



# County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING  
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

## Planning Commission Staff Report Agenda Item No. 3 April 9, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Initial Study No. 8733 and Classified Conditional Use Permit  
Application No. 3827

Allow the expansion of an existing almond processing facility by raising the annual processing capacity from 360,000,000 lbs. to 405,000,000 lbs. per year.

**LOCATION:** The subject parcel is located on the south side of W. Harlan Ave. approximately one-third of a mile east from the intersection with S. Derrick Ave., and approximately 15 miles southwest from the City of San Joaquin (32581 W. Harlan) (APN: 045-080-43S) (Sup. Dist 4).

**OWNER:** Superior Almond Hulling

**APPLICANT:** Dirk Poeschel Land Development Services

**STAFF CONTACT:** Arianna Brown, Planner  
(559) 600-4245

Tawanda Mtunga, Principal Planner  
(559) 600-4256

### RECOMMENDATION:

- Adopt the Negative Declaration prepared for Initial Study (IS) No. 8733; and
- Approve Classified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3827 with recommended Findings and Conditions; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

**EXHIBITS:**

1. Conditions of Approval and Project Notes
2. Location Map
3. Zoning Map
4. Land Use Map
5. Site Plan and Elevations
6. Applicant's Operational Statement
7. Summary of Initial Study No. 8733
8. Draft Negative Declaration
9. Site Photos

**SITE DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATIONAL INFORMATION:**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
General Plan Designation	Agriculture	No change
Zoning	AE-20 (Exclusive Agricultural, 20-acre minimum parcel size) Zone District.	No change
Parcel Size	80-acres	No change
Project Site	Active almond hulling facility	No change
Structural Improvements	Hull Conditioner Gravity Deck De-Twigger Screener Hullers Pre-Cleaners Conveyors Truck Scale Baggers Hoppers	Additional Almond Hull Conditioner  Canopy
Nearest Residence	1-mile east	No change
Surrounding Development	Agricultural/Very low density residential	No change

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Operational Features	Existing buildings and structures associated with the current almond hulling operation	Expansion of operations with an additional almond huller and canopy
Employees	Harvest: 20 employees Off-season: 5 employees	Harvest first 90 days: 68 employees 6am-6pm; 14 employees 6pm-6am  Harvest second 90 days: 48 employees 6am-6pm; 14 employees 6pm-6am  Off-season: 24 employees 6am-6pm
Customers	N/A	No change
Traffic Trips	Truck Annual Average Daily: 75 Trips  Employee Annual Average Daily: 25 Trips	Truck Annual Average Daily: 85 Trips  Employee Annual Average Daily: 95 Trips
Lighting	Existing operational lighting	No changes
Hours of Operation	N/A	Harvest: 24/7 operation spanning 180 days beginning August 1 <sup>st</sup>  Off-season: February – April, 5 days a week; May -June, 4 days a week; 6 AM to 4:30 PM

**EXISTING VIOLATION (Y/N) AND NATURE OF VIOLATION: N**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

An Initial Study has been prepared for this project in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Based upon the Initial Study, staff has determined that a Negative Declaration is appropriate. A summary of the Initial Study is included as Exhibit 8.

**PUBLIC NOTICE:**

Notices were sent to 6 property owners within 1,320 feet of the subject parcel, exceeding the minimum notification requirements prescribed by the California Government Code and County Zoning Ordinance.

**PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

A Classified Conditional Use Permit Application may be approved only if four Findings specified in the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance, Section 842.5.050(b) are made by the Planning Commission. The decision of the Planning Commission on a Classified CUP Application is final, unless appealed to the Board of Supervisors within 15 days of the Commission’s action.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The existing almond hulling facility was approved under Conditional Use Permit (CUP) No. 3185 on December 14, 2006. Conditional Use Permit No. 3185 was approved to allow the processing of incoming raw materials up to the amount of 360,000,000 lbs. per year, allowing for an Annual Average of 75 Daily Truck Trips carrying 25-ton loads. The existing operation has five (5) full-time employees and 15 seasonal employees, allowing for an Annual Average of 25 Daily Employee Trips.

The proposed operational increase will allow the current almond hulling operation to process an incoming capacity of 405,000,000 pounds a year. The proposed difference in increased production totals 45,000,000 pounds per year, or an approximate 12% increase to the existing operation. The proposed operational increase will result in an increase of traffic trips which have been evaluated in a Traffic Study provided by Peters Engineering Group dated December 19, 2025. According to the Traffic Study the proposed increase in operation will result in an Annual Average of 85 Daily Truck Trips and an Annual Average of 95 Daily Employee Trips.

**Finding 1:** **That the site of the proposed use is adequate in size and shape to accommodate said use and all yards, spaces, walls and fences, parking, loading, landscaping, and other features required by this Division, to adjust said use with land and uses in the neighborhood.**

	<b>Current Standard: AE-20</b>	<b>Proposed Operation:</b>	<b>Is Standard Met (y/n)</b>
Setbacks	Front: 35 feet Side: 20 feet Rear: 20 feet	No Changes	Yes
Parking	8 regular stalls 1 ADA stall	8 regular stalls (office) 1 ADA stall (office) 22 regular stalls (employee)	Yes
Lot Coverage	No requirements	N/A	N/A
Space Between Buildings	6 feet	No change	Yes
Wall Requirements	No applicable requirements	N/A	N/A

### **Reviewing Agency/Department Comments Regarding Site Adequacy:**

No comments related to the adequate size and shape of the site were expressed by reviewing agencies or departments.

### **Finding 1 Analysis:**

The project site is developed with existing buildings and infrastructure that have operated under a previously approved CUP 3185 and Site Plan Review (SPR 7546), which established the foundational improvements, access configuration, and right-of-way dedications necessary to support almond processing activities on the property. The Operational Statement states that the existing facility already accommodates significant processing activity, receiving approximately 7,200 incoming truckloads (360,000,000 lbs.) annually and transporting processed materials offsite in a well-established pattern

The proposed expansion results in an incremental increase of 900 additional truck loads annually (from 7,200 to 8,100 truckloads, equivalent to 405,000,000 lbs.) an approximate 12% increase that the site is physically equipped to accommodate without the need for changes to existing buildings or circulation infrastructure

All processing activities occur within fully enclosed buildings, with hulls and shells stored via outdoor auger systems already integrated into the operational layout. No new building construction is proposed aside from a minor canopy addition for the hull conditioner equipment, as illustrated in the site plan.

Outdoor lighting, fencing, and site security systems remain unchanged, and the site is surrounded by agricultural uses on large parcels, providing substantial physical buffering.

Employee levels fluctuate peak staffing is 68 daytime and 14 nighttime employees during the first 90 days of harvest, shifting to 48 day / 14 night for the remainder of the 180-day processing season, and 24 employees in the off-season staffing levels that the site currently accommodates without constraint

Based on the Operational Statement and review of existing and proposed conditions, the site provides more than adequate space for circulation, loading, parking, hull stockpiling, and equipment areas. No changes to parcel configuration, setbacks, are required or proposed. Accordingly, the site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the proposed intensification of the almond hulling operation.

### **Recommended Conditions of Approval:**

Development of the property shall be in substantial conformity with the Site Plan, Elevations and Operational Statement approved by the Planning Commission.

### **Finding 1 Conclusion:**

Finding 1 can be made, as the already developed site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the proposed increase in the almond hulling/shelling operation.

**Finding 2: That the site for the proposed use relates to streets and highways adequate in width and pavement type to carry the quantity and kind of traffic generated by the proposed use.**

		Existing Conditions	Proposed Operation
Private Road	No	N/A	N/A
Public Road Frontage	Yes	W. Harlan Avenue	No change
Direct Access to Public Road	Yes	W. Harlan Avenue	No change
Road ADT		W. Harlan Avenue: 1300 VPD	No change
Road Classification		W. Harlan Avenue: Expressway	No changes
Road Width		W. Harlan Avenue:	No changes
Road Surface		Asphalt; Good Condition	No changes
Traffic Trips		Truck Annual Average Daily: 75 Trips  Employee Annual Average Daily: 25 Trips	Truck Annual Average Daily: 85 Trips  Employee Annual Average Daily: 95 Trips
Traffic Impact Study (TIS) Prepared	No	N/A	No Traffic Impact Analysis was required for this project.
Road Improvements Required		N/A	Road Improvements were not made a condition for this project.

**Reviewing Agency/Department Comments:**

No comments related to the adequacy of the streets and highways to accommodate the proposed use were expressed by reviewing agencies or departments.

**Finding 2 Analysis:**

The facility maintains direct access from W. Harlan Avenue, a roadway classified as an expressway in the Fresno County General Plan, providing a high-capacity corridor designed to accommodate agricultural truck traffic and regional freight circulation. The Operational Statement states that no changes to site access are proposed and that the existing 430-foot driveway provides safe ingress/egress for both truck and employee traffic, consistent with conditions of prior approvals

The processing facility receives almonds from orchards within a 35-mile radius, vehicles that already utilize W. Harlan Avenue and Interstate 5 for deliveries. The project's incremental production increase corresponds to an increase of approximately 900 incoming truck loads per year. This is a modest rise compared to the existing 7,200 loads previously permitted and

historically accommodated by the roadway system without performance issues or requests for mitigation.

Outbound traffic is similarly distributed across multiple product categories. The Operational Statement documents:

- 20 truckloads/day of hulls/shells during off-season shipping periods,
- 12 truckloads/day of finished product, with no Sunday deliveries,
- 2 daily light-duty delivery trucks for supplies and parts, and
- 4 service vehicle trips/day for equipment and materials

These activities collectively represent modest increases to existing operations rather than new traffic patterns. The applicant is prepared an updated traffic study through Peters Engineering to validate trip generation under the expanded permit limits, by building on the baseline established in the 2006 Peters Engineering study, which previously confirmed roadway adequacy for much higher baseline loads than currently proposed.

Given the expressway classification of W. Harlan Avenue, the existing driveway length, the relatively small percentage increase in truck movements, and the County of Fresno Road maintenance and Operations Division stating they had no comments for the project, staff finds that the surrounding streets and highways remain adequate to support the proposed expansion.

**Recommended Conditions of Approval:**

None.

**Finding 2 Conclusion:**

Finding 2 can be made based on the above information and staff analysis, it has been concluded that W. Harlan Avenue is adequate to accommodate any traffic generated by the proposed use.

**Finding 3:** **That the proposed use will have no adverse effect on abutting property and surrounding neighborhood or the permitted use thereof.**

<b>Surrounding Parcels</b>				
	Size (acres):	Use:	Zoning:	Nearest Residence (from nearest property line):
North	165	Agriculture	AE40	>1-mile
East	317	Agriculture	AE40	0.50 mile
South	60	Agriculture	AE40	>1-mile
West	165	Agriculture	AE40	>1-mile

**Reviewing Agency/Department Comments:**

Reviewing Agencies and Departments did not express any concern with the project having an adverse effect on the surrounding neighborhood.

**Finding 3 Analysis:** The surrounding area is characterized by large agricultural parcels devoted to active farming and agricultural operations. The Operational Statement confirms no physical expansion of buildings (other than the hull conditioner canopy), no new lighting, no change in processing methods, and no public access, meaning that the proposed increase in incoming almond tonnage does not introduce new or intensified land use characteristics that would alter the site’s relationship with neighboring properties

Noise levels are not expected to increase. The facility’s processing occurs entirely within enclosed buildings, and the site is located immediately east of Interstate 5, which produces ambient noise levels of 70–90 dB, effectively masking operational sounds from the facility

No sound amplification systems or public address systems are used on-site.

Dust impacts remain minimal because almond processing is a dry method, internal roadways are watered regularly, and exterior almond piles are covered to avoid contamination and prevent wind dispersal. Odor impacts are negligible, the Operational Statement notes no wastewater generation from the processing operation, no use of water in the hulling/shelling process, and no prior odor complaints from neighboring agricultural operators.

Solid waste materials (hulls, shells, twigs, dirt) are already part of ongoing agricultural operations; most are used beneficially as livestock feed or soil amendment, with twigs processed under an existing air district permit. These waste streams are already integrated into regional agricultural practices and do not generate incompatibility concerns.

Given these factors no new structures of significance, enclosed processing, absence of public traffic, existing agricultural context, and stable environmental performance, staff concludes that the proposed expansion will not adversely affect abutting properties or the surrounding agricultural neighborhood.

**Recommended Conditions of Approval:**

None.

**Finding 3 Conclusion:**

Finding 3 can be made based on the above information, staff believes the proposal will not have an adverse effect upon surrounding properties

**Finding 4: That the proposed development is consistent with the General Plan.**

<b>Relevant Policies:</b>	<b>Consistency/Considerations:</b>
<b>General Plan Policy LU-A.3:</b> <i>The County may allow by discretionary permit in areas designated Agriculture, special agricultural uses and agriculturally-related activities, including value-added</i>	Consistent: The proposed increase in the almond hulling/shelling operation is considered a value-added agricultural operation and is situated in the vicinity of the

<b>Relevant Policies:</b>	<b>Consistency/Considerations:</b>
<p><i>processing facilities, and certain non-agricultural uses. Approval of these and similar uses in areas designated Agriculture shall be subject to the following criteria:</i></p> <p><i>a. The use shall provide a needed service to the surrounding agricultural area which cannot be provided more efficiently within urban areas or which requires location in a nonurban area because of unusual site requirements or operational characteristics;</i></p> <p><i>b. The use should not be sited on productive agricultural lands if less productive land is available in the vicinity;</i></p> <p><i>c. The operational or physical characteristics of the use shall not have a detrimental impact on water resources or the use or management of surrounding properties within at least one-quarter (1/4) mile radius;</i></p> <p><i>d. A probable workforce should be located nearby or be readily available;</i></p> <p><i>e. For proposed agricultural commercial center uses the following additional criteria shall apply:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1) Commercial uses should be clustered in centers instead of single uses.</i></li> <li><i>2) To minimize proliferation of commercial centers and overlapping of trade areas, commercial centers shall be located a minimum of two (2) miles from a city sphere of influence and four (4) miles from any existing or approved agricultural or rural residential commercial center or designated commercial area.</i></li> <li><i>3) New commercial uses should be located within or adjacent to existing centers.</i></li> <li><i>4) Sites should be located on a major road serving the surrounding area.</i></li> <li><i>5) Commercial centers should not encompass more than one-quarter (1/4) mile of road frontage, or one-eighth (1/8) mile if both sides of the road are involved, and should not</i></li> </ol>	<p>agricultural production operations which is designed to service.</p>

Relevant Policies:	Consistency/Considerations:
<p><i>provide potential for developments exceeding ten (10) separate business activities, exclusive of caretakers' residences;</i></p> <p><i>f. For proposed value-added agricultural processing facilities, the evaluation under criteria "a" above, shall consider the service requirements of the use and the capability and capacity of cities and unincorporated communities to provide the required services; and</i></p> <p><i>g. For proposed churches and schools, the evaluation under criteria LU-A.3a above shall include consideration of the size of the facility. Such facilities should be no larger than needed to serve the surrounding agricultural community.</i></p> <p><i>h. When approving a discretionary permit for an existing commercial use, the criteria listed above shall apply except for LU-A.3b, e2, e4, and e5.</i></p>	
<p><b>General Plan Policy PF-C.12:</b> <i>In those areas identified as having severe groundwater level declines or limited groundwater availability, the County shall limit development to uses that do not have high water usage or that can be served by a surface water supply</i></p>	<p>Consistent: The project receives raw surface water supplied by Westlands Water District. The almond hulling/shelling process itself does not entail any water use; however, project construction, and operation will involve some domestic and dust palliative use, which is not anticipated to be a substantial quantity.</p>
<p><b>General Plan Policy PF-C.17:</b> <i>In the case of lands entitled to surface water, the County shall approve only land use-related projects that provide for or participate in effective uses of the surface water entitlement such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>a. Constructing facilities for the treatment and delivery of surface water to lands in question;</i></li> <li><i>b. Developing facilities for groundwater recharge of the surface water entitlement;</i></li> <li><i>c. Participating in the activities of a public agency charged with the responsibility for recharge of available water supplies for the beneficial use of the subject lands.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Consistent: The project was reviewed by the County Water and Natural Resources Division which determined that the water supplied by the Westlands Water District is an adequate source for the project.</p>

**Reviewing Agency/Department Comments:**

Reviewing Agencies and Departments did not express any concern with the project being inconsistent with the goals of the General Plan.

**Finding 4 Analysis:**

The proposed expansion directly supports the Fresno County General Plan's goals for agricultural productivity, value-added processing, and economic reinforcement of agricultural industries. General Plan Policy LU-A.3 allows agriculturally related uses, including processing facilities, in areas designated "Agriculture," provided they support surrounding agricultural operations. Here, the facility processes almonds sourced from a 35-mile agricultural region, providing essential first-stage processing (hulling/shelling) needed before almonds are transferred to finishing operations throughout the state

The plant's location near Interstate 5 allows efficient distribution of finished components (almonds, hulls, shells), reinforcing the site's strategic suitability for agricultural value-added functions.

General Plan PF-C.12 requires adequate water supply. The Operational Statement documents that the hulling/shelling process is a dry operation, requiring only minimal domestic and dust-control water. The facility receives 140 acre-feet/year from Westlands Water District, maintains a 100,000-gallon fire-suppression tank, and uses approximately 20,000 gallons/day during peak months, scaling down to 200 gallons/day the remainder of the year—demonstrating ample and sustainable water availability for both existing and expanded operations

General Plan PF-C.17 requires evaluation of water supply for discretionary permits. The project generates no industrial wastewater, and only typical employee wastewater is generated. Solid byproducts (hulls, shells, twigs, dirt) are reused beneficially in agricultural systems, aligning with the County's goals for sustainable resource utilization.

The expansion supports agricultural economic viability by enabling the facility to increase processing throughput from 360,000,000 to 405,000,000 lbs., a relatively small increase that accommodates industry growth without altering land use patterns or introducing incompatible uses

Based on alignment with LU-A.3, PF-C.12, PF-C.17, and the broader agricultural policies of the General Plan, the project is consistent with the General Plan.

**Recommended Conditions of Approval:**

None.

**Finding 4 Conclusion:**

Finding 4 can be made based on the discussion of consistency with General Plan Policies described above.

**SUMMARY CONCLUSION:**

Staff can recommend making all four Findings for granting the Application based on the factors cited in the analysis, in conjunction with the recommended Conditions of Approval and Project Notes. Staff therefore recommends approval of Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3827, subject to the recommended Conditions of Approval.

**PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS:**

**Recommended Motion** (Approval Action)

- Move to adopt the Negative Declaration prepared based on Initial Study No. 8733; and
- Move to determine the required Findings can be made and move to approve Conditional Use Permit No. 3827, subject to the Conditions of Approval and Project Notes attached as Exhibit 1; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

**Alternative Motion** (Denial Action)

- Move to determine that the required Findings cannot be made (state basis for not making the Findings) and move to deny Conditional Use Permit No. 3827; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

**Recommended Conditions of Approval and Project Notes:**

*See Exhibit 1*

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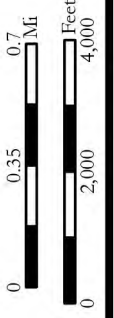
**Initial Study No. 8733 and Classified Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3827  
Conditions of Approval and Project Notes**

Conditions of Approval	
1.	All Conditions of Approval for Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3185 shall remain in effect unless altered by this application.
2.	Development of the property shall be in substantial conformity with the Site Plan, Elevations, and Operational Statement approved by the Planning Commission.
3.	Plans, permits and inspections shall be required for all proposed improvements on the property, including fences/gate entrances exceeding six feet in height. Contact the Building and Safety Section of the Development Services Division at (559) 600-4540 for information.
4.	Prior to issuance of any building, grading or operational permits, the applicant shall obtain Site Plan Review application approval in compliance with Fresno County Zoning Ordinance Chapter 854.5. The Site Plan Review shall include evaluation of the parking layout, circulation, lighting, the noise mitigation integration, and ADA compliance.
5.	A minimum of two (2) sets of construction plans shall be provided to Fresno County Fire Protection District for review.
6.	Fleets associated with operational activities should utilize the cleanest available Heavy Heavy-Duty (HHD) trucks, including zero and near-zero technologies.
7.	All on-site service equipment (cargo handling, yard hostlers, forklifts, pallet jacks, ect.) should utilize zero-emissions technologies.
Notes	
<b>The following Notes reference mandatory requirements of Fresno County or other Agencies and are provided as information to the project Applicant.</b>	
1.	This Use Permit will become void unless there has been substantial development within two years of the effective date of approval.
2.	The applicant must submit a supplemental Municipal and Industrial (M&I) Water Application to the Westlands Water District and identify the source of water to be made available to meet the incremental increased use.
3.	Any additional storm water runoff generated by the proposed development of this site cannot be drained across property lines or into the road right-of-way, and must be retained on-site, per County Standards. Provisions shall be made to

Notes	
	maintain natural drainage throughout the development in a manner that will not significantly change the existing drainage characteristics of those parcels adjacent to the development.
4.	The end of curbed/taper edge of any existing or proposed access driveway approach should be set back a minimum of 5 feet from the property line.
5.	Any existing or proposed parking areas should comply with the Fresno County Off-Street Parking Design Standards and/or current industry standards. Stalls should be 18' x 9', and backing distance must be a minimum of 29' for 90-degree parking stalls. Also 5' should be provided beyond the last stall in any row to provide for backing. Any proposed handicap accessible parking stalls and curb ramps shall be in compliance with ADA standards and the maximum surface slope within the disabled parking space(s) and adjacent access aisle(s) shall not exceed 2% in any direction. Any proposed access road turnaround should comply with 2022 California Fire Code Appendix D Fire Apparatus Access Roads and/or current industry standards.
6.	For unpaved or gravel surface access roads, the first 100 feet off of the edge of the road right-of-way must be graded and asphalt concrete paved or treated with dust palliative.
7.	A minimum of 10'X10' corner cut-off should be improved for sight distance purposes at any existing or proposed driveway accessing Harlan Avenue.
8.	A Notice of Intent (NOI) and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) are required to be filed with State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) before the commencement of any construction activities disturbing 1.0 acre or more of area. Copies of completed NOI with WDID number and SWPPP shall be provided to Development Engineering prior to any grading work.
9.	It is recommended that the applicant consider having the existing septic tank pumped and have the tank and leach lines evaluated by an appropriately licensed contractor if it has not been serviced and/or maintained within the last five years. The evaluation may indicate possible repairs, additions, or require the proper destruction of the system.
10.	New sewage disposal system proposals shall be installed under permit and inspection by the Department of Public Works and Planning Building and Safety Section. Contact Department of Public Works and Planning at (559) 600-4540 for more information.
11.	Facilities that use and/or store hazardous materials and/or hazardous wastes shall meet the requirements set forth in the California Health and Safety Code (HSC), Division 20, Chapter 6.95, and the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 22, Division 4.5. Your proposed business will handle hazardous materials and/or hazardous waste and will be required to submit a Hazardous Materials Business Plan pursuant to the HSC, Division 20, Chapter 6.95 ( <a href="http://cers.calepa.ca.gov/">http://cers.calepa.ca.gov/</a> ). Contact the Fresno County Hazmat Compliance Program at (559) 600-3271 for more information.
12.	At such time the applicant or property owner(s) decides to construct a water well, the water well contractor selected by the applicant will be required to apply for and obtain a Permit to Construct a Water Well from the Fresno County Department of Community Health, Environmental Health Division. Please be advised that only those persons with a valid C-57 contractor's

Notes	
	license may construct wells. For more information, contact the Water Surveillance Program at (559) 600-3357.
13.	Consideration should be given to conformance with the applicable standards of the Noise Elements of the Fresno County Ordinance Code. All equipment shall be maintained according to the manufacturer's specifications, and that noise generating equipment be equipped with mufflers.
14.	As a measure to protect ground water, all water wells and/or septic systems that exist or have been abandoned within the project area should be properly destroyed by an appropriately licensed contractor.
15.	If any underground storage tank(s) are found during construction, the applicant shall apply for and secure an Underground Storage Tank Removal Permit from the Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division. Contact the Fresno County Hazmat Compliance Program at (559) 600-3271 for more information.

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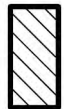
# LOCATION MAP

## 2025

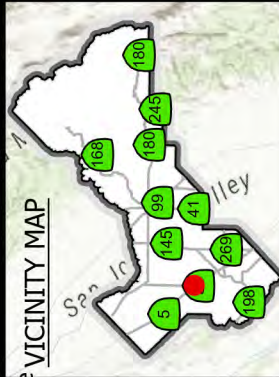
## CUP 3827

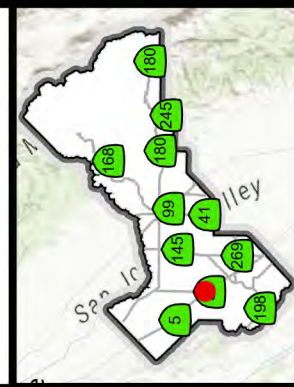
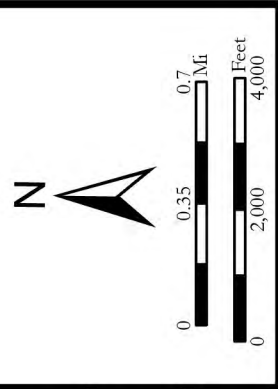
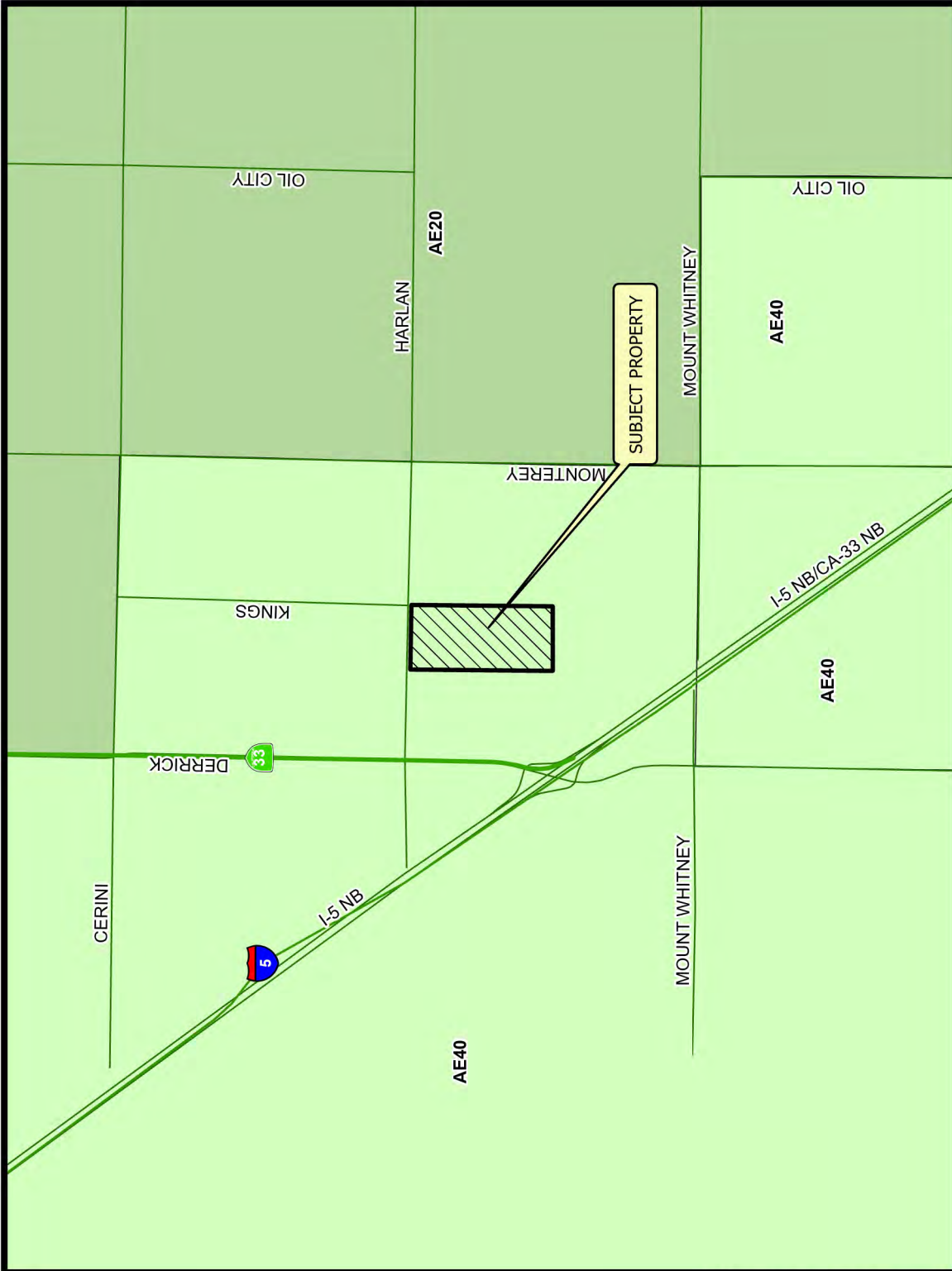
Prepared by : County of Fresno, Department of Public Works and Planning, Development Services Division  
 Person Prepared by : chuwang  
 On Date : 6/5/2025


### Legend



Subject Property







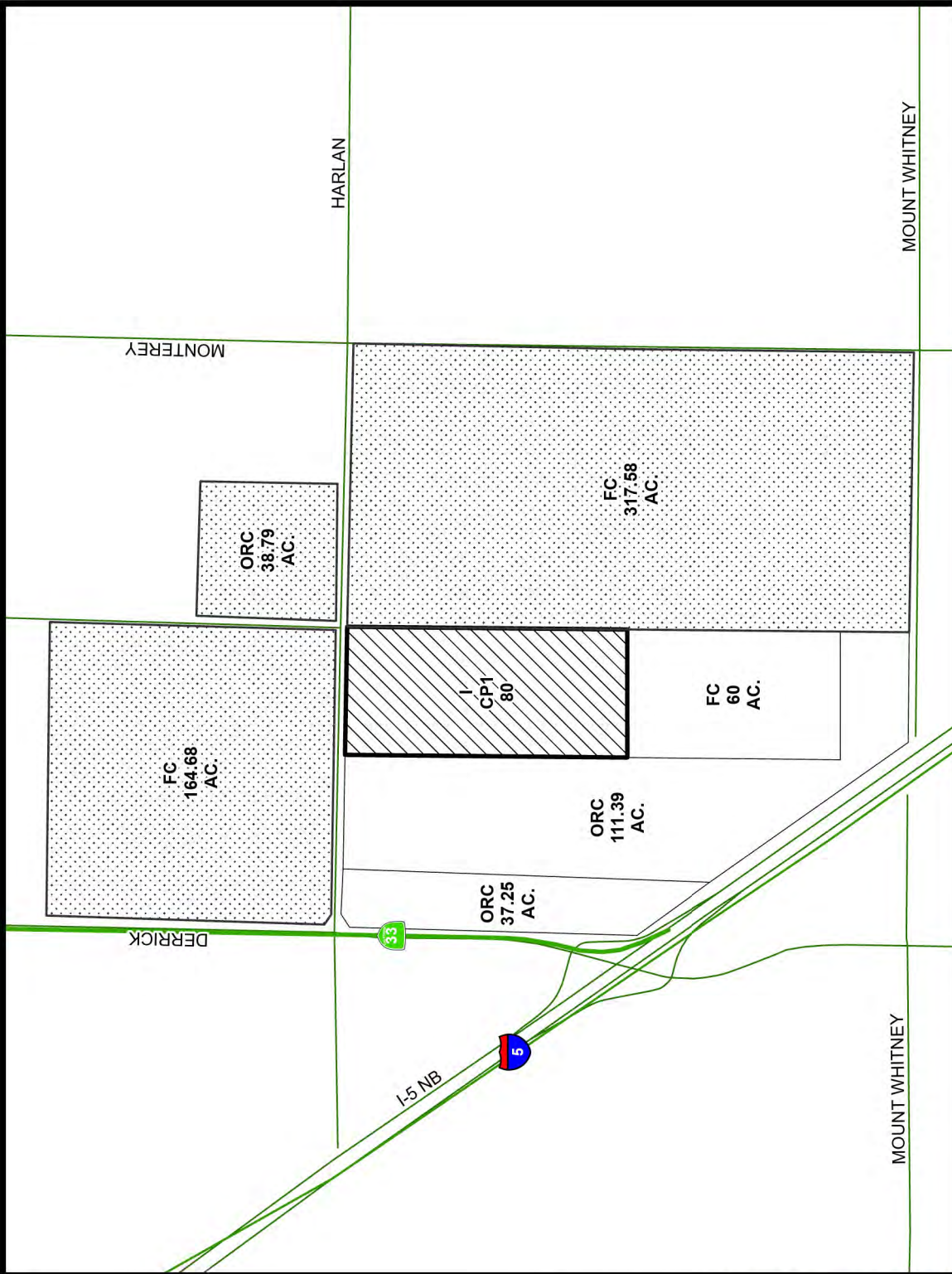
**THE COUNTY OF FRESNO**

# Existing Zoning Map

## 2025

CUP 3827  
STR 19 - 17S / 15E

Prepared by : County of Fresno, Department of Public Works and Planning, Development Services Division  
Person Prepared by : chuwang  
On Date : 6/5/2025



# Existing Land Use Map

2025

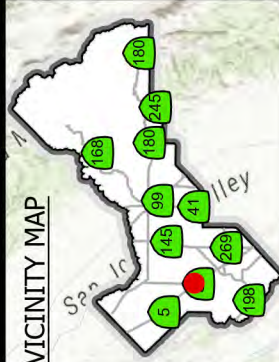
CUP 3827

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 Person Prepared by : chuwang  
 On Date : 6/5/2025

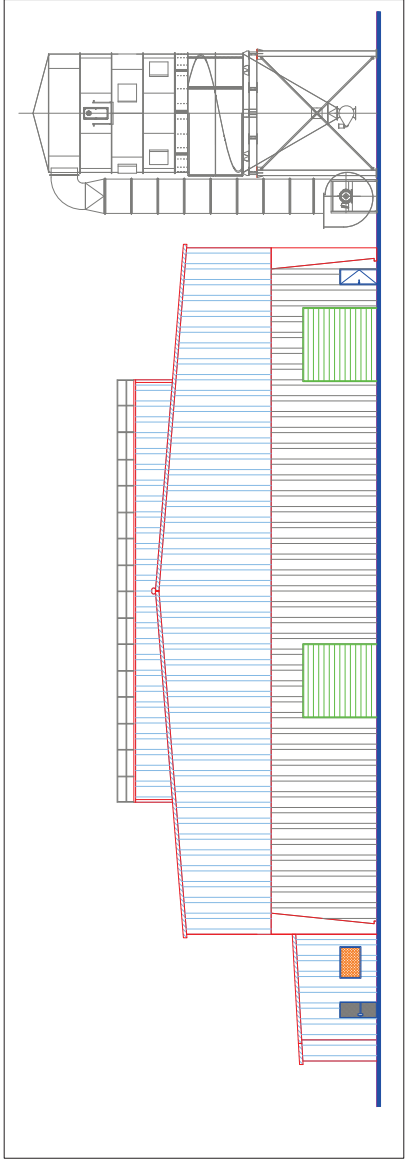
## LEGEND:

-  Subject Property
-  Ag Contract Land

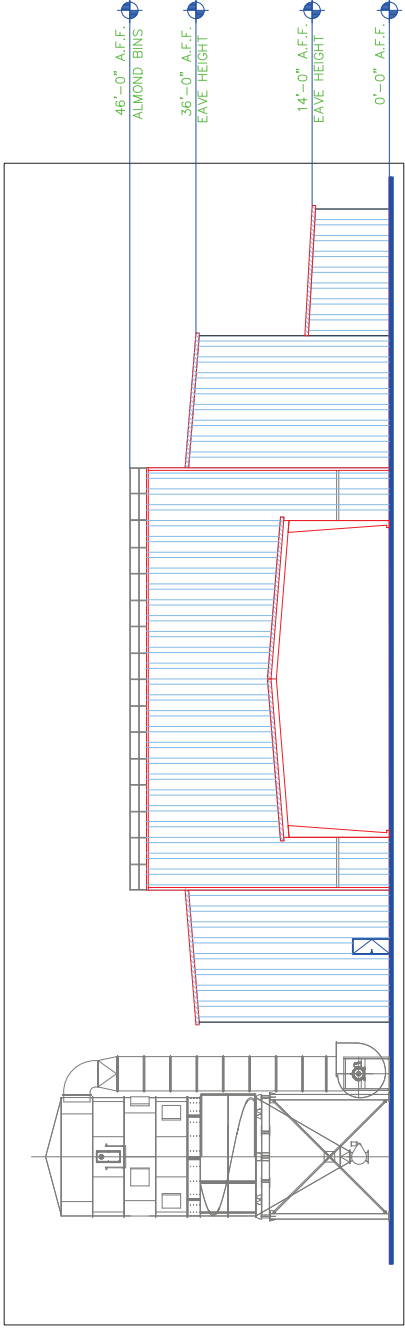
LEGEND
CP# - OFFICE COMM./PROF
FC - FIELD CROP
I - INDUSTRIAL
ORC - ORCHARD
V - VACANT





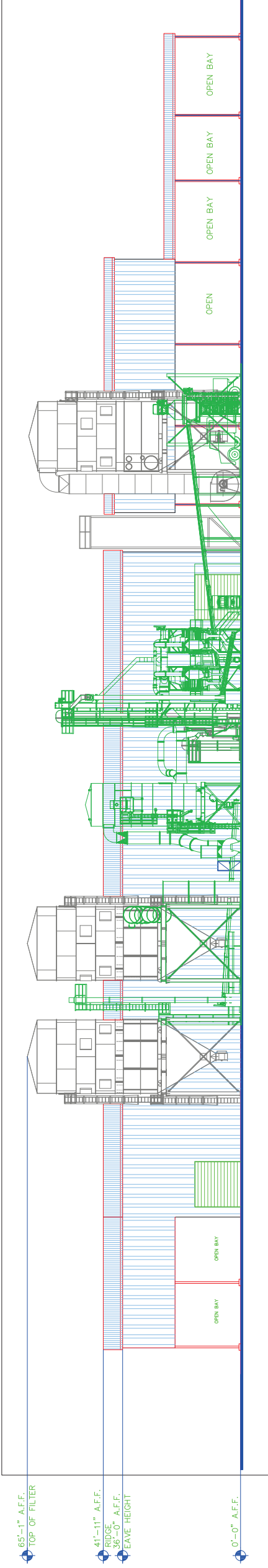


**WEST ELEVATION**  
SCALE: 1:200



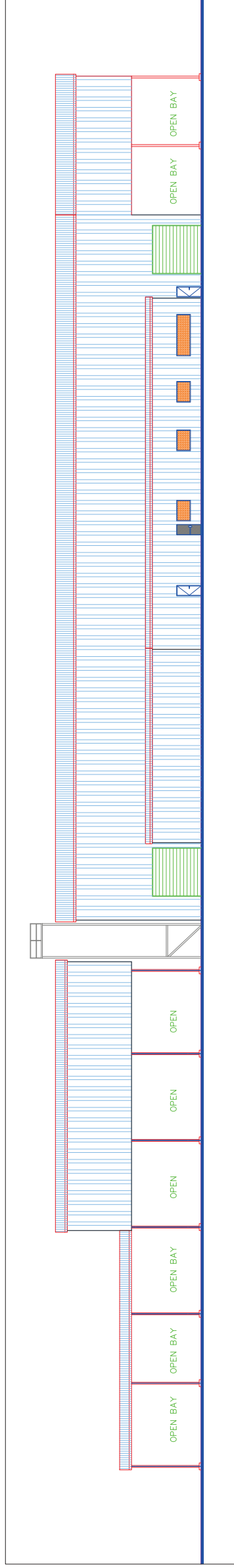
**EAST ELEVATION**  
SCALE: 1:200

46'-0" A.F.F. ALMOND BINS  
36'-0" A.F.F. EAVE HEIGHT  
14'-0" A.F.F. EAVE HEIGHT  
0'-0" A.F.F.



**SOUTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: 1:200

65'-1" A.F.F. TOP OF FILTER  
41'-11" A.F.F. RIDGE  
36'-0" A.F.F. EAVE HEIGHT  
0'-0" A.F.F.



**NORTH ELEVATION**  
SCALE: 1:200

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**Beeler**  
INDUSTRIES  
4664 KERNAN COURT, P.O. BOX 390 SALIDA, CA 95368

**SUPERIOR ALMOND HULLING LP**  
32581 WEST HARLAN AVENUE  
CANTUA CREEK, CA 93608

REVISIONS		DATE	DRAWN BY	26 - Jun - 25
NO.	DESCRIPTION	BY	FR	FR
1	CONTRACTOR PREPARED LOCATION			

**EXHIBIT 5 PAGE 2**

**ELEVATIONS**  
SHEET No.

## EXHIBIT 6

### Conditional Use Permit Application Operational Statement for Superior Almond Hulling June 2, 2025

**Applicant:** Superior Almond Hulling  
32581 W. Harlan Ave.  
Cantua Creek, CA 93608

**Record Owners:** Superior Almond Hulling  
32581 W. Harlan Ave.  
Cantua Creek, CA 93608

**Representatives:** Dirk Poeschel  
Land Development Services, Inc.  
923 Van Ness, Suite 200  
Fresno, CA 93721  
559-445-0374

**APN:** 045-080-43s (80 +/- acres)  
045-080-46s (60 +/- acres)

**Project Area:** 140 +/- acres

**Request:** Approval of an Unclassified Conditional Use Permit to allow the expansion of an almond processing facility in the AE-20 zone.

**Background:**

In December 2006 Fresno County approved Initial Study No. 5664 and Classified Conditional Use Permit No. 3185 to allow an almond processing facility on an 80-acre portion of a 256.91-acre parcel in the AE- 20 zone. Subsequently, Site Plan Review No. 7546 was also approved requiring certain improvements and dedications which were completed in accordance with the aforementioned approvals. The county also revised the APN's for the site. Between 2006 and 2007, APN 045-080-40s became APN's 045-080-43s and -42s. Subsequently, APN's 045-080-42s became APN's 045-080-47s and -46s between 2013-2014. The subject site now consists of two parcels: APN 045-080-43s which is bordered by W. Harlan Ave. on the north and APN 045-080-46s which borders APN 045-080-43s immediately to the south.

Growth in the almond industry and successful operation of the business requires that the applicant increase plant capacity. Please see the proposed project site plan, floor plans and elevations prepared for the project by Beeler Industries. Photographs of the existing facility are also attached.

**1. Nature of the Operation**

The site is fully developed in accordance with Classified Conditional Use Permit No. 3185 and Site Plan Review No. 7546. Conditional Use Permit No. 3185, hereinafter the existing permit, allowed the facility to accept an average of 7,200 truckloads of raw almonds per year. Refer to *Table 1 - Previous Production* and *Table 2 - Proposed Production* for a summary of the quantity of almonds previously processed and the proposed quantity to be processed as part of the proposed expansion.

**TABLE 1  
PREVIOUS PRODUCTION**

		<b>Number of Loads/Day</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Number of 25-ton Loads</b>	<b>X 50,000 lbs.</b>
<b>Harvest Incoming (Field Run)</b>	Almonds	80	90	7,200	360,000,000
<b>Outgoing</b>	Finished Almonds	16	90	1,440	72,000,000
	Hulls & Shells	16	240	3,840	192,000,000
<b>Off-Season Outgoing</b>	Hulls & Shells	3	210	630	31,500,000
	Hulls & Shells	4	120	240	12,000,000
	Shells	1	120	120	6,000,000
			Total	13,470	

**TABLE 2  
PROPOSED PRODUCTION**

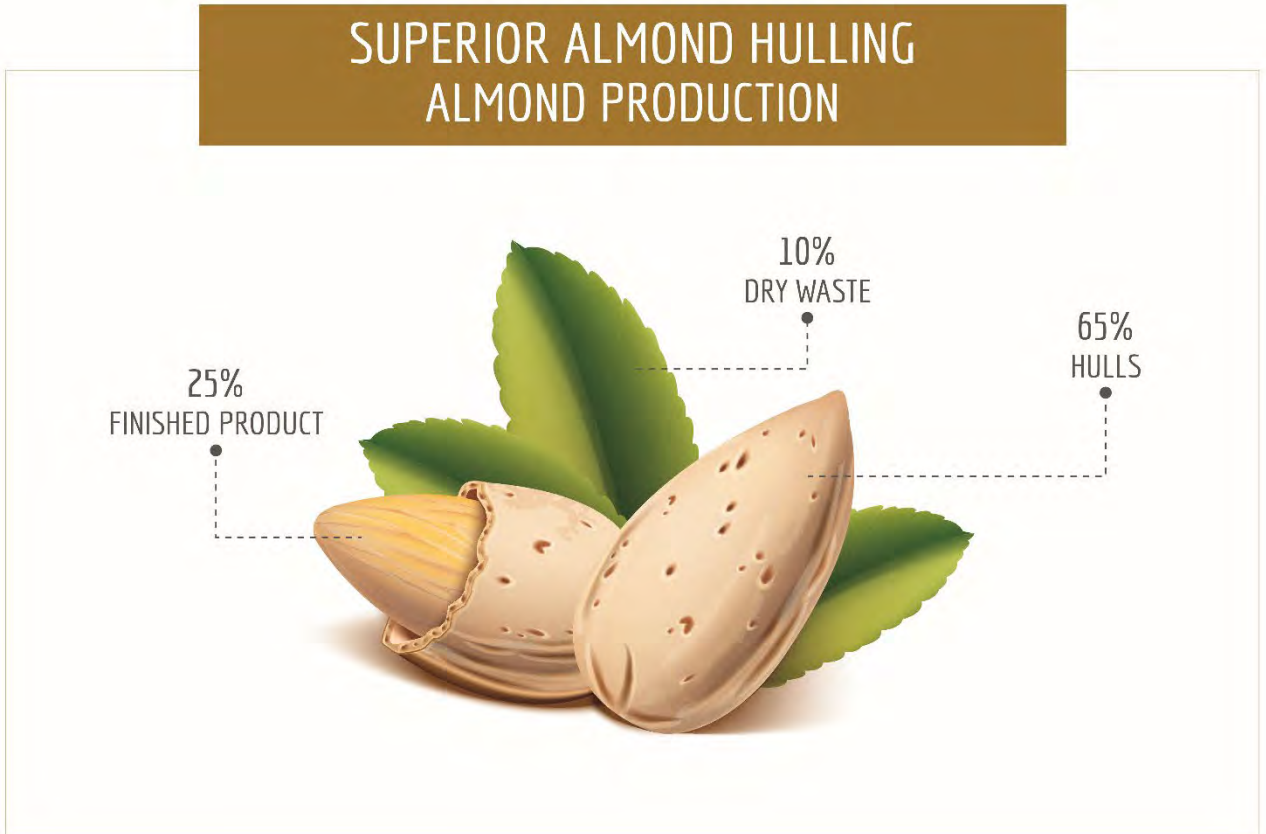
		<b>Number of Loads/Day</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Number of 25-ton Loads</b>	<b>X 50,000 lbs.</b>
<b>Harvest Incoming (Field Run)</b>	Almonds	90	90	8,100	405,000,000
<b>Off-Season Outgoing</b>	Finished Almonds	12	180	2,160	108,000,000
<b>Outgoing</b>	Hulls & Shells	20	260	5,200	260,000,000
			Total	15,460	

Note that the difference between the incoming and outgoing totals is attributed to dirt and twigs attached to the almonds. Finished product accounts for 25 percent of the total tonnage while hulls comprise 65 percent of the total tonnage. The remaining 10 percent of the total tonnage is comprised of 5 percent twigs and 5 percent dirt. Please see *Illustration No. 1* below. The twigs are burned on site per an existing permit from the San Joaquin Unified Air Pollution Control District (Permit No. C-7213). The associated dirt from the almonds imported to the site is transported over existing field roads to neighbors for use on their fields.

The traffic impact study prepared by Peters Engineering dated October 17, 2006, for the existing project estimated that the facility will generate 16 truckloads of shelled almond meats per 24 hours. An update to that traffic study is being prepared by Peters Engineering based on the previous permit limit of approximately 13,470, 25-ton loads and expanding as proposed to 15,460, 25-ton truck loads. Expressed differently, plant

incoming capacity is increasing from 360,000,000 lbs. to 405,000,000 lbs. a year or approximately an 11% increase.

**ILLUSTRATION NO. 1**



As shown in Table 1 and 2, each truck has a 50,000 lb. (25 ton) capacity. Therefore, approximately 360,000,000 lbs. of field run almonds are transported to the site each year. The proposed permit seeks to allow the expansion from 360,000,000 lbs. per year to 405,000,000 lbs. of field run almonds for an average of 4.5 million lbs. per day over the 90-day peak harvest season. Peters Engineering is preparing an updated traffic study to evaluate traffic associated with the proposed production increase.

The raw almonds will arrive from various orchards within an approximately 35-mile radius of the facility. Trucks then dump the almonds directly onto an elevator that delivers the nuts to the processor or onto an on-site stockpile. In any form, almonds are healthy food containing healthy fats, Vitamin E, magnesium, fiber, protein, calcium and other healthy nutrients. Fresno County farmers produce approximately 25% of California's almonds.

The facility provides the initial processing of almonds in preparation for finishing by others for wholesale distribution. The almonds will ultimately be used in a variety of forms such as candy, cereal, and consumer sized bags. Raw almonds are processed for shipping to other processors who finish the almonds per retailer specifications.

The processing of almonds at the facility will consist of the separation of hulls and shells from the almond meat by a series of rollers and screens. The hulls and shells are separated and stored by open auger lines outside the building. A water truck is used to control fugitive dust around the almond piles. The almond piles are located on the site and are covered to prevent contamination or migration of the product by birds.

As shown in Table 2, above, it is estimated that 12 truckloads of finished product are transported off site per off-season workday. No deliveries or exports occur on Sunday. Loading of products usually occurs within 24 hours of processing.

Table 2 also identifies that approximately 260,000,000 lbs. of hulls and shells are transported off site Monday through Saturday in 20 truckloads per day. The hulls and shells are used for multiple purposes such as dairy feed and animal bedding. A small percentage of the raw material contains sticks that are burned per an existing San Joaquin Unified Air Pollution Control District Permit No. C-7213.

The almonds are dried naturally in the field so no dryers that heat the product are required.

## **2. Operational Time Limits**

### **Harvest**

The almond harvest typically spans 90 days beginning around August 1 extending to October. A majority of the almonds are harvested and delivered to the facility in 75 to 90 days of the harvest season. During the peak of the harvest the facility is expected to operate 24/7. Security staff are present at all times. Total processing season from August to January is 180 days.

### **Off-Season**

During the off-season, February through April, the facility operates five days a week from 6 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with no night shift. From May through June, the facility operates 4 days a week.

## **3. Number of Customers or Visitors**

There will be no change to customers or visitors as the site is closed to the public for food safety reasons. Only employees and delivery vehicles will have access to the facility.

## **4. Number of Employees**

### **Harvest**

The existing operation has varying numbers of employees split between 2, 12-hour shifts. For the first 90 days, the day shift has 68 employees from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the night shift has 14 employees from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. For the remainder of the 180-day processing season, the day shift has 48 employees from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the night shift has 14 employees from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

## **Off-Season**

During the off-season, the facility has only one shift with 24 employees on site performing administrative, processing, loading and maintenance tasks. Except for security, the facility has no employees on Saturday or Sunday.

## **5. Service and Delivery Vehicles**

There will be no change to the 4 daily trips to the site for equipment servicing, general delivery of materials and parts.

## **Traffic**

An update to the project traffic study is being prepared by Peters Engineering based on the previous permit limit of approximately 13,470, 25-ton loads and expanding as proposed to 15,460 25-ton truck loads. Expressed differently, plant incoming capacity is increasing from 360,000,000 lbs. to 405,000,000 lbs. a year or approximately an 11% increase.

As noted above, the precise harvest season varies from year to year but is estimated to last 90 days from August 1 through January with the processing season lasting 180 days. To minimize trip length and associated costs for hauling, almonds are brought to the facility from orchards with an approximately 35-mile radius. As illustrated in the annotated site aerial below, the facility is immediately adjacent to I-5 which is a major trucking corridor through the Central Valley. No change to the wholesale destinations will occur. Project hulls and shells are shipped throughout the state as well as to other states for use in cattle feed. The applicant does not own or operate the delivery trucks.

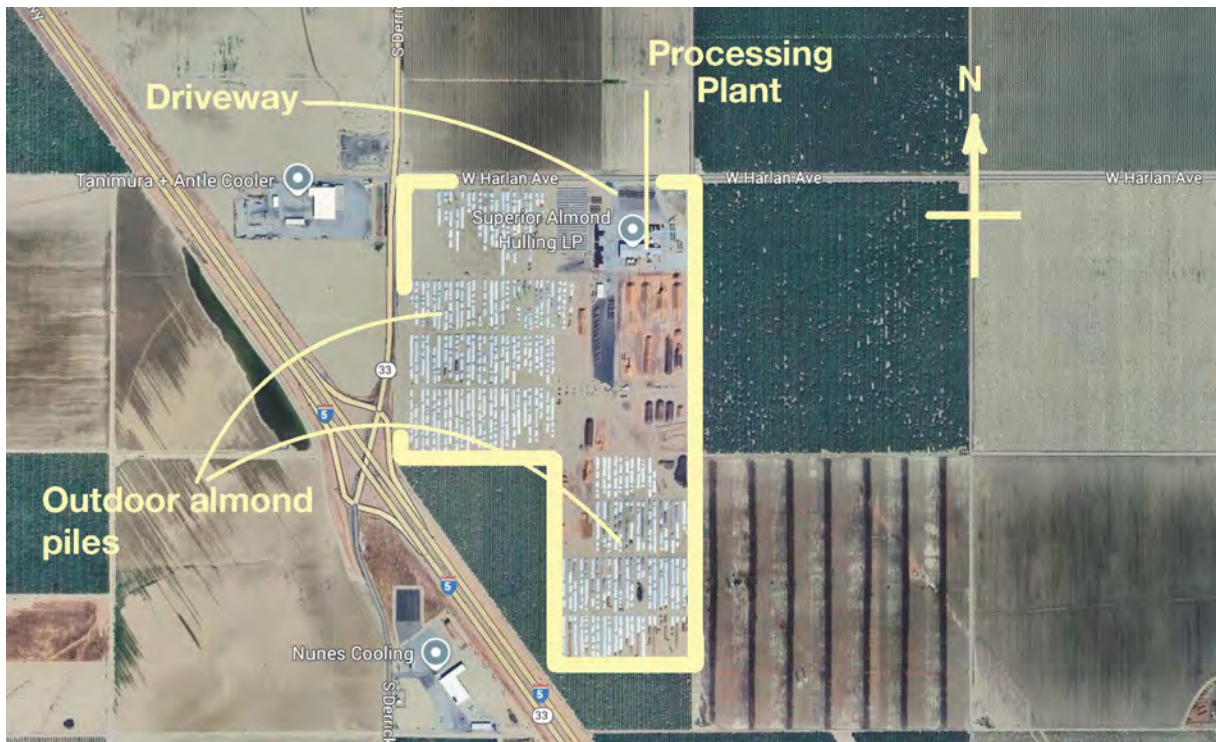
Two light duty delivery trucks visit the site on average each day with supplies and parts etc. No deliveries are made on weekends. There will be no change to the 4 daily trips to the site for equipment servicing and general delivery of materials and parts.

## **6. Access to Site**

No change to site access will occur. Access to the site is from W. Harlan Ave. which is designated an *expressway* in the Circulation Element of the Fresno County General Plan. The site is just east of Interstate 5 (I-5) which provides an excellent connection to wholesalers in various parts of the state.

An existing 430 ft. driveway will continue to allow the safe ingress and egress of trucks and employee vehicles. The previous permits requested an additional 23 ft. of right-of-way on the north side of the property to achieve the total buildout of W. Harlan Ave. to 80 ft. An onsite vehicle turn-around was also required as a condition of the previous permits. These and other requirements of the previous permits have been completed.

## ANNOTATED SITE AERIAL



### 7. Number of Parking Spaces

The previously permitted site plan had 9 permitted parking stalls including 1 handicapped stall. Additional parking stalls designed in accordance with county standards are proposed west of the roll away dumpsters and west of the existing shop. Please see the attached site plan prepared by Beeler Industries. Truck loading and parking will comply with county standards.

### 8. On-site Sales

There will be no on-site sales of any products.

### 9. Processing Equipment

A summary of existing equipment provided below.

Stationary Processing Equipment - Huller Area	Stationary Processing Equipment Processing Building	Mobile Equipment Huller & Processing
Truck Scale Conveyors Pre-cleaners Hullers Screener De-Twigger Gravity Deck Hull Conditioner (application currently being processed)	Scales Baggers Hoppers Forklifts	Bobcats Front-end loaders Forklifts

## **10. Supplies and Materials**

No change in supplies or materials. Typical office supplies and materials are used for project administration. The almond processing products are paper, plastic and large plastic bins.

## **11. Impacts to other Properties-Appearance, Glare, Noise, Dust, Odor**

### **Appearance**

No change in the appearance of the facility is proposed. The maximum height of the tallest existing facility building is 65 ft. The project encompasses 80 acres of a 256.91 +/- acre site. The use is agricultural in nature providing a needed function to the almond industry surrounded by other agricultural uses.

The facility will operate under strict federal and state food safety protocols and will be subject to inspection by a variety of regulatory agencies. The site will be kept free and clear of litter and debris to avoid attracting vermin. The applicant will implement state-of-the art vermin control measures.

### **Glare**

No change in lighting. All lighting will be hooded and directed downward to minimize light pollution.

### **Noise**

There will be no change in noise levels. Potential noise impacts will be minimal as the facility is in an agricultural area of primarily large parcels and at least 2 miles from any residential development. Furthermore, the processing occurs in a completely enclosed building.

Noise generated from I-5 which is immediately west of the facility will generate 70 to 90 dB noise levels continually during day and night hours. The I-5 noise profile will mask any noise generated by the facility.

### **Dust**

There will be no change in processing methods. The applicant's almond processing is a dry method. Internal roadways are regularly watered by water trucks. Almonds outside of the plant are covered with plastic material so the almonds will not be contaminated, eaten by birds or migrate off site. Therefore, very little dust will be generated by the facility. On site trucks will travel on paved internal roads to minimize dust creation.

### **Odor**

No change in processing methods is proposed. As mentioned previously, the facility does not utilize water in its processing operation. Therefore, large amounts of wastewater with

biochemical oxygen demand are not produced by the facility. Also, there have been no complaints from adjacent property owners of odors emanating from the facility.

## **12. Solid or Liquid Waste**

### **Solid Waste**

A proportional increase in solid waste will occur in association with the increase in almond processing. As described in *Illustration No. 1* above, almond waste contains different components that are of potential value to certain entities. Twigs and dirt represent approximately 5% each, or 10% of the dry waste of the project throughput. Broken shells and earthen material that can be used for composting or other soil amendment applications. The facility recently added a hull conditioner to more thoroughly clean the hull waste making it more valuable as a feed supply.

Rejected almonds and almond hulls represent approximately 65% of the project thruput. They are shipped off site to dairies.

### **Liquid Waste**

Only typical putrescible waste will be generated by the project employees, with materials such as paper, cardboard, etc. directed to the appropriate recycling centers in accordance with the California Green Building Code (CALGreen). A minimal amount of wastewater is generated by employees and no wastewater is generated in association with almond processing.

## **13. Volume of Water**

The hulling and shelling process is a dry process. Water is only required for toilet and hand washing and control of fugitive dust with water trucks. The project has a water allocation of 140 acre/feet per year from the Westlands Water District. Water for potable drinking purposes is delivered to the site by Wetlands Water District and processed through a filtration system. A 100,000-gallon water storage tank is on site for fire suppression. Estimated water use is 20,000 gallons per day from August through September, then approximately 200 gallons per day the balance of the year. Therefore, the proposed expansion will not require additional processing water.

## **14. Advertising**

No change to site advertising is proposed.

## **15. Existing or New Buildings**

The site is currently developed with buildings and out structures. No change to the buildings is proposed. A future canopy may be construction for the hull conditioning equipment as shown on the site plan by Beeler Industries.

## **16. Buildings Used in the Operation**

There will be no change to buildings or out structures except for a recently added almond hull conditioner. All existing buildings and structures are illustrated on the attached site plan by Beeler Industries.

## **17. Outdoor Lighting and Sound**

There will be no change to outdoor lighting. No sound amplification system or public address system is utilized. All processing activities occur in a completely enclosed building.

## **18. Landscaping and Site Fencing**

No landscaping is proposed for the site. The site is surrounded by a chain-link security fence around the perimeter of the facility to control access to comply with food-safety requirements. Security staff will monitor the site 24/7 either in person or with security cameras.



# County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING  
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

## EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- CONSULTANT: Dirk Poeschel Land Development Services
- APPLICATION NOS.: Initial Study No. 8733 and Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3827
- DESCRIPTION: Allow the expansion of an existing almond processing facility by raising the annual processing capacity from 360,000,000 lbs. to 405,000,000 lbs. per year.
- LOCATION: The subject parcel is located on the south side of W. Harlan Ave. approximately one-third of a mile east from the intersection with S. Derrick Ave., and approximately 15 miles southwest from the City of San Joaquin (32581 W. Harlan) (045-080-43S) (Sup. Dist 4).

### AESTHETICS

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

- A. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; or
- B. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project proposes expanding the operations of an already existing almond hulling facility. Per Figure OS-L.1 of the Fresno County General Plan, there are no scenic roadways fronting the project site. The expansion of the project will be within an already disturbed area and would not be impacted by the project. Therefore, the project will not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista or scenic resource.

- C. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is located in a predominantly agricultural use area. The project does propose the construction of a future hull conditioning equipment canopy as part of the operational expansion, but it would not degrade the visual character of the area.

- D. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose a new source of light that would create adverse views in the area.

## II. AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY 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. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:

- A. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site was previously disturbed with the existing almond hulling operation. No additional acreage is proposed as part of the operational expansion.

- B. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The subject parcel is zoned AE-40 (Exclusive Agricultural, 40-acre minimum parcel size) Zone District and is not subject to a Williamson Act Contract. The project will not conflict with the existing zone for agricultural use and would not conflict with the Williamson Act Contract.

- C. Conflict with existing zoning for forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production; or

D. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located on land zoned for forest land, timberland or timberland zoned Timberland Production, and as such will not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of land for non-forest use.

E. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is in a predominantly agricultural land use area has been previously disturbed with an existing almond hulling facility. The proposed expansion will not change the existing environment in a way that would convert farmland for non-agricultural use.

### III. AIR QUALITY

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district 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; or

B. 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?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Reviewing Agencies and Departments did not express concern with the project to indicate that the project would result in a conflict with an applicable Air Quality Plan or result in cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant. The Air Quality Assessment conducted for the project indicates the Project will not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.

C. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations; or

D. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The nearest sensitive receptors are residences approximately 2-miles north of the project site. The Air Quality Analysis prepared for the project indicates that emissions generated during Project operations would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

#### 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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The area has been previously disturbed by the existing almond hulling facility. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) did not express concern with the project to indicate impacts to special-status species. Therefore, development of the project is not expected to negatively impact through habitat modification as the site is not occupied or has not significant habitat for special-status species.

- 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 Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; or
- C. Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

No riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community was identified on the project site. The area has been previously disturbed by the existing almond hulling facility.

- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site was previously disturbed by the existing almond hulling facility. The project does not cut off movement of the site for any wildlife residents. No migratory wildlife corridor or native wildlife nursery site was identified on the project site.

- E. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance; or

- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Reviewing Agencies and Departments did not identify a local policy or ordinance adopted for the protection of a biological resource that would be in conflict with the project proposal. No Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan or other approved local, regional, or state Habitat Conservation Plans were identified as being in conflict with the project proposal.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5; or
- B. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5; or
- C. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site was previously disturbed by the existing almond hulling facility. There are no known historical or archaeological resources located in the project site. Local Tribes were contacted for consultation, and no response was received. No potential impacts to cultural resources were identified.

VI. ENERGY

Would the project:

- A. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation; or
- B. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project will be built in accordance with current building code standards which would take into consideration applicable energy efficiency standards. The project construction and operation would not result in a potentially significant impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. No state or local plan for

renewable energy or energy efficiency was identified during Agency and Department review.

## VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the project:

- A. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

1. 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to Figure 8-1 of the 2024 Fresno County General Plan Background Report and the California Department of Conservation Earthquake Hazard Zone Application (EQ Zapp), the project is not located on a known earthquake fault zone.

2. Strong seismic ground shaking?
3. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the Department of Conservation California Geological Survey the project is not located in an area near a known earthquake fault zone and is not susceptible to liquefaction.

4. Landslides?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the 2024 Fresno County General Plan Background Report the project area is in a low-risk area for landslides.

- B. Result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project would result in the development of the site where impervious surface would be added, and a loss of topsoil would occur. The subject site is relatively flat with small changes in elevation. The project will not result in a loss of topsoil or soil erosion where a significant risk of loss, injury, or death would occur.

- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the 2024 Fresno County General Plan Background Report the project site is located in an area with low risk for landslides and liquefaction. There have been no known issues with subsidence in the project area. No geologic unit or unstable soil was identified on the project site.

- C. Be located on expansive soil as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the 2024 Fresno County General Plan Background Report the project site is not located in an area known to have expansive soils.

- D. 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; or
- E. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose the development or use of a septic system or alternative wastewater disposal system. There were no unique paleontological resources or unique geologic features identified on the project site.

## VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the project:

- A. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment; or
- B. Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

An Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) was prepared for the project in December 2025 by JK Consulting Group, which analyzed greenhouse gas emissions expected as a result of the proposed almond hulling expansion. According to this assessment greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to be 22.71 Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide

Equivalent per year as a result of the increase in operations. This is below the emissions threshold of 7,000 tons per year and is expected to have a less than significant impact.

## VIII. HAZARDS AND 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; or
- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

This project will not result in the production, use or transportation of hazardous materials.

- C. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The nearest school is located approximately 4-miles north of the proposed project site. The project will not emit hazardous emissions, or handle 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the NEPAAssist Database, the project site is not located on a listed hazardous materials site, and the project would not result or 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 or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within two miles of a public airport or public use airport. The nearest public airport is in Coalinga approximately 19-miles south of the proposed project site.

- F. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan; or
- G. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Reviewing Agencies and Departments did not identify any conflict with the project and any adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Additionally, no concerns were expressed that the project would result in a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires.

#### X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:

- A. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality; or
- B. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project proposes to expand its almond hulling operations, which is a dry process not requiring the use of water. The project does not propose the additional use of water resources and would not violate water quality standards, waste discharge requirements or substantially degrade surface or ground water supply. With the project not utilizing additional water supplies, no impact to groundwater supplies or groundwater recharge would occur.

- C. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site?
  1. Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;
  2. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite?

3. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The existing facility is located on relatively flat land and does not anticipate substantial erosion or siltation events occurring as a result of the project. Surface runoff is anticipated to be kept onsite per County of Fresno standards and is not expected to result in flooding on or offsite. Reviewing agencies and departments did not express concern with the project to indicate that the project would result in runoff water contributions that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide additional sources of polluted runoff.

4. Impede or redirect flood flows?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within a flood hazard area. Applicable agencies reviewed the project site and did not have any comments regarding any requirements and asserted the project as proposed would not impede or redirect flood flows.

- D. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within a flood hazard area, and the project will not increase the risk of release of pollutants due to project inundation. Additionally, the project site is not located near a body of water where a tsunami or seiche risk is prevalent.

- E. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not anticipate the use of water resources and would not contribute to a degradation of water quality. Reviewing Agencies and Departments did not express concern with the project in regard a conflict with a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.

## XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:

- A. Physically divide an established community?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site has been previously disturbed for the existing almond hulling facility. The project will not physically divide an established community.

- B. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

There were no land use plans, policies, or regulations for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect identified in the Fresno County General Plan as being in conflict with the project proposal.

## XII. 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; or
- 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

According to the 2024 Fresno County General Plan Background Report the project site is not located on or near an identified mineral resource or mineral producing site.

## XIII. NOISE

Would the project result in:

- A. Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies; or
- B. Generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

The project proposes the expansion of an existing almond hulling facility. Current operating noise levels will not increase with the expansion of the operations. Noise levels and vibrations associated with the project are not expected to have significant impacts.

- C. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or 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 expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels; or

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project site is not located within two miles of a public airport or public use airport. The project site is not located in an airport land use plan. The nearest airport is in Coalinga approximately 19-miles south from the proposed project site.

#### XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

- A. Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?; or
- B. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The nearest residence is approximately 2-miles north of the project site. The project area has been previously disturbed by the existing almond hulling facility. The project will not induce unplanned population growth or displace any number of people or housing.

#### XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project:

- A. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically-altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically-altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services?
  1. Fire protection;
  2. Police protection;
  3. Schools;
  4. Parks; or
  5. Other public facilities?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Reviewing agencies and departments did not provide concerns regarding the project or a need for additional governmental facilities or alteration to existing governmental facilities. The project proposes to expand the operations of an existing almond hulling facility and does not anticipate utilizing any public facilities during its operation and should not cause negative impact on the public services available.

#### XVI. RECREATION

Would the project:

- A. 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; or
- B. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project proposes the expansion of an existing almond hulling facility. The project is not expected to increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks and does not include the construction or expansion of recreational facilities.

#### XVI. TRANSPORTATION

Would the project:

- A. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities; or
- B. Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Reviewing agencies and departments did not express concern with the project in terms of a transportation impact resulting from the project. The Project proposal will cause an annual average of 70 additional automobile trips per year, which is below the VMT threshold of 110 trips per day.

- C. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?; or
- D. Result in inadequate emergency access?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

Reviewing Agencies and Departments did not express concern with the project design or access to indicate that a hazard due to design features or inadequate emergency access will result from the project.

## XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

- A. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:
1. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or
  2. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

FINDING: NO IMPACT

Participating California Native American Tribes were notified of the project proposal and given the opportunity to enter into consultation with the County of Fresno in addressing potential tribal cultural resources occurring on the project site. No notified California Native American Tribe expressed concern with the project and did not enter into consultation. The subject parcel has been previously disturbed. No reviewing Agency or Department provided comments to indicate that a listed or eligible historical resource is located on the project site.

## XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the project:

- A. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project proposes the operational increase of an existing almond hulling facility and does not anticipate the relocation or construction of Public Utilities. Reviewing agencies and departments did not identify any significant environmental effects as a result of the project.

- B. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is proposing to increase an existing almond hulling operation. The almond process is existing and will remain a dry process not requiring the use of water supplies. The proposed use would not utilize water for the operation and would not have an impact on water supplies.

- C. 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project does not propose the development of a wastewater treatment system. The existing almond hulling facility has employees that generate wastewater. No additional employees are proposed with the operational expansion. It is determined that there is adequate capacity to serve the existing use.

- D. Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals; or
- E. Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

FINDING: LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

This project proposes to increase existing almond hulling production amounts from 360,000,000 lbs. a year to 405,000,000 lbs. per year. A proportional increase to solid wastes will occur as a result of the Project. Reviewing agencies and departments did not provide comments to indicate that the project would result in solid waste generation in excess of State or local standards, or result in a conflict with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulation related to solid waste.

## XX. WILDFIRE

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:

- A. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects; or
- B. Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire; or
- C. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment; or
- D. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

As depicted in the 2025 Fresno County Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map, produced by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the project site is located within an Unzoned Local Responsibility Area.

Additionally, this project was routed for review by CalFire and they did not provide comments to indicate that the project would result in impairment to evacuation plans, exposure to pollutant concentrations, exacerbation of fire risk, or exposure to post-fire risks.

## XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Would the project:

- A. Have the potential to substantially 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, substantially 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?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The subject site has been determined to be previously disturbed and occupied with human activity. The project does not have the potential to substantially degrade the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a wildlife species and would not cause a wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels.

- B. 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)?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project is not anticipated to result in a cumulative considerable impact and would result in a less than significant impact regarding the identified section.

- C. Have environmental effects, which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

FINDING: NO IMPACT:

The project has been determined to not result in substantial adverse effects on human beings.

## **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**

Based upon Initial Study No. 8733 prepared for Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3827, staff has concluded that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. It has been determined that there would be no impacts to Aesthetics, Agriculture & Forestry Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology/Soils, Hazards & Hazardous Materials, Hydrology/Water Quality, Land Use/Planning, Mineral Resources, Population/Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities/Service Systems, Wildfire, or Mandatory Findings of Significance.

Potential impacts related to Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Noise and Utilities/Service Systems have been determined to be less than significant.

A Negative Declaration is recommended and is subject to approval by the decision-making body. The Initial Study is available for review at 2220 Tulare Street, Suite A, street level, located on the southwest corner of Tulare and "M" Street, Fresno, California.

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**EXHIBIT 8**

File original and one copy with: <b>Fresno County Clerk 2221 Kern Street Fresno, California 93721</b>		Space Below For County Clerk Only.  CLK-2046.00 E04-73 R00-00	
Agency File No: <b>IS 8733</b>	<b>LOCAL AGENCY NEGATIVE DECLARATION</b>	County Clerk File No: <b>E-</b>	
Responsible Agency (Name): Fresno County	Address (Street and P.O. Box): 2220 Tulare St. Sixth Floor	City: Fresno	Zip Code: 93721
Agency Contact Person (Name and Title): Arianna Brown, Planner	Area Code: 559	Telephone Number: 600-4245	Extension: N/A
Project Applicant/Sponsor (Name): Dirk Poeschel	Project Title: Initial Study No. 8733 and Conditional Use Permit No. 3827		
Project Description:  Allow the expansion of an existing almond processing facility by raising the annual processing capacity from 360,000,000 lbs. to 405,000,000 lbs. per year. The subject parcel is located on the south side of W. Harlan Ave. approximately one-third of a mile east from the intersection with S. Derrick Ave., and approximately 15 miles southwest from the City of San Joaquin (32581 W. Harlan) (045-080-43S) (Sup. Dist 4).			
Justification for Negative Declaration:  Based upon Initial Study No. 8733 prepared for Conditional Use Permit Application No. 3827, staff has concluded that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. It has been determined that there would be no impacts to Aesthetics, Agriculture & Forestry Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology/Soils, Hazards & Hazardous Materials, Hydrology/Water Quality, Land Use/Planning, Mineral Resources, Population/Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities/Service Systems, Wildfire, or Mandatory Findings of Significance.  Potential impacts related to Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Noise and Utilities/Service Systems have been determined to be less than significant.			
FINDING:  The proposed project will not have a significant impact on the environment.			
Newspaper and Date of Publication: Fresno Business Journal – March 3, 2026		Review Date Deadline: Planning Commission Hearing – April 9, 2026	
Date:	Type or Print Signature: Tawanda Mtunga Principal Planner	Submitted by (Signature): Arianna Brown Planner	

State 15083, 15085

County Clerk File No.: E-

**LOCAL AGENCY  
NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

EXHIBIT 9



Drainage Basin

Existing Building "B"

Existing Building "A"

Hull Conditioner Location

Almond Hull Piles

Canopy

Asphalt Trailer Parking

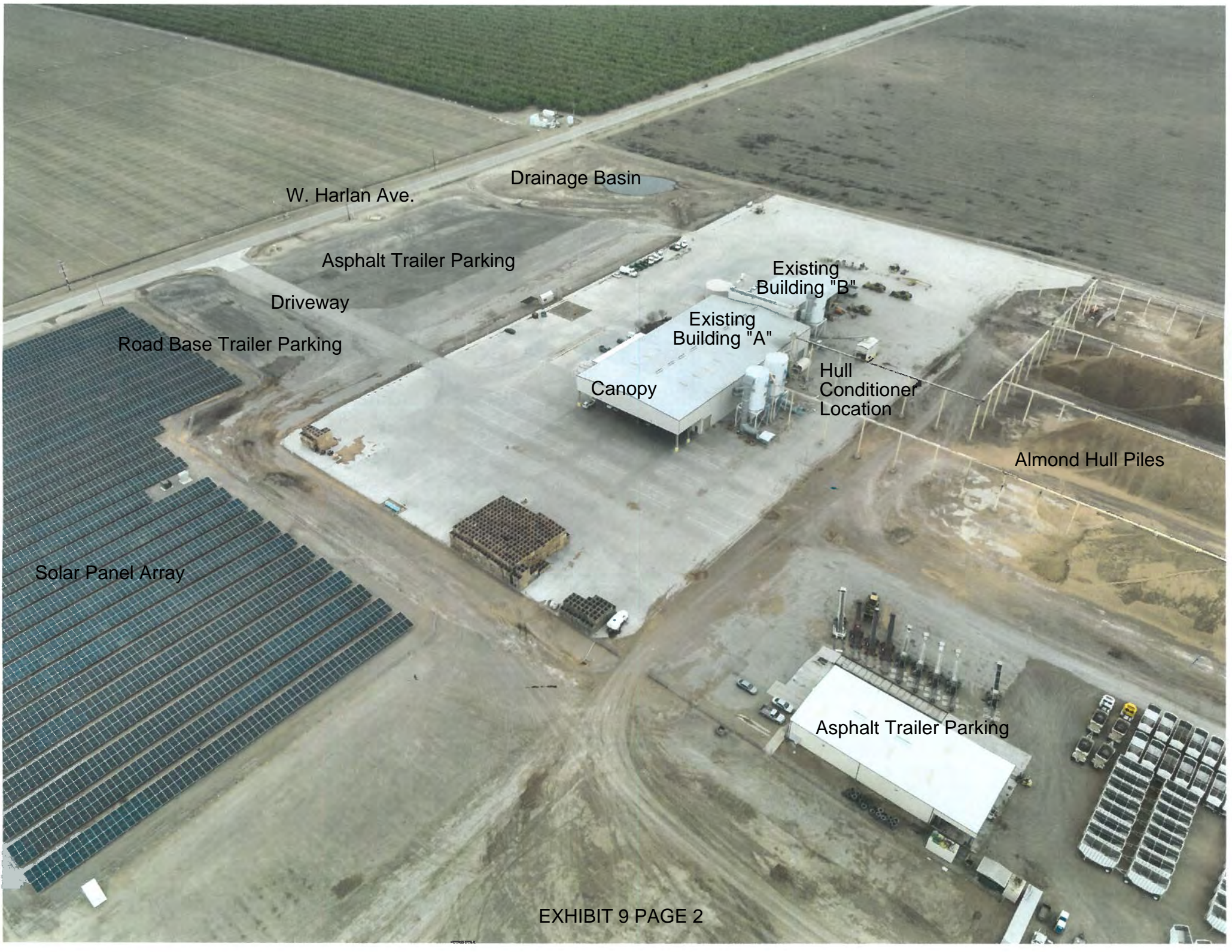
Asphalt Trailer Parking

Driveway

W. Harlan Ave.

Road Base Trailer Parking

Solar Panel Array



W. Harlan Ave.

Drainage Basin

Asphalt Trailer Parking

Driveway

Road Base Trailer Parking

Existing Building "B"

Existing Building "A"

Canopy

Hull Conditioner Location

Almond Hull Piles

Solar Panel Array

Asphalt Trailer Parking