

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This Range Wide Environmental Impact Statement (RWEIS) presents the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of a range of alternatives, including the Preferred Alternative to diversify Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) operations. The Preferred Alternative, if adopted by the U.S. Army (Army) would convert YPG into a multipurpose installation. The new program would incorporate new management practices, update operational concepts, and integrate opportunities for public-private partnerships to meet the demands of a broader customer base. The location of YPG is shown in figure 1.

The RWEIS addresses the general impacts of a broad program (the total YPG mission) to a large geographic area (southwestern Arizona). This RWEIS is therefore a programmatic type of environmental impact statement (EIS) as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Future actions at YPG will require lower tier documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act. Projects identified in the Preferred Alternative are representative examples and do not represent commitments made by YPG or the Army. The RWEIS is designed to function along with the other planning documents at YPG, such as the Installation Master Plan, the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, and the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan. If additional Army initiatives result in proposed programs not covered by this RWEIS, then additional NEPA documentation would be prepared, as appropriate.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Defense systems development at YPG requires modern, large, specialized test facilities with advanced data acquisition capabilities. Future mission needs will require changes in

the infrastructure and increased capabilities of YPG during the life of this document (1999 to 2014). These changes could result in potentially significant effects to the environment.

The Preferred Alternative identifies potential future mission activities at YPG and the extent of changes needed to support that mission. Changes in future activities on YPG are analyzed in relation to the following activity areas: testing, training, public-private partnership opportunities, recreation, and other activities. The expanded mission is expected to increase troop training, introduce combat systems testing, and involve new customers from the private sector. Training activities at YPG have increased over the five-year period from 1991 through 1995. This continued expansion of training exercises, activities, and diverse participants will increase impacts to the environment. All branches of the military are likely to conduct training activities at YPG within the 15-year life span of this document.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THIS RWEIS

A range of alternatives were developed in relation to the proposed action to direct the future development of YPG. Preparation of this document considered several alternatives. Developmental criteria are shown in the box below.

Alternative A - Baseline Activity Levels (No Action)

Alternative A is the No Action alternative. This alternative considered activities on the installation at levels comparable to those experienced during the five-year baseline period from 1991-1995. Over this baseline period the type and frequency of mission activities fluctuated, as a reflection of changing

DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA FOR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- **The military mission continues to have top priority.**
- **New activities that are compatible with the military mission will be considered.**
- **Range areas are closed to the public except as specifically authorized. Roads and other facilities routinely available for public use may also temporarily be closed (when required) for security and safety.**
- **The Army and Department of Defense comply with the applicable federal and state regulatory statutes (environmental laws, permits, and licenses).**
- **Valid existing rights and formalized agreements are protected and maintained, as required by law.**
- **The policies and planning of adjacent land owners, managers, and local governments are considered in projects conducted at YPG.**

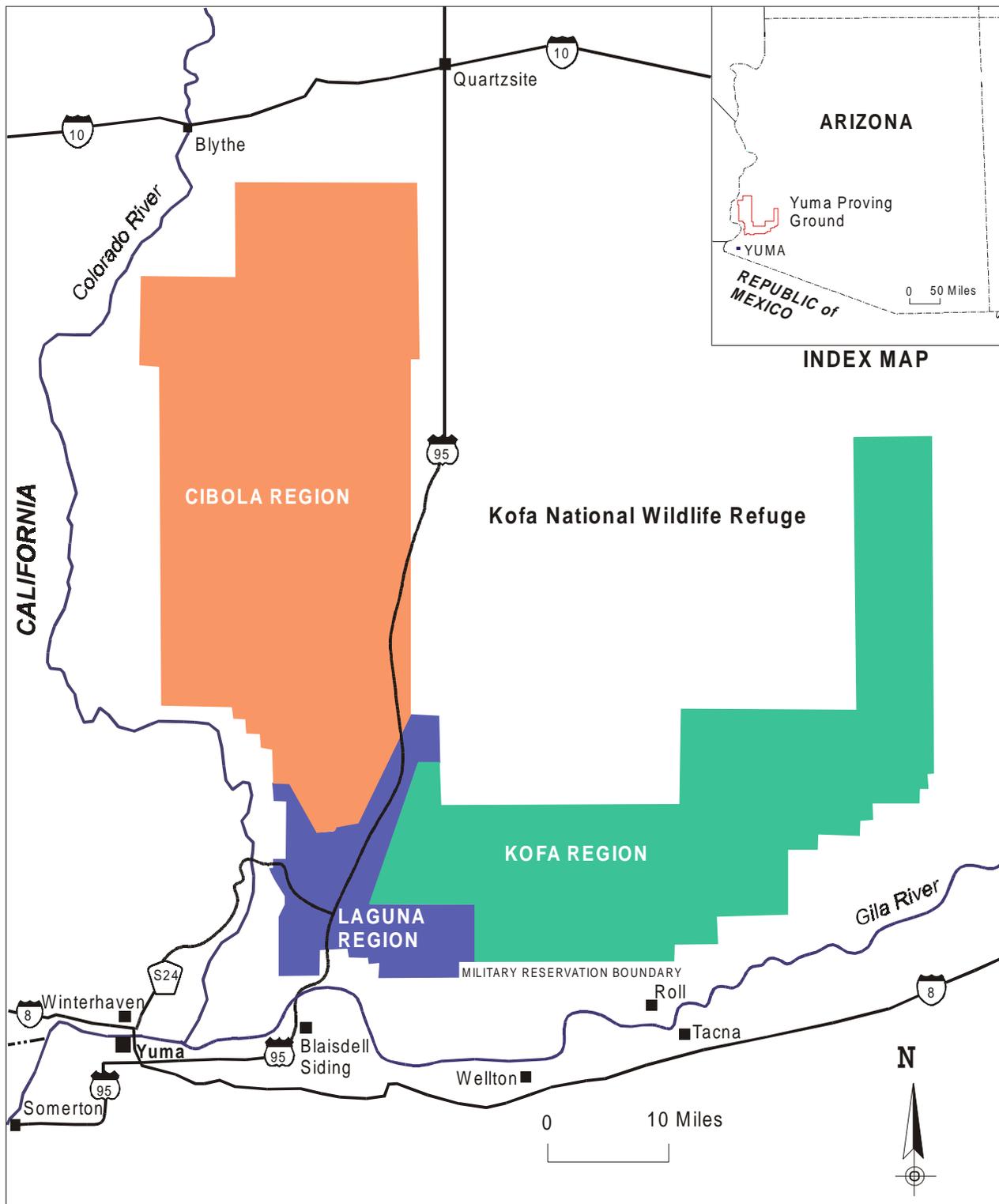


Figure 1. Location and Regions of Yuma Proving Ground.

national defense needs. Therefore Alternative A considered fluctuations in activity levels to be an integral part of operations, and anticipated that similar fluctuations, within the range established, would continue to occur. Support services and maintenance of existing facilities and infrastructure were also expected to continue at levels comparable to those experienced during the baseline period.

Alternative B - Decreased Military Mission

Under alternative B some military operations were evaluated in context of a 50 percent decrease from baseline levels. During development of this alternative, not all areas of the composite mission at YPG were expected to decrease over the next 15 years. Predictions of decreases in mission activities were based on information and knowledge available from the technical divisions at YPG. The development of more advanced technology was considered a key factor when evaluating the potential for an activity to decrease.

Alternative C - Increased Military Mission

Alternative C predicted increases for baseline military mission activity and enhanced the principal mission by incorporating more military activities, such as training. The predicted increases in mission activity levels varied for each functional region, however, installation wide activity was assumed to increase 100 percent above baseline-period activity.

Alternative D – Modified Nonmilitary Mission

Under alternative D military mission activity would have remained consistent with baseline conditions described in Alternative A. However, nonmilitary activities, such as recreational use and private industry partnerships, were predicted to experience increases or be added as new activities. Other nonmilitary activities; such as mining and agricultural outleases, were considered.

Alternative E - Diversified Mission

Under alternative E, enhancement of the military and nonmilitary activities at YPG would occur. Alternative E incorporates parts of alternatives A through D. The emphasis on testing would continue, with new testing activities introduced. Training activities would also increase. Private industry partnerships would be sought that encourage the use of existing facilities, and new facilities constructed in support of a diversified mission. Building state-of-the-art technology and infrastructure to support an expanded private and military customer base would be maximized for the installation land assets.

Alternative F - Preferred Alternative

Alternative F was developed after publication of the Draft RWEIS. This alternative is a synthesis of alternatives A through E, formulated by considering the needs of YPG and the comments received on the Draft RWEIS. Under alternative F, the installation mission would diversify military and nonmilitary activities. Test activities and capabilities will adjust as technology advances and national defense objectives change. Traditional test and evaluation will continue to be a priority. New military activities, such as training, will be added to YPG. Private industry will be encouraged to use existing

facilities and construct new facilities in support of a diversified mission. This alternative includes developing partnerships with more military units and other government agencies. Yuma Proving Ground will maintain, remodel, or dispose of existing facilities, as appropriate, to support a diversified mission.

ISSUES

Comments were solicited from the public, government agencies, Native American tribes, and non-governmental organizations regarding the scope and content of the RWEIS and the future of YPG. Comments received were evaluated, and the ideas were included in the formation of the Preferred Alternative.

Agencies and Tribes expressed concern for biological, cultural, and water resources. They also wanted to clearly establish agency roles and responsibilities with reference to YPG operations. The public commented about concern for biological and cultural resources, land use, and NEPA compliance.

IMPACTS

Listed in Table S-1 are the potential significant environmental impacts of all of the alternatives. Table S-1 also lists the range of impacts possible for alternative F.

Potentially significant impacts may occur to geology and soils, biological resources, cultural resources, and socioeconomics. The military presence at YPG protects natural resources by limiting access and activities, preventing or mitigating many impacts. The military presence in the Yuma, AZ, region provides positive socioeconomic benefits.

CONCLUSION

Alternative F, the Preferred Alternative, was developed to fulfill the requirements of the proposed action at YPG. This decision was made based on the YPG mission, the needs of the Defense Department, potential environmental impacts, and by considering input from other government agencies and the public. Alternative F is expected to be the most efficient and sustainable use of Army resources found at YPG. The Army and YPG will make every reasonable effort to minimize environmental impacts through careful planning, best management practices, and mitigation actions.

TIERING AND NEPA DOCUMENTS

This RWEIS will assist decisionmakers in developing future courses of action for the installation. Future environmental documents will be needed, as the courses of action are fully defined. These future environmental documents will tier by reference to this programmatic RWEIS. Documents may include site or program specific Environmental Assessments (EAs), records of environmental consideration (RECs), or regulatory permit applications.

TABLE S-1 COMPARISON OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE				
Alternative Considered	Geological & Soil Resources	Biological Resources	Cultural Resources	Socio-economics
Alternative A 1991-1995 Baseline Military Activities	Test km/yr. driven = 488,267 Rounds fired = 243,450 1-3 construction projects.	<1 km ² /yr vegetation trimmed or removed. 3 vegetation removal projects/yr.	2 test excavations/yr. No sites damaged.	\$119 million/yr. to local economy.
Alternative B Decreased Baseline Military Activities	Test km/yr. driven = 244,130 Rounds fired = 121,730 2 construction projects	<1 km ² /yr trimmed or removed. 1 vegetation removal project/yr.	1 excavation/yr. No anticipated sites damaged.	\$59 million/yr. to local economy.
Alternative C Increase Baseline Military Activities Introduce New Military Activities	Test km/yr. driven = 976,530 Rounds fired = 486,900 2-6 construction projects	<2 km ² /yr vegetation trimmed or removed. 6 vegetation removal projects/yr.	4 test excavations/yr. No anticipated sites damaged.	\$179 million/yr. to local economy.
Alternative D Baseline Military Activities Introduce New Nonmilitary Enterprises	Test km/yr. driven = 537,100 Rounds fired =243,550 2-6 construction projects	<3 km ² /yr vegetation trimmed or removed. 6 vegetation removal projects/yr.	3 test excavations/yr. No anticipated sites damaged.	\$119 million/yr. to local economy
Alternative E Increase Baseline Military Activities Introduce New Military Activities and Nonmilitary Enterprises	Test km/yr. driven = 1,025,370 Rounds fired =511,260 2-6 construction projects	<3 km ² /yr vegetation trimmed or removed. 6 vegetation removal projects/yr.	+ 6 test excavations/yr. No anticipated sites damaged.	\$200 million/yr. to local economy.
Alternative F Military activity would fluctuate above and below baseline. New activities are added and others are reduced. New, compatible non- military activities are permitted.	Test km/yr. driven = 488,270 - 1,025,370 Rounds fired =243,450 - 511,260 1-6 construction projects	<3 km ² /yr vegetation trimmed or removed. 3 - 6 vegetation removal projects/yr.	2 - 6+ test excavations/yr. No anticipated sites damaged.	\$119 - \$200 million/yr. to local economy.