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GROUNDBREAKING GOOD NEIGHBOR AGREEMENT REACHED BETWEEN RECOLOGY AND KERN COUNTY COMMUNITY GROUPS

Local Community Groups Reach Historic Agreement with Recology to Modernize Operations and Abatement Programs, and to Partner on Local Community Projects

Lamont, CA – Yesterday community groups in Arvin and Lamont reached an agreement with Recology over the company’s new operation of Recology Blossom Valley Organics – South, a large composting facility outside of Lamont. The agreement will bring significant economic and environmental benefits to a region that has been over-burdened by pollution for decades. This agreement marks nearly a decade of work by local residents to curb pollution and odors from the previous owner’s operation of the facility, and will provide some immediate relief to residents living near the mega-composting facility. The agreement will ensure the operation is safe, protects public health, and also makes significant financial investments in the community.

“Side by side with the Center on Race Poverty & the Environment we fought against Community Recycling and Resource Recovery since 2007. Today to be able to partner with the new operator is exciting. I hope that we can all work together to improve both our air quality and our communities,” said Estela Escoto of Committee for a Better Arvin and long-time resident of Arvin.

The members of Committee for a Better Arvin and Comité Progreso De Lamont have been working with Recology over the past two years to address residents’ long-standing concerns over the air pollution and odors that emanated from the site previously. In 2011, Kern County revoked Community Recycling’s permit after years of community complaints, chronic noncompliance with County standards, and the deaths of Armando and Eladio Ramirez after they inhaled hydrogen-sulfide fumes emitted from rotting waste while working at the facility. A lawsuit filed against the County allowed the facility to remain in operation. Community Recycling sold the facility to Recology in 2015.

“We are finally able to hope for a better community. We are able to work with the new company, Recology, to reduce air pollution and to increase investments where we live,” said Jose Mireles, a member of Comité Progreso De Lamont and a resident of Lamont for over 40 years.

Recology has committed to installing an aeration system that will reduce pollution by at least 80%, and this commitment was a driving factor for the community groups to enter into negotiations. The goals of the agreement are to maintain an open line of communication with the nearby residents of Lamont,

Weedpatch and Arvin, improve neighborhood safety and livability, and ensure a high quality of environmental standards are met.

“Recology has been committed to working hand in hand with our community stakeholders to ensure that Blossom Valley Organics - South operates successfully, transparently, safely and to the benefit of the region. This agreement memorializes that commitment,” said Eric Potashner, Vice President & Senior Director Strategic Affairs at Recology.

This agreement signifies a new beginning for the residents of Lamont and Arvin in terms public health and safety, and a partnership between Recology and the local community.

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About Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment

Founded in 1989, the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (CRPE) is an environmental justice organization that uses collective action and the law to support communities of color that bear the brunt of environmental hazards. With offices in California located in Delano and Oakland, CRPE represents communities and works directly with them to achieve their goals. For more on CRPE, go to www.crpe-ej.org.

About Committee for A Better Arvin

The Committee for a Better Arvin is a non-profit grassroots organization dedicated to protecting the health and well-being of Arvin residents. The committee formed in 2007 to address the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) failure to clean an abandoned pesticide manufacturing plant for over two decades while the chemicals seeped into soils and groundwater below the site. The committee has since continued to work to protect Arvin’s residents.

Comite Progreso de Lamont

Comite Progreso de Lamont is a group of concerned residents who formed to improve schools and childhood education in Lamont in 2000. The group have recently expanded its focus to work on improving livability in Lamont. The committee has successfully advocated for 2 million dollars of improvements in Lamont and South Kern.

These organizations all receive support from Building Healthy Communities-South Kern, a comprehensive community initiative that is creating a revolution in the way Californians think about and support health in their communities.