

# THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NOTICE OF PREPARATION

## ROBERT B. DIEMER TREATMENT PLANT NORTH ACCESS ROAD

### INTRODUCTION

The Robert B. Diemer Treatment Plant (i.e., Diemer Plant or plant) is a conventional water treatment plant with ancillary facilities that serves the greater Orange County service area of The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan). Local entities that receive water from the plant include the Municipal Water District of Orange County, as well as its member agencies, the city of Brea, and the city of Yorba Linda. The Diemer Plant processes water from two major water sources: the State Water Project (SWP) and the Colorado River, and distributes that water to Metropolitan's member agencies. The Diemer Plant was placed into service in 1963, with an initial capacity of 200 million gallons per day (mgd). In 1969, the Plant was expanded to a treatment capacity of 520 mgd. The plant delivers a blend of Colorado River water and SWP to Orange County and parts of Metropolitan's central pool portion of the distribution system.

A secondary access (North Access Road) is being proposed on the north side of the plant to provide an emergency access point and an additional supplemental route to the Diemer Plant. The project is also being proposed to improve safety in Chino Hills State Park (CHSP) since Metropolitan currently uses an existing easement (known as Telegraph Canyon Trail), which is shared with, and is frequently used by, pedestrians, hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists. Metropolitan's existing access easement along Telegraph Canyon Trail terminates at the Diemer Plant's sludge lagoons located on the northwest corner of the Diemer Plant property. Consequently, this existing easement does not provide access to the main plant level or other plant facilities.

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) is planning to construct a visitor center for CHSP off of Carbon Canyon Road just west of Metropolitan's current entrance to their easement. Construction of the visitor center is scheduled to begin in late 2006. There is currently no official entrance to CHSP or parking at this location. Consequently, the visitor center and the accompanying parking facility will substantially increase pedestrian and other recreational use of the current trail/easement, further restricting Metropolitan's safe operational use of Telegraph Canyon Trail.

In an effort to preserve and enhance existing access rights, Metropolitan cooperated with State Parks and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) during the planning process for the CHSP visitor center to make additional modifications to Carbon Canyon Road to facilitate Metropolitan's use of its existing access easement. These modifications included the addition of an acceleration/deceleration lane to improve turning conditions for vehicle travel. All modifications will be constructed by State Parks and/or Caltrans along with work required for the

visitor center's new entrance. The modifications to Carbon Canyon Road are expected to be completed by mid 2008.

Metropolitan is concerned about visitor safety as a result of intensified use of Telegraph Canyon Trail combined with Metropolitan truck traffic. Accordingly, Metropolitan and State Parks recognized the benefit of separating Metropolitan truck traffic from trail users and agreed conceptually to a new easement within CHSP, contingent on future environmental, regulatory, and project approvals for the access road. Moreover, an improved access provided Metropolitan an opportunity to extend the north access to the Diemer Plant beyond the sludge lagoons to the main plant level.

Metropolitan has previously investigated additional access from the south on multiple occasions to supplement the current access from Valley View Avenue but has not been successful. In addition to the needs already discussed, significant residential development has occurred around the plant that has resulted in additional shared vehicular use along Valley View. This intensified use along Metropolitan's only ingress and egress out of the Diemer Plant presents safety concerns in the event of an emergency. In addition, Metropolitan has received requests from emergency providers, such as local fire officials (i.e., Orange County Fire Authority), to develop a supplemental access to the Diemer Plant.

To maintain a high degree of safety and operational flexibility and to potentially support on-going construction activities at the Diemer Plant, it is important to provide at least two access roads into and out of the Diemer Plant facility. The Diemer Plant currently relies on a single access gate for the entrance and exit of all plant, construction, staff, and chemical delivery traffic and is the only water treatment facility owned and operated by Metropolitan without a designated secondary access point into and out of the facility. The existing easement within CHSP currently has no vehicle limits and no restrictions on operational use. Metropolitan shares this access road with CHSP and it is the main access into the park from Carbon Canyon Road. The improvements planned for the visitor center would provide an opportunity to separate Metropolitan's operational use from the park use, while maintaining a "common law" implied right to access the existing easement as is reasonable and necessary to access other easements maintained by Metropolitan within the CHSP, including the Yorba Linda Feeder easement and any other Diemer Plant facilities. While the proposed access road may benefit construction projects at the Diemer Plant in the short run, the long-term purpose is public safety; both to remove the shared use so the public has better and safer access to and use of the park, and to ensure Metropolitan has secondary emergency access.

The Draft EIR for the proposed project will include an analysis of impacts associated with the construction and operation of the North Access Road; no analysis of impacts resulting from the construction and operation of the CHSP visitor center will be included. The environmental analysis for the visitor center was previously conducted by State Parks and approved in 2004 (Chino Hills State Park Visitor Center Environmental Impact Report, SCH #2003120071), including modifications to Carbon Canyon Road and other mitigation.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Metropolitan is proposing the following objectives for the proposed project:

- Improve the operational safety of the plant by providing a second emergency access.
- Improve public safety by constructing a new road on the north side of the Diemer Plant thereby removing trucks from trails in CHSP, and transferring them onto an alternative roadway exclusively for Diemer Plant traffic.
- Provide alternative access/flexibility to the plant, thereby better ensuring continued plant operations and reliable drinking water to southern California.
- Provide a firebreak and fire fighting capability between the Diemer Plant and CHSP.

These objectives would also be consistent with the mandates of State Parks and Caltrans.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Metropolitan is proposing to construct the North Access Road to the Diemer Plant. The proposed road would be partially located within the Diemer Plant property and partially within CHSP property, as shown on Figure 4 (Proposed Project). The road would begin south of Carbon Canyon Road (SR 142) in the city of Brea, sharing or directly adjacent to the new entrance of the CHSP visitor center and would connect to the existing Diemer Road located on the southeast side of the Diemer Plant, as shown on Figure 4 (Proposed Project). This proposed secondary access road's main purpose is for emergency secondary access, and could potentially be used by plant personnel, service trucks, and emergency vehicles. The fully-constructed roadway width would range from 30 to 40 feet, including a 28-foot wide paved road, which would include storm drain facilities, a waterline system to accommodate fire hydrants and irrigation, and a system of earth retaining structures. The roadway length would be approximately 1.3 mile. See Figures 1 (Regional Location), 2 (Project Vicinity), and 3 (Aerial Photograph) for more information on the project vicinity.

The main entrance gate to the Diemer Plant, located on Valley View Circle in the city of Yorba Linda, is situated in a residential neighborhood. Currently, a limited use secondary access to the plant is located off of Carbon Canyon Road, via an easement through CHSP. This existing easement is the only route to the plant other than the main entrance and provides access to the sludge lagoons on the north side of the plant. A narrow and extremely steep pathway connects the sludge lagoons to the main plant site, but it is not suitable for vehicle use. Both State Parks and Metropolitan are considering the feasibility to move this access corridor westerly onto a new alignment that would separate Metropolitan's use with the park user's recreational use. The proposed North Access Road would be from Carbon Canyon Road to the Diemer Plant's sludge lagoons along a newly proposed easement. From this point, the North Access Road would continue up the north slope of the Diemer Plant and would connect to the main Diemer Road located just south of the Finished Water Reservoir (FWR) on the east side of the Plant.

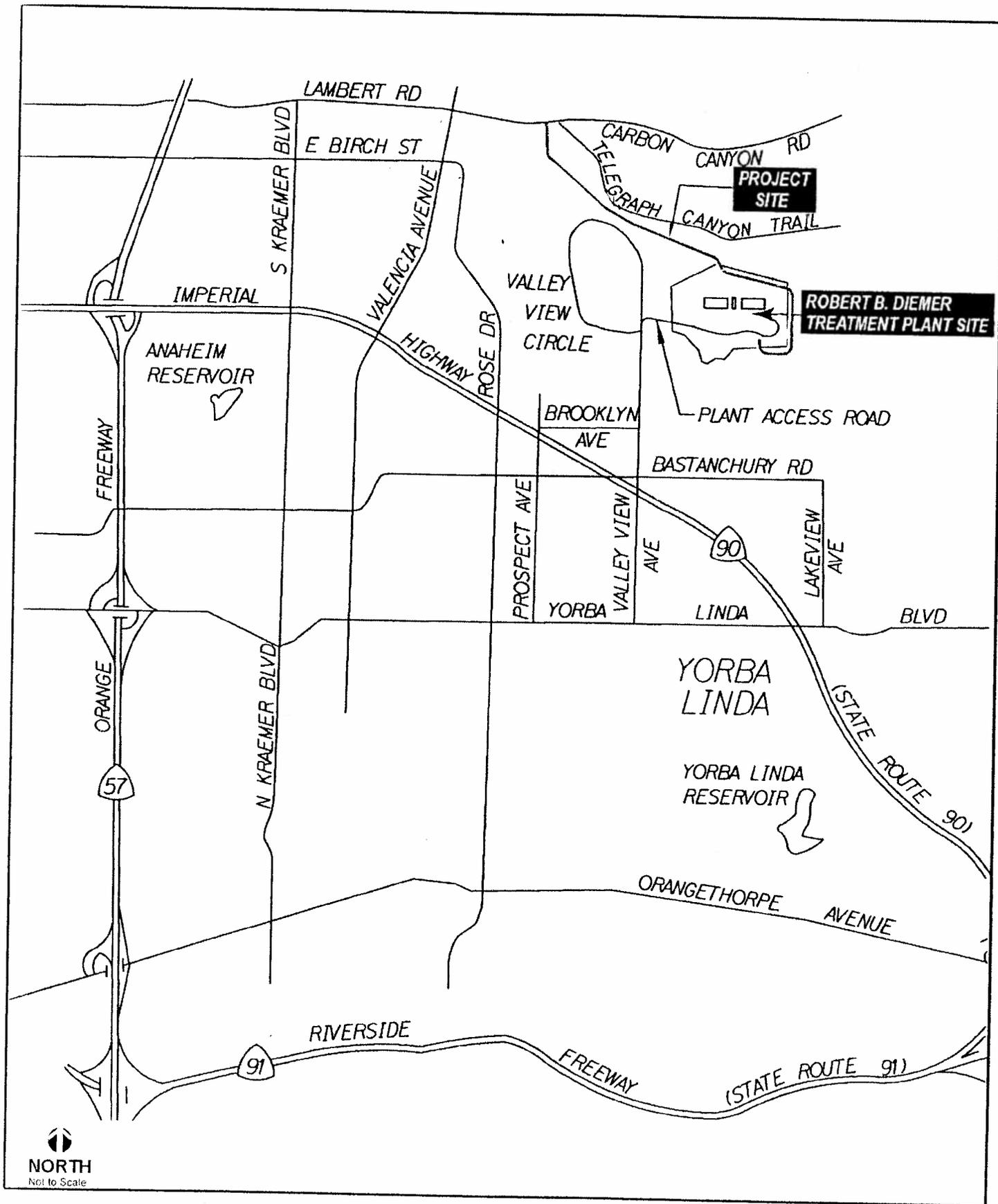
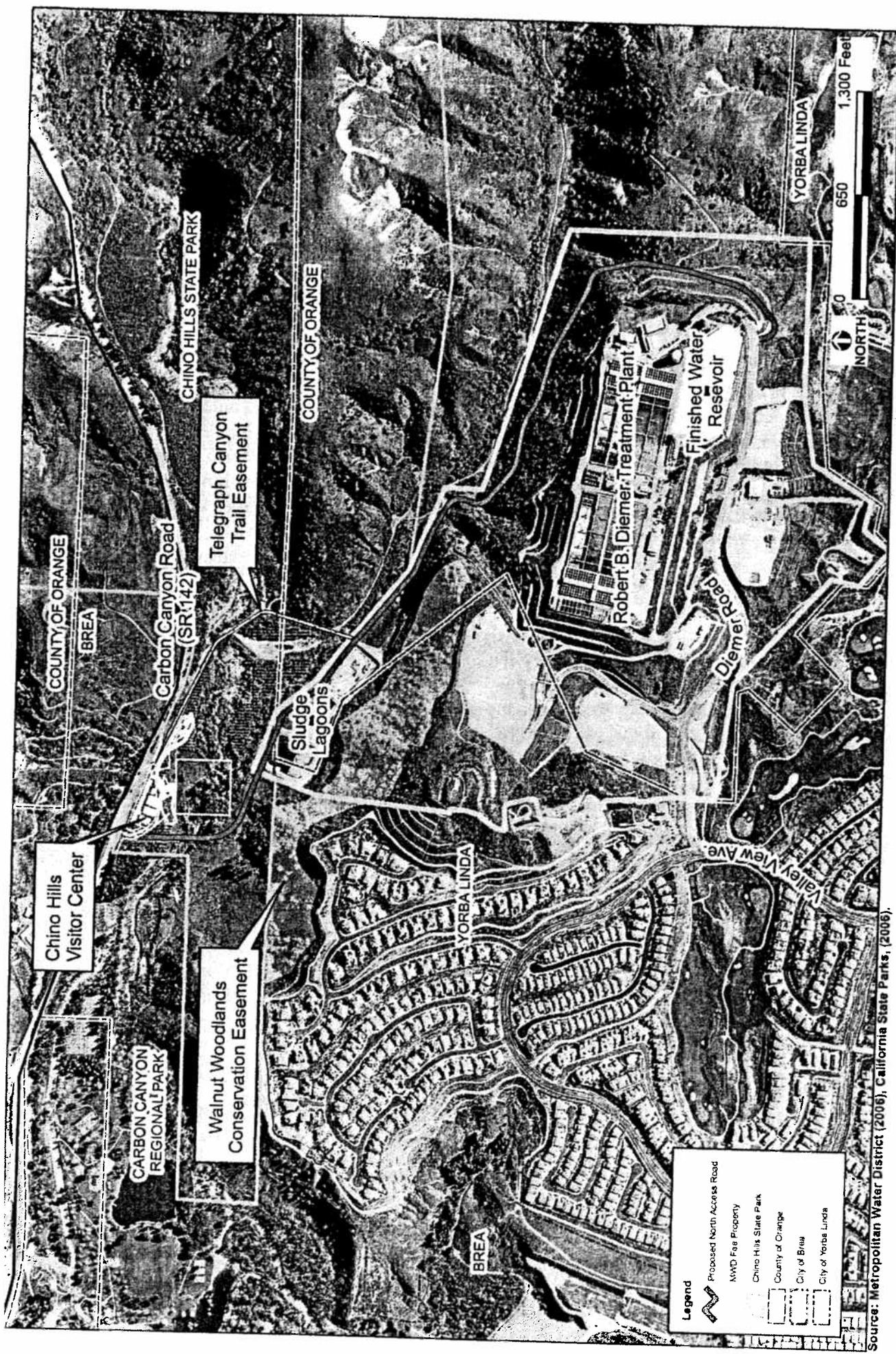


Figure 2  
Project Vicinity



**Figure 4  
Proposed Project**

Robert B. Diemer Treatment Plant North Access Road Project

Source: Metropolitan Water District (2006), California State Parks, (2006).

The proposed North Access Road would be a limited-use roadway, that is, vehicle traffic on the road would have a set limit to the amount of vehicle round trips allowed per day, exclusive of emergency use. The types of vehicles would include, but not be limited to, employee's cars and/or vanpools and operational service trucks. No chemical delivery trucks would be allowed to use the new road. Additional vehicle trips may also be allowed on the road, such as a temporary increase of construction traffic after the new access road is constructed sometime in 2008. The entrance to the new road would either be aligned with or immediately adjacent to the future visitor center entrance and would be secured with a security gate requiring access authorization by Metropolitan.

The proposed North Access Road would incorporate design elements that would reduce environmental impacts and increase security to CHSP. The road would incorporate visual screening and vegetative treatments into the design of the road and the road would be graded to mimic the topography of the local hills. Visual improvements would include landscaping involving native vegetation that blends into the surrounding parkland. The North Access Road would also include the construction of a bridge over Carbon Canyon Creek within the CHSP to allow the creek to meander unobstructed under the proposed road. Other features would include the construction of a trail connection from CHSP to Carbon Canyon Regional Park bordering the State Park on the west. The road would also include gate access and other security measures to restrict public use of the roadway.

The proposed North Access Road would be designed to drain runoff or other materials on the road away from native habitat and into the existing sludge lagoons. A new Sludge Handling Facility is currently being constructed on the Upper Pad of the Diemer Plant, which will replace the sludge pond's primary function as a sludge collection basin, once construction is complete in 2007. An additional storm drain system would be designed to intercept upslope runoff generated from the adjacent hillside area, and this runoff would discharge back to its original drainage path below the roadway.

A portion of the North Access Road alignment would be located in very hilly terrain. The majority of the landscape that would be affected by the proposed road contains dense native, undisturbed vegetation, including walnut trees, although portions of the alignment have been disturbed by the previously approved construction of narrow dirt access corridors for the Basin No. 8 Rejection Line project, and various other utility installations. Construction of the proposed access road would result in some modification to the site's topography.

## **PROJECT LOCATION, LAND USES, AND EXISTING SETTING**

The proposed North Access Road is located within the cities of Brea and Yorba Linda, the county of Orange, the Metropolitan-owned Diemer Plant property, and CHSP. The proposed project site is bordered by CHSP to the north and east, Carbon Canyon Regional Park to the west, and the Diemer Plant to the south. Further northwest in the vicinity of the project site is the Olinda residential development along Carbon Canyon Road and to the southwest the Vista del Verde residential development and the Black Gold Golf Club off of Valley View Avenue. Access to the proposed North Access Road would be from Carbon Canyon Road north of the