Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

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Director of Planning

DATE: December 12, 2007

PROJECT TITLE: Big Rock Creek Surface Mine Project
Project Number R2007-00670

PROJECT APPLICANT(S): Lebata, Inc.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (County) will be the Lead Agency pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for an application submitted by Lebata, Inc. (Applicant) for the installation and operation of the following:

- Aggregate Surface Mining and Processing Facilities
- Ready-Mixed Concrete Plant
- Asphalt Mixing Plant
- Raw Cement Transfer and Aggregate Distribution Facility

The Applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and Surface Mining Permit (SMP) for a new surface mining operation and the facilities listed below in Section 3.3.

This Project Description, attached figures and the attached CEQA Initial Study prepared by the County of Los Angeles constitute the Notice of Preparation (NOP) required by CEQA (Guidelines Section 15082[a]).

2.0 LOCATION

The Project site is located in the Antelope Valley, off Avenue T, in unincorporated Los Angeles County, east of the City of Palmdale, near the community of Pearblossom (Figure 1 – Site Location Map). The Project site is located immediately south of Avenue T and is bound by 136th East to the east, Avenue U to the south, and 126th East to the west. The property is currently in an undeveloped condition.

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 Land Use

The Applicant seeks approval to mine aggregate within an approximately 284.5-acre area, and process the mined materials onsite. The total Project area is comprised of approximately 310 acres. The Project's primary objective is to produce marketable Portland Cement Concrete-grade (PCC) aggregate and related construction material products.

The California Department of Conservation Division of Mines and Geology has classified the Project area as MRZ-2 (source: *Open File Report 94-14: Update of Mineral Land Classification of Portland Cement Concrete Aggregate in Ventura, Los Angeles, and Orange Counties, California, Part II – Los Angeles County.* Miller, R.V., *1994*).

3.2 Surrounding Land Uses

The Project site is located in a relatively remote and undisturbed area of the Antelope Valley. The property is bisected by an existing railroad track and is surrounded by vacant undeveloped properties on the north, west and south sides. Properties along the eastern boundary are mostly undeveloped, although there are a few residences, outbuildings and well houses. The nearest residence is immediately south of the railroad tracks, approximately 200 feet east of the Project's eastern boundary of the South Parcel.

3.3 Major Components of the Proposed Project

The Applicant proposes to:

- Conduct aggregate surface mining and processing operations to produce marketable Portland Cement Concrete-grade (PCC) aggregate and related products over approximately 50 years;
- Mine aggregate within an approximately 284.5-acre area;
- Mining will occur within three distinct phases, divided into several mining sub-phases;
- Install and operate a ready-mixed concrete plant;
- Install and operate an asphalt mixing plant;
- Install and operate a raw cement and aggregate transfer and distribution facility;
- Supply primarily the greater Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley and the Saugus/Palmdale and San Bernardino/Riverside market areas with Portland Cement Concrete-grade (PCC) aggregate (e.g., rock, sand and gravel), specialty sand, ready-mix concrete, mortar, road base, asphalt and raw cement; and
- Provide for the environmentally sound and economically viable closure of the site.

Refer to Figure 2 – Facilities Site Plan.

3.3.1 Surface Mining and Processing

Initially, material will be excavated by dozers and shovels, either placed directly into the jaw crusher, or placed into articulating trucks for transport to the jaw crusher. As the mining pit deepens, material will be excavated by shovel and transported by articulating trucks for

transport to the jaw crusher. From the jaw crusher, material will be conveyed out of the mining pit to the Aggregate Processing Facilities. A grader will be used to maintain the Project's interior roads. Mining will occur within three distinct phases (Phases), divided into several mining sub-phases (Blocks). These phases are described as follows and are illustrated in Figure 3 – Mine Phasing Plan:

Phase 1 (North Pit) will begin in the North Parcel, which is located between Avenue T and the Southern Pacific Railroad, and will involve approximately 96.8 acres. In Phase 1, mining will start at the southeast quarter of the Project site and progress toward the north. The first Block within Phase 1 is larger than most to provide room at the bottom of the pit for the energy dissipaters, and to be able to continue mining to the north. Block 1 will take approximately 16 months to complete.

The remainder of Phase 1 will involve the excavation of a series of Blocks of approximately 1,000,000 gross tons each. It is projected that each of the Blocks will take approximately one year to complete. Floodwater interceptors and down drains will be added as mining progresses.

A five-foot berm will be constructed on three sides of the Phase 1 pit because of its proximity to vehicles and personnel to those slopes. On the east side, a three-foot berm will be built in compliance with the proposed Drainage Concept, prepared by Stetson Engineers. The Drainage Concept can be found in the Surface Mining and Reclamation Plan.

- ***Phase 2*** (South Pit) will involve the South Parcel where excavated materials will be conveyed out of the Mining Pit through a tunnel under the railroad tracks to the Aggregate Processing Facilities site. The mined area will involve approximately 161.1 acres.

  Phase 2 is divided into a series of Blocks of approximately 1,000,000 gross tons (nominal) each. Each Block will take approximately one year to mine. Again, interceptors and down-drains will be sequenced as the respective Blocks are mined.

- ***Phase 3*** may be divided into two sub-phases.
  - ***Phase 3a*** (Processing Facilities Site) will involve the excavation of materials under the area occupied by the various plants and facilities, on approximately 16.9 acres. In advance of Phase 3 excavation, the facilities occupying that location will be relocated into the bottom of the North Pit area excavated during Phase 1.
  - ***Phase 3b*** (Raw Cement and Aggregate Transfer and Distribution Facility Area). The Applicant proposes the option to include within this Phase, the excavation of materials underlying the Raw Cement and Aggregate Transfer and Distribution Facility.

Peak daily aggregate production will be limited to the physical capabilities of the aggregate processing equipment, which is capable of processing 5,200 tons per day (650 tons per hour). Actual production levels will vary over time and are a direct function of the rate of development within the Project's market area, the number and type of contracts obtained, the overall economy, equipment downtime, as well as hours and days of operation. Initial testing indicates that the deposit is comprised of:

- ~ 26.73 percent Gravel
- ~ 52.52 percent Sand
- ~ 20.75 percent Fines

Gross and net volumes of the material proposed to be excavated from the mining area and processed for sale are estimated to be:

- 46.52 million tons gross volume (assumes 1.5 tons per cubic yard, a total of 31.02 million cubic yards); and
- 36.87 million tons net volume of PCC-grade aggregate (assumes approximately 20.75 percent of the material will be unsuitable for sale as aggregate).

At the proposed gross extraction rate of approximately 1,000,000 gross tons per year, this resource could last about 47 years. The Applicant is requesting a 50-year permit.

Finished products will be PCC-grade aggregate and aggregate using products, such as concrete and asphalt. Processing also creates scalped fines as a byproduct, some of which may be used as a soil amendment onsite in association with revegetation activities. The remainder of the fines will be sold as slurry or used in nonstructural concrete.

Water will be used on site for washing of aggregate, for the production of the ready-mixed concrete for dust control and for irrigation. A water well will be drilled at the processing facilities site after appropriate permits have been obtained.

Phased/Concurrent Reclamation

It is estimated that the mine site will be in operation for approximately 50 years. The Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan designates the Project site as "Open Space" and it is reasonable to predict that the open space nature of the Project area and surrounding land will not have changed significantly during the intervening years. Other potential post-mining uses include groundwater recharge or storm water retention basins.

The Reclamation Plan anticipates that upon completion of the operation, two depressions of approximately 80 feet will remain. Upon reclamation, the exterior slopes of the mine pits will be 2:1 horizontal: vertical finished grade, which is considered a stable condition. No backfilling is proposed.

The Revegetation Plan was developed to restore indigenous vegetation within the mine pits and otherwise disturbed areas of the proposed Big Rock Creek surface mine as required by the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1975, as amended (Public Resources Code § 2719 et. seq.) and per the Performance Standards for Revegetation (Public Resources Code § 3705) and for Topsoil Salvage, Maintenance and Redistribution (Public Resources Code § 3711).

The special status wildlife species that have the potential of being on the site are the desert tortoise, the Mojave ground squirrel and the burrowing owl. Further investigations are planned and mitigation will be developed during the preparation of the EIR.

Financial Assurance

The Applicant recognizes its responsibility for ensuring the successful and timely completion of the reclamation of the Project site. Both, the County of Los Angeles, in Chapter 22.56 of the Los Angeles Zoning Code and SMARA, require the Applicant develop a Financial Assurance Calculation representing the costs of site reclamation, should the operator be unable to fulfill its obligation. The Applicant has prepared a draft Financial Assurance Calculation and is prepared to enter into a mutually acceptable agreement to cover the reclamation costs as a condition of the SMP.

3.3.2 Ready-Mixed Concrete Plant

The Applicant proposes to install and operate a Ready-Mixed Concrete Plant to manufacture and deliver 150,000 cubic yards per year of ready mixed concrete on an average annual basis. The actual quantity will depend upon market demand and may be as much as 225,000 cubic yards per year during peak demand.

Concrete ingredients include aggregate (sand and gravel), Portland cement, fly ash, small amounts of admixtures and water. Although the relative proportion of ingredients in any batch is subject to change based upon the final use of the concrete, a typical mixture will contain the following approximate materials and amounts by weight:

- Aggregate (sand and gravel) – 78 percent
- Portland Cement – 12 percent
- Fly Ash – 2 percent
- Admixtures – less than 1 percent
- Water – 8 percent

Ready-Mixed Concrete, as a process, uses a central concrete mixer dual-drum and/or dry drum batch plant. Concrete ingredients are added to the large, enclosed rotating drums where they are thoroughly mixed. The wet concrete mixture is then transferred into concrete mix trucks for delivery to various job sites for placement. The control of the batching operations is accomplished from a portable control building located onsite. The mixing drums are fitted with a required bag-house and a vacuum that captures dust and emissions that emanate from the drums.

In addition to the dual drum central mixer and loading facility, the batch plant includes aggregate storage areas, two cement silos, one fly ash silo, a water tank, and conveyors. The silos are completely enclosed and the air exchanged during filling is vented through filters that remove dust particles. The tallest silo is approximately 59 feet high. The conveyors, mixing drums, and other machinery at the Project are powered by electric motors.

All trucks will exit the Project by driving over a vibrating grate to remove any loose materials. Trucks returning to the Project with unused concrete, or at the end of the workday, will wash their drums clean of concrete at the truck washout area. Wash water and left over concrete are collected and reclaimed in lined basins for use onsite. Approximately every three days, the built-up silts and sediments (i.e., fine material) will be removed from the lined basins and transferred to a stockpile for eventual use offsite as landfill cover, among other uses. A similar maintenance process would be employed to maintain the traditional open pond water recycling system, should that alternative be approved and utilized.

3.3.3 Asphalt Mixing Plant

The Applicant proposes to install and operate an Asphalt Mixing Plant to manufacture and deliver 200,000 tons of asphalt per year on an average annual basis. The actual quantity will depend upon market conditions and may be as much as 300,000 tons per year during peak demand.

The plant will be capable of utilizing both RAP and ground crumb rubber. The Project consists mainly of the drying drum with baghouse and mixing drum. Utilizing a combination of the "continuous mix" and "counterflow drum mix" processes, aggregate, which has been proportioned by size gradations, is introduced into the drying drum at the end opposite the burner. As the drum rotates, aggregates are mixed and hot air is blown in a direction "counter" to the aggregate's movement through the drying drum. Hot dry aggregate is then transferred to the adjacent mixing drum where it is blended with pre-heated asphalt oil to form asphalt. The resulting asphalt mixture is discharged at the end of the mixing drum, and then conveyed to one of three 180-ton heated storage silos, where it is loaded into transport trucks. When RAP is being used, the RAP materials are mixed with the aggregate at the end of the Drying Drum, and the mixture is transferred to the mixing drum where asphalt oil is introduced.

When rubberized asphalt (RAC) is being produced, ground crumb rubber is blended with pre-heated asphalt oil which is pumped into a point approximately midway in the mixing drum unit where it is mixed with the hot, dry aggregate that has just come from the drying drum.

The asphalt mixing plant will employ the latest generation of combustion technology. The burner is fuel-efficient, reduces emissions of NOx and VOCs, and keeps CO to a minimum. Natural Gas will be used to achieve the Best Available Control Technology (BACT) Guidelines for NOx, VOCs, CO and SOx. Furthermore, a fabric filter collector (baghouse) with 99.96 percent efficiency will be used to vent the rotary aggregate dryer. This will achieve the BACT guidelines for PM_{10}.

Of concern to permitting agencies, "blue smoke" contains tiny oil droplets that carry much of the characteristic asphalt odor. Air pollution control agencies are becoming more concerned with blue smoke, especially as RAP, rubberized asphalt and polymer blends are more routinely specified in asphalt materials contracts. Without the proper controls, these specialty mixes can produce an increased amount of blue smoke. To control this form of emission, the Project includes a Blue Smoke Control Unit, which utilizes a filtration system providing a control efficiency of 98 percent (1.8 microns or greater) to collect fugitive emissions from the mixing drum, conveyors delivering asphalt to the silos, and the silos themselves.

The Asphalt Mixing Plant is of modular construction with pre-wiring and distributed controls for fast and easy plant setup and subsequent relocation. In this instance, the Applicant is proposing to install a plant that affords:

- Precise computerized cold feed and batching controls to ensure good mix quality.
- Control of burner and mix temperatures to produce consistent asphalt mix.
- Highly efficient plant design and pollution control equipment that exceeds environmental protection requirements.

3.3.4 Raw Cement and Aggregate Transfer and Distribution Facility

The Applicant currently has no rail transport option to deliver raw cement or aggregate materials from the Project to the Los Angeles Basin. The rail carrier has little available rail capacity and currently does not consider either type of commodity a "preferred cargo" for rail shipment. Moreover, the Applicant, despite an intensive three year search, has been unable to locate a suitable rail receiver site in the Los Angeles Basin.

Approximately 9.7 acres of the North Parcel will be used for a Raw Cement and Aggregate Transfer and Distribution Facility. This area is directly north of, and adjacent to the railroad tracks that bisect the North and South Parcels. The raw cement portion of the facility will be able to receive and accommodate 17 railcars, in which raw cement will be delivered from the Sacramento area. The raw cement will be transferred pneumatically from the rail cars into two adjacent silos. The Project will receive approximately 300,000 tons of raw cement annually.

Raw cement will be used onsite at the Ready-Mixed Concrete Plant and the remainder will be pneumatically loaded from the silos located in the Raw Cement and Aggregate Transfer and Distribution Facility into raw cement haul trucks for transport by truck to third parties or operator-owned concrete plants in the Greater Los Angeles, and the San Bernardino and Riverside areas. Under average operating conditions, the Ready-Mixed Concrete Facility will produce 150,000 cubic yards per year, with each cubic yard weighing approximately 4,000 pounds. Of this, raw cement comprises 12 percent by weight, or 480 pounds per cubic yard. This means the onsite Ready-Mixed Concrete Plant will use 36,000 tons of raw cement per year (i.e., 150,000 cubic yards x 480 pounds per cubic yard / 2,000 pounds = 36,000 tons of raw cement).

At an annual production rate of 150,000 cubic yards, raw cement is expected to be used for concrete production as follows:

- Onsite Use by Operator – 12 percent
- Greater Los Angeles area by Operator – 88 percent

At a peak production rate of 225,000 cubic yards, raw cement is expected to be used for concrete production as follows:

- Onsite Use by Operator – 18 percent
- Exported to the Greater Los Angeles area by Operator – 82 percent

If and when rail capacity becomes available, the aggregate portion of the facility will be able to ship Project materials by rail to the Los Angeles Basin, and will be able to receive aggregate mined and processed elsewhere for further shipment by rail to the Los Angeles Basin. Since there is little opportunity to ship aggregate from the Project by rail, the Applicant may find the need to receive aggregate by rail on occasion to supplement the project's supply of aggregate. Such aggregate would provide certain grades of material the project cannot produce in sufficient quantity to support operations at the Ready-Mixed Concrete Plant or Asphalt Mixing Plant. Such rail deliveries will serve to avoid the use of trucks to transport these supplemental materials to the Project.

In the future, if rail capacity becomes available and contracts are executed with the rail carrier, the Applicant will then be in a position to make fuller use of the Raw Cement and Aggregate Transfer and Distribution Facility to transport raw cement and aggregate materials to the Los Angeles basin via rail.

3.3.5 Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan

A Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan (SPCC) will be prepared to meet the requirements of the following:

- Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 112
- California H&S Code, Chapter 6.67, §25270 - Aboveground Petroleum Storage Act (1989)

The purpose of the SPCC is to identify procedures and controls to prevent accidental releases of petroleum products and to minimize the impact if a release occurs.

3.3.6 Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan

In 1987, Congress enacted the Water Quality Act, amending the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to include regulation of the discharge of storm water from industrial and certain municipal sources. EPA issued final regulations establishing permit application requirements for storm water in the November 16, 1990 Federal Register (55 CFR 47990). The regulations provide for individual and group applications and for the issuance of individual and general permits.

In California, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) elected to issue a statewide General Permit that applies to all industrial storm water discharges requiring a permit except those from construction activities. The SWRCB adopted the General Permit and Fact Sheet on November 19, 1991, which was reissued on April 17, 1997. The General Permit requires that the Project:

- Eliminate unauthorized non-storm water discharges.
- Develop and implement a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).
- Monitor discharges of storm water.

A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be developed to comply with the requirements set forth in Industrial Storm Water General Permit Order 97-03-DWQ, which pertains to the General Permit No. CAS000001, the purpose of which is to fulfill two major objectives:

- Identify sources of pollution that may contaminate industrial storm water discharges.
- Describe and ensure the implementation of practices to reduce pollutants in storm water discharges.
- File Notice of Intent (NOI).

3.3.7 Operating Hours

The Project will operate up to 303 days per year, employing 156 people working three shifts. Employees include sales and management staff, plant operators, and concrete and asphalt truck drivers during the day shifts. The night shift will employ seven persons for plant operations and maintenance.

3.3.8 Product Transportation

The Project will generate an average of 217 truck roundtrips and a maximum of 301 truck roundtrips during operations per day. This includes outgoing product trips and incoming materials trucks. Approximately 80 percent of the outgoing product trucks will travel to plants in the greater Los Angeles area while about 20 percent are anticipated to deliver material to plants in the San Bernardino and Riverside area. Employee trips are estimated to be 156 roundtrips per day for average and peak operations. A *Traffic Impact Analysis* was prepared by Austin-Foust Associates, Inc. to evaluate the impact of truck traffic on the existing road system.

3.3.9 Administration, Security, and Public Safety

The Project will include an administration office and dispatch/operations building for normal everyday business. Night time and weekend security will be provided by perimeter fencing around the Aggregate Processing Facilities and Plant areas and around the active mining pit, locked gates, lighting, and security trailer. The office area may be alarmed. Equipment will be disabled daily at the end of the shift. A six-foot high perimeter fence, using cyclone fence materials, will be installed.

3.4 Additional Permits Required for Operation

A variety of permits, plans, licenses and certificates may be required by other agencies. Actual permitting requirements will be determined by the permitting agencies during application processing, the more significant of which will involve the following agencies:

Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District

- Permit to Construct
- Permits to Operate (PTO)

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

- NPDES Permit (General)
- Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan (refer to 3.3.1 below)
- Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (refer to 3.3.2 below)
- Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification

California Department of Fish and Game

- Section 1605 (long-term) Streambed Alteration Agreement

County of Los Angeles, Department of Health Services

- Business Plan

- Hazardous Materials Inventory
- Above-Ground Storage Tank (diesel)

County of Los Angeles, Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division

- Welding Permit
- Hazardous Materials Storage and Use

4.0 POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will evaluate the environmental impacts of the Project, after having first established the environmental setting, or baseline, for the environmental analysis. In the Project Initial Study prepared by the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning, the following potentially significant impacts were identified for further evaluation, the results of which will be disclosed in a focused EIR. In each instance, the significance of potential Project impacts, cumulative impacts, and appropriate mitigation measures will be disclosed in the EIR.

- Geotechnical Hazards
- Flood Hazards
- Noise
- Water Quality
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources – Sensitive Species Habitat/Loss of Habitat
- Visual Quality
- Traffic/Access
- Environmental Safety – Hazardous Materials

5.0 ALTERNATIVES

The EIR will evaluate alternative means to implement the Project. Issues and concerns identified during agency and public scoping and through subsequent environmental evaluation will be used to develop and refine Project alternatives. Development of potential alternatives will be made in conjunction with the local community and state and federal agencies involved in the process. As required by CEQA, the County will also analyze the "no project" alternative as a baseline for gauging the impacts of the Project.

6.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Due to the scope and longevity of this Project, the EIR will evaluate impacts that are individually not significant but that may be cumulatively significant when viewed in connection with existing conditions and probable future projects. The potential cumulative impacts from other existing surface mining operations in the same vicinity will be assessed. The significance of potential impacts and appropriate mitigation measures will be disclosed in the EIR.

7.0 DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

The CEQA Guidelines require an evaluation of the direct physical changes in the environment and reasonably foreseeable indirect physical changes in the environment which may be caused by the Project. For example, it will be necessary to evaluate the growth-inducement resulting

from the Project. The significance of potential impacts and appropriate mitigation measures will be disclosed in the EIR.

8.0 REVIEW PERIOD

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than 30 calendar days after formal issuance date of this notice. Please submit comments no later than the close of business January 11, 2008. In submitting comments, please include the commenter's name, telephone number, and e-mail address in the event it is necessary to further clarify the comments being offered.

Please send your written comments to:

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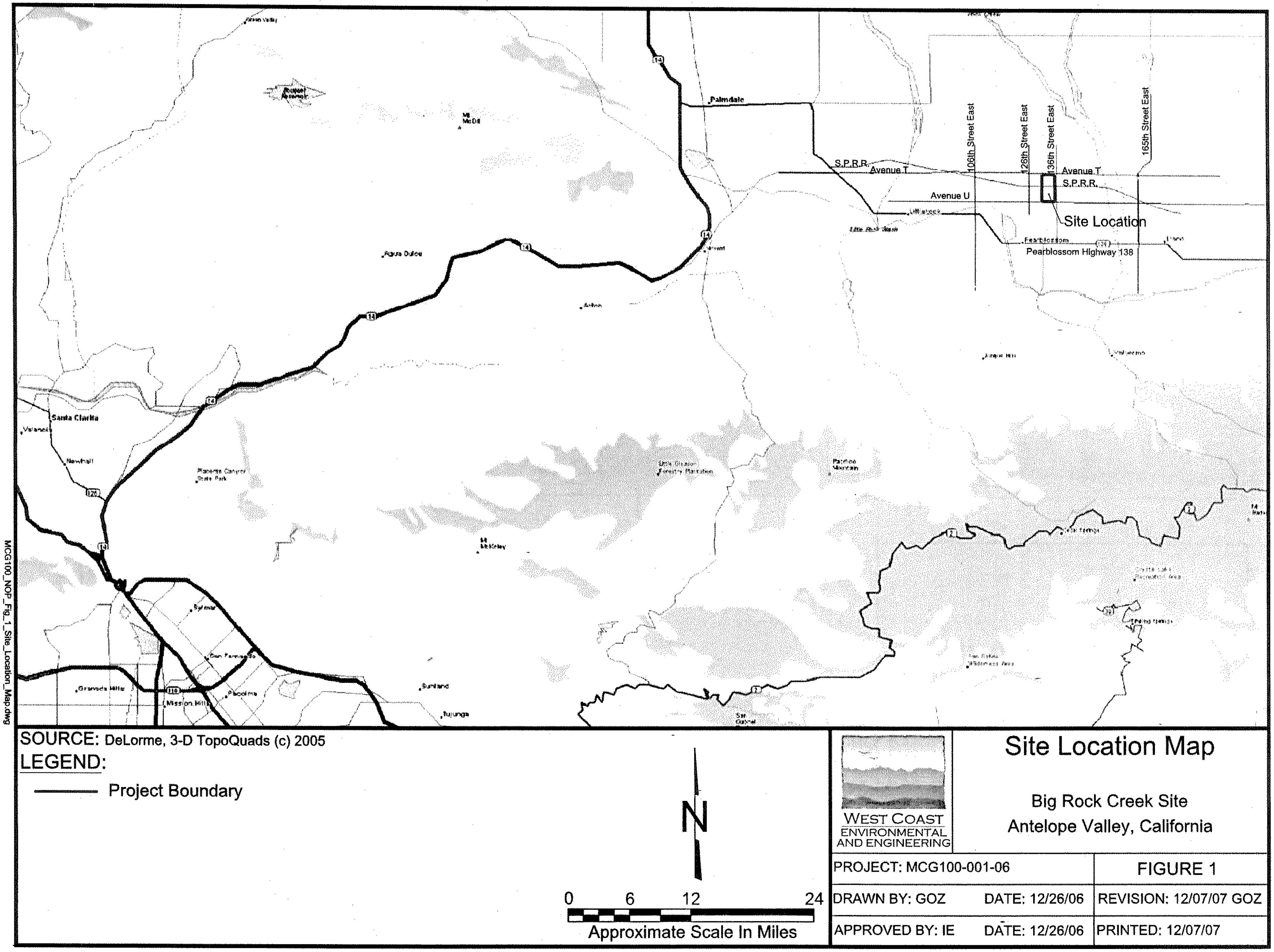

SOURCE: DeLorme, 3-D TopoQuads (c) 2005

LEGEND:

—— Project Boundary

WEST COAST ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENGINEERING	Site Location Map Big Rock Creek Site Antelope Valley, California	
PROJECT: MCG100-001-06		FIGURE 1
DRAWN BY: GOZ	DATE: 12/26/06	REVISION: 12/07/07 GOZ
APPROVED BY: IE	DATE: 12/26/06	PRINTED: 12/07/07

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