

#### **4.10 SOCIOECONOMICS**

The majority of impacts on socioeconomic resources associated with implementation of the McGregor Range withdrawal alternatives are directly related to changes in the number of personnel assigned, and procurement levels at Fort Bliss. With variations in these two attributes, changes in personnel consumption expenditures (based on the payroll of personnel) and purchases of goods and services in the local economy can be expected. These factors, associated with activities on the installation, are termed “direct effects.” Through the use of the concept of the “multiplier effect,” there will be “secondary effects” generated. These are changes in the local economy (i.e., additional activity that can be expressed in terms of employment, earnings, or output) attributable to changes in the final demand for goods and services, required by changes in spending by post personnel and for post procurements. The total effect is the sum of direct and secondary effects.

Additional impacts can be expected from changes in the manner in which the natural resources of McGregor Range are utilized; specifically, mineral, energy, and grazing resources. Mineral commodities within McGregor Range are gypsum, limestone, and sand and gravel. However, these resources are currently undeveloped, and unlikely to be developed in the immediate future due to their remoteness from points of demand, because adequate supplies exist from other sources in the region, and demand is low. Preliminary investigations indicate low to moderate potential for oil and gas resources, and petroleum exploration and development on the range appears unlikely. An exploration program for geothermal resources is currently underway and preliminary findings indicate that a 3-megawatts electricity facility, capable of powering a desalination plant producing drinking water from a saline aquifer, is feasible. Management and leasing of grazing units would continue as described in Section 3.10.2.3.

##### **4.10.1 Alternative 1**

As described in Section 2.1.1, military activities could vary from the same as currently conducted to an expanded range of capabilities and intensified use. Under Alternative 1 (current boundaries), negligible changes in permanent personnel levels and procurement activity at Fort Bliss are expected to occur and, thus, no measurable impacts to socioeconomic resources are anticipated.

In addition, the current boundaries of the range would remain unchanged and, thus, no impacts would occur to mineral, energy, and grazing resources.

##### **4.10.2 Alternative 2**

Under Alternative 2, negligible changes in personnel levels and procurement activity at Fort Bliss are expected to occur and, thus, no measurable impacts to socioeconomic resources are anticipated.

The current boundaries of McGregor Range would be revised through the removal of the Tularosa Basin and Otero Mesa portions from military use. The area removed from military use (about 40,000 acres) would include grazing units 4 and 5 and portions of units 3 and 8. This area would return to the direct control of the BLM. It is assumed that the current management practices as specified in the RMPA would continue. However, this administrative change could be accompanied by changes in the manner in which the grazing authorizations are conducted.

Currently, the grazing units on the range support between 2,000 and 3,500 head of cattle annually (between 20,000 and 35,000 AUMs). The grazing unit contracts are issued by competitive bid at public auction with values ranging between \$11.00 and \$16.75 per AUM. Through this bidding process, contracts generate between \$150,000 and \$300,000 annually. Should the bidding process be replaced by a price mechanism dictated under the terms of the Taylor Grazing Act, the fees received by BLM could

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fall from an average current bid of \$12.50 per AUM to \$1.35 per AUM. Although this would result in a substantial drop in revenues accruing to the BLM, it is unlikely that the number of cattle supported on the grazing lands in question would change. No measurable impacts to socioeconomic resources would occur.

A substantial portion of the value of the range grazing is attributable, however, to the availability of water currently provided by the Army. The Army would continue to provide water, therefore, the capacity of the rangeland would remain as currently exists.

No measurable impacts would occur to mineral and energy resources. The exploration program for geothermal resources currently underway is located on land that would remain under control of the Army.

#### **4.10.3 Alternative 3**

Under Alternative 3, negligible changes in personnel levels and procurement activity at Fort Bliss are expected to occur and, thus, no measurable impacts to socioeconomic resources are anticipated.

The current boundaries of the range would be revised through the removal of 180,000 acres from military use. The area removed from military use would include grazing units 4, 5, and 7 through 15, and about half of unit 3. This area would return to the direct control of the BLM. It is assumed that the current management practices under the RMPA would continue. However, this administrative change could be accompanied by changes in the manner in which the grazing authorizations are conducted. The Army would continue to provide water for wildlife and grazing as currently exists. As in the case of Alternative 2, no measurable impacts to socioeconomic resources would occur.

No measurable impacts would occur to mineral and energy resources. The exploration program for geothermal resources currently underway is located on land that would remain under control of the Army.

#### **4.10.4 Alternative 4**

Under Alternative 4, negligible changes in personnel levels and procurement activity at Fort Bliss are expected to occur and, thus, no measurable impacts to socioeconomic resources are anticipated.

Under Alternative 4, the current boundaries of McGregor Range would be revised through the return by the Army of all portions of the range north of New Mexico Highway 506 and on Otero Mesa. This area would encompass about 244,000 acres. The area removed from military use would return to the direct control of the BLM. As with Alternatives 2 and 3 the grazing and water management practices are anticipated to remain as currently exist. No measurable impacts to socioeconomic resources would occur.

No measurable impacts would occur to mineral and energy resources. The exploration program for geothermal resources currently underway is located on land that would remain under control of the Army.

#### **4.10.5 Alternative 5 – No Action**

The withdrawal of McGregor Range would not be renewed and the land would return to the public domain. The lands owned in-fee by the Army would be used for exchange for public lands in TAs 8 and 32. Should these fee-owned lands be exchanged, Fort Bliss would no longer have the capability to support its current air defense mission. Installation facilities (Orogrande Range, SHORAD Range, and the McGregor Range Firing Complex) located on McGregor Range would have to be relocated. The loss of these facilities would result in the loss of several activities and units at Fort Bliss. It is estimated that there would be a loss of approximately 128 military and 182 civilian authorizations. It is further assumed

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that there would be reductions the level of procurements conducted by the post. There would also be a reduction in payroll associated with these military and civilian personnel.

With changing mission requirements, changes in procurements as well as payrolls can be expected. In the absence of details describing such likely changes in procurement activity associated with decreased personnel levels, estimates are made. These estimates are based on the statistical relationship between personnel levels and the value of local and nonlocal purchases and contracts, utilities, and non-U.S. expenditures exhibited over the period FY 94 through FY 96. Payroll and expenditure levels for the following categories are derived from changes solely in the number of military personnel: military payroll, Post Exchange (PX) local purchases, nonappropriated fund local purchases, commissary local purchases, and student impact aid. Expenditure levels for the following categories are derived from the aggregate numbers of military and civilian personnel: local procurements, military construction projects, and utilities. Civilian payroll levels are derived solely from projected civilian personnel levels. It is estimated that 112 secondary jobs in the local economy would be lost because of reduced payroll expenditures and post procurements. The total (direct and secondary) employment loss would be 422 jobs.

With a decreased training capability under Alternative 5 it is likely that a smaller number of military units and personnel will spend time at Fort Bliss. It is highly probable, also, that decreased support will be required. Such support would include the procurement of fewer goods and services, mostly from the local economy.

It is not possible at this time to predict the exact magnitude of these potential reductions in personnel on temporary duty (TDY) for exercises. Nor is it possible to predict the likely reduction in value of procurements needed to support this reduced level of training activity. In the absence of such activity-specific information, a programmatic approach to quantifying the direct and secondary effects is adopted. The direct and secondary employment effects associated with the spending of both TDY expenditures (for lodging and meals) and for procurements are expressed in a standard manner, i.e., for each additional million dollars of expenditures.

Regarding TDY expenditures, it is assumed that prevailing Federal Government per diem rates apply (\$102 per day in the El Paso area). Of this per diem amount, two thirds (\$68) is allocated to lodging with the remaining \$34 for meals. One million dollars of expenditure is the equivalent of about 9,800 TDY days or almost 2,000 persons, each having a stay with a duration of 5 days. A withdrawal from the local economy of \$1 million for such TDY expenses could create a reduction of about 22 full-time secondary jobs, 15 of which would be in the hotel and food and beverage sectors of the local economy.

If lodging expenses at contract quarters are paid for directly by the Army, then expenditures by personnel are for meals only. The withdrawal from the food and beverage sectors of the local economy of \$1 million for such TDY expenses would reduce secondary employment by about 22 full-time jobs, 17 of which would be in the food and beverage sectors of the local economy.

In the case of the procurement of goods and services required to support training activities, expenditures are made for a variety of items. Based on information contained in an Army analysis of the economic effects associated with Roving Sands exercises, it is possible to estimate the employment effects resulting from the spending of \$1 million on goods and services in the local economy that support such activities. The major items procured include hotel rooms (27 percent of total expenditures) and van rentals (23 percent). Other items, such as cellular phones, diesel fuel, temporary office trailers, copiers, business connection fees, and water service, represent smaller shares of the total expenditures. These purchases are made from the following economic sectors: hotel, wholesale trade, business services, and miscellaneous services. The withdrawal from the local economy of \$1 million dollars for the purchase of goods and services required to successfully conduct training activities, would reduce secondary employment by about 21 full-time jobs, 14 of which would be directly in the four mentioned sectors of the local economy.

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Utilizing the programmatic approach presented above, the employment effects associated with exercises can be estimated. Using as an example, an exercise involving 10,000 personnel for a duration of 2 weeks and assuming that procurements made by the installation in the local economy in support of the exercise have a value of \$2 million, there would be a total of 43 jobs generated in the local economy. This expenditure includes the provision of contract quarters for personnel. There would be, in addition, TDY expenditures by the personnel participating in the exercise. Assuming that lodgings in the private sector are procured through contracting, expenditures would be for meals. With 10,000 persons each remaining for 10 days, expenditures would amount to about \$3.4 million. This level of spending would support 75 full-time jobs, 57 of which would be in the food and beverage sectors of the local economy over the duration of the training activity.

Construction of facilities also generates employment (both direct in the construction sector of the economy and secondary in sectors supporting the construction industry). It is estimated that the expenditure of \$1 million supports 15 jobs in the local economy (8 of which would be in the construction industry).

Under Alternative 5, the withdrawal of McGregor Range would not be renewed and the land would return to the public domain. The lands owned in-fee by the Army would be used for exchange of public lands in TAs 8 and 32. The area removed from military use would return to the direct control of the BLM. The Army would transfer its water rights to the BLM. Although it is assumed that grazing management would remain as specified in the RMPA, it is possible that this administrative change would be accompanied by changes in the manner in which the grazing authorizations are conducted. The additional land in the Tularosa Basin for potential grazing activities would have negligible effect on the regional economy.

No measurable impacts would occur to mineral and energy resources. The exploration program for geothermal resources currently underway would likely continue.

#### **4.10.6 Alternative 6**

Potential impacts associated with implementation of Alternative 6 would not differ from those described for the previous alternatives. However, this alternative requires congressional action for implementation. Because the precise nature and extent of the congressional action cannot be determined at this time, detailed socioeconomic analysis of this alternative is deferred at this time until the proposal is specified for this type of nonmilitary withdrawal by the DOI.

#### **4.10.7 Cumulative Impacts**

Only in the case of Alternative 5 (No Action Alternative) would there be noticeable impacts to socioeconomic resources. Were these impacts to materialize, they are of minor importance when compared to the overall effects that the presence and operation of Fort Bliss have on the local and regional economies. Further, when compared to the size and magnitude of the three-county economy, any such impacts would not be noticeable.

#### **4.10.8 Mitigation**

In the absence of significant impacts to socioeconomic resources, mitigation measures to offset any adverse impacts are not required.

#### **4.10.9 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources**

No irreversible or irretrievable commitment of socioeconomic resources would occur.