DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider the potential environmental impacts prior to undertaking a course of action. Within the Department of the Army, NEPA is implemented through regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), with supplemental requirements provided under Army Regulation 32 CFR Part 651, *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions*. In adherence with NEPA and 32 CFR Part 651, the Army has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider the environmental effects of leasing a parcel of land to El Paso Community College (EPCC) for the construction and operation of EPCC's East Side Campus.

Description of Action: Under the Proposed Action, EPCC would lease an approximate 200-acre parcel of land from Fort Bliss for the construction and operation of the proposed EPCC East Side Campus. The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1) and the No Action Alternative were considered in this EA. The Proposed Action Alternative involves construction and operation by of a community college campus by EPCC on approximately 200 acres of Army-owned undeveloped land located within the South Training Area. The land would be leased to EPCC under a long-term lease agreement. The No Action Alternative involves no construction or operation of a campus by EPCC within Fort Bliss. A separate siting alternative along Montana Avenue was considered but transportation issues determined that alternative was not viable.

Procedure: An analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with each alternative is addressed in the *EPCC East Side Campus Environmental Assessment*, September, 2010. The findings of the EA determined that the action would not have a significant impact on the natural and human environment of the region. These findings are summarized in this decision document.

Discussion of Anticipated Environmental Effects: Impacts associated with the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative would range from beneficial impacts to moderate adverse impacts affecting the natural and human environment. The project and its impacts are discussed in the EA which is incorporated herein by reference. Impacts identified as important were associated with transportation issues and the project's proximity to the El Paso International Airport.

Measures for Reduction of Impacts: As discussed in Chapter 4 of the *EPCC East Side Campus Draft Environmental Assessment*, September, 2010, additional measures of reducing would be undertaken as part of the Proposed Action which includes:

- Transportation issues were addressed by selecting the preferred site near Loop 602 and Global Reach Blvd which have good capacity for traffic flow. Access routes into and out of the campus would be sized so as not to create congestion that could lead to service failures of the local road systems.
- Due to the proximity of the proposed East Fort Bliss Campus site to the El Paso International Airport, onsite storm water storage, if held for more than five days, would incorporate the use of floating balls to camouflage the liquid surface from the air, thereby providing deterrence to waterfowl and other birds. The proposed East Fort Bliss Campus design shall meet the requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) *Advisory Circular 150/5200-33B - Hazardous Wildlife Attractants On or Near Airports*, and minimize bird aircraft strike hazard (BASH) considerations.
- Additionally, the campus landscape design would be compatible with the installation BASH reduction program and would include measures to avoid attracting avian species so as not to provide nesting and roosting habitat, e.g., minimizing continuous canopy of trees to discourage

colony nesting by birds; using native trees, shrubs and grasses as much as possible; designing buildings to minimize perching or nesting sites such as no cornices, large ledges, unscreened vent openings, or outside ducting; and discouraging permanent water on the site.

- In order to reduce the potential for the introduction and spread of invasive species to the site, any necessary fill materials would be obtained by EPCC from nearby sites within the installation to reduce unwanted invasive weed dispersal. Borrow pits outside the installation if needed would be inspected by EPCC for exotic weeds before use.
- Given the property's past use as a military training area, prior to start of project, EPCC contractors would receive an unexploded ordnance safety briefing given by Fort Bliss Range Safety office. Surface soil discoloration, odors, rubbish and/or other environmental concerns uncovered during construction would be reported to the appropriate authority (e.g., Contracting Officer, Contracting Officer's Representative, Project Manager, Project Engineer, and the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Compliance) immediately of the findings. The contractor would suspend work on the site of the discovery and would continue construction operations in all other areas.
- Due to the property's proximity to the historical Butterfield Trail, during site design and construction, no disturbance will occur within 50 feet of the Trail, north and south of the trail, all along the abutting footprint of the proposed campus. EPCC will generate a management plan for the Butterfield Trail that will preserve or maintain the trail in its natural condition. It will include interpretive plaques or stations and possibly a bike path outside the 50 foot buffer. An agreement will be arranged with the adjacent hospital to cooperate with the management of the trail.
- To minimize overall adverse impacts during construction, only those areas necessary to accommodate the planned construction would be graded. This would serve to reduce the potential for wind erosion and dust and reduce overall impacts to vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Conclusions: Based on the review of the information contained in the EA, Fort Bliss has determined that the implementation of the Proposed Action with accompanying management plans, best management practices, regulatory requirements, and mitigations would not significantly affect the quality of the environment within the meaning of NEPA Section 102(2)(C). The preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Action is not required.

Public Review and Comment Period: Comments regarding the EA can be submitted by e-mail, bliss-eis@conus.army.mil, or mailed to: Mr. John F. Barrera, NEPA Program Manager; IMWE-BLS-PWE; B624 Pleasonton Avenue; Fort Bliss, Texas 79916

Proponent:

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RICHARD M. RHODES, PH.D.
President
El Paso Community College

Date:_____

Approved by:

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JOSEPH A. SIMONELLI, JR.
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding
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Date:_____