

Project Milestones

- ☑ **Published *Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)* and began 90-day *DEIS* Public Comment Period, February 25 – May 26, 2011.** 
- ☑ **Public Comment Meetings April 12 (Joshua Tree), April 13 (Ontario) and April 14 (Victorville).**
- ☑ **Published *Final EIS*, July 27, 2012.**
- ☑ **Land withdrawal legislative process initiated, 2012.**
- ☑ **Signed *Record of Decision (ROD)*, February 11, 2013.**
- ⇒ **Request the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to commence airspace proposal review processes to consider establishment and modification of *Special Use Airspace*, 2013, with goal for FAA to complete by 2014.** 
- ⇒ **If Congress authorizes public land withdrawal:**
 - ◆ **prepare *Resource Management Plan* or amend existing *Plan*, 2013-2014.**
 - ◆ **Secure appropriations to purchase non-federal lands at fair market value and to make necessary training range improvements, 2013-2014.**
 - ◆ **Complete necessary training range improvements, 2014-2015.** 
 - ◆ **Implement and sustain required mitigation, 2014 and beyond.**
 - ◆ **Commence training, 2014; MEB training, 2015.**

Good Neighbor Pledge

To meet its National Military Strategy-required service-level training, the Marine Corps has studied reasonable training land acquisition and airspace establishment alternatives in the areas near the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms CA. The Marine Corps has sought only those lands and airspace needed for training and pledges to continue its tradition of outstanding stewardship of resources it manages. The Marine Corps is proud of this tradition, as well as of its good neighbor practices in the High Desert.

Throughout the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, stakeholders have had opportunities to review these alternatives, the completed studies that support NEPA compliance, and a Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement. Now the Secretary of the Navy has issued a Record of Decision for a project that seeks the resources necessary to train Marines as they must fight.

The Marine Corps looks forward to working with you to meet Marine Corps training requirements while also helping to preserve the region's resources for generations to come.



For Further Information Contact:
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Proposal for 29 Palms Training Land Acquisition and Airspace Establishment



Project Description

February 14, 2013

Why Training Land Acquisition and Airspace Establishment at 29 Palms?

- ◆ Marines must “train as they fight” to respond immediately to any contingency around the globe. With the end of the Cold War, and from lessons learned from military operations, a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is the Marine Corps’ primary contingency response force.
- ◆ MEB training requires range capability that can support sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver.
- ◆ A MEB is approximately 15,000 Marines, built around a brigade Ground Combat Element and a like-sized Air Combat Element. It also includes command and logistic elements.
- ◆ The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) is the Marine Corps’ center for combined-arms excellence. A Center for Naval Analyses study concluded that expanding MCAGCC is necessary to execute sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training.
- ◆ Ranges at MCAGCC and within the DoD inventory currently cannot support these MEB training requirements.
- ◆ The Marine Requirements Oversight Council validated the MEB training requirement and authorized action to pursue additional training land and airspace at MCAGCC.
- ◆ The Undersecretary of Defense approved a Department of Navy request to go forward with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate alternatives, impacts from and mitigation for the acquisition of land and establishment of Special Use Airspace to meet the MEB training requirement.
- ◆ An EIS was developed in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
- ◆ Public involvement occurred throughout the multi-year EIS process, during which over 42,000 public comments were evaluated.

Frequently Asked Questions

◆ Is the base expansion a “done deal?”

No. After the Marine Corps prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) studying a range of reasonable alternatives to meet Marine Corps MEB training requirements, the Secretary of the Navy signed a Record of Decision (ROD) selecting Alternative 6 — the Preferred Alternative — as the optimal alternative considering operational and environmental-impact factors together. The Preferred Alternative was developed in response to public comments to preserve access to important off-highway vehicle recreation areas.



The February 11, 2013 ROD was based on the EIS — including an evaluation of public comments — and costs, and mission training requirements. Based on the ROD, the Department of the Navy has submitted a withdrawal application to BLM and will submit a proposal for lands in the Alternative 6 footprint to Congress. The ROD outlines recommendations to Congress. The Department of the Navy will also request that the FAA undertake processes to establish and modify Special Use Airspace (SUA) sufficient to support MEB training. Congress and the FAA will have to approve these requests.



◆ What happened with the public comments on the Draft and Final EIS, and the Preferred Alternative?

Three public meetings were held to allow for the public review of and comment on the Draft EIS. About 650 people attended and nearly 22,000 comments on the DEIS were received. Comments were analyzed and reviewed in preparing the Final EIS and the Preferred Alternative was slightly modified. Nearly 1,000 public comments were made on the Final EIS issued on July 27, 2012, which were evaluated in preparing the ROD, including further mitigation for the Preferred Alternative that opens more land for recreation use — a total of 43, 049 acres — 10

months of the year when MEB training will not occur.

◆ Doesn’t the base have enough training land?

The current military ranges at 29 Palms cannot meet MEB critical training requirements. Only 40% of the base is available for live-fire and maneuver training; 60% supports safety buffers, as well as area for infrastructure and for natural resources protection. The Marines will continue to be good stewards of lands it controls that contain important environmental and cultural resources.



◆ How would the Marines obtain any new lands?

Congress will have to approve the Department of the Navy request to withdraw federal public lands to meet MEB training. In an effort to continue access to important off-highway recreation areas, the withdrawal request recommends to Congress establishing a Shared Use Area of 43,049 acres,



which would be managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for recreation use 10 months of the year. The Marine Corps would reach a written agreement with BLM on how to manage the lands for recreation. The Department of the Navy will also request that Congress provide funds necessary to purchase at fair market value any non-federal property required for military training.

◆ Why would the base need more airspace?

MEB training requires training airspace to use artillery, mortars, ground-launched missiles, tank guns, machine guns, small arms weapons, and airborne weapons such as missiles and bombs. Any Special Use Airspace established or modified would be managed, as it is now, and released for use by civil and commercial aviation when not needed for military training.