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## Q.1 - INTRODUCTION

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This Preferred Project Environmental Evaluation has been prepared to provide additional environmental information for the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) for the Los Osos Wastewater Project (LOWWP). Based on Section 15088.5 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this new information is not considered “significant” because there are no new significant environmental impacts or mitigation measures that have been added with the evaluation of the Preferred Project. In addition, the new information does not result in a substantial increase in the severity of an environmental impact that was discussed in the Draft EIR. Furthermore, the Preferred Project is not an alternative that is considerably different from the Proposed Projects that were evaluated in the Draft EIR.

To address the project purpose of developing a wastewater collection, treatment and disposal system for the community of Los Osos, the Draft EIR identified and evaluated four proposed projects. The Draft EIR also stated that a different combination of elements from the four proposed projects could be selected as the Preferred Project for design and construction. The draft environmental impact report (Draft EIR) for the LOWWP was released for public and agency review and comment on November 19, 2008. The Draft EIR document, the Response to Comments document, and this Appendix Q: Preferred Project Environmental Evaluation, together constitute the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) and should be reviewed together for a comprehensive understanding of the potential environmental impacts and recommended mitigation measures associated with the Los Osos Wastewater Project. A summary of the Preferred Project Environmental Evaluation is provided in Section Q.2.

Based on the findings of the Draft EIR and the ongoing technical analysis, the County selected a revised 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 evaluated in this document is a modification of Proposed Project 4, which included a wastewater treatment plant and treated effluent storage and disposal located at the Tonini site, water conservation, the Broderson leachfield and 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.

The Preferred Project description is provided in Section Q.3. As the LOWWP preliminary design has continued towards the final design and Design/Build process, the County and its engineering, architectural and environmental consultants have refined the project conceptual design. These refinements are within the scope of the Draft EIR project design parameters, and are discussed in Section Q.3 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, 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.

Section Q.4 summarizes changes to the known environmental setting. 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, force main, conveyance system and sprayfield design refinements as described in the Preferred Project Description in Sections Q.3 and later in Section Q.5.

Section Q.5 begins with a comparison of the Preferred Project with Proposed Project 4 from the Draft EIR. The majority of Section Q.5 is a comparative evaluation of the Preferred Project's potential environmental impacts that are different from the Proposed Project 4 impacts addressed in the Draft EIR.

Since the Draft EIR was prepared, the County's LOWWP team has conducted additional geotechnical, biological and cultural resource field studies at the Tonini site as well as a site specific hydrology study. These reports are incorporated as:

- Section Q.6 - Sprayfield Evapotranspiration at Tonini Ranch
- Section Q.7 - Geotechnical Report
- Section Q.8 - Biological Report
- Section Q.9 - Cultural Resources Report

The Biological Assessment has been prepared by County staff with assistance by the environmental consultant and sent directly to State Water Resources Control Board, and then to U.S. EPA. This started the Section 7 consultation process referenced in the Draft EIR for "CEQA Plus" requirements.