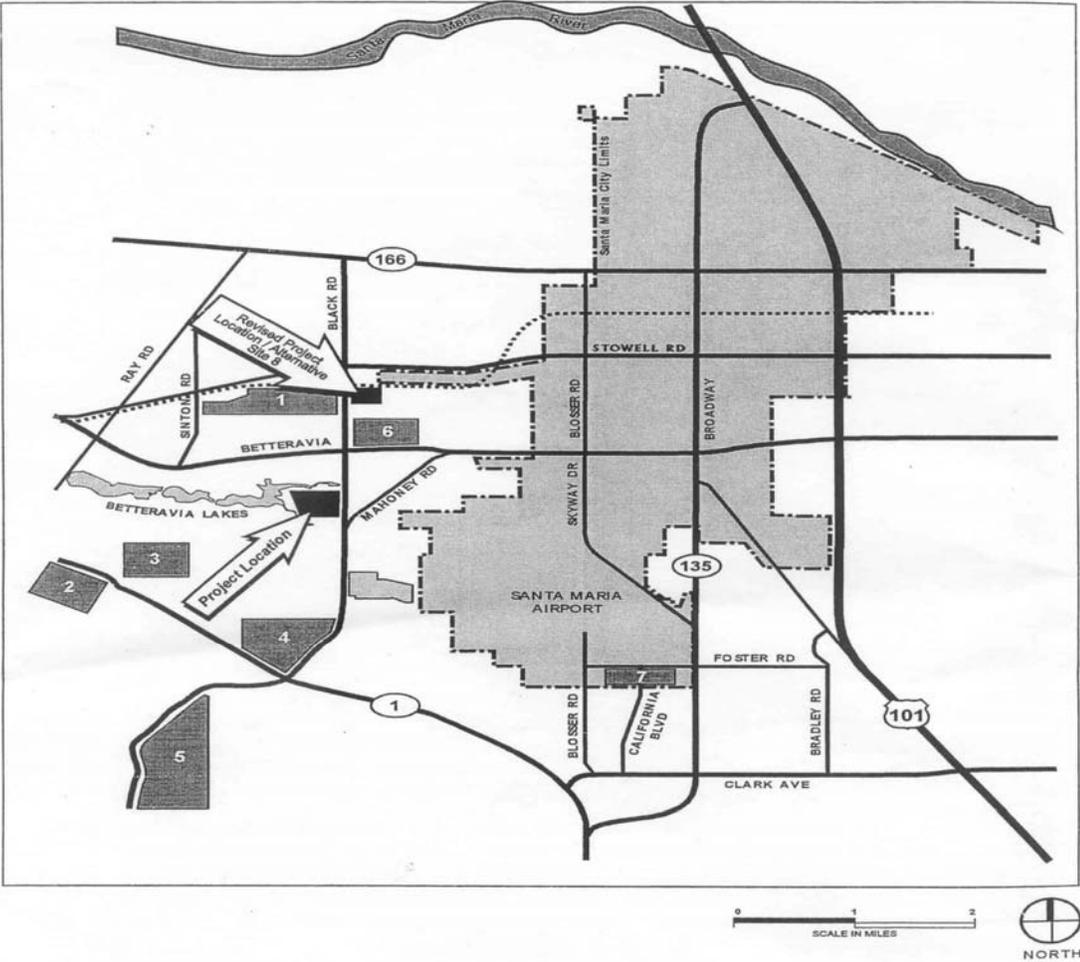


## Introduction

In 1993, the County began an extensive site selection process to attempt to locate a suitable site for a North County jail facility. Originally 275 potential sites were identified but further refinement of the site selection criteria reduced this number to 29 sites, and then down to six sites. A supplemental constraints study identified two other potential sites, bringing the number of potentially feasible sites to eight. In 1997, a Draft EIR was prepared to study the eight sites. One of those sites is the County Laguna Sanitation District site currently proposed for the new jail, and is identified as Site 3.



In addition to Site 3, three other alternative sites were considered in particular detail. One of those alternatives was referred to as Site 8. Site 8 is the so-called “Holly Sugar” site, a 100-acre parcel located on the west side of Black Road between Betteravia Road and Mahoney Road. In 1998, a Draft EIR studied what was called Revised Site 8, which was a 99-acre site located along the east side of Black Road about 1,500 feet south of Stowell Road. In 2000, a third Draft EIR was prepared for a site called the “Unocal Site,” a 100-acre site located north of



# Environmental Overview

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Betteravia Road, between Black Road and E Street. The site encompassed the northern half of Alternative Site 6 (northeast corner of the intersection of Betteravia Road and Black Road) plus some additional acreage to the immediate east. Ultimately Site 3, the proposed Laguna County Sanitation District site, was found to be superior in its compatibility with the environment and the goals of the project.

## Current Status

On April 12, 2005, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously in favor of proceeding with planning for a new jail in North County at the Laguna County Sanitation District (LCSD) site in the Santa Maria Valley. The site is located north of Orcutt Creek and Highway 1 and appears on the alternative site map as Site 3. Prior to the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the preparation of another EIR, preliminary constraints analyses were performed in the areas of biological and cultural resources. In addition, the site has already been tested and is free of hazardous substances.

The Planning and Development Department (P&D) expects to complete an Administrative Draft EIR on the LCSD site in approximately six weeks and anticipates a Draft EIR will be available for public review by March 2006. As required by CEQA, the EIR will fully evaluate the project's effects relative to biological, cultural, agricultural, and visual resources, aesthetics, circulation, air quality, and urban services.



## Approach to Biological Resources

It is believed federally protected species exist at the proposed building site. If so, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will have to grant the project an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) before any construction can proceed. Generally, a habitat conservation plan (HCP), detailing the potential harm to the species and methods to mitigate, is required before



## Environmental Overview

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an ITP is given. Because the project involves a federal agency, namely the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the procedure for obtaining an ITP is different and does not require an HCP. On behalf of ICE (the Action Agency), the County will consult with the USFWS to determine the mitigation measures needed to obtain the ITP. As the lead federal agency, ICE must ensure that the project satisfies National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements in addition to CEQA requirements.

Additionally, it is likely that regulatory agencies will require that acreage be set aside for mitigation of endangered species habitat. It is estimated that approximately 20 acres of habitat will be disturbed due to construction activities. The USFWS has suggested that a ratio of 2:1 may be acceptable; therefore approximately an additional 40 acres of land would need to be acquired to satisfy this environmental requirement.

### Summary

Before a new County Jail can be constructed on any site, a thorough environmental analysis must be conducted. Although preliminary and cursory analyses have been undertaken on the Laguna County Sanitation District site, the County will need to move forward with a draft EIR, which will fully evaluate the project's environmental impacts. This analysis will aid the County in determining mitigation and required for construction to occur and any steps that need to be taken to satisfy environmental requirements.

