

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section describes the general setting for the proposed project. Specific information about the setting for the issue areas studied in this EIR is provided in the individual issue discussions in Section 4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS.

3.1 REGIONAL SETTING

The City of Santa Barbara is located along the California coast, approximately 100 miles north of Los Angeles, and 100 miles south of San Luis Obispo, California (refer to Figure 2-1). Santa Barbara enjoys a Mediterranean climate that is generally mild and sunny most of the year, with relatively stable temperatures. Rainfall is concentrated in the winter months.

The City of Santa Barbara is noted for its scenic views and proximity to the Santa Ynez Mountains to the north, and the Pacific Ocean to the south. The City is situated in a coastal plain, but includes diverse features such as rolling hills, coastal bluffs, and low sandy littoral areas, as well as creeks.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the City of Santa Barbara has a population of 89,600. The City serves as the primary center of business, tourism, culture, and government for Santa Barbara County. To the west lies the City of Goleta; to the east are Montecito and Summerland, within the unincorporated area of the County of Santa Barbara, and the City of Carpinteria. The overall populace encompassing these communities is about 169,000 persons (2000 census).

3.2 PROJECT SITE SETTING

Douglas Family Preserve

This nearly 70-acre site is bordered on the northern and western sides by a steep bluff vegetated with southern oak woodland, and on the south by a coastal bluff vegetated with coastal scrub. Arroyo Burro Creek bounds the site along the western and part of the northern sides, at the base of the bluff, and just south of Cliff Drive. Between the bluff and Cliff Drive on the northerly side, there is an unnamed tributary of Arroyo Burro Creek, creating a small riparian area intermixed with southern oak woodland. This tributary connects with the creek just west of the intersection of Las Positas Road and Cliff Drive. Access from the DFP to the creek and its tributary is limited to the northern side, where the Oak Grove Trail meets the intersection of Las Positas Road and Cliff Drive. Steep slopes prevent access at other points along the northern and western boundary of the site.

The Oak Grove Trail, consisting in part of a narrow road that remains from the days of the property's use as a nursery, leads up the northerly bluff, from the intersection of Cliff Drive and Las Positas Road to the mesa portion of the site. This road is used by pedestrians and, to a lesser extent, bicyclists to access the site. The mesa top portion of the site is relatively flat with a number of existing dirt or paved paths. The mesa top is composed of a mixture of coastal sage scrub, annual grassland, and a variety of exotic vegetation. The mesa includes a variety of significant trees, including coastal live oaks, Monterey pine, Monterey cypress and some fruit trees.

To the east of the property is the Mesa neighborhood, with single-family homes on lots that are generally 7,500 square feet in area. Borton Drive, Mesa School Lane and Medcliff Drive all provide entry to the property from the east.

Hale Park

This approximately 13-acre site in the Eucalyptus Hill Neighborhood is an undeveloped, natural-setting park. Hale Park is bounded by Eucalyptus Hill Road, El Rancho Road, Camino Viejo, and Eucalyptus Hill Drive, and is near the campus of Brooks Institute. It is generally surrounded by residential lots ranging from 10,000 square feet to three acres in size, with occasional lots that are even larger. The property is nearly flat at Camino Viejo Road, where the mouth of a small valley opens up. This area has an open grove of eucalyptus. The valley rises to the west and northwest. The slopes on the southerly side of the property are covered with coast live oak, with more oaks along a small stream that borders the property on the northeast, and a small tributary that joins the stream near the upper end of the property. The steepest part of the slope rises up to Eucalyptus Hill Road and is open grassland with occasional shrubs.

Shoreline Beach Area

This approximately 3-mile long beach area stretches from the Shoreline Park staircase to the western City boundary. Arroyo Burro Beach County Park, which is within City limits, is included in the Shoreline Beach Area. The SBA also includes the portion of beach directly below the DFP bluffs. The 3-mile beach stretch consists mostly of sandy beach, interrupted occasionally by tide pools and exposed rocks. Some of this area is inaccessible at high tide.