



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR

PROPOSED MODERNIZATION AND EXPANSION AT TOWNSEND BOMBING RANGE

PROJECT BRIEFING

August 2011



BRIEFING PURPOSE



- Provide information on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study of alternatives to modernize Townsend Bombing Range (TBR) to meet United States Marine Corps (USMC) aviation training requirements for precision-guided munitions (PGM).
- Identify issues and interests we have heard from stakeholders in regard to the proposed modernization.
- Set out project milestones and the project timeline.
- Answer your questions.



REQUIREMENT IDENTIFICATION



Marine aviation units must train as they fight.

- Marine Corps training doctrine requires Marine aviators to be highly skilled in the use of precision-guided munitions (PGM).
 - Current Marine Corps east coast ranges cannot accommodate PGM training.
 - East coast-based Marine Corps units must deploy to ranges in California and Arizona to train with PGM.
 - The west coast ranges are uniquely suited for more complex unit and higher skills training.
 - Inefficiencies result when east coast-based units have to use the large, west coast ranges for individual air crew training.
- A modernized and expanded Townsend Bombing Range (TBR) could meet up to 93% of the air-to-ground training currently specified in the individual aircrew training requirements for F/A-18 aviation units, versus 43% today.
 - This would be especially supportive for units based at Marine Corp Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort, which is only 71 nautical miles from TBR.



REQUIREMENT IDENTIFICATION



Marine aviation units must train as they fight.

- A modernized and expanded Townsend Bombing Range (TBR) would also better support training requirements for the Georgia Air National Guard, US Air Force, US Army, US Navy and others.
- While a modernized and expanded TBR would allow for training with PGM, it is not anticipated that having this capability would significantly change the frequency of use or scheduling at the range.



REQUIREMENT VALIDATION



- In February 2009, the Marine Requirements Oversight Council approved studying the modernization of Townsend Bombing Range (TBR) to accommodate precision-guided munitions (PGM) training.
- In December 2009, the Undersecretary of Defense approved going forward to study potential land acquisition contiguous to TBR.
- The Undersecretary's approval allowed the Department of the Navy to proceed with preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on behalf of the Marine Corps.
- The EIS will study the environmental impacts of a range of reasonable alternatives to modernize TBR to achieve PGM training, including a No Action Alternative.



PROJECT FACTS



- Townsend Bombing Range (TBR) is owned by the Marine Corps and operated by the Georgia Air National Guard.
 - The current TBR is approximately 5,000 acres in size.
 - Inert bombs (those without high explosives) are used in training at TBR.
 - The Air Force, Navy and Army also use TBR for training activities.
- Lands bordering the current TBR will be studied for their training utility and to evaluate any potential environmental impacts.
- Purchase of any lands would be at fair market value.
- Any current Encroachment Partner real estate interests near TBR that would be acquired for training purposes would be subject to Marine Corps purchase of the Partner's interest.
- Current Restricted Airspace at TBR would only need minor modification over any newly acquired lands, to include the airspace between zero and 100 feet.

ORIGINAL STUDY AREAS AND ALTERNATIVES



- On August 6, 2010, the Marine Corps published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to study three (3) areas for potential land acquisition.
 - These areas (Areas 1, 2, and 3), as stand-alone options or in combination, produced the five alternatives to study for possible modernization in addition to the No Action Alternative.
 - The Marine Corps presented the five original alternatives during the Scoping Period (Fall 2010) and solicited public comment on the range of alternatives and impacts to be studied in the EIS.
 - The five original alternatives ranged from approximately 12,000 acres to approximately 51,500 acres of potential acquisition.
 - All alternatives are sized to maintain public safety.



ORIGINAL STUDY AREAS AND ALTERNATIVES



(continued)

The five original land acquisition Alternatives as presented during the Scoping Period (Fall 2010). A No Action Alternative would also be studied.

Alternative	Acquisition Area	Acreage
1	1	11,948
2	1 + 3	36,828
3	3	24,880
4	1 + 2	26,700
5	1 + 2 + 3	51,580





AREA 2 REMOVED FROM FURTHER STUDY



- Additional analysis of the original study areas resulted in the elimination of study Area 2 from further study in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the following reasons:
 - Study Area 2 (14,752 acres) fails to meet the minimum training requirement:
 - Minimum Threshold Training Requirement: (A) Must provide for a minimum of (2) two, 15-degree cones for final attack heading (one tactical), with release of weapons at airspeeds from 360-540 knots and from altitudes up to 24,000 feet (B) The range must also allow for the delivery of Guided Bomb Units (GBU) 31, 32, and 38; Joint Direct Attack Munitions; and Laser GBU 10, 12, and 16.
 - Area 2 is frequently flooded by the Altamaha River and inaccessible for range maintenance and clearance.
- The removal of Area 2 eliminates Alternative 4 and Alternative 5 from further study in the EIS.



ALTERNATIVES CARRIED-FORWARD



Alternatives 1, 2 and 3, in addition to the No Action Alternative, will be **carried-forward for study** in the EIS.

Alternative	Acquisition Area	Acreage
1	1	11,948
2	3	24,880
3	1+3	36,828

Alternatives 4 and 5 are **eliminated from further study**, removing 14,752 acres from study and reducing the potential for land acquisition from 51,580 to 36,828 acres.

Alternative	Acquisition Area	Acreage
4	1+2	26,700
5	1+2+3	51,580





PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS

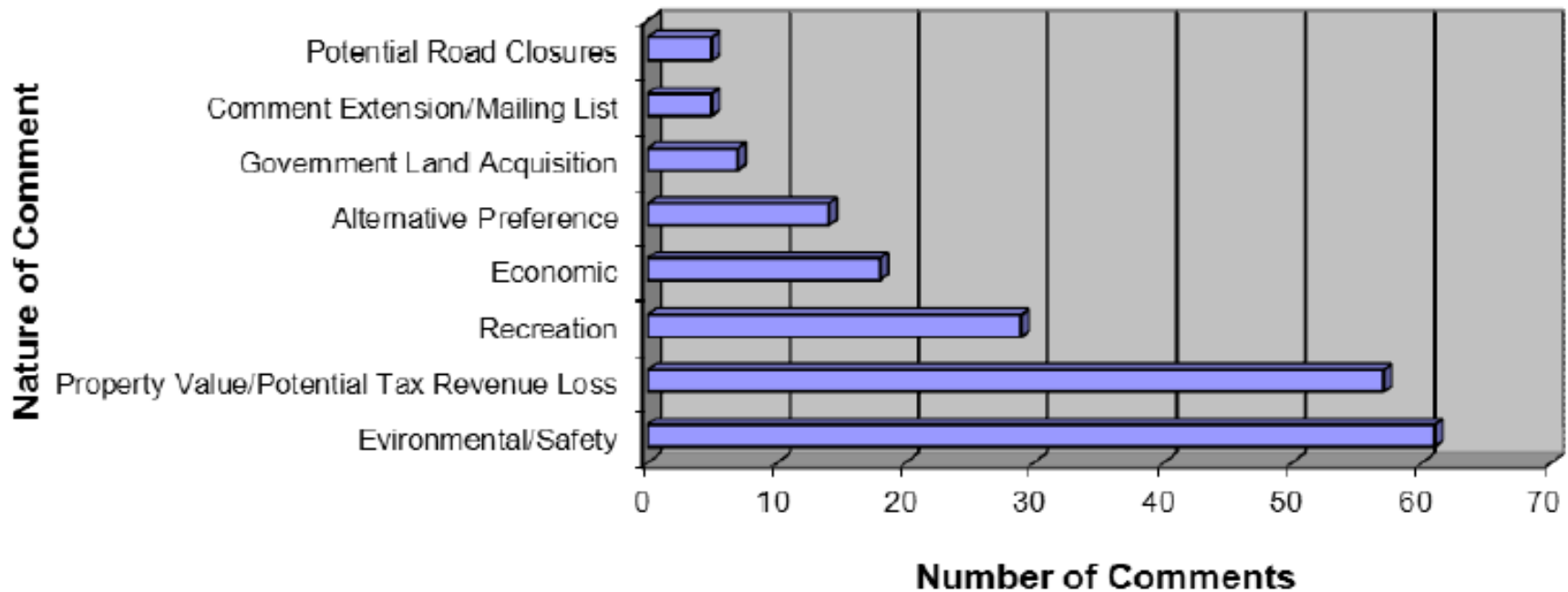


- The public commented on a number of issues during the Scoping Period, helping to identify issues to be studied in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), including:
 - Economic well-being of surrounding communities
 - Property tax revenues and property values
 - Impacts on economic development
 - Interests of the Marine Corps' encroachment prevention partners in preserving conservation values
 - Biological and water resources
 - Transportation issues
 - Hunting, fishing and other recreation activities
 - Noise and other quality-of-life impacts



PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS

(continued)





MAJOR PROJECT MILESTONES



Major Milestones Completed to Date

- ✓ Finalized detailed training requirements (March 2010).
- ✓ Established a range of reasonable alternatives for Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study (March 2010).
- ✓ Initiated EIS study (August 2010).
 - ✓ Published Notice of Intent to conduct EIS (August 2010).
- ✓ Held Public Scoping meetings and received public comments (August – November 2010).
- ✓ Scoping comments reviewed and summarized (November 2010 – June 2011).



MAJOR PROJECT MILESTONES

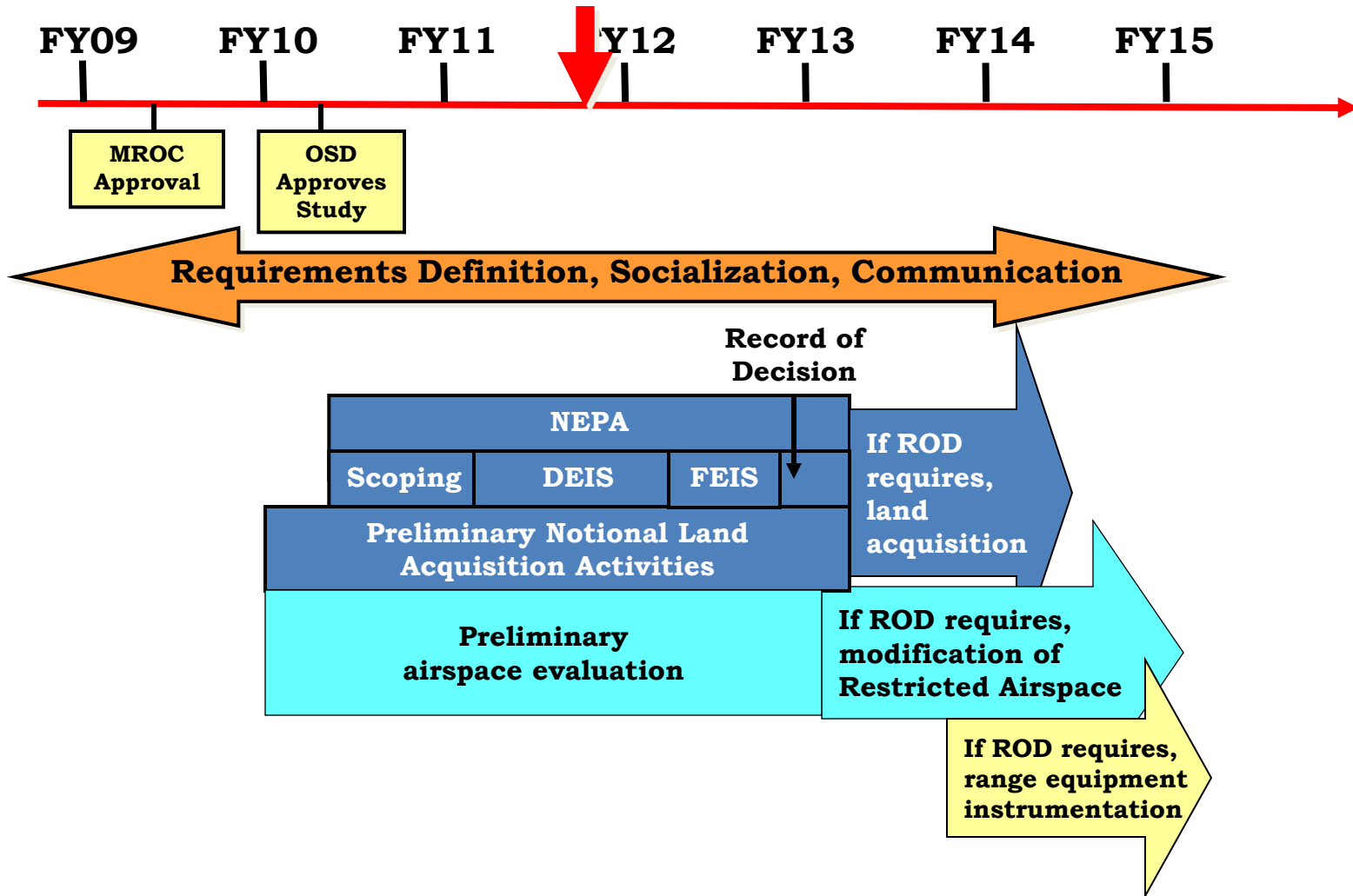


Upcoming Major Milestones

- Conduct and finalize any necessary natural and cultural resource surveys (2010-2011).
- Identify real estate ownership and acquisition issues (2010-2011).
- Consult with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on airspace modification processes (2010-2011).
- Publish Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (Spring 2012).
- Review public comments to Draft EIS (Summer 2012).
- Prepare and publish Final EIS (Summer through Winter 2013).
- Publish Record of Decision (ROD) (Spring 2013); if ROD determines to acquire land:
 - Land acquisition and range instrumentation (2013-2014); and,
 - FAA to consider Restricted Airspace modification (2012-2013).



PROJECT TIMELINE





CONCLUSION



- Modernization and expansion of Townsend Bombing Range (TBR) would significantly enhance the efficiency of training at the Marine Corps aviation training ranges on both coasts.
 - It would allow east coast units, especially those based at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, to be able to fulfill up to 93% of their air-to-ground training requirements at an east coast range.
 - It would improve training capabilities for multiple services that currently use the range – including the Air Force, Army and the Navy.
- If applicable, any appropriate mitigation will be identified for project impacts during preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- Preparation of the EIS has provided and will provide additional opportunities for public review and comment.
 - The Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy are committed to an open and transparent process that will lead to a fully informed Record of Decision.



Questions?

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
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