

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

1.1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Yolo County Central Landfill (YCCL) is a municipal solid waste (MSW) facility located in unincorporated Yolo County about two miles northeast of Davis, and five miles southeast of Woodland, near the intersection of County Roads 28H and 104. The site covers 725 acres. The YCCL is owned by Yolo County and operated by the County's Department of Community Services, Division of Integrated Waste Management (DIWM); it has been in operation since 1975. The landfill is open seven days per week and accepts non-hazardous MSW, green waste and food waste, construction and demolition debris, liquid waste and recyclables. The origin of most of the MSW is from incorporated and unincorporated areas of Yolo County. YCCL is permitted to accept up to 1,800 tons per day of waste. In recent years, average daily throughput has exceeded 1,000 tons per day.

The Project evaluated in this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) consists of several changes to YCCL's existing operations and permits including but not limited to the Solid Waste Facility Permit (SWFP), Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District Permits, and Waste Discharge Requirements. One aspect of the Project, development of a non-specific future off-site borrow area, may also require a mining permit under the state Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) and Yolo County's Agricultural Surface Mining Permit program. The Project is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because the project is undertaken by a public agency and approval of any permits requires discretionary actions by public bodies. Yolo County, which is the CEQA Lead Agency for environmental review, has determined that some of the proposed changes have the potential to cause a significant environmental impact. For this reason, the County has concluded that an EIR is the appropriate level of environmental review for this Project.

The Project would be undertaken to allow the County greater flexibility in developing and implementing processes and operations that would reduce waste from the landfill, reduce environmental impacts of landfill operations, decrease greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increase the recovery of materials and energy from waste, operate more efficiently and economically, and extend the facility's lifespan.

While some of the Project elements, such as construction and operation of a waste gasification facility, are entirely new, many of the Project elements are revisions or improvements to existing designs and operations. The following proposed changes to the design and operation of the YCCL

constitute the Project proposed for evaluation in this EIR. The proposed increased daily permitted tonnage is reflective of waste streams that can benefit from new processing elements, effects of population increases and/or accommodations for peak days/months that have higher tonnage of certain waste streams that can be processed at YCCL (not increased landfill disposal). Some of the Project elements would potentially process out-of-County waste streams more efficiently than other options. Proposed changes to the design and operation of the YCCL that constitute the Project, and which are analyzed in this EIR, include the following:

1. Increased Daily Permitted Tonnage
2. Wood Pellet Facility
3. Large Scale Floating Solar Photovoltaic System
4. Solar Photovoltaic System on Closed Landfill Units
5. Waste Gasification Facility
6. Expanded Biogas Utilization Options
7. Peaking Power Plant
8. New Class 2 Surface Impoundment
9. Organic Waste Fertilizer Facility
10. Stormwater Treatment System and Discharge
11. Additional Groundwater Pumping (Possible Treatment and Discharge)
12. Transfer Station
13. Non-Specific Future Off-Site Borrow Area
14. Thermal Pressure Hydrolysis System
15. Biogas to Methanol Pilot Facility

Each of these Project elements is described in greater detail in Chapter 2.

1.1.2 HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The YCCL covers 725 acres (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 042-004-001, 042-004-002, and 042-014-006) and includes several discrete areas, totaling 473 acres, that are permitted for disposal. These include seven Class III landfill areas for disposal of MSW (designated as Waste Management Units [WMUs] 1 through 7) and four Class II surface impoundments for holding liquid wastes. The site also includes one existing composting facility and one under development, a construction, demolition and inerts debris (CDI) recycling facility, areas for metal, wood, and inert material (concrete, rock, etc.) recovery and recycling, and a permanent household hazardous waste collection facility. Five of the Class III landfill areas (WMUs 1-5) have undergone final closure. WMU 6 is currently operational and includes eight 20-acre modules (100 acres are active, and 60 acres remain to be developed). WMU 7 is approved for future development and consists of eight modules (160 acres total).

The YCCL's current SWFP was issued on July 31, 2018. The Subsequent EIR certified by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors on September 27, 2005 and Addendum's #1, #2, #3 and #4 to

the Subsequent EIR prepared by the Yolo County Community Services Department in March 2006, February 2016, April 2017 and February 2018, respectively, support the design and operation of the YCCL authorized by the current SWFP. The YCCL's Joint Technical Document (JTD) was amended in June 2018 (Yolo County, 2018).

1.2 SCOPE OF THE EIR

In August 2020, the County issued the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR, which included a list of topic areas for which the Project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts (Yolo County, 2020). The EIR's impact analysis primarily focuses on the direct and indirect impacts of the Project on those topic areas.

This EIR focuses only on the potential environmental impacts of the various Project elements that make up the proposed Project, and not on the overall impacts of the operation of YCCL or of already-approved past projects. While the Project described and analyzed in this EIR is distinct from the projects that were subject of the certified 1992 YCCL EIR¹ and 2005 YCCL EIR², much of the information in those earlier documents are germane to this EIR. The certified 2015 YCCL EIR for the YCCL Soil Borrow Site Project³ also contains information germane to this EIR. The analysis in this EIR therefore relies to a considerable extent on the background and analysis contained in the certified 1992, 2005 and 2015 EIRs.

1.2.1 APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

CEQA Guidelines § 15125(a) addresses how a lead agency should establish the baseline conditions against which potential environmental impacts of a project are measured, as follows:

- “(1) Generally, the lead agency should describe physical environmental conditions as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or if no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced, from both a local and regional perspective. Where existing conditions change or fluctuate over time, and where necessary to provide the most accurate picture practically possible of the project's impacts, a lead agency may define existing conditions by referencing historic conditions, or conditions expected when the project becomes operational, or both, that are supported with substantial evidence. In addition, a lead agency may also use baselines consisting of both existing conditions and projected future conditions that are supported by reliable projections based on substantial evidence in the record.
- (2) A lead agency may use projected future conditions (beyond the date of project operations) baseline as the sole baseline for analysis only if it demonstrates with substantial evidence that use of existing conditions would be either misleading or without informative value to decision-makers and the public. Use of projected future conditions

¹ Yolo County. 1992. *Final Environmental Impact Report Yolo County Central Landfill State Clearinghouse No. 91123015*. October 1992.

² Yolo County. 2005. *Yolo County Central Landfill Permit Revisions Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report SCH No. 1991073040*. May 2005.

³ Yolo County. 2015. *Final Environmental Impact Report Yolo County Central Landfill Soil Borrow Site Project*. April 2015.

as the only baseline must be supported by reliable projections based on substantial evidence in the record.

- (3) An existing conditions baseline shall not include hypothetical conditions, such as those that might be allowed, but have never actually occurred, under existing permits or plans, as the baseline.”

CEQA case law provides guidance as to the appropriate baseline for existing, permitted, facilities seeking modifications to permitted operations or activities. In *Fairview Neighbors v. County of Ventura* ([2d Dist. 1999] 70 Cal. App. 4th 238 [82 Cal. Rptr.2d 436]) the Court ruled that for an existing, permitted facility that was seeking a permit for a new or revised aspect of its operation, where the facility’s previously permitted operations had previously undergone environmental review, the appropriate baseline should be the existing permitted operations, rather than the level of operations actually occurring at the time of the Notice of Preparation.

In accordance with this decision, the design, operations, and environmental controls described in the existing SWFP and other current permits, based on the 2005 Subsequent EIR and Addendums, as well as other applicable permits that have undergone separate environmental review, constitute the baseline against which potential impacts of the Project are measured in this EIR.

One Project element, the development of a non-specific future off-site borrow area, is described and evaluated in this EIR in a general, programmatic manner. Implementation of this Project element would occur after a specific location for the off-site borrow area has been identified, and after completion of any required subsequent project-level environmental documentation.

1.3 THE EIR PROCESS

Based on a preliminary review of potential Project impacts, the County determined that an EIR would be the appropriate level of environmental review for the Project. In August 2020, the County prepared and circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this EIR (**Appendix A**), in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15082, to seek comments from affected agencies and the public regarding the scope of the EIR. To avoid a public gathering during the COVID-19 crisis, the County held a virtual scoping meeting via Zoom Webinar on September 16, 2020. One oral comment was received at the virtual scoping meeting and several comment letters were received during the scoping period from interested governmental agencies (see **Appendix B**).

The County will circulate this Draft EIR for review by public agencies and interested persons and organizations for a 45-day public review period, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15105. Written comments will be accepted at the Yolo County Department of Community Services until 4 p.m. on the closing day of the review period. Oral and written comments will be accepted at a hearing on the Draft EIR prior to the close of the review period.

Written comments should be emailed to Stephanie.Cormier@yolocounty.org or submitted to: Stephanie Cormier, Yolo County Department of Community Services, 292 West Beamer Street, Woodland, California, 95695. At the close of the public review period, the County will evaluate

the comments received on the environmental issues and prepare written responses, as required by CEQA Guidelines §15088. The comments and responses will be included in the Final EIR as a separate chapter, along with any revised EIR text necessitated by the response to comments.

1.4 REFERENCES

Yolo County. 2020. *Notice of Preparation Environmental Impact Report (EIR) & Notice of Public Scoping Meeting*. August 28, 2020.

Yolo County. 2018. *Joint Technical Document, Yolo County Central Landfill, Yolo County, California*. June 2018.

Yolo County. 2015. *Final Environmental Impact Report Yolo County Central Landfill Soil Borrow Site Project*. April 2015.

Yolo County. 2005. *Yolo County Central Landfill Permit Revisions Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report SCH No. 1991073040*. May 2005.

Yolo County. 1992. *Final Environmental Impact Report Yolo County Central Landfill State Clearinghouse No. 91123015*. October 1992.

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