NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Clearinghouse
PO Box 3044/ 1400 Tenth St
Sacramento CA 95814

From: County of Tulare – RMA
5961 S Mooney Blvd
Visalia CA 93277

Date: August 8, 2017

Subject: **Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)**

Project Title: Traver Community Wastewater System Improvements

Project Applicant: Tulare County Resource Management Agency

Project Location: Community of Traver, Tulare County, CA

Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. The NOP and Traver Community Wastewater System Improvements Plan of Study are available on the County website at:
http://tularecounty.ca.gov//rma/index.cfm/documents-and-forms/planning-documents/environmental-planning/environmental-impact-reports/Traver Community Wastewater System Improvements/

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

A scoping meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, August 31, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.** in the Main Conference Room of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency at the address shown above.

Please direct your response to **Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner** at the address shown above. Mr. Guerra may also be contacted by e-mail at hguerra@co.tulare.ca.us or by telephone at 559-624-7121.

Please provide us with the name of a contact person in your agency.

Signature _____ Date: 8/10/17
Hector Guerra,
Title: Chief Environmental Planner

Signature _____ Date: 8/10/17
Reed Schenke,
Title: Resource Management Agency Director/Environmental Assessment Officer

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375

PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The unincorporated Community of Traver is located approximately ten (10) miles northwest of the City of Visalia in Tulare County in California's Central Valley. This document has been prepared using the Preferred Alternative as the proposed Project. As such, the following discussion refers to the "Preferred/Proposed Project" as "the Project". The Project site is located approximately 50 miles east of the Coastal Range and approximately 30 miles west of the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. The topography of Traver comprises a relatively flat, level surface with no major slopes, mountain hillsides, or bodies of water. Traver sits at an approximate elevation of 290 feet above mean sea level.

The community is generally bound to the north by Avenue 368, to the east by Road 44, to the south by Avenue 360, and to the west by State Route 99. Wastewater collection system improvements will be located within Section 16, and the existing wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is located within Section 15, of Township 17 South, Range 23 East, Mount Diablo Base & Meridian of the Public Land Survey System. It can be found within the Traver United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle.

Traver WWTP (Road 44, 0.25 mile south of Avenue 368):
Latitude: 36°27'17.84" N Longitude: 119°28'28.15" W

Avenue 368 and Road 44 (intersection)
Latitude: 36°27'32.22" N Longitude: 119°28'28.37" W

Merritt Drive and Old State Route 99 (intersection)
Latitude: 36°27'10.86" N Longitude: 119°29'20.31" W

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.), the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be preparing an Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to evaluate the environmental effects associated with the development of the proposed Traver Community Wastewater Systems Improvements Project as descripted in the Traver Community Wastewater Systems Improvements Plan of Study.

The proposed project will result in improvements to the existing Traver community wastewater collection system and wastewater treatment plant. Improvements to the wastewater collection system are needed to extend service to existing residences and businesses that are currently not being served, and to serve infill areas within the community that are expected to develop in the future consistent with the adopted Traver Community Plan. Improvements to the WWTP are needed to increase capacity and reliability to the system while increasing its efficiency and effectiveness so that the WWTP is better able to meet the needs of the community.

Collection System

The existing sewage collection system consists of 6-inch and 8-inch sewer mains that serve single family residences, churches, one pre-school, one elementary school, a laundromat, two grocery convenience stores and a medical facility. The collection system conveys sewage by gravity to the existing WWTP located on the east side of Road 44 approximately ¼ mile south of Merritt Drive (see Figure 2).

Improvements to the existing collection system are needed to accommodate existing and future development. The proposed improvements to the collection system are shown diagrammatically on Figure 2. Upon completion, all of the existing and future sewage collection system will consist of either gravity

mains or force mains. A new lift station will be constructed at the WWTP headworks. The work will include a 12-inch gravity main or equivalent force main on Merritt Drive from Sixth Street (Old State Highway 99) to Road 44 and then south along Road 44 to the WWTP. The balance of collection system improvements will include an underground crossing at the railroad at or near Merritt Drive and main extensions from the 12-inch trunk line.

Treatment System

The existing WWTP for the Traver community is a pond system with a capacity of 88,000 gallons per day (GPD) as permitted under the Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs). The wastewater plant headworks consist of a lift station, a screen, and a grinder. The plant does not have a screen for removal of large debris and rags. Treatment is accomplished through facultative lagoons. The effluent is discharged for disposal to percolation/evaporation ponds.

The proposed improvements to the WWTP add reliability to the system while increasing its efficiency and effectiveness. The improvements are also needed to expand capacity to accommodate existing un-sewered and future residential, industrial and commercial developments. The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) will likely require modifications to the WDRs if the WWTP is expanded or its processes are significantly changed.

To meet anticipated new WDRs, the treatment process will likely need to be changed or improved. Along with updated WDR's, it is anticipated that the Monitoring and Reporting Requirements that would be issued with the WDR's would include groundwater monitoring requirements. The groundwater monitoring requirements would be used by the Regional Board to verify the effluent discharges via percolation or irrigation do not degrade the underlying groundwater. The monitoring would involve sampling from monitoring wells.

This project will consider two alternative treatment solutions: A Biolac system and a package treatment plant. The proposed improvements for each are listed below.

<u>Biolac System</u>

1. The system would begin with construction of a redundant aeration pond. The new pond would be designed to be compatible with future treatment options, such as Biolac, but would not use the same treatment process as the existing ponds for now. This pond will be for redundancy, and only two of the three treatment ponds at the WWTP will be in use at a time. Expansion to double plant capacity could easily follow with additional ponds and Biolac treatment.
2. Improvements to the lift station, including level controls, check valve replacement and conduit replacement.
3. Additional aerators in the existing aerated ponds.
4. Installation of cleanouts in the pipelines from the headworks to the aerated ponds
5. Construction of self-cleaning screen for the headworks, which may require a new structure and/or reliable water supply.
6. Electrical improvements to provide for the additional aerators and/or headworks screen.
7. In addition to the above six items, two groundwater monitoring wells and a standby generator are recommended. Those are items are not shown on the attached figure.

Package Treatment Plant

This option for expansion of the WWTP would be accomplished using two 100,000 gpd capacity package treatment plants. Based on an assumed influent wastewater characterization, the effluent limits can be met by use of an activated sludge process with nitrification and denitrification capability. For flows in the range projected at Traver, the best way of accomplishing this is through the use of a package treatment plant. A package treatment plant will provide the process necessary to easily address this need and do so in a reliable manner.

It is recommended that the package treatment plant be constructed using two 100,000 gallon per day trains for redundancy and to address seasonal fluctuations in flow.

The system using package plant treatment would include:

1. Improvements to the lift station, including level controls, check valve replacement and conduit replacement;
2. Construction of a new headworks with screen and flow meter;
3. Two 0.1 MGD package plants;
4. Standby generator;
5. Miscellaneous site work and building repairs; and
6. Groundwater monitoring wells.

If you require additional information related to this notice, please contact:

Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner
hguerra@co.tulare.ca.us or at (559) 624-7121

REVIEWING AGENCIES AND POTENTIAL APPROVALS REQUIRED:

The following agencies may have jurisdiction over elements of the proposed Project:

State and Federal:

- California Air Resources Board
- California Department of Conservation
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Region 4
- California Department of Toxic Substances Control
- California Department of Transportation, District 6
- California Department of Water Resources
- California Native American Heritage Commission
- California Office of Historic Preservation
- Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 5
- State WRCB Clean Water Grants
- State WRCB Water Quality

Local and Regional:

- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
- San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District
- Southern California Edison
- Southern California Gas Company
- Tulare County Association of Governments
- Tulare County Fire Warden
- Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency (Environmental Health)
- Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commission
- Tulare County Resource Management Agency (Fire, Flood Control, Planning, Public Works)
- Union Pacific Railroad

Figure 1. Traver Community Wastewater System Project – Area Served

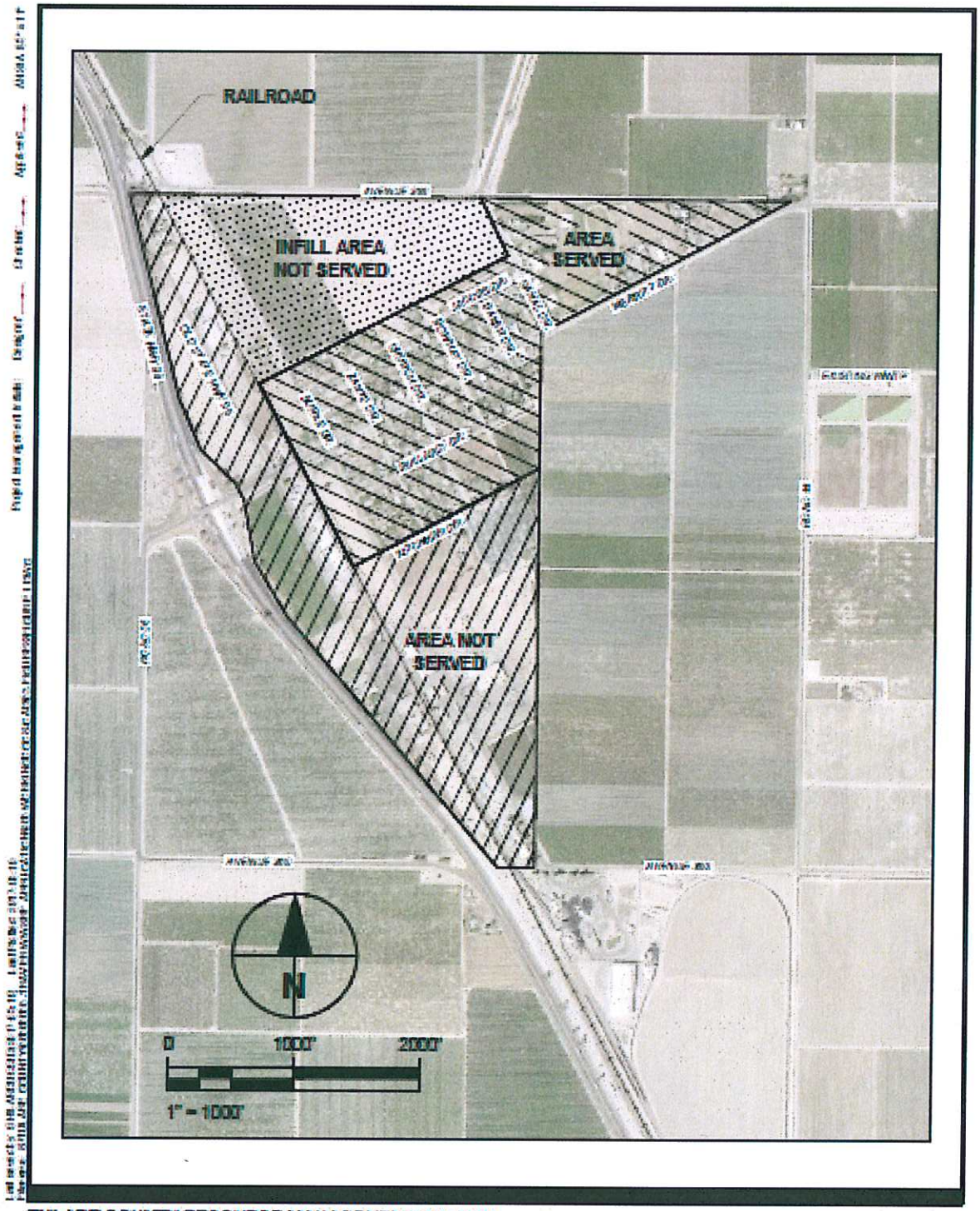
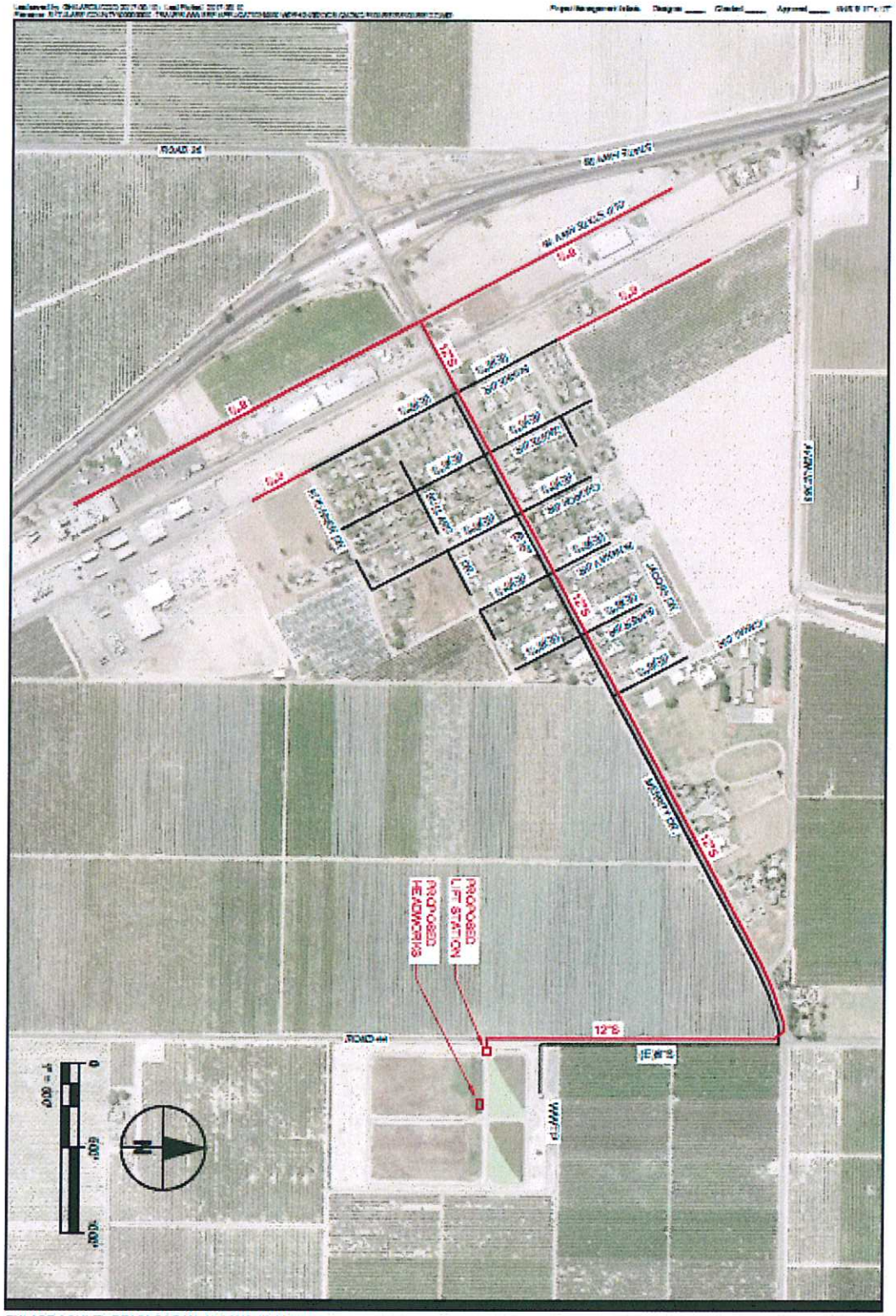


Figure 2. Traver Community Wastewater System Improvements Project
Proposed Improvements Location Map



TULARE COUNTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY
TRAVER COMMUNITY WASTEWATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS
ATTACHMENT 1 - PLAN OF STUDY

AECOM
Figure: 2

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will address all checklist items contained in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. The analysis will address the probable direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts associated with construction and operation of the Traver Community Wastewater System Improvements (Project). The following is a discussion of the environmental topics to be covered in the EIR:

Aesthetic/ Visual Resources

Traver is a community primarily comprised of rural residential properties and non-residential uses including churches, a pre-school, an elementary school, a Laundromat, two convenience grocery stores, and a medical facility. The area has paved roads which are owned and maintained by the County of Tulare and provide sufficient circulation throughout the community. The County of Tulare is the agency that determines property land use and zoning; however, the area is also considered in the City of Tulare's General Plan. The EIR will provide an evaluate impacts to aesthetic and visual resources.

Agriculture Resources

There are currently no agricultural operations occurring within the Project site. Adjacent properties in all directions of the Project site are productive farmland such as row crops, fruit, and nut trees. The Project will not encroach into adjacent agricultural uses and will not require adjacent properties to discontinue any agriculture related operations. The EIR will provide an assessment of potential Project related impacts to agricultural resources.

Air Quality / Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The EIR will describe regional and local air quality in the vicinity of the proposed Project site and evaluate impacts to air quality associated with Project construction and operation. An air quality analysis will be prepared to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts. The Project-related estimated air emissions will be compared to emissions thresholds of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (Air District or SJVAPCD). The EIR will describe existing air quality conditions within the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin and will evaluate the proposed Project's potential air quality impacts. Potential air quality emissions impacts include odor, dust, and construction- and operations-related activities. The EIR will also include a discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and the proposed Project's contribution to potential cumulative impacts on global climate.

Biological Resources

The proposed Project sites have been previously disturbed. Potential foraging areas within the Project site include adjacent agricultural lands north, west, east, and south of the Project sites. The Traver Canal borders the community to the north; however the Project site do not include any hydrological features. As no development or other land use changes have occurred since completion of the June 2014 biological evaluation for the Traver Community Plan Update, an updated CNDDB search of the proposed Project site will be conducted and the proposed Project's potential to affect biological resources will be analyzed in the EIR.

Cultural Resources / Tribal Cultural Resources

Although the proposed Project will be constructed on previously disturbed land, it cannot be definitively concluded that subsurface cultural resources are absent. As no development or other land use changes

have occurred since completion of the June 2014 cultural assessment for the Traver Community Plan Update, an updated search of the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) will be conducted. A Sacred Land File (SLF) Search will be submitted to the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) and any tribes listed by the NAHC will receive consultation notices pursuant to the requirements of AB 52. Depending upon responses from tribal consultation, a cultural resources evaluation may be prepared for this Project. The EIR will examine the proposed Project's potential to affect cultural resources and Tribal cultural resources.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources,

According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey, the majority of the Project site consists of soil classified as Calgro-Calgro, saline-Sodic complex, 0 to 2 percent slopes, with a small area consisting of Youd Loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes. Both soils were formed in alluvium derived mainly from granitic rocks; however, the Calgro soil is considered moderately-well-drained soil while Youd Loam is considered somewhat poorly drained. According to the Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update EIR, there are no known potential mineral resources on or in the vicinity of the Project site. It is currently unknown whether the proposed Project site soils have the potential to contain paleontological resources. If such resources exist on the site, construction, expansion, and continued operational activities could result in potentially significant impacts. A geological evaluation of the proposed Project site will be conducted to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts related to geology, soils, mineral resources, and paleontological resources.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

There are no known hazards or hazardous materials located within the proposed Project site, nor is the proposed Project site located on a Cortese List site. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the proposed Project to result in, or be affected by, impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials.

Hydrology, Water Quality, and Water Supply

Traver is located within Alta Irrigation District and has numerous ditches and canals within two miles of its boundaries. These waterways include: Traver Canal, McClanahan Ditch, Clough Ditch, Banks Ditch, King Ditch, Cross Creek Wasteway. The WWTP lies within flood Zone X, which is a minimal flood hazard area according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood zone designation. The majority of the area for improvements to the collection system are located in flood Zone A, with a smaller area located in flood Zone X. Flood Zone A is a flood hazard area with a 1% annual chance or a 100 year flood, but no base flood elevations have been determined. Construction of buildings within this flood zone require no specific flood mitigation measures; however, it is recommended that all finished floor levels be elevated one (1) foot above adjacent natural ground. The proposed Project is within the Kings River Watershed and over the San Joaquin Valley Groundwater Basin and the Kings Groundwater Sub-Basin. The Project will receive water from the already in place water system provided (Traver Water, LLC). The EIR will describe the proposed Project's effect, both directly and cumulatively on the hydrology, water quality, and water supply resources.

Land Use and Planning

The EIR will describe the proposed Project's potential effects on existing and planned land uses. Traver is located entirely within the County of Tulare, and also entirely within the Alta Irrigation District and Kings River Conservation District boundaries. As such, the EIR will provide a discussion of relevant local plans and policies to address potential conflicts which could potentially result in environmental impacts.

Noise

As no development or other land use changes have occurred since completion of the noise impact assessment prepared for the Traver Community Plan Update, it is likely that the Project will be consistent with short-term, temporary, and intermittent noise levels that will comply with Tulare County General Plan policies. The EIR will describe the noise levels associated with proposed Project construction- and operation-related activities and will compare these levels to applicable noise thresholds to determine whether the proposed Project would result in a significant noise impact.

Population and Housing

The EIR will evaluate the Project's effect on population and housing in the local area based on estimations of Project employment and distribution of the employees by place of residence.

Public Services and Recreation

The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential to create an adverse impact to schools, and will also evaluate effects on local police and fire services along with parks and regional recreational facilities.

Transportation/Traffic

The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's impact on regional and local transportation facilities based on a transportation analysis that will assess construction-related impacts (heavy truck trips and construction worker trips), as well as operational impacts (employee and visitor trips). As no development or other land use changes have occurred since completion of the traffic impact assessment prepared for the Traver Community Plan Update, and the Project in not anticipated to result in transportation or traffic impacts, the EIR will nonetheless examine these resources accordingly.

Utilities and Service Systems

The community is home to over 700 residents in nearly 200 residential units. The EIR will analyze the current capacity of the above-mentioned services, as well as the proposed Project's impact on these systems and the capacity available to support the proposed Project. The EIR will also describe the solid waste facilities that would serve the proposed site. The EIR prepared for the Project will analyze the adequacy of infrastructure services for the Project including road, water and wastewater services, and if appropriate, may require mitigation measures.

Growth Inducement

The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential for growth inducement resulting from the establishment of a new source of employment, as well as new demand for housing, and goods and services. The effect of primary and secondary increases in employment and economic activity will be discussed.

Cumulative Impacts

The EIR will discuss the incremental contribution of the proposed Project to cumulative effects of other past, current, and planned and reasonably foreseeable projects in the vicinity. The summary of projects method will be used where applicable. Also, to the extent feasible, the Cumulative Impacts section will quantify the degree of severity of any cumulative impact.

ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED IN THE EIR

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed Project that are capable of meeting most of the proposed Project's objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed Project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the Lead Agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The EIR will also provide an analysis of the No Project Alternative.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Interested individuals, groups, and agencies may provide to the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency, Planning Branch, written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the proposed Project. Because of time limits mandated by state law, comments should be provided no later than ***5:00 p.m. Monday, September 11, 2017***. Agencies that will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed Project should provide the name of a staff contact person. Please send all comments to:

Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner
Tulare County Resource Management Agency
Economic Development and Planning Branch
5961 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277-9394
or via e-mail at: HGuerra@co.tulare.ca.us
or via facsimile: 559-730-2653
or via phone: 559-624-7121