

**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, 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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Background:

The EA evaluates the potential environmental consequences of several land use changes between the BLM and the Department of the Navy (hereafter referred to as the Navy), and the construction and operation of new military training facilities at and surrounding the La Posta Mountain Warfare Training Facility (MWTF) near Campo, California. The Navy currently conducts special warfare training on 1,079 acres of land in this area. This proposal would expand their operations to 5,554 acres.

Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action includes the following six actions (refer to Fig. 1-2 & Table 1-1 in EA).

- Withdraw Parcels C, E, and G from the BLM for exclusive use by Navy.
- Issue a right-of-way grant for nonexclusive use by the Navy of Parcels A, B, D, F, and H.
- Change the existing land use designation for the 1,079 acres of existing facilities from that of an obsolete Microwave Space Relay Station to use as a Mountain Warfare Training Facility.

- Change the land use of the existing 1,079 acre withdrawal area from both exclusive and nonexclusive use to entirely exclusive use by Navy.
- Construct and operate a new multi-structure training complex on Parcel C.
- Enhance the current training activities conducted on Parcels C, E, and G.

New construction and training enhancements to support special warfare training:

- Construct and operate a new “Multi-structure Training Complex” (MTC) within Parcel C.
- Upgrade the security gate at the main entrance to the MWTF.
- Expand Range 113 Close Quarter Combat (CQC) facility to create a second training space that would be adjacent to the current training space.
- Construct a horizontal ricochet reduction platform at Range 115 to create a fully baffled range and reduce the surface danger zone.
- Improve Range 112 consisting of the addition of four sniper bullet traps that would be built into the hillside above the existing Range, expand decline shooting platforms, and pave the parking area for one of the shooting platforms.
- Install water well and a 5,000 gallon potable water storage tank, septic tank and leach field.
- Construct a storage building for an emergency electric generator.
- Connect underground water and electrical systems to the MTC.
- Widen and straighten the existing dirt access road and construct two drainage culverts.

Training activities on 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 enhance the surface danger zone for 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 Proposed Action would not be significant.

Geology

The Proposed Action would involve minor landform alterations related to site preparation for the new facility 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 and would comply with Best Management Practices as required by the general construction activity storm water permit issued by the State Water Resources Control Board. The Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan 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 and septic system 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 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 and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. The specific measures for construction include minimization of erosion and siltation of off-site areas during construction. Any increase in potential erosion is not considered significant.

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 Proposed Action would permanently impact approximately 41 acres of habitat associated with wildlife corridors. The amount of permanent acreage loss associated with the Proposed Action, however, would not be considered significant in the larger context of the La Posta linkage/migration corridor that currently functions on a regional scale. No significant impacts to functioning wildlife corridors are, therefore, 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 or adjacent to the proposed project area. In 2005, a biological assessment

of QCBs was prepared by the NAVY and submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS rendered a biological opinion recommending conservation measures for this species. With implementation of the terms and conditions agreed upon by the USFWS and NAVY, there would be no significant impact to this species.

Specific hydrological conditions are necessary to support the breeding habitat for the arroyo toad. Because none of the affected parcels provide these hydrological conditions, arroyo toads are not anticipated to use any portion of the project area for reproduction. 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 identified project design measures.

Cultural Resources

Four archaeological sites were identified within the proposed project location. However, none of these sites are located where facility construction or access improvements would occur.

Land Use

Implementation of the Proposed Action would require the modification of the Clover Flats Grazing Allotment to exclude grazing on parcels C, E, F and G that are proposed for withdrawal and exclusive use by the Navy. No direct impacts to grazing would occur on parcels C and G as grazing does not occur on these lands nor is anticipated to occur in the future. Potential future use of these lands for grazing under this grazing allotment, however, would be precluded. This action would result in a significant and adverse impact to on-going grazing use on parcels E and F. Recent consultation with the holder of the affected grazing allotment resulted in proposed mitigation to allow year-long cattle grazing within parcels E and F with the removal of livestock only during periods of infrequent use by the Navy. This mitigation, acceptable to both the Navy and allotment holder, reduces this impact to non-significance.

One apiary permit would not be renewed since this use is also incompatible with the military training. Although this would result in an adverse impact to the existing users, this impact is not considered significant as other areas in the vicinity are suitable for apiary use.

Existing access roads, powerlines, telephone lines, and a 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 is no existing recreational or community support facilities within or near the project area. Public recreational activities, such as horseback riding, camping, hiking, and hunting, would no longer be allowed on the withdrawal parcels C, E and G. This impact is not considered significant since use of these lands for these activities is nominal.

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 at the training facility, however, there would be a slight increase trainees going to and from the site. This increase in traffic would not be substantial, and significant impacts to the regional transportation network would not occur.

Air Quality

Estimated construction and operation emissions for the Proposed Action would be less than the conformity trigger levels and would not be regionally significant.

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. These noise levels are within the levels of non-significance.

Aesthetics

There are no designated scenic areas visible to the general public in affected area and no significant visual impact would occur.

Environmental Health and Safety

Construction and operational safety procedures and precautions would be implemented to prevent human health and safety issues. 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 restricted construction zones and

would not conflict with public or military use of surrounding areas.

All activities would be in compliance with Navy guidelines and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's *Best Management Practices for Lead at Outdoor Shooting Ranges*. The Proposed Action would involve live fire operations at the Close Quarter Control facility and small arms ranges; however, range management practices would continue to be implemented to ensure range safety.

Utilities and Public Services

Water and septic systems would be designed and constructed to comply with all permitting requirements of the County of San Diego and the South Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. No additional electrical distribution facilities would be necessary as a sufficient supply of electricity exists to meet the needs of the expanded facility and operations. The Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to police or fire services and solid waste production.