



**SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY UNIFIED AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT**

**INITIAL STUDY/ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST/  
PROPOSED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

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**A. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**1. Project Title:**

Wickstrom Dairy/Valsigna Farms- Application No. N-5753-1-1, 2-1, 3-1 and 4-1

**2. Lead Agency Name and Address:**

San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District  
1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue  
Fresno CA 93726-0244

**3. Contact Person:**

Planning/CEQA: Ms. Elena Nuño  
(559) 230-5800

Permit Services: Jonah Aiyabei  
(559) 230-6000

**4. Project Location:**

This project is located at 6071 Larson Rd. in the unincorporated community of Hilmar in Merced County, California. The project is located in an area of attainment for CO, but is non-attainment for PM10 and ozone. This site is not within 1,000 feet of a K-12 school, therefore the requirements of California Health and Safety Code 42301.6 (School Noticing) do not apply.

**5. Project Sponsor's Name and Address:**

Wickstrom Dairy/Valsigna Farms  
6071 Larson Rd  
Hilmar, CA  
Attn: Marc Sanders, Contractor

**6. Assessor's Parcel Number:**

045-220-039, 40

**7. General Plan Designation/Zoning:**

Zoned A-1: General Agricultural



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**8. Project Description:**

The project proposes modifications and additions to the site facilities to be constructed as specified below.

Wickstrom Dairy is applying for an Authority to Construct (ATC) permit to modify their existing operation. The existing as-built capacity of the dairy is physically limited to 1,800 cows. The applicant proposes to install a fourth freestall barn to house an additional 600 milk cows. This will bring the dairy's milk cows capacity to the 2,400 maximum allowed by the conditional use permit issued by Merced County in October 1997. The increased capacity will result in additional liquid manure being flushed into the lagoons, and additional emissions from the liquid manure system. In order to mitigate lagoon emissions due to the increase in the number of milk cows, the applicant is proposing to stop flushing from the heifer corrals. This will result in additional manure being handled as a solid and an increase in potential emissions from the solid manure management system.

**9. Other Agencies Whose Approvals Are Required and Permits Needed:**

None

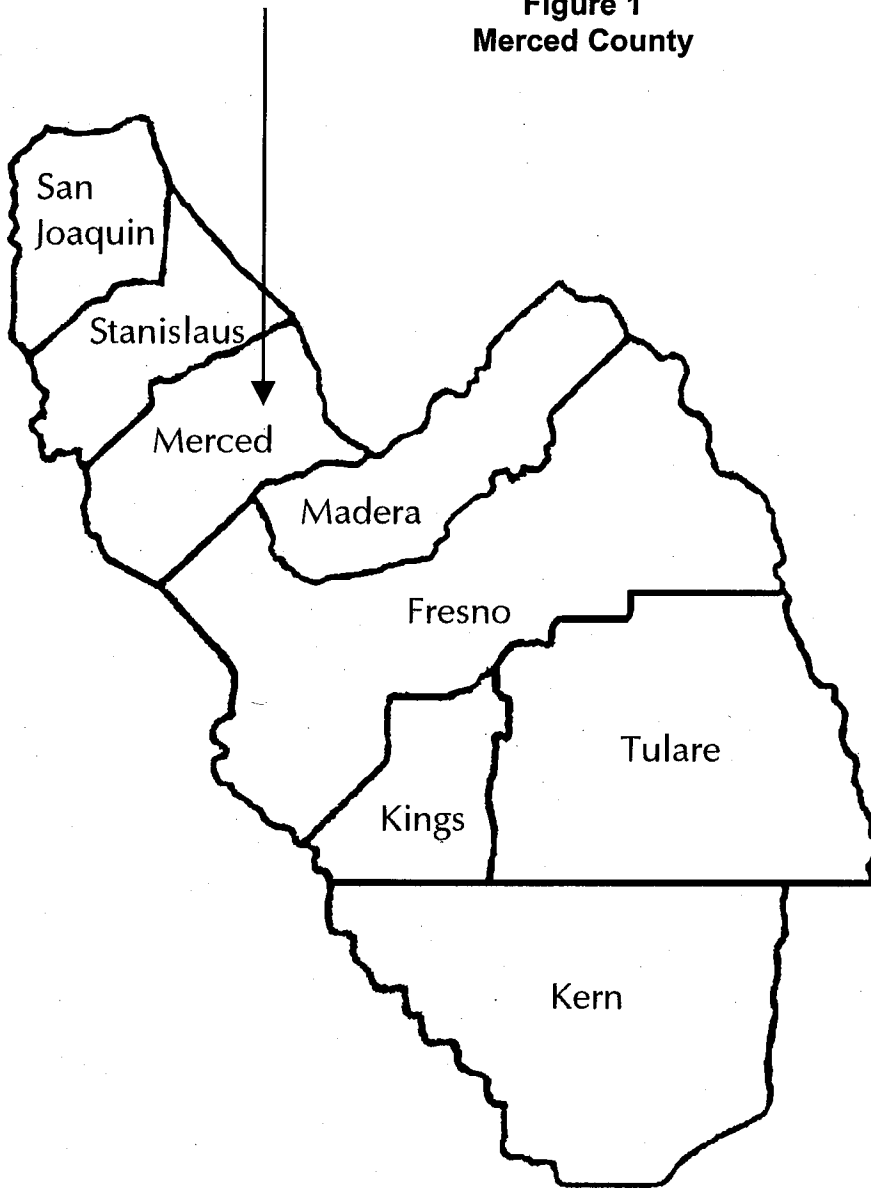
**10. Name of Person Who Prepared Initial Study:**

Elena Nuño  
San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District  
1990 E. Gettysburg Ave.  
Fresno, CA 93726  
(559) 230-5800



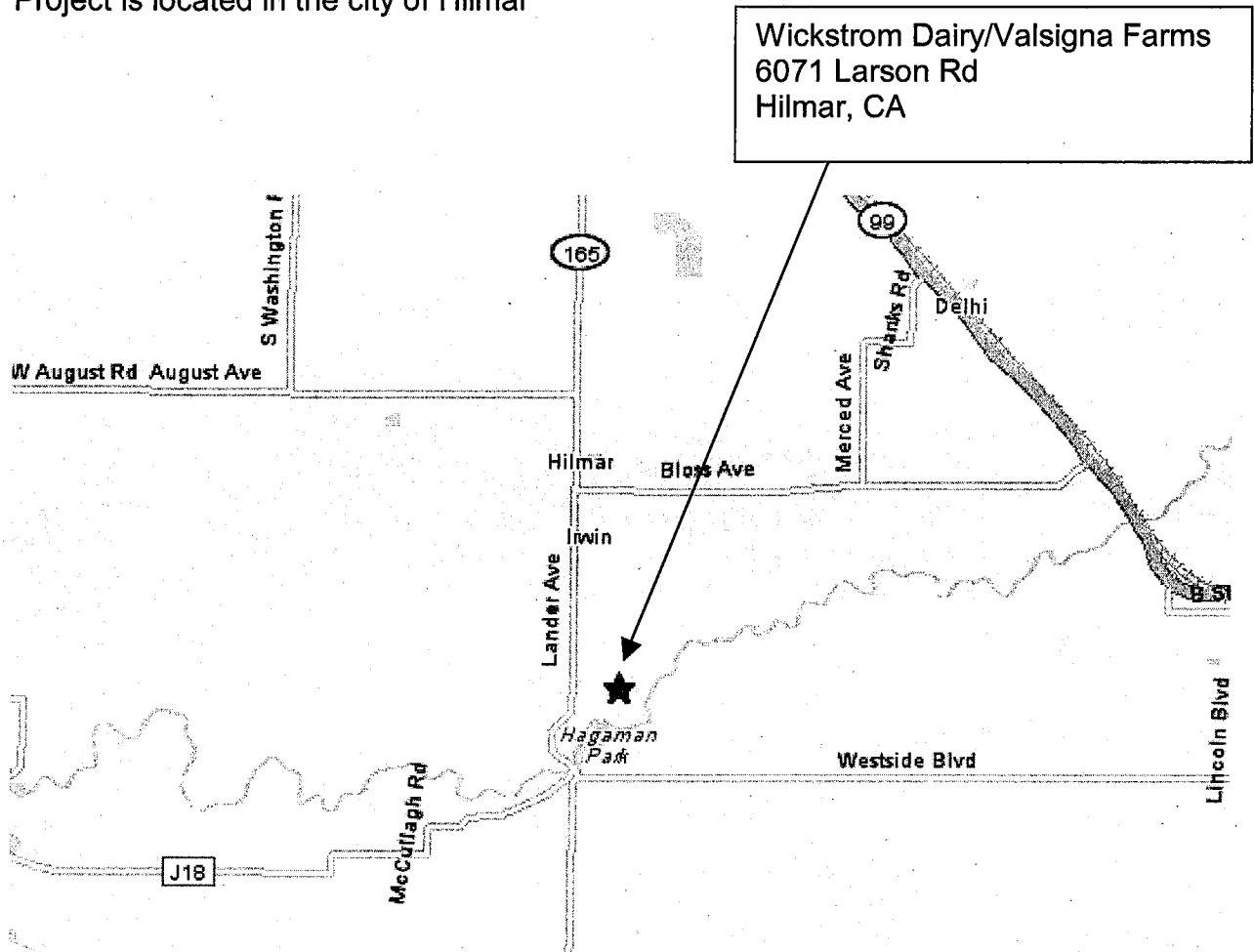
Project is located in Merced County

**Figure 1**  
**Merced County**





Project is located in the city of Hilmar





**B. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED**

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by the proposed project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" or "Potentially Significant Unless Mitigated", as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture Resources              | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources          | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Geology/Soils          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrology/Water Quality            | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use/Planning      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources             | <input type="checkbox"/> Noise                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services               | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Traffic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities/Service Systems     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance |   |

**C. DETERMINATION**

I certify that this project was independently reviewed and analyzed and that this document reflects the independent judgment of the District.

- I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because the mitigation measures described on an attached sheet have been added to the project. A NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect(s) on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets, if the effect is a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated." An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

Signature:  Date: 1/12/06

Printed name: Elena Nuño  
 Title: Air Quality Specialist



**D. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CHECKLIST**

Explanations of all answers on the check-off list are located in Section E.

**I. AESTHETICS** Would the proposal:

- a) Affect a scenic vista or scenic highway?
- b) Have a demonstrable negative aesthetic effect?
- c) Create light or glare?

**II. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES** In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Would the project:

- a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?
- b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?
- c) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?

**III. AIR QUALITY** Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

- a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?
- b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?
- c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?
- d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?
- e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?

Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
			√
			√
			√
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			√
			√
			√
			√



**IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES** Would the project:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?
- b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?
- c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?
- d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?
- e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?
- f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√

**V. CULTURAL RESOURCES** Would the project:

- a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in '15064.5?
- b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to '15064.5?
- c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?
- d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

			√
			√
			√
			√



**VI. GEOLOGY/SOILS** Would the project:

- a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
  - i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.
  - ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?
  - iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?
  - iv) Landslides?
- b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?
- c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?
- d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?
- e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?

Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
			√
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			√
			√
			√
			√
			√

**VII. HAZARDS & HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

Would the project:

- a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?
- b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?
- c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

			√
			√
			√





- d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?
- e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?
- f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?
- g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?
- h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?

Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√

**VIII. HYDROLOGY/WATER QUALITY** Would the project:

- a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?
- b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?
- c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?
- d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?
- e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

VIII. HYDROLOGY/WATER QUALITY			
Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√



- f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?
- g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?
- h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?
- i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?

**IX. LAND USE/PLANNING** Would the project:

- a) Physically divide an established community?
- b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?
- c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?

**X. MINERAL RESOURCES** Would the project:

- a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?
- b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

**XI. NOISE** Would the project result in:

- a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?
- b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?
- c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?
- d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?

Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√





**XIV. RECREATION**

- a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?
- b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

**XV. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC** Would the project:

- a) Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?
- b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?
- c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?
- d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?
- e) Result in inadequate emergency access?
- f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?
- g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?

**XVI. UTILITIES/SERVICE SYSTEMS** Would the project:

- a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?
- b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?
- c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?

Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
			√
			√
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			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√



- d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?
- e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?
- f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?
- g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

**XVII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

- a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?
- b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively Considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?
- c) Does the project have environmental effects, which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√
			√



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## **E. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CHECKLIST COMMENTS**

### **I. AESTHETICS**

I. a) & b): The existing dairy operation is located in the A-1 (General Agricultural) zone. The existing project is subject to Animal Confinement Facilities regulations imposed by the County of Merced (Source 1). The expansion project will also be subject to County regulations and no aesthetic impacts are anticipated.

### **II. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES**

II. a) - c): The project will not have an adverse impact on agricultural resources. The project is located in an agricultural zoned area and on an existing dairy. The previous environmental document prepared by Merced County also did not identify any significant adverse impacts to agricultural resources. (Source 1)

### **III. AIR QUALITY**

III. a) – e): The project will not conflict or obstruct implementation of air quality plans. The project emissions are calculated to be below the District's Threshold of Significance for Reactive Organic Gases (10 tons/year). All other criteria pollutants are also below District thresholds.

The project is not located near any sensitive receptors. (Source 2) The project is subject to Merced County's Animal Confinement Facilities Ordinance which imposes requirements to mitigate odor impacts. The increased dairy capacity is not expected to create a significant odor impact.

### **IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

IV. a) – f): The project involves the expansion of the capacity of an existing dairy. This will not have any significant impact on the diversity of other species of animals in the area, or result in a barrier to the migration or movement of other animals in the area. The previous environmental document prepared by Merced County also did not identify any significant adverse impacts to biological resources. (Source 1)



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## **V. CULTURAL RESOURCES**

V. a) – d): No cultural resources are known to exist on the existing dairy site, therefore, no impacts to known cultural resources are expected to occur. There is the possibility of discovering unknown cultural resources during construction activities related to the project. If this should occur, the contractor or project official shall consult Central California Information Center (CCIC), CSU Stanislaus, Turlock, the State Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento, or the Native American Heritage Commission in Sacramento for recommended procedures, as required under Section 7050 of the Health and Safety Code and Section 5097 of the Public Resources Code.

## **VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

VI. a) – e): No significant adverse impacts are anticipated from the proposed project.

## **VII. HAZARD & HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

VII. a) – h): No significant adverse impacts are anticipated from the proposed project. (Source 2)

## **VIII. HYDROLOGY/WATER QUALITY**

VIII. a) – i): The additional 600 dairy cows proposed by the project will not have a significant impact to hydrology/water quality. In order to mitigate lagoon emissions due to this project, manure management system will be modified for the existing open corrals to stop flushing the paved areas of the corrals, and remove corral manure exclusively by scraping. (Source 2)

## **IX. LAND USE/PLANNING**

IX. a) – c): The proposed project will not conflict an existing land uses and will not have a significant impact on land use/planning.

## **X. MINERAL RESOURCES**

X. a) – b): The project will not have an adverse effect on mineral resources.



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## **XI. NOISE**

XI. a) – f): The project will not have a significant noise impact.

## **XII. POPULATION/HOUSING**

XII. a) – c): The proposed project is not expected induce substantial population growth, displace housing units or people. The proposed project will not require the construction of replacement housing.

## **XIII. PUBLIC SERVICES**

XIII. a) - d): The proposed project is not anticipated to create significant adverse public service impacts.

## **XIV. RECREATION**

XIV. a) & b): No land use or planning requirements, including those related to recreational facilities, would be altered by the proposed project.

## **XV. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC**

XV. a) - g): The proposed project is not anticipated to generate any significant adverse impacts to transportation or traffic systems.

## **XVI. UTILITIES/SERVICE SYSTEMS**

XVI. a) - f): The proposed project is not expected to have any significant effects that were not addressed in the original environmental document prepared by Merced County. (Source 1)





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## **XVII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

XVII. a) – c): This project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory.

This project does not have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals. Neither does this project have impacts, which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable. This project will have no potential environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

Based upon consideration of the information provided in the comments to the Environmental Checklist and other analyses performed for this project, it does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment or to interfere with either short-term or long-term environmental goals. There will not be any significant cumulative impacts.

## **F. REFERENCES**

1. Merced County, "Initial Environmental Study and Draft Negative Declaration for Conditional Use Application No. 97010 - Wickstrom Dairy – to establish a dairy for up to 2,400 milk cows on a 37 acre property located on the west side of Larson Avenue and 1300 feet South of Crane Avenue in the Hilmar Area", September 16, 1997.
2. San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, "Authority to Construct: Application Review for a Dairy Operation", December 12, 2005.