

**McGregor Range Land Withdrawal
Legislative Environmental Impact Statement**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS)* has been prepared in support of an application by the United States (U.S.) Army to renew the withdrawal of McGregor Range, which is critical to maintaining our nation's military readiness. The *Military Lands Withdrawal Act (MLWA)* provides that the Army may seek renewal of the McGregor Range withdrawal. In connection with the application for renewal, the MLWA specifies that the Secretary of the Army will publish a Draft *Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*, consistent with the requirements of the *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)*, if there is a continuing requirement for military use of this range. Since this action is a proposal for legislation, the Army and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have mutually agreed to use the LEIS process, pursuant to 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1506.8, to comply with the requirements of Public Law (PL) 99-606. This LEIS is being prepared in cooperation with BLM and local government. Therefore, pursuant to the LEIS process, the Army has decided to prepare a final LEIS, and a Notice of Availability of the final LEIS will be published in the *Federal Register*. However, there will not be a Record of Decision (ROD) because the decision to renew the withdrawal is made by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by the President.

McGregor Range, located in Otero County, New Mexico, has supported the military mission of the U.S. Army at Fort Bliss from the 1940s to the present. McGregor Range is comprised primarily of public lands, which are lands owned by the Federal Government and administered by the Department of the Interior (DOI), BLM, pursuant to the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)* (PL 94-579) and other public land laws. At McGregor Range, the public lands have been withdrawn from the provisions of various public land laws for military use. Public lands comprising the range were subsequently withdrawn through Public Land Order (PLO) 1470 in 1957 for a period of 20 years. At that time, the public lands were interspersed with private ranch holdings that were purchased by the Army and are now owned in fee by the Army. Portions of McGregor Range were first leased by ranchers to the Army during the 1940s. The PLO withdrawing McGregor Range expired in 1977, but the legislation required by the *Engle Act of 1958* (43 United States Code [USC] 155) to continue the withdrawal was not passed until 1986 when Congress enacted the MLWA PL 99-606. Throughout the intervening period, the Army continued its mission on McGregor Range. PL 99-606 renewed the withdrawal for a period of 15 years, through 2001.

The area encompassed by the current boundary of McGregor Range includes approximately 608,385 acres of public domain lands withdrawn under PL 99-606 in 1986; and 71,083 acres of Army fee-owned lands within Otero County, New Mexico. McGregor Range also includes 18,004 acres of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands, which are used by the Army in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the USFS and the Department of the Army (DA) Fort Bliss. The 18,004 acres of USFS land are not included in this withdrawal renewal. McGregor Range is surrounded by lands administered primarily by the BLM and USFS to the north and west, with pockets of privately owned lands to the east used for ranching. To the south and west are withdrawn and Army fee-owned lands in El Paso County, Texas, and Otero and Doña Ana counties in New Mexico.

The public domain lands within McGregor Range are managed by the Army and BLM in accordance with an MOU signed in 1990, the BLM's *White Sands Resource Management Plan (RMP)*, as amended by the *McGregor Range Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA)*. The MOU expires in the year 2001 unless canceled or renewed. In accordance with PL 99-606, the Army has priority use of McGregor Range at all times to support its mission. However, BLM has management responsibility for wildlife, including improvements for sustaining wildlife, and for a variety of nonmilitary uses and resources in defined geographic areas, including energy and mineral resources, grazing, vegetation, recreation and

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hunting, wilderness, visual and cultural resources, and management of nonmilitary-caused fires. Consistent with provisions of FLPMA, the BLM tries to maximize multiple uses whenever possible.

Fort Bliss administers, trains, and deploys active duty U.S. Army, Army National Guard, Army Reserves, and other service personnel and units. Periodic exercises involve units from other installations, and from other services and allied nations. Units are organized, trained, and equipped for national emergency or crisis and overseas deployment. McGregor Range supports the training requirements of a variety of U.S. and allied units, as well as other federal agencies. Mission activities conducted on McGregor Range include training to maintain the operational readiness of active duty, reserve, and National Guard units, and weapons system testing. Field training exercises (FTX) include various combinations of training, field operations, communications, command and control, simulated enemy contact, camouflage, smoke generation, and weapons firings. Use of McGregor Range is paramount to maintaining combat readiness. Joint Training Exercises (JTX), such as Roving Sands, are conducted on McGregor Range. In addition, live firing exercises (FIREX) occur on McGregor Range. The 1-week long FIREX associated with Roving Sands is the largest density of missile firing at the range. White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) uses the Fort Bliss Training Complex for limited tests.

The current withdrawal under PL 99-606 expires November 6, 2001. To continue the military use of these public lands, the U.S. Army must apply for continuation of the withdrawal. The lead agency for the preparation of the LEIS is the DA. The BLM is a cooperating agency. To assist the congressional decision-making process associated with the Army's application, this LEIS is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1 discusses the purpose and need for McGregor Range.
- Chapter 2 describes six alternatives including No Action. Under Alternative 5, the No Action Alternative, the withdrawal of McGregor Range for military purposes would not be renewed.
- Chapter 3 provides an overview of the existing (baseline) environmental conditions of McGregor Range and the potentially affected environment.
- Chapter 4 addresses the potential environmental consequences of implementing the alternatives described in Chapter 2, when compared to baseline conditions presented in Chapter 3. Cumulative effects, mitigation measures, and irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources associated with the alternatives are also discussed in Chapter 4.
- Chapter 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 present the Preparers and Contributors, Persons and Agencies Consulted, Distribution List, References, Glossary, and Index, respectively.
- Appendices provide additional technical support data.
- Volume II, *Public Comment and Response Document*, contains the responses to the public comments received during the comment period. Boxes containing numbers in the margin of Volume I indicate where text has been changed in response to a comment from Volume II.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose for renewing the land withdrawal for McGregor Range is to provide a safe and secure location to train military personnel and test equipment to meet nationally directed missions and requirements. Realistic training that fully engages military capabilities is the primary means to ensure readiness and prepare our military to fight and win in combat. This training is central to the way the U.S. Armed Services fight. Effective training consists of a careful progression of exercises directed at

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individuals, crews, and units. All training exercises are fully evaluated to provide feedback and lessons learned for the development of future tactics and doctrine. Whether training is conducted at the individual level or as a full-scale field exercise, realistic training is critical to maintaining military proficiency, and the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of training is central to ensuring the readiness of military forces to respond to threats wherever they arise. Joint and combined training exercises have improved U.S. operability and understanding of the strengths of each military service, as well as those of our allies. The skill of our nation's air defense soldiers is developed through training on McGregor Range.

An effective training range must provide sufficient land and airspace to conduct training at realistic distances. Access to a variety of conditions (e.g., simulated threats, operational space, topographic relief, and safety constraints) and scheduling availability are also important characteristics for a training range. Existing training areas such as McGregor Range are used to the greatest extent possible, while maintaining sound stewardship of the lands and its resources. Our forces require training areas of the size and configuration of McGregor Range to realistically prepare soldiers and units for known and emerging threats to our nation and its interests, and to test and refine new concepts, weapons systems, and strategies to deter, compel, and if required, to fight and win.

U.S. military strategy requires strong armed forces that are trained, equipped, and ready to defend our nation's interests. McGregor Range is needed to:

- Provide sufficient space to conduct real-world military training;
- Train soldiers to use the Patriot missile system, Avenger, Stinger, Bradley Linebacker, and other advanced weapons systems;
- Maintain highest quality military and operational readiness standards;
- Support allied military education and training programs; and
- Integrate Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine elements during joint FTXs such as Roving Sands.

The training conducted at McGregor Range ensures the ability of air defense troops to:

- Intercept and destroy missiles in flight,
- Intercept and destroy aircraft in flight,
- Protect U.S. military forces at home and abroad, and
- Safeguard civilian populations.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Six alternatives have been identified for analysis in this LEIS. These alternatives include options for renewal of the withdrawal for all, part, or none of the existing withdrawn land area. The Army proposes to apply for renewal of the lands currently comprising McGregor Range (Alternative 1) for the 50-year period 2001 through 2051.

The military uses of the withdrawn land and Army fee-owned land are as defined for McGregor Range in two Fort Bliss documents: (1) the *Training Area Development Concept (TADC)* and (2) the Fort Bliss Mission and Master Plan *Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS)*. Potential military uses of McGregor Range, as described in these documents, would require additional project-specific NEPA documentation. Some nonmilitary uses would be permitted on withdrawn lands under multiple use objectives for each withdrawal alternative.

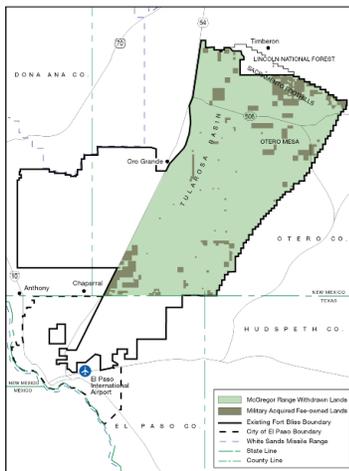
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The LEIS includes Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, under which Congress would renew the withdrawal for only a portion of McGregor Range and return the remainder to the public domain. Under these alternatives, the Secretary of the Army would need to prepare a written determination concerning the contamination of the areas returned to the public with explosive, toxic, or other hazardous substances. Public access to returned areas would be in accordance with DOI and Army consideration of the clean-up of ordnance and explosive hazards. The No Action Alternative, under which the U.S. Army would cease military use of McGregor Range and make the land available to DOI for return to the public domain, is included. Under Alternatives 2 through 6, the Secretary of the Interior could decide not to accept certain areas due to future liability, thereby necessitating transfer to the Army.

The alternatives addressed in the LEIS are:

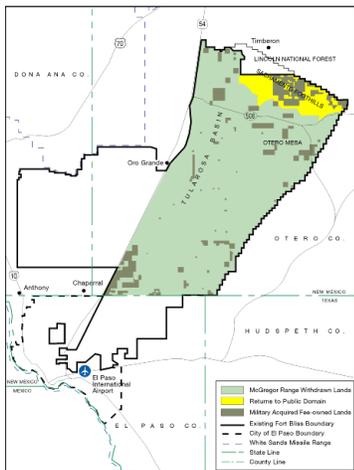
Alternative 1 (Army's Preferred Alternative):

Under this alternative, the withdrawal of McGregor Range would be renewed under the same conditions as provided in PL 99-606. The McGregor Range boundary would remain as it is currently.



The renewed withdrawal would be for 608,385 acres. McGregor Range also includes 71,083 acres that are owned by the U.S. Government and managed by the Army. In addition 18,004 acres of USFS managed land are used as a safety buffer and for dismounted training; that acreage is not included in the withdrawal but would continue to be used through an agreement with the USFS. McGregor Range currently encompasses all of these lands (approximately 697,472 acres). 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 State 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.

Alternative 2:



The Tularosa Basin and Otero Mesa portions of McGregor Range would be withdrawn for continued military use. The Sacramento Mountains foothills portion of McGregor Range, including most of the Culp Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA), would return to the public domain.

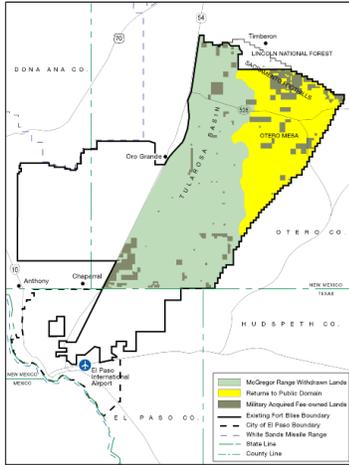
Under this alternative, Congress would renew the withdrawal of 568,385 acres of public land.

The area returned to the public domain is about 40,000 acres, comprised of currently withdrawn lands in Training Areas (TAs) 13 and 14, and parts of 12, 15, and 16 (grazing units 4 and 5 and portions of 3 and 8), and including Culp Canyon WSA. Army fee-owned in-holdings, within the area returned to the public domain, would be retained for specialized training.

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Alternative 3:

The Tularosa Basin portion of McGregor Range would be withdrawn for continued military use. The Otero Mesa and Sacramento Mountains foothills portions of McGregor Range would return to the public domain.

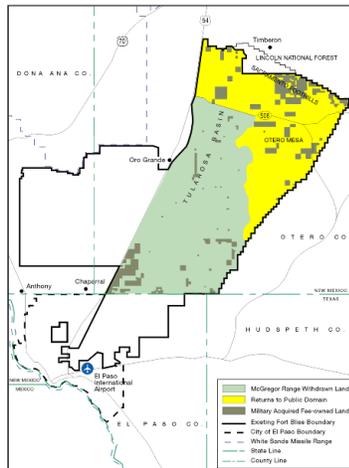


Under this alternative, Congress would renew the withdrawal of 428,385 acres of public land.

The area returned to the public domain is about 180,000 acres, comprised of currently withdrawn lands in TAs 13 through 23 and part of 12 (grazing units 4, 5, 7 through 15, and about half of grazing unit 3). This area would include Culp Canyon WSA and the 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 the public domain area would be retained for specialized training.

Alternative 4:

Under this alternative, Congress would not withdraw any portion of McGregor Range north of New Mexico Highway 506 or on Otero Mesa.



The Tularosa Basin portion of McGregor Range south of New Mexico Highway 506, encompassing 364,385 acres, would be withdrawn for military use.

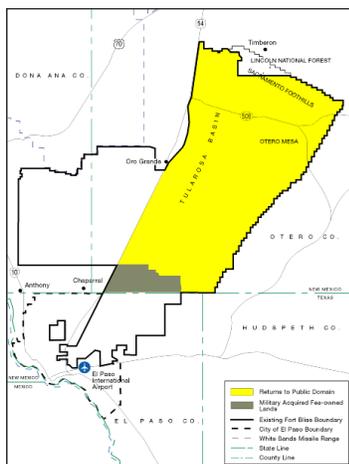
The area returned to the public domain would be about 244,000 acres comprised of currently withdrawn lands in all the existing grazing units, and would include Culp Canyon WSA and McGregor Black Grama Grassland ACEC. The portion of grazing unit 2 south of New Mexico Highway 506 would be exchanged for 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.

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Alternative 5 No Action:

Under this alternative, the withdrawal of 608,385 acres of currently withdrawn land on McGregor Range would not be renewed. The 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 TAs 8 and 32, in order to maintain essential infrastructure around McGregor Range Camp, the McGregor Ammunition Supply Point (ASP), and the Meyer Range Complex.

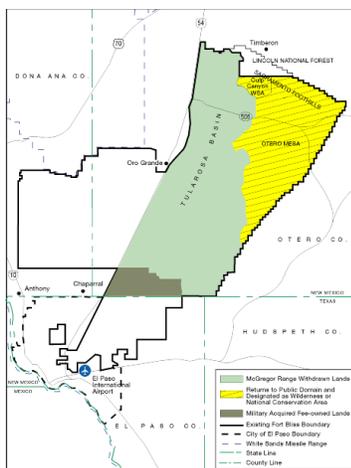


There would be no further military use of the land returned to the public domain. Restricted airspace above the land area would continue to be used for aircraft training by Army aviation and U.S. Air Force (USAF) units within the region. The lands held by the Army in fee would be exchanged for public lands in TAs 8 and 32, which would continue to be available for training purposes. The exchange would be to retain the infrastructure associated with McGregor Range Camp, the McGregor ASP, and Meyer Range. Installation facilities on McGregor Range that would have to be relocated elsewhere include:

- Orogrande Range;
- Short-range Air Defense (SHORAD) Range; and
- McGregor Range Firing Complex.

Alternative 6:

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 public lands within TAs 8 and 32 on 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The LEIS alternatives were superimposed on the existing environment to produce the environmental consequences for 14 broad categories of environmental resources: land use, airspace, transportation, utilities, earth resources, air quality, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics, environmental justice, noise, safety, and hazardous materials and items of special concern. The environmental consequences resulting from the withdrawal of various portions of the existing McGregor Range are briefly summarized below for each environmental resource.

Land Use

Under Alternative 1, the full renewal of the withdrawn land would allow the U.S. Army to continue its current air defense mission, allow continued military training for other U.S. services and allied forces, and would provide flexibility to support future programs and expanded operations based upon McGregor Range capabilities. Ongoing environmental effects from mission activities and nonmilitary activities would continue. The withdrawn land would continue to be managed to avoid or minimize environmental impacts as described in the White Sands RMP, as amended by the McGregor Range RMPA.

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Under Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, the size of the withdrawn land would vary. The U.S. Army would be able to continue use of the withdrawn, Army fee-owned, and USFS lands to support its current air defense mission and to implement some future programs and expanded missions. Alternative 5 would result in the return of the majority of lands on McGregor Range to the public domain. Alternatives 5 and 6 include transfer of the Army fee-owned land to the BLM in exchange for land encompassing the McGregor Range Camp, the McGregor ASP, and Meyer Range. The reduced land area would restrict the variety of training scenarios of high- and medium-altitude air defense (HIMAD) missile firing profiles that could be accomplished on McGregor Range under Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 6. Ground troop maneuvering would no longer occur on land returned to the public domain.

Nonmilitary activities on withdrawn land and land returned to the public domain under each alternative would continue to be managed under the White Sands RMP as amended. Use of some lands returned to the public domain could be restricted until after ordnance and explosive hazards clean-up activities are completed.

Airspace

Alternatives 1 and 2 would not affect airspace use or management in the Region of Influence (ROI).

Alternatives 3, 4, and 6 would not affect airspace use or management in the ROI. However, the return of Otero Mesa and other areas of the existing McGregor Range to the public domain would preclude development of the USAF tactical complex on Otero Mesa, potentially reducing the level of activity within the Restricted Area 5103.

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If the Restricted Area is maintained in its current configuration, Alternative 5 would not affect airspace use in the ROI. Civil aircraft would continue to be prohibited from traversing R-5103 above McGregor Range when the Restricted Area is activated. However, it is possible that with discontinuation of all air-to-ground and ground-to-air activities, the Restricted Area airspace, in consultation between the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), could be reconfigured to change the vertical boundaries, lateral boundaries, and/or operating procedures. It is also possible that the Restricted Area could be changed to a Military Operations Area (MOA) with fewer restrictions on civil aircraft use.

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Transportation

Civilian traffic on U.S. Highway 54 would occasionally be impeded by military traffic as a result of activities associated with any of the land withdrawal alternatives including Alternative 5, No Action. Under Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5, periodic closures of New Mexico Highway 506 would be reduced or eliminated, which would be a beneficial impact.

Utilities

Demand for utility services to support military activities on withdrawn land will remain under Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. Under Alternative 5, utility service to McGregor Range Camp, the McGregor ASP, and Meyer Range would continue.

There would be no impacts to utilities unless water and power demands increase significantly, which would result in increased purchases from El Paso and/or require installation of additional lines. Similarly, no impacts to wastewater utilities are expected. However, a significant increase in the need for wastewater treatment would require expansion of existing systems.

Earth Resources

There would be no impacts to geological resources under any alternative, since the management practices of the current White Sands RMP, as amended by the McGregor Range RMPA, are assumed to continue on all withdrawn, Army fee-owned, and public domain lands within the current boundaries of McGregor Range. However, lands returned to the public domain under Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 could be opened for locatable minerals development.

Under Alternative 1, regardless of the activity level, major sources of impacts to soil resources on McGregor Range would be the off-road vehicle maneuvering in TA 8 and ground disturbance associated with missile firings. Other sources of impacts to soils could include ground disturbance from facility construction and demolition, ordnance clean-up activities, and erosion from vegetation loss as a result of range fires ignited by military activities.

Military activities on withdrawn and Army fee-owned land under Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 6 would be the same as those described in Alternative 1, except that military FTXs currently conducted or planned for the entire withdrawn area would be restricted to withdrawn and fee-owned land. However, with military activities constrained, activities in the remaining withdrawn area would remain similar to current uses of that portion of McGregor Range.

Nonmilitary activities would be similar under all alternatives except that public use of lands returned to the public domain could increase because the Army would no longer control access. Additional public use (e.g., off-road vehicle driving) could potentially impact soils in localized areas.

Under Alternative 5, there would be no further use of McGregor Range for military activities other than in TAs 8 and 32. Consequently, except for ordnance and explosive hazards clean-up activities, there would be no continuing impacts to the soil resource from military activities. The entire McGregor Range could be made available for nonmilitary uses. The reintroduction of grazing to the Tularosa Basin could impact the soil resource.

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Air Quality

Under Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, most of the air quality emissions on McGregor Range would be from mobile sources associated with the field exercises, including off-road operation of wheeled and tracked vehicles (TA 8 only); combustion of fuels in vehicles, equipment, and aircraft; missile firings; and ordnance detonation. Emissions produced during training exercises are dispersed widely and have no significant long-term adverse impacts on air quality. Fugitive dust emissions created on McGregor Range primarily result in localized, short-term effects. Impacts at locations beyond the perimeter of McGregor Range are expected to be insignificant.

Under Alternative 5, No Action, military use of McGregor Range would be limited to the areas of McGregor Range Camp, McGregor ASP, and Meyer Range. Potential air quality impacts would continue to have localized, short-term effects.

Water Resources

Water resources in the ROI would continue to be used to support on-going and future military activities on withdrawn and Army fee-owned land under all alternatives. McGregor Range Camp would continue to be supplied with purchased water. No new wells or additional withdrawals from existing wells are planned, except at Davis Dome near McGregor Range Camp, where an on-going investigation of geothermal resources is underway. There, geothermal water has the potential to produce electric power for a desalination plant to provide drinking water from the saline aquifer. This source could be used to augment or replace water currently pumped by Fort Bliss from the Hueco Bolson aquifer near the Main Cantonment Area. That action would result in a favorable impact to the groundwater resource in both areas by enabling saline groundwater to be used on McGregor Range and by reducing pumpage from the heavily over-pumped east El Paso well fields. Impacts to the aquifer from use of treated water would be evaluated in future NEPA documentation of the effect of developing a desalination facility.

Water resources from the Sacramento River and Carrisa Springs would continue to be used for nonmilitary activities under the Army's current water rights under Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4. The water right supporting the wildlife and livestock uses on McGregor Range would be transferred to the BLM under Alternatives 5 and 6.

Regional water resources, while not significantly affected by military activities, have cumulative impacts to resources that supply the water purchased for McGregor Range Camp. Under a current-trends scenario with no increased surface-water supply, a water-supply shortage to the area (El Paso, Juarez, Fort Bliss) could occur between 2013 and 2025. However, municipal water will continue to be available to customers, including McGregor Range, but its short supply may increase costs.

Biological Resources

On-going and future military activities on withdrawn lands have the potential for impacts to biological resources. Impacts from activities that result in ground disturbance or fires could continue to occur indirectly and cumulatively to vegetation, wildlife, and sensitive species from on-going and future military activities on withdrawn lands and nonmilitary activities in the areas returned to the public domain.

Impacts could occur indirectly and cumulatively to wetlands and arroyo-riparian drainages (probable Waters of the U.S.), wildlife, and sensitive species from future and on-going military activities on withdrawn lands, as well as from nonmilitary activities in the areas returned to the public domain under all alternatives.

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Since current and future military and nonmilitary activities may continue to affect biological resources, impacts to vegetation, wetlands and arroyo-riparian drainages, wildlife, or sensitive species would result.

Cultural Resources

While current and future military and nonmilitary activities may continue to affect cultural resources, no significant adverse impacts to archaeological, architectural, landscape, or traditional cultural property resources would result.

The primary sources of impacts to cultural resources under all alternatives are ground disturbance, noise, vibration, and visual impacts from on-going and future military activities on withdrawn lands, as well as nonmilitary activities in the areas returned to the public domain. Continuing public access could be the source of impacts to cultural resources including archaeological, architectural, traditional cultural property, and historic landscape resources. The potential for additional public access under Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 6 could provide increased opportunity and access to these cultural resources on lands returned to the public domain, possibly resulting in inadvertent damage or vandalism to some cultural resources.

The cessation of military activities on most of McGregor Range under Alternative 5 would result in elimination of possible impacts from military ground disturbance in those areas returned to the public domain. The decrease in ground disturbance related to military activities in areas previously closed to the public, could be offset by a return to grazing on currently ungrazed lands and other nonmilitary activities. Impacts to cultural resources could increase depending upon the location and levels of grazing the BLM would adopt for the returned lands. Impacts to setting by noise or visual intrusion are likely to decrease with the cessation of training activities and future construction. However, lands returned under Alternative 5 would continue to be managed under the White Sands RMP, as amended.

Socioeconomics

The majority of impacts on socioeconomic resources associated with implementation of the 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 consumption expenditures of personnel (based on the payroll of personnel) and purchases of goods and services in the local economy can be expected. 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.

Under all alternatives except Alternative 5, changes in personnel levels and procurement activity at Fort Bliss are not expected, thus, only the current beneficial impacts to socioeconomic resources would be anticipated. Under Alternative 5, the loss of facilities on McGregor Range would result in the loss of several activities and units at Fort Bliss; however, these losses are expected to be less than 300 military, Army civilian, and related contractor personnel. In addition, the management practices on withdrawn, Army fee-owned, and land returned to the public domain are expected to remain as specified in the White Sands RMP, as amended by the McGregor Range RMPA. Thus, economic impacts would be negligible.

Environmental Justice

Under Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, continued withdrawal of lands would not result in environmental justice impacts. Because the acreage of withdrawn lands for all other alternatives is less than Alternative 1, Alternative 1 may be perceived to have the greatest potential effect. However, none of the alternatives, including Alternative 5 where all withdrawn land is returned to the public domain, would cause environmental health or safety risks that would disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations, or children.

Noise

Under Alternatives 1 and 2, noise impacts resulting from current mission activities and proposed activities such as the USAF tactical target complex and the potential Army helicopter training range, would primarily occur on training ranges and is within land use compatibility guidelines for nearby areas. Therefore, the elevated noise is not considered to be significant. Levels of nonmilitary use would be expected to remain relatively at current levels.

Under Alternatives 3, 4, and 6, the lateral boundaries of the restricted airspace are not proposed to change; however, the USAF tactical target complex on Otero Mesa could not be used, and less area would be available to provide Surface Danger Zones (SDZs) for missile firings. Therefore, in general, noise related to missile firings and fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft operations would remain similar, but less than discussed for Alternatives 1 and 2.

Under Alternative 5, aircraft noise would not be expected to exceed current levels, and would probably be less, since some current aviation noise results from aircraft supporting other McGregor Range activities. All air-to-ground and ground-to-air activities on McGregor Range would cease, thus eliminating noise from these sources.

Safety

Under Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, safety considerations associated with military activities result from increased human presence, use of ordnance, live firing of missiles, and aircraft overflight. In general, changes in the levels of use of specific ranges, or in the number of live firing events do not necessarily increase safety risks. Scheduling prevents incompatible range-use conflicts.

Current safety impacts would not change on withdrawn land. Ground and explosive safety risks will remain low. However, a degree of risk remains in areas with ordnance and explosive hazards. The Army has an on-going evaluation of the ordnance and explosive hazards on McGregor Range.

Under Alternative 5, potential hazards to public safety associated with the granting of public access in portions of McGregor Range such as the Tularosa Basin may preclude return of this area to the public domain, necessitating transfer of that land to the Secretary of the Army for future clean up. Current safety impacts would not change on TA 8 and portions of TA 32. Therefore, ground and explosive safety risks in TAs 8 and 32 will remain low.

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Hazardous Materials and Items of Special Concern

Under Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, increases in the use of hazardous materials and items of special concern could result from on-going military, future military, and nonmilitary activities that occur on withdrawn lands. Items of special concern include medical and biohazardous waste, asbestos, lead-based paint, pesticides, radon, low-level radioactive waste, and petroleum storage tanks. Both hazardous materials and items of special concern would continue to be managed on withdrawn lands in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and Army procedures. As demolition of facilities on McGregor Range continues, asbestos abatement and lead waste generation would continue. No adverse impacts would result.

The return of all withdrawn lands to the public domain under Alternative 5, could result in decreased use of hazardous chemicals by the Army outside of TA 8 and portions of TA 32. If this occurs, and is not offset by nonmilitary use of hazardous chemicals on these lands, minor long-term beneficial environmental impacts could result from the reduced risk of exposure and/or spills.

MILITARY MISSION CONSEQUENCES

The principal military mission on McGregor Range is training. Air Defense training conducted at McGregor Range is essential to develop the ability of air defense soldiers to:

- Intercept and destroy missiles in flight;
- Intercept and destroy aircraft in flight;
- Protect U.S. military forces at home and abroad; and
- Safeguard civilian populations.

An additional mission is weapons system and equipment test operations. Test operations help ensure the soldier has the best available weapons and equipment.

The variations in Patriot training and test scenarios available at Fort Bliss, under each of the McGregor Range withdrawal alternatives, is illustrated in Figure ES-1.

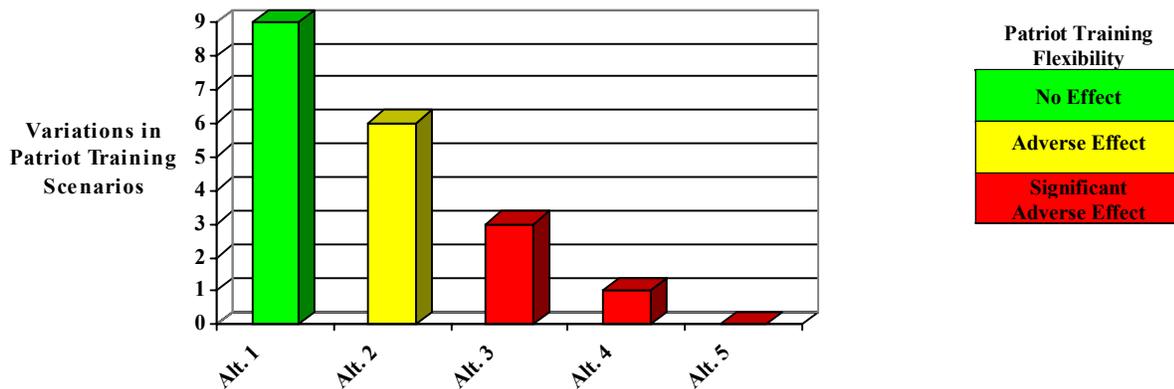


Figure ES-1. Variations in Patriot Training Scenarios.

Effective training requires the use of land and airspace for training exercises, safe weapons firing, test operations, surface impact capabilities, off-road vehicle maneuver, on-road vehicle maneuver, controlled access FTXs, dismounted training, and aircraft operations. The consequences of each alternative on the military mission are shown in Table ES-1. Additionally, the capability to support emerging concepts and doctrine related to warfighting (such as Army Force XXI and Army-After-Next) would be significantly impacted because of the spatial requirements that these operations will require.

MITIGATION

Both military and nonmilitary activities conducted on withdrawn or public domain land could have potentially adverse impacts to specific environmental resources, principally on soils and vegetation. Specific future projects on both withdrawn and public domain lands will be the subject of appropriate NEPA documentation. Either the Army or the BLM, as appropriate, will prepare project-specific NEPA documentation. Specific project related mitigation actions would be determined at the time of the project definition.

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Table ES-1. Military Mission Consequences

<i>Mission Capability</i> ⁽¹⁾	<i>Alternative 1</i>	<i>Alternative 2</i>	<i>Alternative 3</i>	<i>Alternative 4</i>	<i>Alternative 5</i>	<i>Alternative 6</i>
Weapons Firing						
Patriot/HIMAD	No effect	-33%	-89%	-89%	-100%	-89 to 100%
Small Missiles						
McGregor Launch Complex	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	-100%	-89 to 100%
SHORAD Range Operations	No effect	Training Modification Required	Training Modification Required	Training Modification Required	-100%	Training Modification Required
Orogrande Range Operations	No effect	Training Modification Required	Training Modification Required	Training Modification Required	-100%	Training Modification Required
Small Arms						
Meyer Range	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect
Test Operations						
Laser Operations						
Orogrande Range	No effect	Test Modification Required	Test Modification Required	Test Modification Required	-100%	Test Modification Required
Missile System Components						
Orogrande Range: Air Defense Artillery Test Directorate (ADATD) Operations	No effect	Test Modification Required	Test Modification Required	Test Modification Required	-100%	-100%
SHORAD Range Operations	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	-100%	No effect
McGregor Launch Complex	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	-100%	No effect
Surface Impact						
Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS)	No effect	No effect	No effect	Training Modification Required	-100%	No effect
Air-to-ground						
Otero Mesa Site	No effect	No effect	-100%	-100%	-100%	-100%
Class C Bombing Range	No effect	No effect	No effect	-100%	-100%	No effect
Off-road Vehicle Maneuver						
TA 8	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect
On-road Vehicle Maneuver	No effect	-6%	-26%	-35%	-100%	-26%
Controlled Access FTX	No effect	No effect	-48%	-57%	-100%	-48 to -100%
Dismounted Training	No effect	-6%	-26%	-35%	100%	-26%
Aircraft Operations						
Fixed-wing Air-to-air	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect
Rotary-wing Nap-of-the-Earth (NOE)	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect	No effect

⁽¹⁾ Impacts to mission capability are presented as the percentage change in training scenarios, land acreage available, or qualitatively as to requirements to modify training or test programs.

No Effect	Adverse Effect	Significant Adverse Effect
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Five means of mitigating an environmental impact are recognized in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500 to 1508): avoidance, limitation of action, restoration of the environment, preservation and maintenance operations, and replacement. The withdrawal alternatives include actions and agreements designed to mitigate adverse effects from military use. The McGregor Range RMPA that was developed by the BLM through the NEPA process following the MLWA of 1986, addresses practices designed to mitigate conflicts in land use for both military and nonmilitary purposes.

The 1990 MOU between the Army and the BLM regarding environmental resource management on McGregor Range implements these means to avoid impacts, limit actions that can result in impacts, accomplish restoration activities, and support preservation and maintenance operations to the degree funding for the appropriate agency allows. It is assumed that the RMPA would continue in effect after the withdrawal renewal for any lands withdrawn by Congress, and that the 1990 MOU would also be renewed to provide continued management guidance for McGregor Range. No additional mitigation measures would be required. With these mechanisms in place, the Army and BLM have a process for ensuring that any mitigation measures needed to reduce or eliminate adverse impacts from either military or nonmilitary activities are identified and implemented. Changes in neither military activity or missions, nor nonmilitary activities on the land are proposed in the decision before Congress, therefore, no mitigation measures are required.