

McGregor Range, New Mexico Land Withdrawal Renewal Legislative Environmental Impact Statement



Environmental Stewardship



Environmental Awareness — A Priority

One of the key goals at Fort Bliss is upholding the Army's commitment to environmental stewardship on McGregor Range. Fort Bliss is continually working to improve its environmental programs through enhancing its *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)* review process, training programs, community outreach, and the Environmental Quality Control Committee, which is chaired by the Commanding General.

McGregor Range contains facilities, equipment, and infrastructure for specific military activities. Most of the land area is used for a variety of overlapping military and nonmilitary uses that include ground maneuvers, safety zones, recreation and hunting, grazing, and natural resource field surveys.

The public domain lands within McGregor Range are managed by the Army and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in accordance with an *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* signed in 1990, the BLM's *White Sands Resource Management Plan*, as amended by the *McGregor Range Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA)*.

In accordance with Public Law 99-606, the Army has priority use of McGregor Range at all times to support its mission. However, the BLM shares management responsibilities for wildlife, including improvements for sustaining wildlife. The BLM is also responsible for a variety of nonmilitary uses and resources in defined geographic areas, including energy and mineral resources, grazing, vegetation,

recreation and hunting, wilderness, visual and cultural resources, and management of nonmilitary-caused fires. Army-owned lands within the range boundary are managed similarly to adjacent withdrawn public land.

Fort Bliss pays close attention to potential environmental impacts that could occur on McGregor Range in connection with military projects and actions necessary to perform its training, equipment testing, and mobilization missions. This close monitoring makes sure the Army conducts itself in an environmentally responsible manner and that it is in compliance with existing environmental regulations and policies.

The Army currently uses the Army Integrated Training Area Management (ITAM) program as a tool for sustaining the land base to support training. Various elements of this program provide information about land condition trends and land rehabilitation efforts using digital geographic information system (GIS). This helps with the selection of training locations that will require a minimum cost for land restoration and environmental compliance.

Army Regulation 200-3 (*Natural Resources - Land, Forest, and Wildlife Management*) and the *Sikes Act*, requires that the Army develop an *Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP)* and *Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP)* for Fort Bliss. These plans, when finalized, will apply ecosystem management and biodiversity principles, and comparative property significance criteria to help the Army prioritize management actions in conjunction

with the RMPA for McGregor Range.

The Military Mission and Environmental Responsibility

The Fort Bliss INRMP establishes a framework for coordinating and directing natural resource management activities such as environmental conservation efforts and range complex usage. The important goals of the INRMP are to:

- Support the Fort Bliss mission;
- Preserve biological diversity through ecosystem management;
- Conserve soil and water resources;
- Preserve and enhance native flora and fauna (including at least one known, and possibly four other, endangered or threatened species) through habitat management; and
- Coordinate with other installation land users to maximize efficient land use.

Actions supporting these goals include procedures to control environmental effects of ground-disturbing activities affecting soil erosion and vegetation; fires resulting from training exercises; and demolition or construction of facilities. Implementation of the INRMP will help Fort Bliss effectively integrate the Army's compliance with environmental laws and regulations, with the BLM's responsibilities under the RMPA, and prevent deterioration of areas designated for training, as well as nonmilitary uses.

Fort Bliss also has completed an ICRMP that focuses specifically on the management of cultural resources on the installation. The plan includes a 5-year program designed to inventory and evaluate the installation's pre-1950 buildings and designated landscapes to determine their historical significance, and post-1950 facilities to establish whether they have exceptional importance within the context of the Cold War. The ICRMP helps the Army streamline its development of appropriate treatment plans for designated historical sites. There are an estimated 13,900 known archeological sites within Fort Bliss, many of which may be eligible for inclusion in the *National Register of Historic Places*.

The ICRMP also includes provisions for consulting with Native Americans with historic ties to the land on McGregor Range, complying with the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act*, and determining whether proposed actions comply with the *Native American Religious Freedom Act*.

The ICRMP, when implemented, will provide for the continued management of cultural resources on Fort Bliss, in balance with the Army's requirements for routine

training, testing, and facility development. Effective cultural resources management will be facilitated through the adoption of procedures that have been programmatically reviewed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer.

For More Information

Further information on the renewal may be obtained by calling 915-568-6708 or toll-free 1-888-248-8329, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., mountain time. At other times, leave a message and your call will be returned. The Fort Bliss public affairs staff (915-568-4505) and Fort Bliss Web site (www.bliss.army.mil) can provide additional information, or write to Fort Bliss Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss, Building 15, Fort Bliss, Texas 79916.

Comments on the Draft LEIS should be received by February 9, 1999. Please direct comments to Dr. Andy Vliet, Program Manager, McGregor Range Military Land Withdrawal Renewal, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss, Attn: ATZC-CSA, P.O. Box 6020, Fort Bliss, Texas 79906, or send e-mail to: mcmgregor@emh10.bliss.army.mil.
