



# South Coast Air Quality Management District

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## **Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Proposed Regional Agricultural Pipeline Conversion Project**

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. The following comments are meant as guidance for the Lead Agency and should be incorporated into the Final MND.

### SCAQMD Staff's Summary of Project Description

The Lead Agency proposes to convert the existing Wasson Sill Diversion Structure and an existing abandoned agricultural line that runs parallel to the existing Lake Elsinore Outlet Chanel (LEOC) to convey tertiary-treated effluent (Proposed Project). Specifically, the Proposed Project would include construction of approximately 600 linear feet of new 36-inch PVC pipeline, new discharge dissipation outlet structure, and rip-rap. Based on a review of aerial photographs, SCAQMD staff found that existing residential uses are located along the Temescal Creek where construction activities of the Proposed Project would take place. Construction of the Proposed Project is expected to take three months to complete<sup>1</sup>.

### SCAQMD Staff's Summary of the Air Quality Analysis

The Lead Agency *qualitatively* analyzed the Proposed Project's construction-related air quality impacts and found that due to the short, three-month construction period, the Proposed Project would not be expected to generate significant adverse air quality impacts during construction. The Lead Agency also *qualitatively* analyzed the Proposed Project's operational air quality impacts. Since operation of the Proposed Project would be limited to minor vehicle- and equipment-related emission associated with routine facility inspection and maintenance<sup>2</sup>, the Proposed Project's operational emissions would not be expected to be significant.

### SCAQMD Staff's Comments – Air Quality Analysis

SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency include *quantitative* estimations of the Proposed Project's construction (regional and localized) and operational emissions as substantial evidence to support a fair argument that the Proposed Project's construction and operational air quality impacts will not be significant. One of the basic purposes of CEQA is to inform government decision makers and the public about the potential, significant environmental effects of proposed activities (CEQA Guidelines Section 15002(a)(1)). A mitigated negative declaration is appropriate when the Lead Agency finds that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment after incorporating mitigation measures (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15070 to 15075). Reasons to support this finding shall be documented in the initial study. Evaluation of air quality impacts, unlike some other impact areas, easily lends itself to quantification. Not only does quantification make it easier for the public and decision-makers to understand the breadth and depth of the potential air quality impacts, but it also facilitates the

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<sup>1</sup> MND. Page 11.

<sup>2</sup> MND. Page 14.

identification of mitigation measures, if required, to reduce any significant adverse air quality impacts. Without quantifying emissions from construction and operational activities, the MND has not made the documentation which serves as substantial evidence to support a fair argument that the Proposed Project would not have any adverse effects on air quality. Therefore, SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency quantify and disclose the Proposed Project's air quality impacts (regional and localized air quality impacts and operational air quality impacts) in the Final MND.

#### *Regional and Localized Air Quality Analysis during Construction*

Air quality impacts from both construction (including demolition, if any) and operations should be calculated. Construction-related air quality impacts typically include, but are not limited to, emissions from the use of heavy-duty equipment from grading, earth-loading/unloading, paving, architectural coatings, off-road mobile sources (e.g., heavy-duty construction equipment) and on-road mobile sources (e.g., construction worker vehicle trips, material transport trips). SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency quantify criteria pollutant emissions from construction activities and anticipated construction equipment and compare the results to SCAQMD's CEQA regional pollutant emissions significance thresholds for construction<sup>3</sup> to determine air quality impacts.

As stated above, construction of the Proposed Project, though short, will be in close proximity to sensitive receptors (e.g., residential uses). Therefore, SCAQMD staff recommends that the Lead Agency quantify the Proposed Project's localized emissions and disclose the localized air quality impacts in the Final MND to ensure that any nearby sensitive receptors are not adversely affected by the construction activities that are occurring in close proximity. SCAQMD guidance for performing a localized air quality analysis is available on SCAQMD website<sup>4</sup>.

#### *Operational Air Quality Analysis*

The Lead Agency should use its best efforts to quantify emissions from operation of the Proposed Project and compare the results to SCAQMD's CEQA regional pollutant emissions significance thresholds for operation<sup>5</sup>. Operation-related emissions may be caused by a number of sources, including, but not limited to, stationary sources (e.g., boilers), area sources (e.g., solvents and coatings), and vehicular trips (e.g., on- and off-road tailpipe emissions and entrained dust). Air quality impacts from indirect sources such as sources that generate or attract vehicular trips, if applicable to the Proposed Project, should also be quantified and included in the analysis. In the event that operation of the Proposed Project generates or attracts vehicular trips, especially heavy-duty diesel-fueled vehicles, and since the Proposed Project is located next to a school, it is recommended that the Lead Agency perform a mobile source health risk assessment. Guidance for performing a mobile source health risk assessment<sup>6</sup>. An analysis of all toxic air contaminant impacts due to the use of equipment potentially generating such air pollutants should also be included.

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<sup>3</sup> South Coast Air Quality Management District. SCAQMD Air Quality Significance Thresholds. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/scaqmd-air-quality-significance-thresholds.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> South Coast Air Quality Management District. Localized Significance Thresholds. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/localized-significance-thresholds>.

<sup>5</sup> South Coast Air Quality Management District. SCAQMD Air Quality Significance Thresholds. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/scaqmd-air-quality-significance-thresholds.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> South Coast Air Quality Management District. *Health Risk Assessment Guidance for Analyzing Cancer Risk from Mobile Source Diesel Idling Emissions for CEQA Air Quality Analysis*. Accessed at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/mobile-source-toxics-analysis>.

SCAQMD Staff's Comments – Mitigation Measures

In the event that the Lead Agency concludes after its analyses that construction or operational emissions would exceed SCAQMD's air quality CEQA daily significance thresholds, feasible mitigation measures to minimize these impacts are required. Several resources are available to assist the Lead Agency with identifying potential mitigation measures for the Proposed Project, including:

- Chapter 11 of SCAQMD's CEQA Air Quality Handbook.
- SCAQMD's CEQA web pages available here: <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/regulations/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/mitigation-measures-and-control-efficiencies>.
- SCAQMD's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) for the 2016 Air Quality Management Plan (2016 AQMP) available here (starting on page 86): <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/Agendas/Governing-Board/2017/2017-mar3-035.pdf>.

SCAQMD Staff's Comments – SCAQMD Permits

In the event a permit from SCAQMD would be required for the Proposed Project, SCAQMD should be identified as a Responsible Agency for this Project in the Final MND. The assumptions in the air quality analysis in the Final MND will be the basis for permit conditions and limits. If there are permitting questions, they can be directed to SCAQMD Engineering and Permitting staff at (909) 396-2551.

Closing

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15074, prior to approving the Proposed Project, the Lead Agency shall consider the MND for adoption together with any comments received during the public review process. Please provide the SCAQMD with written responses to all comments contained herein prior to the adoption of the Final MND. When responding to issues raised in the comments, response should provide sufficient details giving reasons why specific comments and suggestions are not accepted. There should be good faith, reasoned analysis in response. Conclusory statements unsupported by factual information do not facilitate the purpose and goal of CEQA on public disclosure and are not meaningful or useful to decision makers and the public who are interested in the Proposed Project.

SCAQMD staff is available to work with the lead agency to address these issues and any other questions that may arise. Please contact me at [lsun@aqmd.gov](mailto:lsun@aqmd.gov) if you have any questions regarding the enclosed comments.

Sincerely,

*Lijin Sun*

Lijin Sun, J.D.

Program Supervisor, CEQA IGR

Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

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