

To: Decisionmakers

From: Alice McCurdy, Deputy Director
Planning and Development



Project Lead Agency: Santa Barbara County Public Works Department, Resource Recovery & Waste Management Division.

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Date: September 25, 2014

RE: Determination that Use of a Previously Prepared EIR (per CEQA Section 15162) applies to the Baron Ranch Restoration Plan Modification

Project Location: The Baron Ranch is located at 14550 Calle Real, Goleta, California, 93117 comprised of three County-owned parcels, Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN) 081-100-005, 081-150-032 and 081-090-009, located approximately 25 miles west of the City of Santa Barbara, along the Gaviota coast, Third Supervisorial District. The restoration areas are on APN 081-150-032.

1.0 Background/Executive Summary

The Tajiguas Landfill has been in operation since 1967 for disposal of municipal solid waste. Tajiguas Landfill is located in a coastal canyon known as Cañada de la Pila, approximately 26 miles west of the City of Santa Barbara. The original landfill predates adoption of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the Coastal Act, which designated the Coastal Zone in California in 1976. The Coastal Zone boundary bisects the southerly portion of the Tajiguas Landfill site and approximately one quarter of the 497-acre property is within the Coastal Zone.

The Baron Ranch is a 1,083 acre ranch located immediately east of the Tajiguas Landfill approximately 25 miles west of the City of Santa Barbara along the Gaviota Coast. The property was purchased to provide a buffer between the landfill and adjacent private holdings, to prevent future subdivision/residential development next to the landfill, to allow flexibility for solid waste operations, provide options for mitigation, and to provide possible future public recreational access. Arroyo Quemado, a creek that runs north-south through the Baron Ranch, supports a breeding population of California red-legged frogs. Areas of the property are currently developed with avocado and cherimoya orchards. In December 2010, a 6-mile loop public hiking trail was opened on the Ranch.

On August 13, 2002, the BOS certified an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (01-EIR-05) for, and approved, the Tajiguas Landfill Expansion Project (Front Canyon Expansion). In May 2009, the BOS certified a subsequent EIR (08EIR-00000-00007) for, and approved, the Tajiguas Landfill Reconfiguration and Baron Ranch Restoration Project (SCH No. 2008201052).

The expansion project involved an expansion of the permitted capacity of the landfill. The

reconfiguration project involved the reconfiguration of the waste footprint approved as a part of the expansion project, and the comprehensive restoration of native habitats on the county-owned Baron Ranch to benefit the Federally threatened California red-legged frog. A Restoration Plan was prepared for the ranch and analyzed in 08EIR-00000-00007. Restoration opportunities were largely identified and are occurring along and adjacent to Arroyo Quemado in abandoned and active orchard areas. Revegetation has been implemented in phases in compliance with the plan and approximately 32 acres have been restored to date.

As described below, the Resource Recovery & Waste Management Division (RRWMD) of the County Public Works Department is now proposing to modify a portion of the oak woodland restoration area and modify the location of the chaparral restoration. The modified areas are shown on Figure 1. The changes are based on a more detailed knowledge of site conditions resulting from implementation of habitat restoration on the ranch over the past five years.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, when an EIR has been certified for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared for that project unless the Lead Agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in the light of the whole record one of the following:

- (1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR... due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
- (2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR... due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or
- (3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR... was adopted, shows any of the following:
 - (A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR...;
 - (B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;
 - (C) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible, and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or
 - (D) Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

(CEQA Guidelines, Section 15162, subd. (a).; see also Pub. Resources Code, Section 21166.)

Based on the preceding legal standards, and as discussed in further detail below, the proposed modifications to the Baron Ranch Restoration Project to relocate a portion of the oak woodland restoration and relocate the chaparral restoration do not trigger the requirements for a subsequent EIR. The modifications neither reveal previously undisclosed significant environmental impacts nor a substantial increase in the severity of previously disclosed impacts (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15162).

2.0 Changes in the Proposed Project Description

The Tajiguas Landfill Reconfiguration and Baron Ranch Restoration Project Subsequent EIR analyzed the proposed impacts associated with implementing the Baron Ranch Restoration Plan. The plan was prepared to address and compensate for biological impacts associated with the Tajiguas Landfill Reconfiguration Project and to also provide partial mitigation for biological impacts associated with the Tajiguas Landfill Expansion Project. Based on experience with implementing over 30 acres of restoration of the site over the past 5 years, some modifications to the previously identified oak woodland and chaparral restoration areas are proposed to improve the success of the restoration and to enhance the biological value of the restored areas. For the oak woodland restoration, the restoration would be modified to reduce the width of the oak woodland restoration area located along the west side of Arroyo Quemado and to extend the restoration further to the north by adding a new area of approximately 2.8 acres. The total acreage to be restored would remain at 10.8 acres. With respect to the chaparral mitigation areas, the restoration areas would be relocated from the east side of Arroyo Quemado to the west side in abandoned and active orchard areas north and south of Drainage C (see Figure 1). The total acreage restored would remain at 6.2 acres.

3.0 Changes in Project Impacts

3.1 Agricultural Resources

The Tajiguas Landfill Reconfiguration and Baron Ranch Restoration Project Subsequent EIR evaluated the agricultural impacts associated with conversion of orchard areas at the ranch to native vegetation. The project was identified as impacting approximately 16 acres of active orchard areas and 22 acres of barren/inactive orchard areas, which was identified as a less than significant (Class III) agricultural impact. The modification to the oak woodland restoration areas would not result in a change in the acreage of active orchards impacted by the project. Approximately 2 acres of chaparral restoration previously proposed in active orchard areas would be relocated to an area of abandoned orchards. The abandoned orchards in this area are in areas that were formerly comprised of chaparral vegetation. Agricultural impacts would remain adverse but less than significant (Class III), and would be reduced as compared to the originally proposed project.

3.2 Cultural Resources

Conejo Archaeological Consultants prepared a Phase I Cultural Resources Investigation of the Baron Ranch restoration areas (Maki, 2008) as a part of the subsequent environmental impact report for the Tajiguas Landfill Reconfiguration and Baron Ranch Restoration Project. Archaeological impacts associated with implementation of the proposed restoration plan were identified as potentially significant but mitigable (Class II). The modified restoration areas were not included in the original Phase 1 survey area, so an addendum to Conejo's 2008 report was

prepared. This amended archaeological investigation included a review of a 2013 Central Coastal Information Center (CCIC) records search results, which included information on the modified restoration locations. In addition, Federal, state and local historic listings were examined to identify potential historic resource impacts. Finally, a field survey was conducted of the modified restoration locations. The CCIC's 0.5-mile record search identified two archaeological sites within a 0.5-mile radius of the modified locations; neither of which will be impacted by the revised project. There are no listed Federal, State or County Historic properties within a 0.5-mile radius of the modified locations. Conejo's field survey did not identify any prehistoric or historic resources in the modified restoration areas. Mitigation measures CR-1(a), (cultural resource orientation) and CR-1(c) (evaluation and protection of discovered resources) included in 08EIR-00000-00007 would continue to be implemented. Impacts to cultural resources associated with the modified restoration areas would remain potentially significant but mitigable (Class II).

4.0 Other Environmental Issue Areas

08EIR-00000-00007 disclosed that the Baron Ranch Restoration Project would result in beneficial (Class IV) water resource impacts, adverse but less than significant (Class III) impacts to sensitive riparian habitat and wetlands, and significant but mitigable impacts (Class II) to California red-legged frogs during implementation of the restoration and beneficial (Class IV) impacts after completion of the restoration. Impacts to these environmental issue areas are not changed as a result of the modifications to the restoration areas. Thus, 08EIR-00000-00007 remains adequate to disclose impacts for these issue areas.

5.0 Findings

The Planning and Development Department concludes that the previous environmental documents may be used to fulfill the environmental review requirements of the current project. Because the current project meets the conditions for the application of State CEQA Guidelines, Sections 15162, preparation of a new EIR is not required.

Discretionary processing of the Baron Ranch Restoration Plan Modification may now proceed with the understanding that any substantial changes in the proposal may be subject to further environmental review.

Attachments:

Figure 1 – Revised Chaparral and Oak Woodland Restoration Areas

Figure 1
Revised Chaparral and Oak Woodland Restoration Areas

