

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
DOI-BLM-CA-060-0010-0002-EA**

NAME of PROJECT: La Posta Mountain Warfare Training Facility

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action have been assessed. Based on the analysis provided in the attached EA prepared by the Department of the Navy (DON), I conclude the approved action is not a major federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment under the criteria in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.18 and 1508.27. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

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Date

Background:

The Department of the Navy (DON) currently conducts special warfare training on public lands under a right-of-way (ROW) reservation administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in an area near Campo, California. This existing land withdrawal is used by the Commander Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) Naval Base Coronado (NBC) for special operations. The current land use designation for this withdrawal is Microwave Space Relay Station. The training that occurs on this land can better be described as a Mountain Warfare Training Facility (MWTF) and for this reason the Proposed Action includes a change in the land use designation.

Existing Conditions:

The 1,079 acre area currently withdrawn from the BLM is located within the unincorporated portion of San Diego County. There are a number of other federally administered lands in the immediate area, with a portion of the Cleveland National Forest to the north and public lands under the administrative jurisdiction of the BLM to the immediate north, east, south, and west of the existing withdrawal. Some privately owned land abuts the existing withdrawal to the

southwest, southeast, and northeast. The unincorporated community of Campo is located approximately 3 miles to the southwest.

Proposed Action:

The project action includes administrative actions such as land withdrawals and changing land designations as well as constructing new training facilities and enhancing existing training facilities and activities on BLM land near Campo, California. The Proposed Action includes the following six actions.

- Withdrawing Parcels C, E, and G (Refer to Map in EA) from the BLM for exclusive use by DON.
- Obtaining nonexclusive use of Parcels A, B, D, F, and H (Refer to Map in EA).
- Administratively changing the existing land use designation of land at the Microwave Space Relay Station to Mountain Warfare Training Facility.
- Changing the land use of the existing withdrawal area from partially exclusive and partially nonexclusive use to exclusive use by DON.
- Constructing and operating a new multi-structure training complex on Parcel C (Refer to Map in EA).
- Enhancing the current training activities conducted in Parcels C, E, and G (Refer to Map in EA).

New construction and training enhancements to support special warfare training:

- Construction and operation of a new “Multi-structure Training Complex” (MTC) within Parcel C.
- An upgrade of the security gate at the main entrance to the MWTF.
- Expansion of Range 113 Close Quarter Combat (CQC) facility to create a second training space that would be adjacent to the current training space.
- Construction of a horizontal ricochet reduction platform at Range 115 to create a fully baffled range and reduce the surface danger zone.
- Improvements to Range 112 consisting of the addition of four sniper bullet traps that would be built into the hillside above the existing Range, expansion of existing and construction of new decline shooting platforms, and pavement of the parking area for one of the shooting platforms.
- Installation of a well and a 5,000 gallon potable water storage tank, septic tank and leach field.
- Construction of a storage building for an emergency electric generator.
- Connections to underground water and electrical to the MTC.
- Widening and straightening of the existing dirt access road and construction of two drainage culverts.

Training activities on the Parcels C, E, and G would include strategic reconnaissance, land navigation, photo image capture, sniper activity, and patrolling. Current live fire training activities would continue on Parcel C. Withdrawal of Parcel G would allow SPECWAR to enhance the surface danger zone for the live fire activities.

Environmental Effects:

The EA evaluated potential impacts to Geology, Mineral Potential, Hydrology/Water Quality, Biological Resources, General Wildlife and Wildlife Corridors, Federally Listed Wildlife Species, Cultural Resources, Land Use, Public Facilities Access, Socioeconomics, Traffic and Circulation, Air Quality, Noise, Environmental Health and Safety, Ordnance, and Utilities and Public Services.

The analysis in the EA has determined that potential impacts associated with the implementation of the Proposed Action would not be significant.

Geology

The Proposed Action would involve minor landform alterations related to site preparation for the new construction. No adverse impacts to topography would occur. There are no unique geologic features that would be adversely impacted by implementation of the Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action is located in an active seismic region. Construction would comply with the seismic design criteria of the Uniform Building Code or in accordance with the latest seismic design criteria of the Structural Engineers Association of California. Therefore, there would be no significant impacts associated with seismicity.

The current soil erosion and sediment control measures required by Naval Base Coronado would be implemented during all phases of construction. Construction of the Proposed Action is subject to compliance with the storm water measures contained in a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and would comply with Best Management Practices (BMP) as required by the general construction activity storm water permit issued by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). The SWPPP would be subject to the review and approval of the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). There would be no significant impacts associated with erosion or sedimentation from implementation of the Proposed Action.

Construction and operation of the potable water supply groundwater well and septic system leach field are included as part of the Proposed Action. The groundwater well would require an installation and operating permit from the County of San Diego. The proposed leach field (on-site waste water systems) would be permitted by the County of San Diego and would follow specified design parameters.

Mineral Potential

All mining claims and patents on the MWTF withdrawal are listed as forfeited or closed on BLM records with the exception of one series of claims. These claims were subjected to a forfeiture appeal. Reversal of existing conditions through appeal is not expected. Therefore impacts to activities related to the mineral potential of the site would not be significant.

Hydrology/Water Quality

Under the Proposed Action all construction of facilities would comply with the Clean Water Act (CWA) and construction crews would comply with the SWPPP process. Therefore, the project impact of increased erosion potential would not be adverse. The specific measures for construction include minimization of erosion and siltation of off-site areas during construction.

Biological Resources

No federally listed plant species were observed or are known to occur within the vicinity of the Proposed Action area. There would be no significant impact to plants from implementation of the Proposed Action.

Sensitive Vegetation Communities within the project area include California buckwheat-white sage series, California buckwheat series, and Needlegrass series. Impacts to these species would be less than significant.

The implementation of the Proposed Action would permanently impact approximately 41 acres of native vegetation. However, the amount of permanent acreage loss associated with the Proposed Action would not be considered significant in the larger context of the La Posta linkage/migration corridor that currently functions on a regional scale. Therefore, no significant impacts to functioning wildlife corridors are expected to occur from the Proposed Action.

Two federally listed species, the Quino checkerspot butterfly (QCB) and the arroyo toad, are known to occur within the Proposed Action area and/or within the vicinity of the Proposed Action area.

In 2005 a biological assessment of QCBs was prepared by the DON and submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS rendered a biological opinion recommending conservation measures for this species. While project implementation is likely to adversely affect this species, with incorporation of the terms and conditions agreed upon by the USFWS and DON, there would be no significant impact to this species. The biological opinion with the terms and conditions is included in the EA.

Specific hydrological conditions are necessary to support the breeding habitat for the arroyo toad. Because none of the parcels provide these hydrological conditions, it is not expected that the arroyo would use any portion of the project area for reproduction. There would be no significant impacts to the arroyo toad.

A total of 2,132 meters of isolated waters of the U.S. occur in the southern portion of Parcel C. Direct impacts to isolated waters of the U.S. will be avoided through construction project design.

Cultural Resources

Four archaeological sites were identified within the proposed project location. However, none of these sites are located in Parcel C where the construction of the MTC and access road improvements are planned. There would be no significant impacts to cultural resources from construction or operation of the Proposed Action.

Land Use

Implementation of the Proposed Action would require the modification of a grazing allotment so that grazing would not take place on any of the property proposed for withdrawal for exclusive use. This would result in 2,308 acres being removed from the allotment and no longer available for grazing use. The existing user would be notified in advance and the lease would be modified. One apiary permit would not be renewed since this use is also not compatible with the military training. Although this would result in an adverse impact to the existing users, this impact is not considered significant to the overall land use of the area.

The existing ROW, for access roads, powerlines, telephone lines, and wind energy project, would not be affected by implementation of the Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action area would continue to be federally owned property and would not be subject to the policies and restrictions of the County of San Diego. Therefore, there would be no significant impact to adopted plans, ordinances, and policies.

Public Facilities Access

There are no existing recreational or community support facilities within or near the Proposed Action area. Public recreational activities, such as horseback riding, camping, hiking, and hunting, which are currently allowed in the proposed withdrawal and ROW parcels, would no longer be allowed on the withdrawal parcels. Since the level of use of these parcels by these activities is relatively minor, this impact is not considered to be significant.

Socioeconomics

There would be no increase in military or civilian personnel working at the proposed facility. Construction and operation of the Proposed Action would have no effect of the demographics of the surrounding area nor would it have an effect on the overall economy and jobs in San Diego County.

The Proposed Action would be located within areas designated for military training and would not be in proximity to any housing area. There are no schools or child care facilities within one mile of the project area. Therefore, there would be no significant impacts to economics, environmental justice, or environmental justice for children from construction or operation of the Proposed Action.

Traffic and Circulation

Increases in traffic volumes associated with construction activity would be temporary; once construction has been completed, there would be no long-term impacts to the regional transportation network or non-base transportation. The Proposed Action would involve no net change in permanent military and civilian personnel on La Posta MWTF. However, it would result in additional transient personnel going to and from the site for training. The Proposed Action would result in about 12 additional persons per training day (excluding weekends and holidays). This number of additional personnel at the site would result in additional traffic (approximately eight new trips daily) going to and from the facility. This increase in traffic would not be substantial, and significant impacts to the regional transportation network would not occur.

Air Quality

Air quality impacts associated with the Proposed Action related to emissions during construction and subsequent operation of the proposed facilities would not be significant.

Estimated construction and operation emissions for the Proposed Action would be less than the conformity trigger levels and would not be regionally significant. A record of Non-Applicability has been prepared by the DON for the Proposed Action.

Noise

Construction noise levels at the closest residences would be 46 to 49 dBA. Noise levels at the closest residences for operational activities, primarily weapons fire, would be approximately 30 dBA which would not substantially increase nighttime or daytime ambient noise levels. There would be no significant impacts associated with noise.

Aesthetics

There are no designated scenic areas visible to the general public in the Proposed Action area. Therefore, no significant visual impact of public views would occur.

Environmental Health and Safety

Construction and operational safety procedures and precautions would be implemented to prevent potential injury. Security fencing would be erected around the construction areas, and appropriate signage would be posted to prevent unauthorized personnel from accessing the site. Operations would be contained within the restricted construction zone and would not conflict with safe public use or military use of the surrounding areas.

There would be no potential impacts related to explosive safety quantity distance arcs, electromagnetic radiation, munitions transport, lead-based paint, or accident potential zone as proposed withdrawal lands would not be open to the public. All activities would be in compliance with NBC guidelines and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's *Best Management Practices for Lead at Outdoor Shooting Ranges*.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would involve live fire operations at the Close Quarter Control facility and small arms ranges involving the use of a variety of small arms. Range management practices would continue to be implemented to ensure range safety and therefore no significant impacts would occur.

Utilities and Public Services

New facilities under the Proposed Action include a new well, water storage tank, and septic system to support the water supply and restroom facility needs. The well and septic system would be designed and constructed to comply with all permitting requirements of the County of San Diego and the SWRCB. No significant impacts would occur.

The La Posta MWTF has an adequate supply of electricity to meet the needs of the expanded facility and operations in the Proposed Action.

The implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to police or fire services and solid waste production.