



**What is the 29 Palms
Training Land Acquisition and Airspace Establishment Project
Frequently Asked Questions
July 2015**



**NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014 (NDAA) ENACTED
DECEMBER 26 2013**

1. Did Congress approve a modified version of Alternative 6, the Preferred Alternative, to meet the Marine Corps Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training requirement?

- After careful consideration of the purpose and need for the proposed action, the analysis contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, further consultation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and comments received from Federal, State, and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and individual members of the public, the Department of the Navy (DoN) selected Alternative 6 in the Record of Decision (ROD). The DoN then submitted an application for Congress to consider withdrawal of public lands.
- Alternative 6, while not the best alternative from either an operational or environmental impact perspective, is the optimal alternative given both the operational and environmental impact factors considered together. This determination is based on the training value afforded by Alternative 6 and the amount of land area that will still be available and accessible to the public for recreational purposes.

2. What was the total expansion area of the base?

- Congress passed and the President signed the (NDAA), authorizing the withdrawal of federal land to accommodate MEB training requirements. An Exclusive Military Use Area to the west and south of MCAGCC was established; when combined with non-federal lands totals 107,000 acres. The Shared Use Area, which is available for public recreation 10 months per year, equals approximately 56,000 acres when combined with non-federal lands. The bill also designated approximately 43,000 acres as the Johnson Valley Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Area (JVOHVRA).
- DoN secured appropriations to pay fair market value for non-federal lands in the Alternative 6 footprint, to implement mitigation measures, and to prepare and equip the new lands for training purposes.
- DoN submitted airspace proposals to the Federal Aviation Administration for establishment and modification of the Special Use Airspace required to meet the MEB exercises and MEB Building Block Training.

3. Was additional recreation acreage made available as mitigation in the ROD and again by Congress?

- The ROD recommended further mitigation for recreation impacts by including an additional 4,912 acres to a Shared Use Area available for public recreation 10 months of the year. This recommended adjustment would expand the Shared Use Area to a total of 43,049 acres. Congress increased the size of the Shared Use Area by another 12,500 acres to total approximately 56,000 acres for public access while not being used for military training.

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- By not selecting Alternative 1, the best alternative from a military training perspective, approximately 43,000 acres in the JVOHVRA remains available to the public year round.
- The Marine Corps and BLM have established the Resource Management Group to address all issues associated with the Shared Use Area and will implement an effective community/public outreach plan to ensure the public is given every opportunity to understand the change in land use and potential dangers.

4. Why did the Marine Corps and the DON select Alternative 6?

- Alternative 6 was selected in the Draft EIS as the preferred alternative because it is the optimal alternative considering operational and environmental impact factors together. With slight changes in response to public comments on the Draft EIS and the Final EIS, it remained the preferred alternative through the ROD when it was selected for submission to Congress.
- Alternative 6 was developed in response to public comments and was designed to preserve public access to important off-road recreation areas during periods when Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training did not require use of those lands. It would allow for reopening 43,049 acres (later modified by Congress) of the acquisition area to public recreation use for 10 months a year.
- Alternative 6 does not meet the MEB training operational requirements as well as Alternative 1, but Alternative 1 does not provide for public access to any of the training lands that would be acquired. (*From an operational perspective, Alternative 1 is the best alternative.*)
- While Alternative 5 is the environmentally preferred alternative, it is a very poor alternative from an operational perspective due to terrain restrictions that would limit training activities.

5. Is this a done deal?

- Yes, Congress and the President approved the withdrawal of public lands and the purchase of non-federal lands at fair market value. Congress and the President approved the appropriation of the funds to purchase non-federal lands within the withdrawal area and those lands are currently being acquired.
- The FAA will have to make a formal decision on the DoN airspace proposals after receiving further public comment during its own processes and EIS preparation.

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**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (FINAL EIS) WAS MADE AVAILABLE FOR
PUBLIC REVIEW ON JULY 27, 2012**

1. **What were the major changes between the Draft EIS and the Final EIS based on further study and public comment?**
 - An additional mitigation measure for recreation was developed and added. A Displaced Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Study was added in response to public comments.
 - Four additional special conservation measures for biological resources were added that include new Special Use Areas and discussion of a tortoise translocation plan.
 - Airspace sections were revised and updated per coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration.
 - An analysis of air quality impacts to sensitive receptors was added in response to public comments.
 - Analyses of single-event noise and noise-generated vibrations results were undertaken and added in response to public comments.
 - Impacts from ordnance on water wells analysis was undertaken in response to public comments and added.
 - Agency correspondence with the California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), California Native American Heritage Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District has been added.
 - Public comments and the USMC responses to comments were added.

2. **What does the Final EIS show about the impacts to the environment of the proposed action?**
 - As analyzed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidelines, the Final EIS shows that the alternatives studied would have less than significant impacts on air quality (except for Alternative 3), socio economics (except for Alternative 3 cumulative impacts), public health and safety, visual resources, transportation (except for Alternative 3), noise, geological resources and water resources (except for Alternative 3).
 - As analyzed under NEPA and CEQ guidelines, the Final EIS shows that the alternatives studied would have significant impacts on land use, recreation (except Alternative 3), airspace management and cultural and biological resources.
 - The Marine Corps continues consultation with the FAA on airspace configurations and use that would sufficiently support MEB and MEB-building block training while allowing for effective overall management of the national air space.

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- For all Alternatives, the direct and indirect environmental impacts to cultural resources are less than significant. However, when cumulative environmental impacts were assessed (which includes known other projects) the environmental impacts to Cultural Resources became significant under all alternatives.
 - The Marine Corps is proposing mitigation measures for five resource areas, as appropriate to the Alternative, including special conservation measures developed in consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service for impacts to biological resources, especially the desert tortoise.
 - The Marine Corps and US FWS have completed formal consultation under the Endangered Species Act regarding effects to the threatened Desert tortoise. In its Biological Opinion (BO) of the proposed actions dated July 17, 2012 the USFWS concluded the proposed action was not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the desert tortoise, nor destroy or adversely modify its critical habitat. The BO also identifies specific avoidance, minimization and conservation measures, as well as required terms and conditions.
- 3. What is the significance of impacts to resources like recreation, species and habitat, use of airspace, land use, transportation, health, etc.?**
- The two tables on the following pages show a comparison of the impacts by resource type and alternative, both as direct and indirect effects (first table) and as cumulative effects (second table).

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SUMMARY OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES						
ALTERNATIVE	1	2	3	4	5	6 (PREFERRED)
CHANGE IN CONDITIONS						
LAND ACQUIRED (ACRES)	201,657	134,863	198,580	201,657	180,353	167,971
SHARED USE AREA	No	No	No	YES – ON 180,353 ACRES	YES – ON ALL	YES, ON 43,049 ACRES
UNDERTAKE MEB BUILDING BLOCK TRAINING IN NEW AREAS	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	YES, ON 103,618 ACRES
CHANGE IN PERSONNEL	70	65	59	77	77	77
RESOURCE AREA IMPACTS						
LAND USE	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
RECREATION	SI	SI	LSI	SI	SI	SI
SOCIOECONOMICS	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
VISUAL RESOURCES	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
TRANSPORTATION	LSI	LSI	SI	LSI	LSI	LSI
AIRSPACE MANAGEMENT	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
AIR QUALITY	LSI	LSI	SI	LSI	LSI	LSI
NOISE *	---	---	---	---	---	---
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
CULTURAL RESOURCES	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
WATER RESOURCES	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI

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SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS						
ALTERNATIVE	1	2	3	4	5	6 (PREFERRED)
CHANGE IN CONDITIONS						
LAND ACQUIRED (ACRES)	201,657	134,863	198,580	201,657	180,353	167,971
SHARED USE AREA	No	No	No	YES – ON 180,353 ACRES	YES - ALL	YES – ON 43,049 ACRES
MEB BUILDING BLOCK TRAINING	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	YES – ON 103,618 ACRES
CHANGE IN PERSONNEL	70	65	59	77	77	77
RESOURCE AREA IMPACTS						
LAND USE	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
RECREATION	SI	SI	NI	SI	SI	SI
SOCIOECONOMICS	LSI	LSI	SI	LSI	LSI	LSI
PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
VISUAL RESOURCES	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	LSI
TRANSPORTATION	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
AIRSPACE MANAGEMENT	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
AIR QUALITY	LSI	LSI	SI	LSI	LSI	LSI
NOISE*	---	---	---	---	---	---
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
CULTURAL RESOURCES	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
WATER RESOURCES	LSI	LSI	SI	LSI	LSI	LSI

NOTES: SI = SIGNIFICANT IMPACT; LSI = LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT; NI EQUALS NO IMPACT

*THE NOISE SECTIONS OF THIS EIS DESCRIBE ONLY THE POTENTIAL CHANGES IN NOISE LEVELS UNDER EACH ALTERNATIVE. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANY NOISE-RELATED IMPACTS IS ASSESSED AS A FUNCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES THAT MAY BE AFFECTED BY NOISE (E.G., BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES, LAND USE, ETC). THEREFORE, NOISE-RELATED IMPACTS ARE ASSESSED AS APPROPRIATE IN THE RELEVANT IMPACT SECTIONS FOR THOSE OTHER RESOURCES.

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MARINE CORPS REQUIREMENTS DRIVE THE 29 PALMS LAND/AIRSPACE STUDY

1. What is the training requirement driving the project?

- Marines must train as they fight to prepare for the certainty and uncertainty of combat. Realistic training is for the safety of the Marines put in harm's way.
- Lessons learned from combat in the 1990s and operations over the last decade, and the addition of new weapons systems, and changes in Marine Corps doctrine led to the establishment of an enduring requirement for Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) sustained (48-72 hours), combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training.
- A Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training exercise requires sustained, continuous offensive action (combined arms, live fire and maneuver), with three battalions moving abreast—in three different corridors—and with, at a minimum, two battalions converging on a single objective. The MEB includes a Ground Combat Element, an Air Combat Element, a Command Element and a Logistics Combat Element.
- The MEB elements constitute about 15,000 personnel. The Marine Corps is the first responder force for national security, its crisis reaction force. The Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is the middleweight deployment force for the Marine Corps that is prized both for its decisive combat power and its lightweight agility.
- “Combined-arms” means that ground-based and airborne weapons systems, including direct and indirect fire, will be used in the training exercise.

2. What do you mean by “Marines must train as they fight?”

- Training is mission rehearsal. To meet training requirements, Marines must train under conditions that closely approximate those of the battlefield.
- By training as they fight, Marines become proficient in tactics, techniques and procedures, both as individuals and as units. This training concept is as essential for success in military operations as it is in nearly all other team activities.
- Marines will instinctively do as they are trained. Because Marines are equipped and deployed to combat as a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), they must train to the MAGTF training standards before deployment.
- Marines need to train as a MAGTF to succeed. Doing less will jeopardize their safety and degrade mission readiness. A Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), one scalable type of MAGTF of about 15,000 Marines, is the Marine Corps' primary contingency response force.
- A MEB must train realistically, with all elements – ground combat, air combat, logistics and command – involved in the sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training exercise.

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3. Why the new requirement?

- The end of the Cold War brought the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) forward as the premier force to respond to global crises. This resulted from a number of studies and analyses undertaken over a period of years to adjust Marine Corps war-fighting and training doctrine so that it could meet its role in the nation's national security and national military strategies in this new era.
- A Marine Corps study, conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), concluded that a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) had to train as an integrated combat team – without the use of distributed or representational forces – to replicate the conditions of actual combat. The Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC), a body constituted of the senior Marine Corps general officers, concurred with this requirement and approved the MEB training requirement after examining the trends seen in combat along with modernization in strategies and weapons systems.
- Repeated reviews of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade doctrine and Marine Expeditionary Brigade training requirement have been made by Marine Corps General Officers. Their conclusions regarding readiness requirements have been supported by the Secretary of the Navy, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Congress and President of the United States

4. Who established the requirement?

- The Marine Corps' Training and Education Command (TECOM), the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), with the concurrence of the Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC), established the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training requirement after careful study of doctrine, lessons learned from recent combat operations and an evaluation of new and foreseeable weapons systems and platforms.

5. Will USMC requirements change within the near future?

- No, Marine Corps training requirements are based on enduring doctrine and meeting the Marine Corps role in the National Military Strategy. These are unlikely to change in the near term.
- The reduction of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will not eliminate the requirement for MEB training.

6. Are there plans for additional acquisitions after this one?

- Although the Marine Corps does not currently foresee other acquisition requests, it will continually study training requirements shaped by emerging developments in doctrine and systems.

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ACQUIRED LANDS RESPOND TO TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. Why was Twentynine Palms, California selected for the Land Acquisition Project?

- The CNA study concluded that the U.S. Southwest range complex provided the best training area for a MEB, and that an expanded Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) was the best location to meet the training requirement.
- MCAGCC is the “center of excellence” for Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) training, so it is important to ensure the capability at MCAGCC to achieve sustained, combined-arms, live fire and maneuver training and to enhance such training for other large-scale MAGTFs.
- More than 90 percent of the Marines deploying around the world receive their final training at MCAGCC, and newly acquired lands will provide additional training capability to meet the full range of current and foreseeable Marine Corps training, including for individual and unit Building Block Training leading up to MEB training.
- Additional land and associated airspace will allow the Marine Corps to utilize current *and* planned weapons and systems in training.
- Before the expansion of MCAGCC, no military installation in the nation could provide sufficient training range areas for large-scale, sustained, combined-arms live fire maneuver MEB training.

2. Why couldn't Marines use the National Training Center at Fort Irwin; in other words, why not share training lands with the Army?

- Although the Army and the Marine Corps often serve side-by-side and execute similar missions, they have different training requirements. As a result, NTC does not have ranges capable of supporting MEB-level sustained, combined-arms live-fire and maneuver training.

3. Didn't the Marine Corps have enough land at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC)?

- No, the maneuver and training areas at MCAGCC were previously insufficient to meet Marine Corps training requirements for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training.
- MCAGCC could not accommodate all the units that currently need to train.
- Only 40 percent of MCAGCC, before expansion, was available for this type of combined-arms, live-fire and mechanized maneuver training. The remaining 60 percent of the land supported safety buffers, areas for infrastructure, natural resources protection, or was otherwise unavailable due to terrain restrictions.
- Marines will continue to be good stewards of the environment, particularly of the natural and cultural resources placed under their control.

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4. Who establishes the land-use restrictions that limit training?

- Some of the guidelines to protect human health and safety, or natural or cultural resources are internal USMC guidelines and requirements.
- Other restrictions are from resource agencies such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The terrain restrictions preclude, in many places, the type of training the Marine Corps needs to conduct.

5. Why study such a large amount of land and why study these particular areas?

- The alternatives the Marine Corps examined ranged from the smallest amount of land that would meet minimum requirements for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training, to ones that could meet 100 percent of the requirement.
- To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the Department of the Navy and Marine Corps team developed and studied a range of reasonable alternatives that could meet MEB training requirements, as well as studying a No Action Alternative. The Record of Decision reaffirmed that the preferred alternative, Alternative 6, was the optimal alternative considering operational and environmental impact factors together.

6. Why was an expansion of MCAGCC necessary, given that the nation is trying to downsize the number of troops deployed to operations overseas?

- The Secretary of the Navy observed that, despite downsizing of the force, the Marine Corps continues to have a requirement to have the capability of putting two brigades across the beach in a contested environment.
- As the nation's requirements to prepare Marines for overseas deployments are reduced, training tempos and exercises at installations like MCAGCC may decrease, but sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training will still be required.
- MCAGCC is likely to be the premier service-level training facility for Marines in the future, with a large volume of training activity.
- Because MCAGCC is the premier service-level training facility for the Marine Corps, large-scale MAGTF combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training, such as for a MEB, is a logical extension of the type of training that has gone on at MCAGCC for decades.
- Marines are the first to fight for our nation and they must always be prepared to deploy immediately. Providing the land and airspace sufficient to meet the MEB training requirement would play an important role in helping the Marine Corps to fulfill this training requirement.
- With the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) designated as the premier force to respond to global crises, sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training will remain a critical Marine Corps training requirement.

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7. I thought the military was giving up land because of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process?
- The MCAGCC land acquisition was necessary to meet the MEB level training requirement; before the expansion there was no location where the Marine Corps could sufficiently conduct the sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training it needs to best prepare Marines for deployment to combat. BRAC is a process that seeks to “right-size” our nation’s military basing; working to ensure that MCAGCC can meet MEB training requirements is part of that right-sizing effort.
 - BRAC closures result when an installation is in excess to military requirements.

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POTENTIAL SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE RESPONDS TO TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. Why did the Marine Corps study the establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace?

- Advanced weapons systems now provide military forces with greater capabilities for detecting and countering enemy threats at greater distances. This has required that range and airspace areas be expanded, where necessary and feasible, to enable these forces to train in an environment that is more representative of realistic combat conditions. For that reason, the Marine Corps requires corresponding training airspace to support MEB training.
- A restricted area is used to contain the effects of ground-based and airborne weapons systems to ensure public safety. Military Operations Areas (MOAs) provide airspace where attack maneuver and other activities can be carried out, but no live fire occurs in a MOA. Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA), which normally overlays an MOA (at altitudes above 18,000 feet) is like an MOA in that it allows non-military aircraft to be vectored through at the discretion of the local air traffic control authority.
- A Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is a combined-arms force known as a Marine Air Ground Task Force. The Marines deploy to combat as a combined-arms unit, which includes air and ground combat elements (along with command and logistics elements).
- To ensure that MEB training requirements are fulfilled, both training lands and training Special Use Airspace must be sufficient to meet requirements for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver and provide sufficient buffer for public safety.

2. How will this airspace decision be made?

- In preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), both land and airspace issues and resource impacts were evaluated through the analysis of a range of reasonable alternatives. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), as the civil aviation authority, was an important cooperating agency in the project EIS.
- Throughout the EIS process, the FAA cooperated with the Department of the Navy during study of alternatives to establish, expand or modify Special Use Airspace. With the FAA's cooperation and expertise, the Department of the Navy was able to prepare an EIS that provided significant analysis and information to support subsequent FAA decision making.
- The DoN has submitted an airspace proposal to support the training that will take place on acquired lands. The FAA will then conduct formal airspace customer feasibility forums, and undertake the appropriate processes, including formal, established procedures to analyze the airspace proposal request.
- If the FAA concludes that additional Special Use Airspace should be established, or current airspace modified, at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) to support MEB training requirements, it would establish or modify such Special Use Airspace per its published process.

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3. Would this program result in any new restrictions being placed on commercial airline or civil aviation over flights?

- Through its long-standing working relationship with the FAA, the Marine Corps will continue to work to minimize disruption to the National Airspace System.
- Existing MCAGCC airspace impacts on commercial or civil aviation flights over or near MCAGCC might be extended over any newly-acquired land due to safety issues involved with live-fire, combined arms air-ground task force training.
- The Marine Corps will work with the FAA and aviation stakeholders on issues examined during the EIS.
- The Marine Corps supports FAA efforts to optimize the safe use of airspace over the installation by commercial and civil aviation.

4. What types of airspace are used to support military training at MCAGCC?

- Restricted Area (RA): Non-military aircraft are prohibited from entering during military training activities that involve live fire; MCAGCC releases it for use by all aircraft in the National Airspace System when it is not needed for military training.
- Military Operations Area (MOA): A military operations area is airspace designated outside of Class A airspace (18,000 to 60,000 feet) to separate or segregate certain nonhazardous military activities from Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) traffic and to identify for Visual Flight Rule (VFR) traffic where these activities are conducted.
- Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA): Similar to a MOA (and usually overlaying a MOA) within Class A airspace (18,000 to 60,000 feet), non-military aircraft may fly in ATCAA during military training so long as air traffic controllers can maintain IFR separation from military aircraft; only non-hazardous military activities may be undertaken in ATCAA.

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INPUT THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

1. **What is the current status of the Land Acquisition? What steps have already taken place? How has public input been considered?**
 - The Environmental Impact Statement study and NEPA process took nearly four and one-half years to complete, including public review and comment. The Draft EIS was released on February 25, 2011; the Final EIS was released on July 27, 2012; and, the ROD was released on February 15, 2013.
 - The NDAA was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President on December 26, 2013, authorizing the public land withdrawal, with modifications to the ROD's selected alternative. These modifications were put into effect in support of Marine Corps training requirements while also preserving as much recreation area as possible in Johnson Valley, for public use, taking public comment into consideration.
 - Congress appropriated money for the purchase of non-federal lands and property interests at fair market value. The purchase of these properties is in progress.
 - The RMG was activated via Charter in June 2014, for the cooperative management of the Shared Use Area, and to solicit input from stakeholders as to the management and facilitation of public recreation and other uses when military training is not occurring.
 - DoN has requested the FAA to undertake its formal process to consider establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace, which could conclude as early as 2015.
2. **What is the involvement of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on this project?**
 - The BLM was a cooperating agency on the Environmental Impact Statement studies.
 - The BLM and the Marine Corps held public meetings to hear stakeholder input regarding the Department of the Navy's military training land withdrawal/segregation request.
 - The BLM and the Marine Corps held public meetings to consider stakeholder input regarding the location of company objective sites in the Shared Use Area.
 - The Combat Center and BLM will enter into a written agreement to manage the Shared Use Area.
 - The BLM and Marine Corps established a Resource Management Group to collaborate and address the issues associated with this shared use – such as community outreach, safety and related matters, as mandated by the NDAA.
 - BLM will manage the nearly 56,000 acre Shared Use Area for the 10 months of the year that it is available to the public for recreation use. The Marine Corps will manage the land the other two thirty-day periods of the year for military training.

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3. Did BLM participate in the land withdrawal process and how have citizens engaged?

- The BLM issued a public notice of the proposed land withdrawal in the *Federal Register* on September 15, 2008. The BLM and the USMC held public meetings on October 23 and 24, 2008 at which time the public had a chance to review and comment on the proposed withdrawal. There was a 90-day public comment period through December 15, 2008, during which time the public made nearly 2,300 comments to the BLM. The BLM provided these comments to the Marine Corps during the Environmental Impact Statement scoping period that ran from October 30, 2008, to January 31, 2009. As a cooperating agency, the BLM coordinated closely with the Marine Corps during all steps in the project's planning process, including preparation of the Final EIS.
- In June 2009, the Department of the Navy removed approximately 60,000 acres of land it had originally proposed for study, including approximately 33,000 acres of public lands. These lands were in each of the three EIS study areas (east, west and south), and represent nearly 15 percent of the original study area. On January 25, 2010, the BLM published a notice in the *Federal Register* that ended the segregation on these public lands on February 24, 2010.
- On September 15, 2010, the BLM published a notice in the *Federal Register* to initiate a Withdrawal in Aid of Legislation. This withdrawal was designed to keep the segregation of use in effect on the land under study in the project EIS. The public comment period on that proposed action was in effect through the Draft EIS public comment meetings in April 2011.
- Representatives of the Marine Corps, including Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) personnel, have regularly met with stakeholders to discuss issues, both aboard Marine Corps installations and in community forums, to draw community perspectives into the planning processes.

4. What is the Resources Management Group (RMG)?

- The RMG was activated by charter in June 2014; the purpose of the RMG is to provide for the cooperative and coordinated management of the Shared Use Area by the BLM for recreational and natural resource conservation purposes ten months of the year, and for military training purposes by the Marine Corps for two thirty-day periods a year
- The RMG is mandated by Congress to implement a Public Outreach Program to educate the public on land use changes, advise the Secretaries of Navy and Interior as to issues associated with these multiple uses, meet at least once per year, and to solicit input from stakeholders as to the management and facilitation of public recreation and other uses in the Shared Use Area when military training is not occurring.

4. How are Private Lands being acquired?

- During the Environmental Impact Statement process, a concurrent examination was made of private land ownership in the area.

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- Private lands were not part of the withdrawal and segregation of public lands process. Segregation only affects federal land, and it prevents the establishment of permanent interests that would conflict with the proposed withdrawal for military purposes.
 - All private or state lands that are inholdings to the public lands withdrawal area have been evaluated for fair market value and are already acquired or in negotiations.
- 5. How did the public express its views of the project alternatives? To what extent did the Marine Corps coordinate with the public?**
- Nearly 1,000 comments were received on the Final EIS. They were evaluated in preparation of the ROD.
 - Nearly 22,000 comments were received from the public on the Draft EIS, and over 650 people attended three meetings to review the Draft EIS analysis of the environmental impacts, on both natural and socio-economic resources, of the various alternatives. Stakeholder comments – including from public agencies; state, local and tribal governments; businesses, non-governmental organizations such as conservationists, recreation enthusiasts and developers and individuals, for example – were studied during preparation of the Final EIS.
 - Nearly 20,000 public comments were also received during the three-month EIS scoping period that ended January 31, 2009. These comments helped to shape the studies and analyses, and led to the development of a sixth alternative – which has become the Marine Corps' Preferred Alternative.
 - The Marine Corps worked closely with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Federal Aviation Administration throughout the EIS process. These cooperating agencies helped to ensure that all stakeholder concerns were addressed during preparation of the EIS.
 - The Marine Corps has held public meetings in coordination with BLM to receive public opinion and feedback,
 - The Marine Corps held public meetings in coordination with BLM to receive public comment in order to determine the location of the Company Objective Sites which will reside in the Shared Use Area.
 - The Marine Corps will continue to work with BLM in the management of the Shared Use Area and with FAA in the management of any Special Use Airspace established or modified to support MEB training.
- 6. Why were there four public review and comment periods? Are there others?**
- The first comment period was in connection with the BLM's public notice for the segregation of lands for the Marine Corps' EIS study. Comments during this period were made to the BLM, but have been shared with the Marine Corps and considered in preparing the EIS.

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- The second comment period was for the “scoping period” for the EIS study. During this period the public was invited to provide comments to the Marine Corps on issues and the proposed alternatives for study in the National Environmental Policy Act process. These comments helped to shape the range of reasonable alternatives and substantive issues that were studied in the EIS, including the development of Alternative 6, which became the Preferred Alternative.
- The third comment period was for review of the Draft EIS. These comments led to further studies, the slight modification of Alternative 6, and the identification of appropriate and feasible mitigation measures for biological resources, airspace use and recreation.
- The fourth review period followed release of the Final EIS. The nearly 1,000 comments received were evaluated in preparation of the Record of Decision (ROD).
- The Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy team have given consideration to all comments received during the past comment periods. Comments during the public review period of the Final EIS were evaluated in preparation of the ROD released by the Department of the Navy on February 15, 2013.
- Congress gave consideration to public comments they received during their review process. Those public and agency comments led to slight modifications in the withdrawal that ultimately formed the outcome signed into law by the President.
- The public will be able to comment during the FAA process during a 45 day period.

7. How will the Public be notified of military training in the Special Use Area?

- The Marine Corps alone and in collaboration with the BLM will work diligently to notify the public long in advance of any proposed closure of Shared Use Area for military training.
- The Marine Corps implements a robust communication, outreach and engagement plan to share information with the public and stakeholders about the Shared Use Area and any land use changes
- The Marine Corps will provide notice 12 to 18 months in advance of proposed MEB training exercises to allow the public appropriate time to plan for use of and to schedule events in the Shared Use Area.
- The Marine Corps will be instituting physical barrier measures around the new base boundary to protect public that may have missed notification methods

8. What is the project timeline?

- The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) development process took more than four years to complete, including public review and comment. The Draft EIS was released on February 25, 2011; the Final EIS was released July 27, 2012. The NEPA process was

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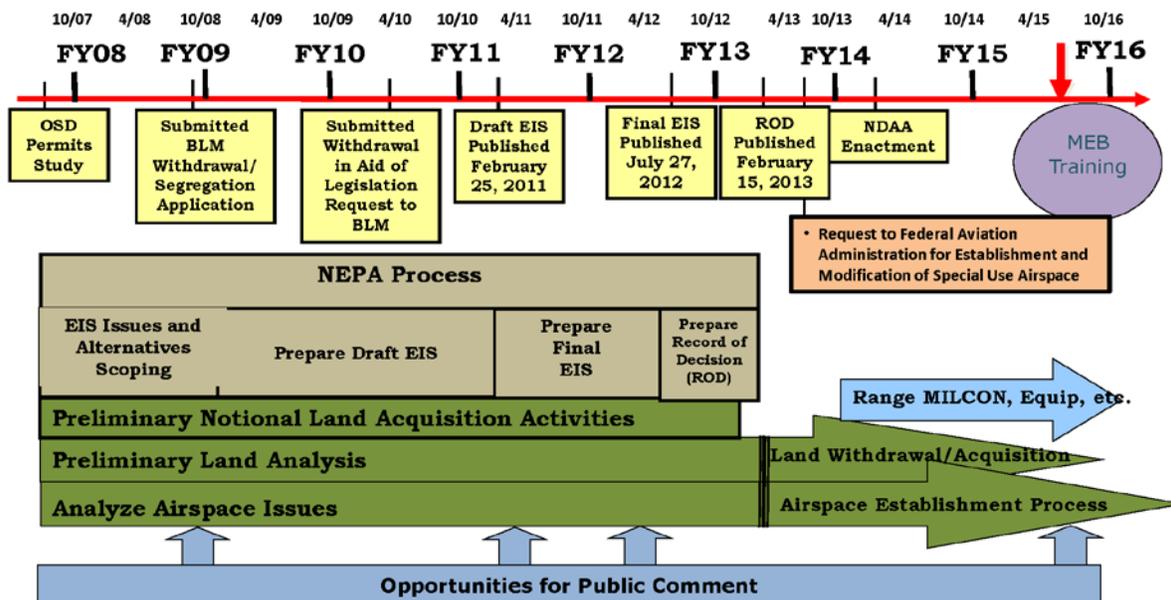


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completed with the release of the ROD, nearly four and one-half years after the Notice of Intent to conduct the EIS study.

- The Department of the Navy issued a Record of Decision (ROD) on February 15, 2013, which selected Alternative 6 that purchases non-federal lands and recommends to Congress the withdrawal of Department of Interior lands, and submits a proposal to the FAA for the establishment and modification of Special Use Airspace.
- The 2014 National Defense Authorization Act authorized withdrawal of public lands to support military MEB exercises
- The Federal Aviation Administration will undertake its formal process to consider establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace, which could conclude as soon as 2015.
- Marines will conduct training in new training lands and airspace in 2015, and will undertake a MEB exercise in 2016.
- The following timeline displays those objectives.



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ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES WERE CAREFULLY AND THOROUGHLY STUDIED

1. What threatened or endangered species are on the base?

- There is one listed species, the threatened Desert Tortoise. Over 380 Desert Tortoises have been hatched and reared at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) during the first few years of a program undertaken with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and academic researchers. Additionally the Marine Corps continues to conduct surveys to locate the Desert Tortoise, perform health assessments and translocate them to protected areas where they can be monitored to support recovery efforts. The Marine Corps at MCAGCC also works to protect and study such sensitive species as the Nelson Big Horn Sheep, various bat species and desert plants on base.
- The expansion of MCAGCC led to the preservation of approximately 15,000 acres of habitat for threatened and/or endangered species within the newly acquired areas, as well as neighboring Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. As a result of the Expansion, the Marine Corps will be conducting endangered species monitoring and expanding the head-starting program for 30 years in an effort to recover the threatened desert tortoise.
- The Marine Corps is committed to continuing its excellent stewardship of natural resources in the newly acquired lands in support of endangered and/or threatened species.

2. What have the resource surveys undertaken for the Environmental Impact Statement concluded about Desert Tortoises and other species, as well as cultural resources, in the study areas?

- The resource studies are now complete and were used in preparation of the Final EIS to evaluate impacts to biological and cultural resources by the different alternatives and have been used to prepare a biological assessment for review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS), which issued a Biological Opinion (BO) on the project July 17, 2012. All of the alternatives studied showed impacts on these resources, some significant and some less than significant.
- In its BO of the proposed actions dated July 17, 2012 the USFWS concluded the proposed action was not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the desert tortoise, nor destroy or adversely modify its critical habitat.
- Special conservation measures will be implemented with any proposed action, to avoid or minimize potential impacts.
- In response to comments and work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during the biological assessment, four additional special conservation measures were developed in preparation of the Final EIS, including development of Special Use Areas, Monitoring and Research, Resource Protection and Enforcement. Consideration has been given to the impacts on species of any displaced off-highway vehicle activity.

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- In addition to these natural resource studies, consultations have occurred with Native American Tribes and the State Historic Preservation Officer to ensure that cultural resources are appropriately protected and managed.
- Stakeholders reviewed and commented on the natural and cultural resources analyses set out in the Draft EIS during the public comment period that ended May 26, 2011, and at the three public comment meetings held April 12, 13, and 14, 2011. In response to public comments, biological resources sections were updated with additional information or discussion of impacts on a variety of species, including migratory birds, and reduced plant productivity associated with dust deposition on leaf surfaces.

3. Would the additional noise bother the outlying communities?

- In response to public comments on the Draft EIS, additional noise studies were undertaken and added to complete the Final EIS, including analyses of single-event noise and noise-generated vibrations results
- The Marine Corps has studied potential noise impacts in preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement analysis and the study has determined that noise impacts from the land acquisition or airspace establishment would likely remain on board the installation and would be less than significant off base. This does not mean that some noise would not be heard off base, but the noise would not be significant.
- Increased noise from military training will be experienced by some surrounding communities such as Lucerne Valley, Landers and Yucca Valley; however, no one outside the installation boundaries will be exposed to a noise level greater than or equal to a 70dB Community Noise Equivalent Level, which is comparable to a normal conversation or television volume.
- MCAGCC currently releases a public service announcement to inform the public of upcoming large exercises that may cause additional noise within the community. This custom will continue as a courtesy to the surrounding communities.

4. Did the USMC consider asking the Congress to de-designate wilderness areas to the east of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center for potential expansion to the east?

- The Marine Corps did not propose land acquisition in any congressionally designated wilderness areas.
- In the Wilderness Act of 1964, Congress established a National Wilderness Preservation System. In 1994 Congress designated three areas near to MCAGCC as wilderness areas: Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness, Sheephole Valley Wilderness and Cadiz Dunes Wilderness.
- These wilderness areas are administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as they are left unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. The wilderness designation provides protection of those areas and the preservation of their wilderness character.

5. Has the Bureau of Land Management provided recreational and other data to the USMC?

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- Yes, and the BLM worked with the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy as a cooperating agency in evaluating the resource impacts of the proposed alternatives studied in the Environmental Impact Statement, including any losses of socio-economic values, recreation and mining.

6. How does the Land Acquisition affect off-road recreation?

- As a result of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2014, Congress designated over 43,000 acres specifically for off-highway vehicle and recreational use.
- Nearly 100,000 acres remain open to recreation in Johnson Valley. Congress designated over 43,000 acres as the Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area and this is available for OHV and other recreation year round. Coupled with the approximate 56,000 acres of Shared Use Area available 10 months of each year, this nearly 100,000 acre area comprises the second largest off-highway vehicle area in California.
- In an effort to facilitate as much recreation and organized racing events as possible, the Marine Corps has entered into a license agreement with the race promoter of the largest organized annual event in Johnson Valley to use a section of MCAGGC consisting of a portion of the recently acquired lands so that the race may continue as it historically has. This license agreement is valid for several years.

7. Would historic or archeological resources be impacted by the acquisition?

- The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs (NREA) mission is to develop and maintain awareness of the natural and cultural resources at MCAGCC and the importance of resource protection, to develop a plan to catalogue, protect and mitigate any losses of those resources at MCAGCC.
- Potential impacts to cultural resources resulting from a proposed alternative were identified and studied in the Environmental Impact Statement, and consultations have occurred with Native American Tribes and the State Historic Preservation Officer to ensure that cultural resources are appropriately protected and managed.
- The Marine Corps is committed to continuing its excellent stewardship of natural and cultural resources in the newly acquired lands.

8. Would dust generation increase and would it impact local communities?

- Potential dust generation issues were studied as air quality impacts in the Environmental Impact Statement and were found to be less than significant.
- The Marine Corps does not anticipate any impact on local communities from dust.

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- The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan ensures coordination with military training organizations to minimize disturbances to training areas (i.e., road proliferation, dust control, etc.).

9. Would water quality or quantity be impacted?

- Water resources impacts were studied in preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement and the studies found that any impacts to water would be less than significant. Additional studies on water resources and potential impacts to water quality from ordnance use were conducted in response to public comments.

10. What about airborne chemicals, ground contamination, noise and restrictions to traffic (e.g., on Hwy 247 or Amboy Road)?

- Impacts to the environment from these types of factors were studied in the Environmental Impact Statement and it was found that the impacts to public health and safety would be less than significant.

11. What effect does the Land Acquisition have on energy projects proposed for the area?

- When Congress approved the withdrawal of land for military training purposes, there were no alternative energy projects proposed for that land.

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**MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER,
A PREMIER TRAINING FACILITY**

- 1. What is the estimated cost for the Land Acquisition?**
 - Initial estimates for potential project costs – environmental reviews, regulatory compliance and real estate acquisition – to complete the potential land acquisition were approximately \$50 million for the smallest acquisition alternative. The current acquisition estimate is about \$56.4 million.
- 2. Where does the money come from for any land acquisition?**
 - The money for land acquisition comes from Congressional appropriations through the military construction program.
- 3. Who trains here?**
 - Currently, over 90 percent of the Marines deploying to combat around the globe receive their final training at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center before deployment, as well as units who are stationed at the base and units from other services and from other nations.
 - Some units from the Army train here to hone select skills after they have trained for their “core” skills at their own bases.
 - Many multi-national forces train here as well.
- 4. What units train regularly on base?**
 - The base is home to many First Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) units, including the 7th Marine Regiment; 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion; 1st Tank Battalion; the 3rd Battalion, 11th Marines; “D” Company, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion (AAV); Combat Logistics Battalion 7, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374; and VMU-1.
 - Marine Reserve units also train at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center.
- 5. Do other countries’ militaries train here? Which ones?**
 - Yes, military units from many countries have trained here, including units from the United Kingdom and Singapore.
- 6. What units are currently training at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center? Are they the next unit to head out?**
 - For security purposes, the Marine Corps does not discuss future deployment plans of military units.

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- 7. Do the units return to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center between each combat tour?**
 - Yes, because the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center offers units the unique, comprehensive training package. Training includes taking the lessons learned from the combat theater and incorporating them into training to ensure that Marines are trained with the most up-to-date information.
- 8. What kind of training do they receive at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center?**
 - Among other training, they receive Marine Air-Ground Task Force combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training, cultural awareness training, and Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) training.
- 9. What is MOUT and why is it important?**
 - A “MOUT” is a “Military Operations in an Urban Terrain” training facility. It provides for training of Marines to replicate their operations in an urban environment, such as those presented in Afghanistan and Iraq, where there is close-quarter battle and the presence of many non-combatants.
- 10. What future weapons systems will be used here?**
 - The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center would need to accommodate the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter, the MV-22 Osprey and new munitions.
- 11. How long is MEB training and where would it occur?**
 - Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center would occur up to twice a year and would last for just under 30 days, including a culminating sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training exercise of three days duration.
 - MEB training would occur throughout Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center’s current installation and in any newly acquired lands, and support Special Use Airspace.
 - Only non dud-producing ordnance would be used for training in the 56,000 acres to which the public would have access during periods of time that MEB training is not occurring.
- 12. How long does a Battalion train at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center?**
 - Battalion-size training usually occurs for 28 days per exercise.
- 13. Would depleted uranium rounds be used aboard the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in training activities, and are they already used aboard the base?**
 - There is no requirement to use depleted uranium rounds in training and the Marine Corps does not use depleted uranium rounds for training aboard the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center.

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INCIDENTAL PROJECT QUESTIONS

- 1. What will the Marine Corps build on this land?**
 - Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) will construct such assets as required to support training, including targetry and roads.
- 2. Will there be an increase in the permanent party population aboard the base?**
 - There will only be an increase of approximately 77 personnel as a result of the training land and airspace study effort.
- 3. To what extent did the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) apply to this project?**
 - The Marine Corps met with the State of California to discuss CEQA requirements for state actions that could be undertaken following the project decision. State agencies were encouraged to use the National Environmental Policy Act documents when such documents complied with CEQA. To the extent practicable, the Environmental Impact Statement incorporated CEQA requirements to allow state agencies to utilize the Environmental Impact Statement analysis to support any future project-specific analyses that may be required by CEQA.
- 4. Will greenhouse gas emissions and climate change due to global warming be analyzed?**
 - The Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy did comply with requirements to study greenhouse gas emissions and climate change issues in the Environmental Impact Statement.
- 6. When did the Marine Corps first notify the public of the project?**
 - Once the requirement had been validated by the Marine Corps' Requirements Oversight Council, Department of the Navy and Department of Defense, and permission to undertake National Environmental Policy Act and other analyses was approved in the summer of 2007, the Marine Corps immediately notified Congress, issued a press release and sent letters from the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center's Commanding General to community leaders and organizations. Since then, the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center and Head Quarters Marine Corps have held meetings with Members of Congress and their staffs, State Government officials in Sacramento, the Bureau of Land Management and Federal Aviation Administration, and with community stakeholders such as off-road vehicle enthusiasts, energy companies, the film industry, the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center neighbors, local government officials, local airports and pilot associations, and others. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to undertake the NEPA analysis and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published on October 30, 2008.
- 7. Can the public get Geographic Information System (GIS) files, specific maps or other products to assist in their analysis of the Final Environmental Impact Statement?**
 - The project has loaded necessary maps and other documents onto the MCAGCC project

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website: <http://www.marines.mil/unit/29palms/las/>.

- GIS files can be requested through the USMC process outlined at
<http://www.29palms.marines.mil/Staff/G4InstallationsandLogistics/LandAcquisition.aspx>

8. Is it necessary to transport equipment to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center to support MEB training?

- MCAGCC maintains a great deal of equipment at the installation to support training and to minimize transportation costs and impacts.

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