

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Existing and Future Tajiguas Landfill Site Conditions

The Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project facilities are proposed to be located at the Tajiguas Landfill and residual waste from the facilities would be disposed of in the landfill. The existing Tajiguas Landfill Project is fully permitted and operational (see Table 3-2 for a summary of permitted components), and has undergone full environmental review (see Section 1.4 for a summary of prior CEQA review) regarding physical impacts to the environment. Landfill construction is phased and operations are proceeding as described in the Tajiguas Landfill Environmental Documents and in compliance with the approved permits. The impact analyses contained in the Tajiguas Landfill Environmental Documents were based on full build-out of the landfill.

Unlike a residential or commercial development project, full build-out of the landfill does not occur until the landfill reaches capacity and is closed, which is at the end of the landfill life. Up until that time, the environmental condition of the landfill is constantly changing as new waste cells are developed and then filled with MSW, borrow areas are excavated for daily cover, soil is removed and stockpiled for waste cell development activities, and on-site roads and infrastructure are moved to adjust to the different waste disposal locations.

The condition of the landfill at the approximate time of the release of the Resource Recovery Project NOP is shown in Figure 3-3. As can be seen from this figure, the landfill has not yet reached the maximum permitted elevation. Disposal capacity is still available, and disposal activity is still occurring, in the top deck and back canyon area of the landfill property. The aerial photo shows the existing condition (September 2012), the red colored contours show excavation and waste fill that will occur prior to construction of the Resource Recovery Project, while the additional waste fill contours and disturbance area that will occur with full build-out of the landfill are shown in blue. The full horizontal and vertical disturbance area of the North Borrow/Stockpile Area has not been reached and the disturbance limit of the West Borrow Area has not yet been reached. Further disturbance to these areas will occur as landfill cell construction and landfill closure activities proceed. The operations deck area is at its final elevation and a final cover/cap has been placed over the MSW footprint that extends onto the operations deck.

Between the existing conditions (2012) and before the project is anticipated to begin operations in approximately 2017, the top deck will receive up to 80 feet of additional MSW to reach the permitted maximum elevation of 620 feet above msl. The landfill front face and top deck will then be closed and the final cover system will be installed. Following closure of the top deck, waste filling will occur in the back canyon area of the landfill.

1 Waste cell development (including installation of the groundwater protection system
2 [landfill liners]) in the back canyon area is currently in progress. Several liners have already
3 been installed and installation of the Phase 3B groundwater protection system, which involves
4 approximately 800,000 cubic yards of grading and the placement of an impervious liner and
5 leachate collection system over 6 acres of the site, is currently in progress and is expected to be
6 completed in fall 2014. Installation of the Phase 3B liner represents the last major waste cell
7 construction/groundwater protection system project at the landfill¹. Smaller construction projects
8 and landfill closure activities in areas where final fill elevations have been reached will occur
9 after the Phase 3B liner project. These conditions will exist with or without the Tajiguas
10 Resource Recovery Project.

11 Operationally, daily waste disposal volumes, traffic volumes, and on-site equipment use
12 fluctuate. Table 1-3 presents peak total daily tons/days and peak daily vehicles recorded at the
13 landfill between 2004 and 2012.

14 **Setting**

15 As discussed above and in Section 3.4, each of the proposed Resource Recovery
16 Project components would be entirely located at the existing Tajiguas Landfill property. The
17 landfill is located in a coastal canyon along the unincorporated, rural Gaviota coast area in
18 southern Santa Barbara County. The Gaviota coast area is identified as having a high level of
19 scenic value by the Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan. The Gaviota coast is bisected
20 by the transportation corridor of U.S. Highway 101 and the Union Pacific railroad. The
21 immediate project vicinity is generally rural agricultural in character with scattered residences.
22 The Arroyo Quemada community, an existing rural developed neighborhood lies southeast of
23 the landfill property between U.S. Highway 101 and the coast in the project area. Cattle grazing
24 is a common land use within the area.

25 Vegetation in the project area consists of introduced annual grassland, coastal sage
26 scrub, chaparral, and riparian and oak woodland along the coastal drainages. The landfill
27 property is bordered by open space/agriculturally zoned land to the east (County-owned Baron
28 Ranch) and west (Canada de al Huerta and Arroyo Hondo), Los Padres National Forest to the
29 north, and open space/agriculturally zoned land and U.S. Highway 101 to the south.

30 The Tajiguas Landfill has been used as a County MSW disposal facility since 1967 and
31 has a Waste Disposal Overlay in the Land Use Element of the County's Comprehensive Plan
32 recognizing its use as a landfill. The inland areas of the Tajiguas Landfill are located within
33 areas zoned for agriculture under County Ordinance 661. The southern portion of the landfill is
34 located within the coastal zone within areas zoned AG-II-320, which permits agricultural uses
35 within a 320-acre minimum lot size. The portion of the landfill within the Coastal Zone pre-dates
36 the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, the Coastal Act of 1976, and the Coastal Zoning
37 Ordinance and is considered a legal, non-conforming use. Areas of the landfill property not
38 disturbed by ongoing solid waste disposal activities support ruderal grassland, coastal sage
39 scrub, chaparral and oak woodlands.

¹ As the Tajiguas Landfill air space is consumed, it is necessary to provide additional lined area for acceptance of new waste. Because waste disposal is ongoing and the construction of new cells can take several months to complete, this lined area must be constructed well in advance of the waste placement.

1 Additional environmental setting information is provided for each issue area in the
2 following impact analysis sections.

3 **Baseline**

4 Under CEQA, to accurately assess the potential environmental impacts of a proposed
5 project, an environmental baseline must be selected to which environmental impacts of a
6 proposed project can be compared. Generally, when an agency is preparing an EIR, the CEQA
7 baseline used in the CEQA analysis constitutes the existing environmental conditions at the
8 time of the issuance of the NOP (CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(a)). However, a lead agency
9 can exercise its discretion to select a baseline different from existing environmental conditions
10 when existing conditions do not accurately reflect generally existing conditions or tend to be
11 misleading or without informational value, based on substantial evidence (Neighbors for Smart
12 Rail v. Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority (2013) 57 Cal.4th 439, 445, 449). CEQA
13 and case law provide that the baseline can consist of established levels of permitted use.
14 Where prior environmental review has occurred, the courts have held, the existing
15 environmental setting may include what has been approved following the prior CEQA review
16 under certain circumstances (Benton v. Board of Supervisors of Napa County (1991) 226
17 Cal.App.3d 1467; Fairview Neighbors v. County of Ventura (1999) 70 Cal. App. 4th 238; San
18 Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center v. County of Merced (2007) 149 Cal. App. 4th 645).

19 The landfill operates under the following permit conditions (Solid Waste Facility Permit
20 42-AA-0015) as analyzed in the Tajiguas Landfill Environmental Documents:

- 21 • Permitted Operations: Solid Waste Disposal Site, Green Material Processing.
- 22 • Permitted Maximum Tonnage: 1500 tons/day.
- 23 • Permitted Traffic Volume: 184 vehicles/day + additional 50 vehicles/day
24 miscellaneous traffic (234 vehicles/day total).
- 25 • Permitted Area: Total – 357 acres, Disposal – 118 acres.
- 26 • Design Capacity: 23,300,000 cubic yards.
- 27 • Maximum Elevation: 620 feet (msl).

28 The Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project constitutes a modification of the approved
29 Tajiguas Landfill Expansion Project to increase recycling opportunities, generate green energy,
30 reduce greenhouse gas emissions and extend the life of the Tajiguas Landfill by reducing the
31 amount of waste that would be buried each year. Therefore, this Subsequent EIR analyzes
32 differences between the approved and permitted Tajiguas Landfill Expansion Project and the
33 modified project (Resource Recovery Project) when evaluating whether any new significant
34 impacts would result or if other previously identified impacts would be changed (Benton v. Board
35 of Supervisors of Napa County (1991) 226 Cal.App.3d 1467, 1484; Temecula Band of Luiseno
36 Mission Indians v. Rancho California Water District (1996) 43 Cal.App.4th 425, 437).

1 For purposes of analyzing the differences in the impacts of the Resource Recovery
2 Project from those of the Tajiguas Landfill Expansion Project, the approved and permitted MSW
3 volumes, landfill waste and disturbance footprints and associated operational conditions
4 analyzed in the Tajiguas Landfill Environmental Documents are considered to represent the
5 environmental baseline where those aspects have been established on the ground. For most of
6 the landfill operating parameters listed, the permitted conditions have been established on the
7 ground. However, as discussed above, because waste filling has not yet been completed (the
8 design capacity has not yet been reached), with respect to visual conditions for the MRF/AD
9 Facility the baseline is the existing visual condition at the operations deck. The landfill top deck,
10 the proposed location of the composting area, will undergo significant change (up to 80 feet of
11 additional waste fill) before the composting area is constructed and operated and using existing
12 conditions would be misleading or without informational value. Therefore, the baseline for the
13 assessing aesthetic/visual impacts for this element of the project is the condition expected to
14 exist at the time of construction which will give the public and decision-makers the most
15 accurate picture practically possible of the project's likely impacts.

16 With regards to the traffic baseline, the historic operations data (2004 to 2012) was
17 reviewed and it was observed that the permitted peak traffic volume (184 vehicles/day +
18 additional 50 vehicles/day miscellaneous traffic) has not been reached even when the peak
19 daily MSW volume of 1500 tons/day was recorded. Therefore, permitted landfill traffic volumes
20 were determined to not be a representative/realistic baseline for analyzing traffic impacts.
21 Existing landfill traffic volumes were also determined to not to be representative of baseline
22 conditions because economic conditions (recession) have impacted waste disposal rates and as
23 the economy rebounds, it is anticipated that businesses will produce more (resulting in more
24 byproducts), consumers will buy (and dispose of) more, and construction will increase (resulting
25 in more C&D waste) (CalRecycle 2010, CalRecycle 2013, SWANA 2009). Because MSW
26 disposal volumes and landfill traffic volumes fluctuate, the peak traffic volume of (132
27 vehicles/day + additional 35 additional vehicles/day miscellaneous traffic), as recorded in 2008,
28 was selected to represent landfill baseline traffic volumes. Traffic volumes on U.S. Highway 101
29 are based on data collected in 2012.

30 The Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project would not increase the capacity of the landfill.
31 However, by increasing the diversion rate and therefore slowing the rate of disposal at the
32 landfill, the Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project would extend the life of the permitted landfill
33 operations by approximately 10 or more years (from approximately year 2026 to year 2036).²
34 All of the impacts associated with landfill disposal are impacts that exist for the current Tajiguas
35 Landfill Expansion Project; however, with implementation of the Resource Recovery Project,
36 these impacts would continue for a longer period of time than what was assumed during the
37 permitting of the Tajiguas Landfill Expansion Project.

² It should be noted that neither the Tajiguas Landfill Environmental Documents nor the Solid Waste Facility Permit (42-AA-0015) specifies an absolute date for closure of the existing landfill. The prior Environmental Documents (01-EIR-5, page 1-6, October 2001) specified that "the proposed expansion of Tajiguas is intended to increase the solid waste disposal capacity of this existing County-owned and operated facility for 15 years, or approximately until the year 2020." Based on successful recycling in the communities served by the Tajiguas Landfill and the recent economic downturn the landfill capacity is now projected to be reached in 2026.

1 Unless modified by the current Subsequent EIR analysis, mitigation measures identified
2 in the Tajiguas Landfill Environmental Documents would continue to apply to the Tajiguas
3 Landfill Expansion Project over its extended life.

4 **Structure of the Subsequent EIR Impact Analyses**

5 The impact analysis sections of this Subsequent EIR are structured as follows:

6 Setting

7 The environmental and regulatory setting for the resource/issue area being analyzed
8 focusing on any changes to the setting since 01-EIR-05 was certified or information relevant to
9 the current project analysis.

10 Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures

11 *Thresholds of Significance* – The “significance thresholds” used to determine whether
12 potential project effects are significant. The significance thresholds used are those criteria
13 adopted by the County, other agencies, included in the State CEQA Guidelines, or developed
14 specifically for this analysis.

15 *Approved Tajiguas Landfill Expansion Project* - A summary of impacts and mitigation
16 measures associated with the approved and permitted Tajiguas Landfill Expansion Project as
17 disclosed in 01-EIR-05.

18 *Approved Tajiguas Landfill Reconfiguration* – A summary of impacts and mitigation
19 measures associated with the approved Tajiguas Landfill Reconfiguration and Baron Ranch
20 Restoration Project.

21 *Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project* – A discussion of impacts and mitigation measures
22 associated with the proposed project.

23 *Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project with Optional CSSR Component* – A discussion of
24 impacts and mitigation measures associated with the proposed project with the optional CSSR
25 component.

26 *Extension of Landfill Life Impacts* - A discussion of impacts and mitigation measures
27 associated with the extension of the life of the Tajiguas Landfill associated with the proposed
28 project.

29 *Cumulative Impacts* – An evaluation of the impacts of the proposed project together with
30 other projects causing related impacts and an identification of the project's contribution to the
31 cumulative impact.

- 1 The impacts are classified pursuant to the County’s CEQA Guidelines as follows:
- 2 **Class I Impacts:** Significant unavoidable adverse impacts for which the decision-maker
- 3 must adopt a statement of overriding considerations.
- 4 **Class II Impacts:** Significant environmental impacts that can be feasibly mitigated or
- 5 avoided for which the decision-maker must adopt findings and recommended mitigation
- 6 measures.
- 7 **Class III Impacts:** Adverse impacts found not to be significant for which the decision-
- 8 maker does not have to adopt findings under CEQA.
- 9 **Class IV Impacts:** Impacts beneficial to the environment.