

Project Milestones

- ◆ Publish *Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)* and Begin 90-day DEIS Public Comment Period, September 2010



- ◆ Complete *Final EIS*, July 2011
- ◆ Issue *Record of Decision (ROD)*, October 2011
- ◆ Then, if required by the ROD:

- ◆ Submit completed *Military Land Withdrawal Application* to BLM, 2011



- ◆ Submit Proposed Land Withdrawal Legislation to Congress, 2011

- ◆ If Congress Approves Land Withdrawal, Prepare *Resource Management Plan* or Amend Existing Plan, 2012-2014

- ◆ Request the FAA to commence rulemaking to consider establishment or modification of *Special Use Airspace*, 2011

- ◆ Purchase Non-Federal Lands at Fair Market Value, 2012-2014



- ◆ FAA complete rulemaking process, 2013

- ◆ Complete Necessary Training Range Improvements, 2014

- ◆ Implement and Sustain Required Mitigation, 2014 and beyond

- ◆ Commence MEB Training, 2015

Good Neighbor Pledge

In order to meet its National Military Strategy-required service-level training, the Marine Corps will study reasonable training land and airspace acquisition alternatives in the areas near the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, 29 Palms CA. The Marine Corps pledges to seek only those lands and airspace needed for and to continue its tradition of outstanding stewardship. The Marine Corps is proud of this tradition, as well as of its good neighbor practices in the High Desert.

Throughout the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, stakeholders will have opportunities to review these alternatives, the completed studies that support NEPA compliance, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and the final decision made for a project that seeks the resources necessary to train Marines as they must fight.

The Marine Corps look forward to working with you throughout the NEPA process, receiving your comments, and using them to develop the right plan to meet Marine Corps training requirements while also helping to preserve the region's resources for generations to come.



For Further
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Proposed 29 Palms Training Land and Airspace
Acquisition Project

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Proposed 29 Palms Training Land and Airspace Acquisition Project



Project Description

November 2009

Why Study Training Land and Airspace Acquisition at 29 Palms?

- ◆ Marines must “train as they fight” to respond immediately to any contingency around the globe. With the end of the Cold War, and from lessons learned from recent military operations, a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is the Marine Corps’ primary contingency response force.
- ◆ MEB training requires range capability that can support sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver.
- ◆ A MEB is approximately 15,000 Marines, built around a brigade Ground Combat Element and a like-sized Air Combat Element. It also includes command and logistic elements.
- ◆ The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) is the Marine Corps’ center for combined-arms excellence. A Center for Naval Analyses study concluded that expanding MCAGCC is necessary to execute sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training.
- ◆ Ranges at MCAGCC and within the DoD inventory currently cannot support these MEB training requirements.
- ◆ The Marine Requirements Oversight Council validated the MEB training requirement and authorized action to pursue additional training land and airspace at MCAGCC.
- ◆ The Undersecretary of Defense approved a Department of Navy request for a waiver to DoD’s large-scale, land-acquisition moratorium, allowing the project to go forward with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will evaluate reasonable alternatives, impacts and mitigation.
- ◆ The EIS will be developed in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
- ◆ Opportunities for public involvement will be scheduled several times throughout the multi-year EIS process.

Frequently Asked Questions

◆ Is the base expansion a “done deal”?

No. The Marine Corps will prepare an EIS — an Environmental Impact Statement — that studies a range of reasonable alternatives to meet Marine Corps MEB training requirements. The public will have opportunities to comment on this study, including a range of reasonable alternatives, during this National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. After the EIS is completed, the Marine Corps will select the option that meets its training requirements, consistent with environmental and resource interests.



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◆ Doesn’t the base have enough training land?

The current military ranges at 29 Palms cannot meet MEB critical training requirements. Only 40% of the base is available for live-fire and maneuver training. The remaining 60% of the land supports safety buffers, as well as area for infrastructure and for natural resources protection. Marines will continue to be good stewards of lands it controls that contain important environmental and cultural resources.

◆ Why can’t Marines use the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, for MEB training, sharing with the Army?

The NTC ranges are not capable of supporting MEB-level sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training.

◆ Why would the base need more airspace?

A MEB is a Marine Air Ground Task Force. To support MEB training, while also providing for public safety, the Marine Corps would require training airspace for its use of artillery, mortars, ground-launched missiles, tank guns, machine guns, small arms weapons, and airborne weapons such as missiles and bombs. The FAA would ensure that air traffic is routed around



MCAGCC during training activities that involve such weapons.

◆ Would this place any new requirements on commercial airline or civil aviation flights over the base?

Current MCAGCC airspace restrictions might be extended over any newly acquired training lands due to safety issues involved with live-fire training. The Marine Corps will work with the FAA and aviation stakeholders on airspace issues examined under NEPA and in the FAA rulemaking process.

◆ How does the public express its views of the project and the alternatives?

The EIS will analyze environmental impacts of a range of reasonable alternatives. In the Fall of 2010, a 90-day public comment period on the Draft EIS is planned. The public, will also have opportunities to comment during the FAA’s rulemaking process to establish or modify any Special Use Airspace.



◆ What will the Marine Corps do about community and environmental impacts?

The Marine Corps will evaluate potential mitigation measures required by any proposed action. It is proud of its reputation as a good environmental steward and neighbor, and it will continue to be both.



◆ How would the Marines obtain any new lands?

The Record of Decision would, if necessary, ask the Congress to legislate “withdrawal” of public lands from the Bureau of Land Management to the Department of the Navy. The United States would be required to purchase any non-federal property required for military training at fair market value.

◆ How long will it take to make a decision?

The Department of the Navy plans to publish a Draft EIS in September 2010; publish a Final EIS in July 2011 and issue its Record of Decision in October 2011.