

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE RESPONSE TO COMMENTS DOCUMENT

1.1 - INTRODUCTION

The draft environmental impact report (Draft EIR) for the Los Osos Wastewater Project (LOWWP) was released for public and agency review and comment on November 19, 2008. The extended comment period closed on January 30, 2009 and numerous comment letters were received (14 agency letters and 60 letters from citizens, community groups, non-government organizations, and other interested parties.) This Response to Comments Document is a compendium of summary information responding to various comments made, further analysis of environmental issues related to the final Preferred Project, and additional technical reports performed on the Tonini parcel that is the site of two components of the Preferred Project.

The Draft EIR identified four proposed projects, or a combination of elements of the projects, to address the stated need to develop a wastewater collection, treatment and disposal system for the community of Los Osos. The Draft EIR identified an Environmentally Superior Alternative consisting of a gravity collection system, a facultative pond wastewater treatment system at the Tonini site and effluent disposal by sprayfield operation at Tonini and leachfield application at the Broderson site. Based on the findings of the Draft EIR and the ongoing technical analysis, including corrections to the Draft EIR Greenhouse Gas Analysis, the County selected the Environmentally Superior Alternative as the Preferred Project by combining project components for wastewater collection, conveyance, treatment process and site selection, wet weather effluent storage, and effluent and biosolids disposal. The Preferred Project is a hybrid of Proposed Project 4, which included a wastewater treatment plant and effluent disposal located at the Tonini site as well as a gravity wastewater collection system. The primary change that improves the environmentally superior characteristics is that an extended aeration treatment process (e.g., oxidation ditch or Biolac®) has replaced the facultative ponds from Proposed Project 4. As the LOWWP preliminary design has continued towards the Design/Build process, the County and its engineering consultants have refined the conceptual design for treatment plant and layouts of facilities at the Tonini site. The description of the Preferred Project is provided in Appendix A as well as additional environmental information that includes an evaluation of the potential environmental impacts that are different than those impacts addressed as part of Proposed Project 4.

The sites selected for the various Preferred Project components are the same as the Proposed Project 4 sites. The gravity sewer collection system area is unchanged, although there have been a few pump station and force main design refinements as described in the Preferred Project Description in Appendix Q. The raw sewage conveyance pipeline from the Mid-town Pump Station to the wastewater treatment plant and the treated effluent conveyance pipeline from the Tonini wastewater treatment plant site to the Broderson leachfield will be located within the shoulders of the south side of Los Osos Valley Road.

The Los Osos Wastewater Project (LOWWP) engineering team has developed several preliminary design refinements since the Draft EIR was completed. These refinements are within the scope of the Draft EIR project design parameters, and are discussed in Appendix Q to clarify the Preferred Project components and to facilitate environmental analysis of the Preferred Project. Because a Design/Build process will be used to complete the final design components of the system, subject to County approval, there may be some changes from what is described in this Final EIR. If any Design/Build changes differ significantly from the proposed projects covered by this EIR, supplemental environmental documentation may be required to evaluate some aspects of the final design, provide adequate public review of the proposed project's environmental impacts, and to support the permitting process.

Since the Draft EIR was prepared, the County's LOWWP team had conducted additional geotechnical, biological and cultural resource field studies at the Tonini site. These reports are incorporated as Appendix Q.7 (Geotechnical Report) and Appendix Q.9 (Cultural Resources Report). The Biological Assessment has been prepared by County staff assisted by the environmental consultant and sent directly to State Water Resources Control Board, and then to U.S. EPA (this starts the Section 7 consultation process referenced in the Draft EIR for "CEQA Plus" requirements).

This Response to Comments Document, in conjunction with the Draft EIR circulated in November 2008, constitute the Final EIR. The two documents should be reviewed together for a comprehensive understanding of the potential environmental impacts and recommended mitigation measures associated with the Los Osos Wastewater Project.

1.2 - RESPONSE TO COMMENTS ORGANIZATION

To assist in the review of this Response to Comments Document, following is a description of the organization of this document:

Section 1	Introduction and Overview of the Response to Comments Document
Section 2	List of Commentors
Section 3	Response to Comments Topical Responses Response to Individual Comments on the Draft EIR
Section 4	Minor Revisions and Clarifications to the Draft EIR Text
Appendix Q	Preferred Project Description and Environmental Evaluation Q-1 - Introduction Q-2 - Summary Q-3 - Preferred Project Description Q-4 - Environmental Setting Q-5 - Preferred Project Environmental Evaluation Q.6 - Spray Data for Tonini Q.7 - Technical Report: Geology Q.8 - Technical Report: Biology Q.9 - Technical Report: Cultural Q.10 - References