

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



Draft LEIS Findings



The Legislative Environmental Impact Statement Analyzes Six Alternatives

The Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS) will give Congress the necessary information to make an environmentally informed decision regarding the McGregor Range Land Withdrawal Renewal.

The McGregor LEIS analyzed six alternatives that include options for renewal of the withdrawal for all, part, or none of the existing withdrawn land area. This fact sheet provides a brief description of each alternative and a summary of associated environmental and operational impacts. Chapter 4 of the LEIS contains the full discussion of the environmental consequences (direct and indirect effects, and cumulative impacts) of implementing each of the six alternatives.

The Proposed Action and Alternatives

The Army has completed its application to renew the land withdrawal for McGregor Range for the 50-year period 2001 through 2051. This proposed action is Alternative 1.

The LEIS also analyzes Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Each alternative describes different portions of McGregor Range that Congress would renew and what lands would be returned to the public domain. Prior to the return of any currently withdrawn land to the public domain, the Secretary of

the Army would need to prepare a written determination concerning contaminated lands.

Contaminants could include explosive, toxic, or other hazardous substances. The Department of Interior (DOI) and Army would then decide what returned lands are safe for public access following ordnance and explosive hazards clean-up activities. This is also true for the No Action Alternative, under which the Army would cease military use of McGregor Range and return all previously withdrawn lands to the DOI.

For More Information

Further information on the renewal may be obtained by calling 915-568-6708, or toll-free at 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.

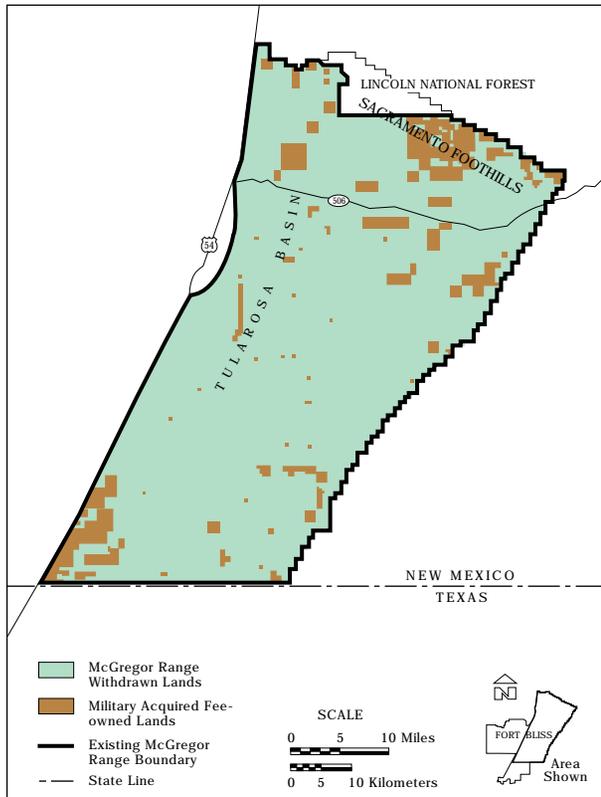
Comments on the Draft LEIS should be received by February 9, 1999. Please direct comments to Dr. Andy Vliet, Program Manager, McGregor Range Military Land Withdrawal Renewal, U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss, Attn: ATZC-CSA, P.O. Box 6020, Fort Bliss, Texas 79906.

Alternative 1 Army's Proposed Action

Alternative 1, the proposed action, would renew the McGregor Range land withdrawal under the same conditions as provided in PL 99-606. There would be no change to the McGregor boundary.

McGregor Range currently encompasses approximately 697,472 acres: 608,385 acres withdrawn under PL 99-606, and 71,083 acres owned in fee by the Army. In addition, 18,004 acres of U.S. Forest Service-managed land are used as a safety buffer and for dismounted training. This acreage is not included in the withdrawal but would continue to be used through an agreement with the Forest Service.

McGregor Range is publicly accessible via U.S. Highway 54 and New Mexico Highway 506. The public is excluded from areas within Tularosa Basin south of New Mexico Highway 506 due to safety concerns. Public access is allowed on other areas of McGregor Range when it does not interfere with the military mission.



Current boundaries of McGregor Range remain the same.

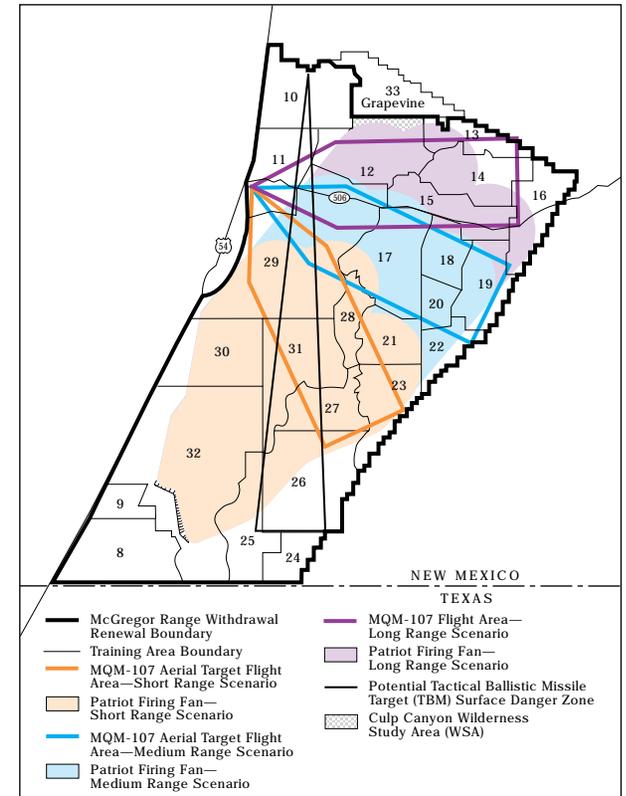
← Area to be Withdrawn

Environmental Impacts

- Continuation of nonmilitary land uses
- Land management continues as present
- Slight increase in water demand from public supplies in El Paso
- Potential for impacts to resources does not change significantly from current conditions
- Continued beneficial effect on local economy

Operational Impacts →

- Military activities continue as present

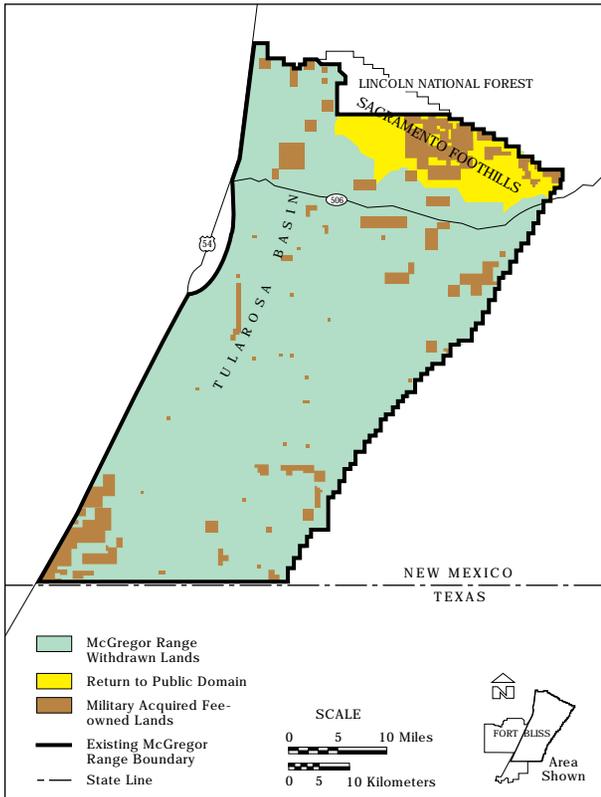


Target Flight Areas and Surface Danger Zones Associated with Patriot Firings.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 would renew the withdrawal of the Tularosa Basin and Otero Mesa portions of McGregor Range for continued military use. This is about 569,395 acres of public land.

The land returned to the public domain totals approximately 40,000 acres, and includes the Sacramento Mountains foothills portion of McGregor Range, and most of the Culp Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA). Army fee-owned in-holdings, within the area returned to public domain, would be retained by the Army for specialized training.



Withdraw Tularosa Basin and Otero Mesa portions of McGregor Range for continued military use.

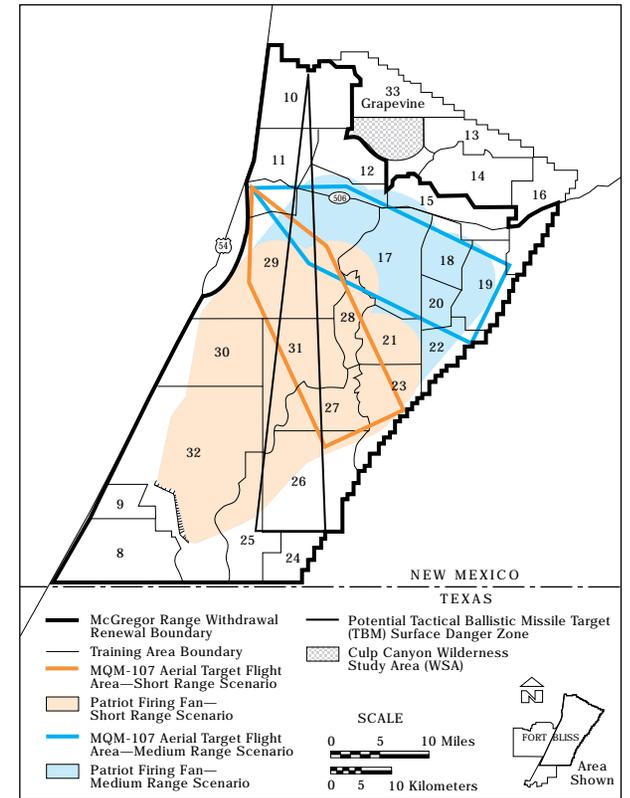
← Area to be Withdrawn

Environmental Impacts

- Small increase in public access for nonmilitary uses
- Slightly fewer road closures
- Less noise disturbance for wilderness users
- Possible impacts to cultural resources from increased public access
- No significant impacts to other resources

Operational Impacts →

- Patriot training scenarios reduced by 33%
- Slight reduction of on-road vehicle maneuvers
- Reduction or elimination of military ground activities in Sacramento Mountains foothills
- Continuation of training on fee-owned land

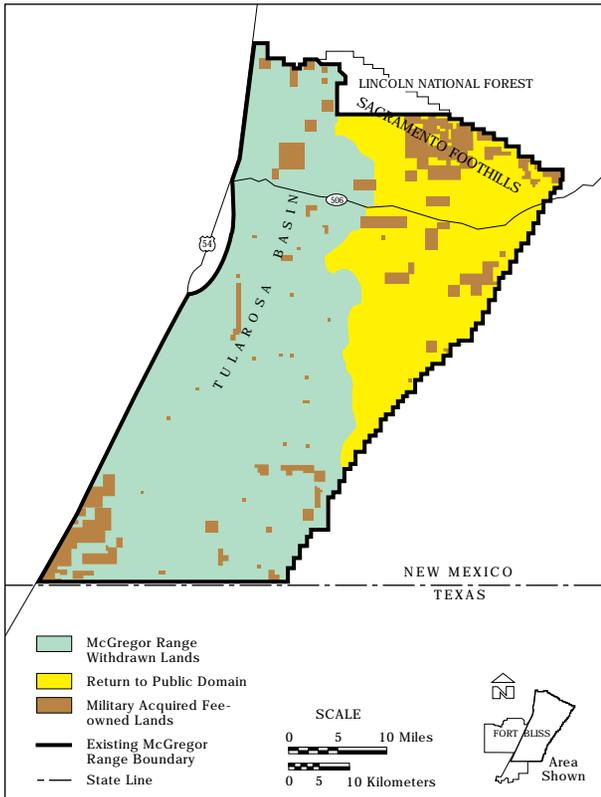


Target Flight Areas and Surface Danger Zones Associated with Patriot Firings.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would renew the withdrawal of approximately 429,395 acres of public land for continued military use. This is the Tularosa Basin portion of McGregor Range.

The area returned to the public domain, about 180,000 acres, includes the Otero Mesa and Sacramento Mountains foothills portions of McGregor Range, Culp Canyon WSA, and McGregor Black Grama Grassland Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The withdrawn area of McGregor Range would encompass areas within the Tularosa Basin and the escarpment of Otero Mesa. Army fee-owned in-holdings, within the lands returned to public domain, would be retained by the Army for specialized training.



Withdraw Tularosa Basin portion of McGregor Range for continued military use.

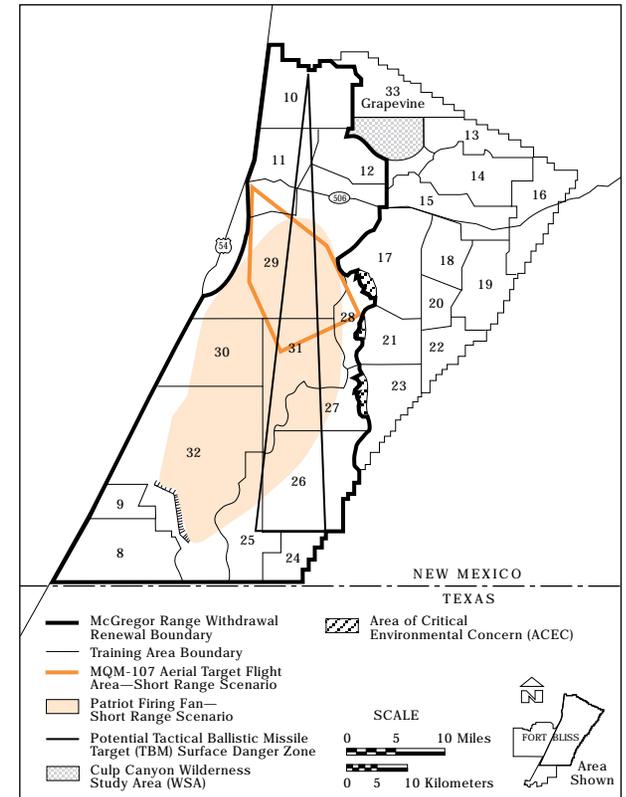
← Area to be Withdrawn

Environmental Impacts

- Changes required to Resource Management Plans for McGregor Range
- Fewer closures of New Mexico Highway 506
- Greater public access for nonmilitary uses
- Less noise for residents north and east of Otero Mesa
- Possible impacts to cultural resources and grasslands from increased public access
- No significant impacts to other resources

Operational Impacts →

- Patriot training scenarios reduced by 89%
- Reduced number of on-road vehicle maneuvers
- Reduced number of FTX sites
- Reduction or elimination of military ground activities in Sacramento Mountains foothills and on Otero Mesa
- Continuation of training on fee-owned land

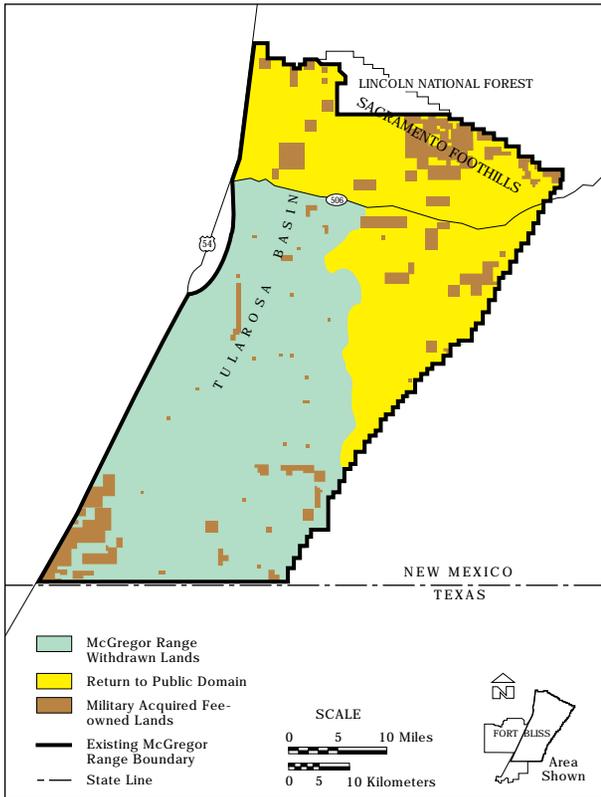


Target Flight Areas and Surface Danger Zones Associated with Patriot Firings.

Alternative 4

Alternative 4 would renew the withdrawal of about 365,395 acres for continued military use. This includes the Tularosa Basin portion of McGregor Range south of New Mexico Highway 506.

This alternative would not renew the withdrawal of any portion of McGregor Range north of New Mexico Highway 506 or on Otero Mesa. The lands returned to the public domain, about 244,000 acres, are comprised of currently withdrawn lands in all the existing grazing units, Culp Canyon WSA, and McGregor Black Grama Grassland ACEC. The portion of grazing unit 2 south of New Mexico Highway 506 would be exchanged for the area between New Mexico Highway 506 and grazing unit 3. Army fee-owned in-holdings within the lands returned to the public domain would be retained for specialized training.



Tularosa Basin portion of McGregor Range south of NM Highway 506 withdrawn for continued military use.

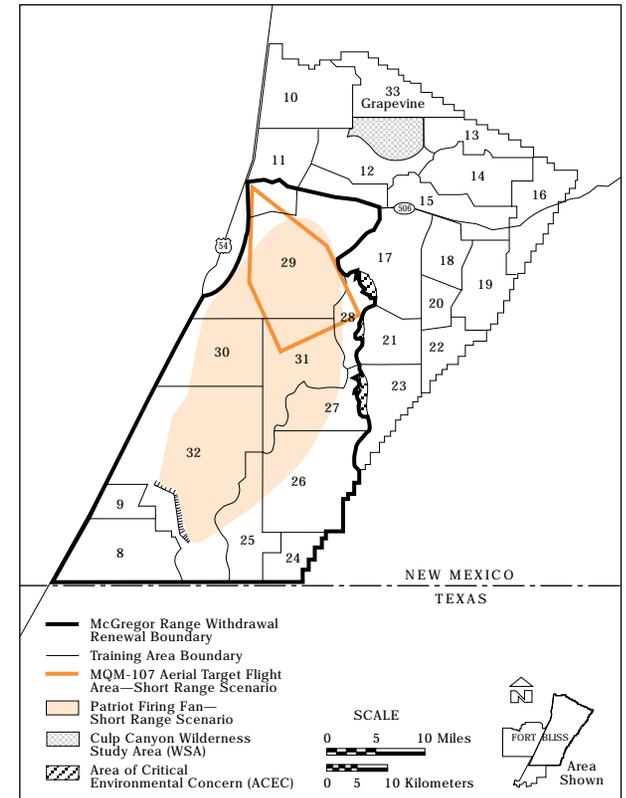
← Area to be Withdrawn

Environmental Impacts

- Same as Alternatives 2 and 3, plus
- No military closures of New Mexico Highway 506
- Reduction in aircraft noise associated with tactical target complex and Class C bombing range

Operational Impacts →

- Same as Alternative 3, plus
- No military ground operations on public lands on Otero Mesa and north of New Mexico Highway 506
- Continuation of military aircraft training and training on fee-owned land



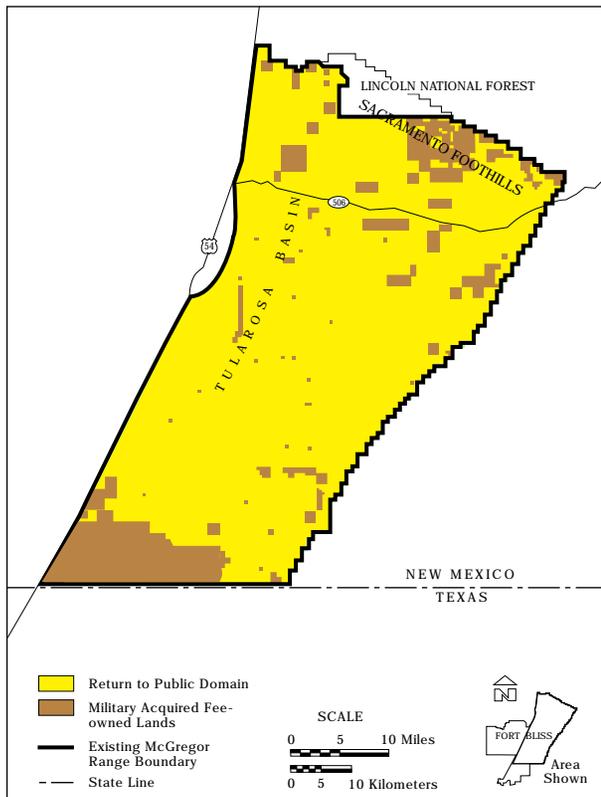
Target Flight Areas and Surface Danger Zones Associated with Patriot Firings.

Alternative 5 No Action Alternative

Alternative 5, the No Action Alternative, does not renew any portion of the 608,385 acres of withdrawn land on McGregor Range. All currently withdrawn land would return to the public domain.

Army fee-owned in-holdings within the lands returned to the public domain would be exchanged for public lands in the southern part of McGregor Range, in order to maintain essential infrastructure around McGregor Range Camp, the McGregor Ammunition Supply Point (ASP), and the Meyer Range complex.

There would be no further military use of the land returned to the public domain. Restricted airspace above the land area would continue to be used for aircraft training by Army aviation and U.S. Air Force units within the region. The lands held by the Army in fee would be exchanged for public lands in Training Areas 8 and 32. This exchange provides for continuation of individual training, and is necessary to retain the infrastructure associated with McGregor Range Camp, the McGregor ASP, and Meyer Range. The installation facilities on McGregor Range that would have to be relocated elsewhere include Orogrande Range, SHORAD Range, and McGregor Range Firing Complex.



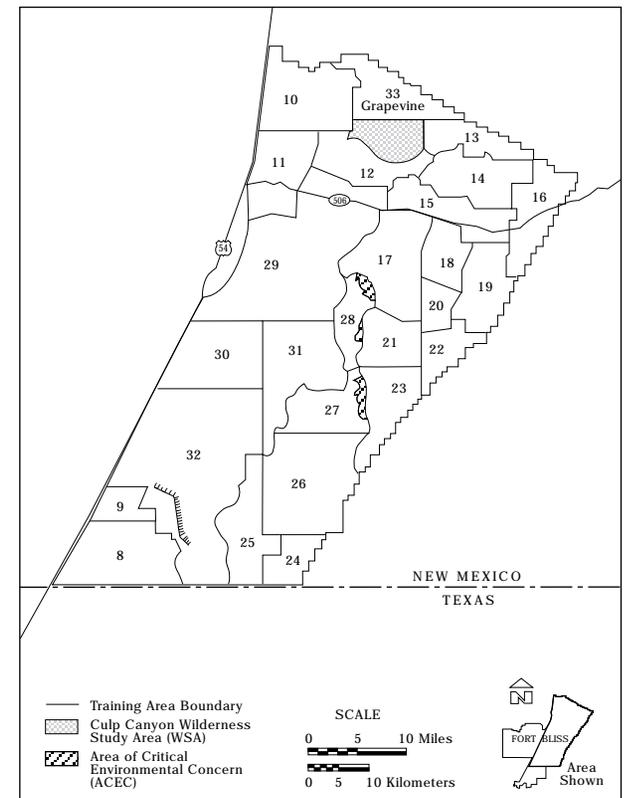
No renewal of McGregor Range land withdrawal, returning range to public domain.

← Area to be Withdrawn Environmental Impacts

- Same as Alternative 4, plus
- Increased soil erosion from clean-up activities and grazing, less erosion from military activities
- Reduction in aircraft noise associated with tactical target complex and missile firings
- Increased public safety risks prior to clean up of Tularosa Basin
- Minor economic impact due to decrease in military employment and purchases

Operational Impacts →

- No military ground operations on McGregor Range, except in Training Area 8 and portions of Training Area 32
- Continuation of military aircraft training

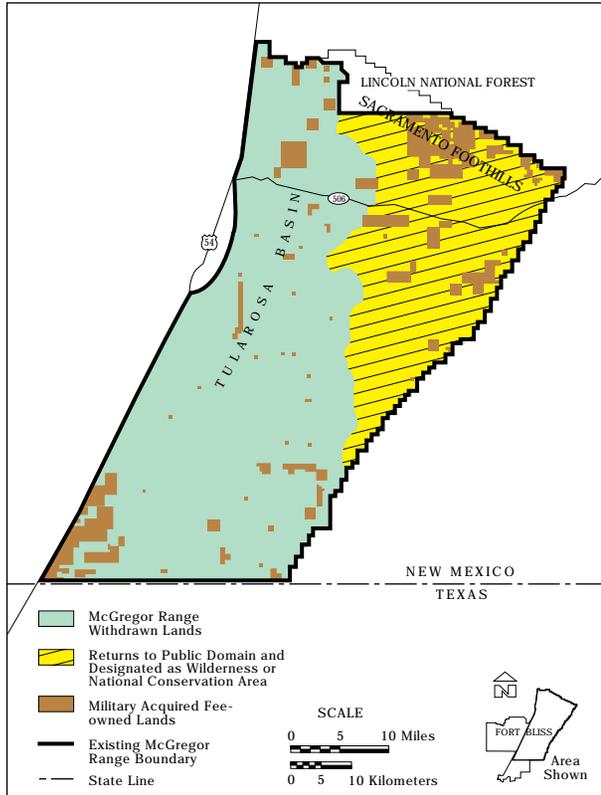


Target Flight Areas and Surface Danger Zones Associated with Patriot Firings.

Alternative 6

Alternative 6 was developed using public comments submitted during scoping. It was suggested that Congress designate the Culp Canyon WSA as a wilderness area. In addition, it was suggested that Congress designate the Otero Mesa and Sacramento Mountains foothills, including in-holdings held in fee by the Army as a National Conservation Area (NCA). The affected fee-owned in-holdings would be exchanged for other public lands elsewhere within McGregor Range.

This alternative would require further congressional action, in addition to the renewal of the military land withdrawal, and could potentially alter the management practices associated with the area included in the NCA. The existing grazing area would continue to be available for multiple uses, to the extent that the areas have productive value and would be managed in accordance with public land laws and congressional specifications for the NCA. The NCA, as envisioned, could be designated along with Alternative 3, 4, or 5.



Withdraw Tularosa Basin portion of McGregor Range for continued military use.

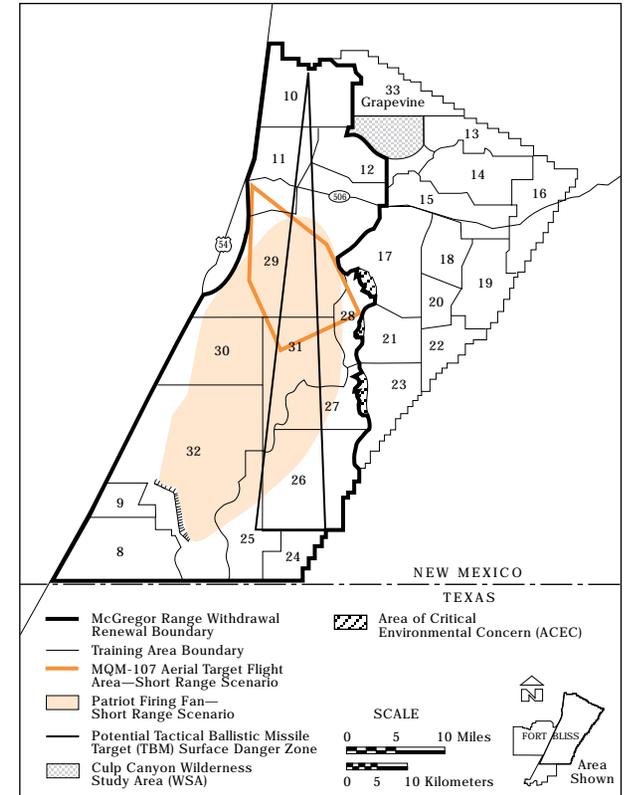
← Area to be Withdrawn

Environmental Impacts

- Same as Alternative 5, plus
- Some changes to land use designations would be required

Operational Impacts

- Same as Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 except
- No military ground activities on fee-owned parcels in Sacramento Mountains foothills.



Target Flight Areas and Surface Danger Zones Associated with Patriot Firings.