
State Water Resources Control Board

April 16, 2026

Alyce Alvarez
County of Fresno
2220 Tulare Street, Suite A
Fresno, CA, 93721

COMMENT LETTER ON THE COUNTY OF FRESNO (COUNTY), INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION (ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT) FOR THE INITIAL STUDY NO 7504, GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT APPLICATION NO. 555, AND AMENDMENT APPLICATION NO 3832 (PROJECT); STATE CLEARINGHOUSE # 2026030913

Dear Ms. Alyce Alvarez:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Environmental Document for the proposed Project. The State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water (State Water Board, DDW) is responsible for regulating public water systems and issuing water supply permits pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act. This Project is within the jurisdiction of the State Water Board, DDW Fresno District.

A public water system, as defined in the California Health and Safety Code (Health & Saf. Code) § 116275 subd. [h], is “a system for the provision of water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances that has 15 or more service connections or regularly serves an average of at least 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year.” If a new public water system will be formed by the Project, an application must be submitted, and a permit must be obtained from the DDW Fresno District before water can be provided for human consumption. “Human consumption” means the use of water for drinking, bathing or showering, hand washing, oral hygiene, or cooking, including, but not limited to, preparing food and washing dishes.” Health & Saf. Code § 116275 subd. [e].

Note, Health & Saf. Code § 116527 subd. (b) requires that any person submitting a permit application for a proposed new public water system must first submit a technical report to the Fresno District at least six months before initiating construction of any drinking water-related improvements. The technical report must include an examination of the possibility of connecting to or being annexed by an existing adjacent community water system. Please see the attached What is a Public Water System flyer.

The State Water Board, DDW, as a responsible agency under the California Environmental Quality Act, has the following comments on the County's Environmental Document:

- The Environmental Document indicates the proposed industrial uses will utilize an onsite well that will serve 35 employees (PDF page 16). This would meet the definition of a public water system. If no nearby municipal water systems agree to serve the Project, the applicant will need to submit a technical report to DDW Fresno District (Health and Saf. Code § 116527 subd. [b]). The proposed Project is near the service area of the City of Fowler (City) and California Water Service -Selma (CWS-Selma). If connecting to City or CWS-Selma is feasible, discuss this possibility in the Environmental Document.
- If a new public water system will be created by the Project:
 - Under subheading 10. Other Agencies Whose Approval is Required, please add "The State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water" as an approving agency and "domestic water supply permit" as the approval.
 - Provide a description of the new and existing system components. Consider water storage, treatment, and fire flow in addition to the existing well. Also, discuss the staff required to operate the system.
 - Please discuss the water quality of the existing well and if the well can currently meet the Waterworks Standards (Ca. Code Regs. tit. 22, chapter 16). If upgrades are needed to meet the standards, discuss what upgrades will be made.
 - Please attach the Biological Resources Evaluation referenced in the document. Documents incorporated by reference must be made publicly available (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15150 [b]).
 - The Project falls within the San Joaquin Valley-Kings Subbasin, according to the Department of Water Resources Sustainable Groundwater Management Act prioritization dashboard (DWR SGMA Prioritization Dashboard). The San Joaquin Valley-Kings Subbasin is a high priority critically overdrafted basin (ibid).
 - Please define the Project area's baseline, based on current or former water use, and the Project's proposed water demand for normal, dry, and multiple dry years (in acre-feet per year).
 - If the amount of water extracted from the existing well will increase, please discuss the cumulative impacts the Project will have on the critically overdrafted basin and best management practices and/or mitigations that will be implemented to reduce cumulatively significant impacts.
 - Please discuss if the Project will comply with the San Joaquin Valley-Kings Subbasin Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan.
 - Under Section VII, when discussing whether soils are capable of adequately supporting wastewater systems:
 - Please discuss the Project plans for wastewater disposal. Will the Project be constructing a septic system?

- The mitigation measure in the Geology and Soils section states only uses that generate small amounts of liquid waste shall be permitted until the project site is served by a community sewer system (PDF page 13), but the measure doesn't quantify what qualifies as a small amount (threshold). Please update the discussion and mitigation to reflect the threshold, how the Project will ensure water quality will be protected, and refer to the permit needed.
- Cal. Code. Regs. § 64572 and Cal. Code. Regs. § 64560 requires separation of drinking water service lines and domestic supply wells from sources of potential contamination. The Project includes disposing of liquid waste on the site (PDF page 13). Please discuss how the well will be protected from contamination. Can the regulations be met or will a waiver or alternative to Waterworks Standards (Cal. Code. Regs. § 64551.100) be needed? If an alternative is needed, how will it be implemented to protect water quality?

Once the Environmental Document is adopted, please forward the following items in support of new water system's permit application to the State Water Board, DDW Fresno District Office at DWPDIST23@waterboards.ca.gov:

- The Environmental Document, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP), comment letters received, and the lead agency responses as appropriate.
- The Resolution or Board Minutes adopting the Environmental Document and MMRP and approving the Project; and
- The Notice of Determination filed at the County Clerk's Office and the State Clearinghouse.

Please contact Lori Schmitz of the State Water Board at (916) 449-5285 or Lori.Schmitz@waterboards.ca.gov, for questions regarding this comment letter.

Sincerely,

Lori Schmitz

Water Boards

Lori Schmitz
Environmental Scientist
Division of Financial Assistance
Special Project Review Unit
1001 I Street, 16th floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Cc:

Ms. Alyce Alvarez

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State Clearinghouse

Sudarshan Poudyal
District Engineer
Fresno District