



RECORD OF DECISION

Proposed Modernization and Expansion of Townsend Bombing Range

PROJECT BRIEFING

January 2014



BRIEFING PURPOSE



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



RECORD OF DECISION



Alternative 4, the Selected Alternative

- On January 31, 2014, the Department of the Navy (DON) published its Record of Decision (ROD) for the Proposed Expansion and Modernization of TBR in McIntosh and Long Counties, Georgia, in the *Federal Register*.
- The ROD documents the DON's decision to proceed with the Proposed Action through Alternative 4, described and identified as the Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS.
- Alternative 4 offers the best balance of operational capability and potential impacts to the environment.
- All practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm that were identified in the Final EIS have been adopted.



REQUIREMENT IDENTIFICATION



Marine Corps aviation units must train as they fight.

- Marine Corps training doctrine requires Marine aviators to be highly skilled in the use of PGM.
 - The Marine Corps cannot adequately train with PGM on the East Coast.
 - Marine Corps units based on the East Coast must deploy to Marine Corps ranges on the West Coast to train with PGM.
 - The West Coast ranges are uniquely suited for more complex unit and higher skills training, and using those ranges for individual air crew training with PGM lessons their overall effectiveness.
- A modernized and expanded TBR would meet up to 85% of the air-to-ground training currently specified in the individual aircrew training requirements for Fighter/Attack 18 (F/A-18) aviation units, versus 47% today.



REQUIREMENT VALIDATION



- In May 2003, Marine Aircraft Group 31 (MAG-31) submitted a Universal Needs Statement (UNS), which identified its requirement for an East Coast PGM range capability.
- In February 2009, the Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) approved studying the modernization of TBR to accommodate PGM training.
- In December 2009, the Under Secretary of Defense approved going forward to study potential land acquisition contiguous to TBR.
- The Under Secretary's approval allowed the Department of the Navy to proceed with preparation of an EIS on behalf of the Marine Corps.

Townsend Bombing Range and Land Acquisition Alternatives



Acquisition Area 1A
 Acquisition Area 1B
 Acquisition Area 3
 Bombing Range
 Target Area
 Contour
 Major Road
 Power Line
 Shared Power Line and Natural Gas Pipeline Right of Way
 Altamaha River

Land Acquisition Alternatives
 Townsend Bombing Range
 McIntosh and Long Counties, Georgia
 0 1 2 Miles
 Sources: Bing 2012, Based on Loh 2009, MFA 2011



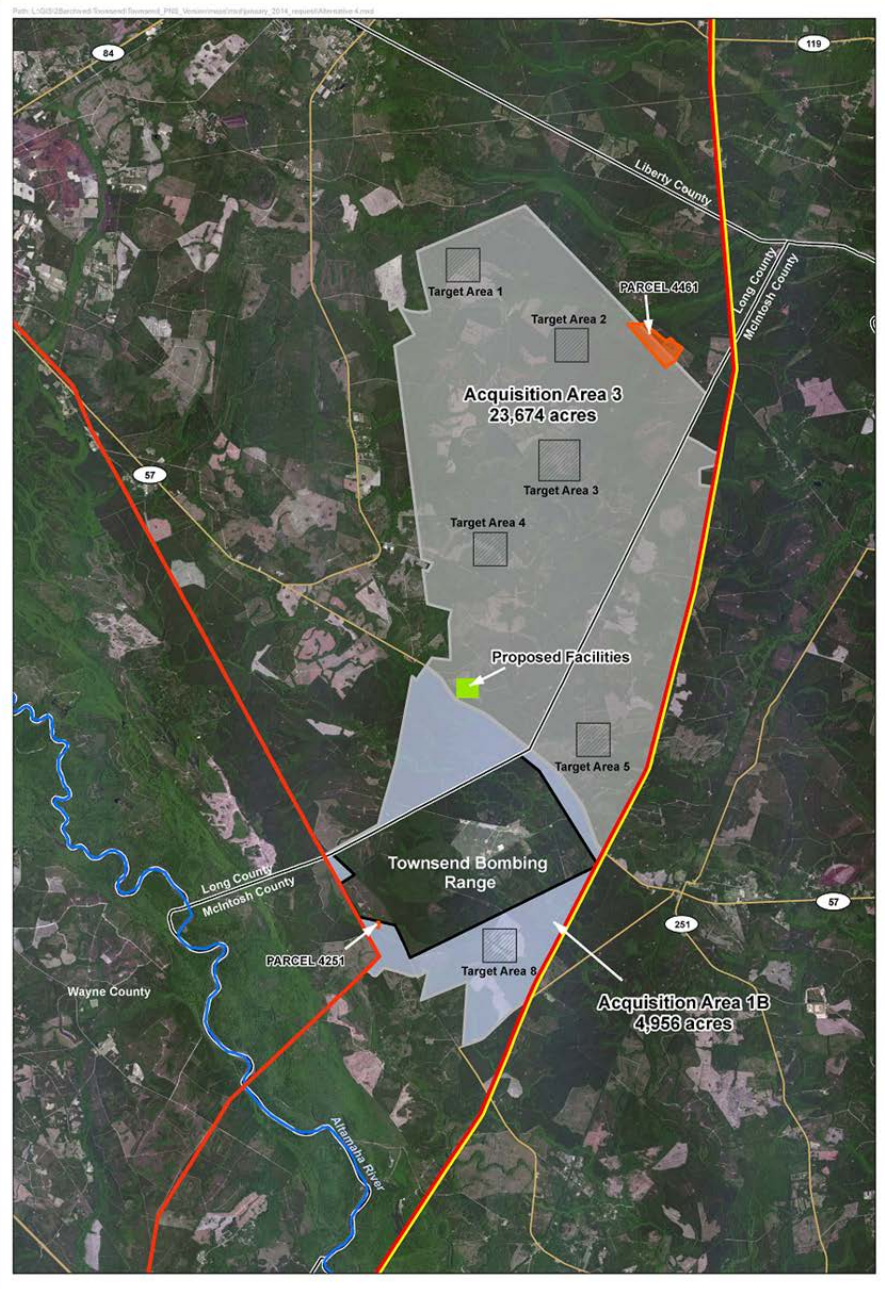
EVALUATED ALTERNATIVES



| | | <u>Alternative</u> | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|-----------|
| | | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> <i>Selected Alternative</i> | No Action |
| Acquisition Area | | 1A + 1B | 3 | 1A+1B+3 | 1B+3 | N/A |
| Acreage | | 11,187 | 23,674 | 34,861 | 28,630 | N/A |
| Infrastructure | Target Areas | 6, 7, 8 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 | N/A |
| | Facilities | <i>All Facilities</i> | <i>Observation Tower</i> | <i>Observation Tower</i> | <i>Observation Tower</i> | N/A |
| Training & Readiness Percentage Met | | 72% | 85% | 85% | 85% | 47% |

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative 4



- Acquisition Area 1B
- Acquisition Area 3
- Existing Range
- Target Area
- Private Properties
- Proposed Facilities
- Counties
- Major Roads
- Power Line
- Shared Power Line and Natural Gas Pipeline Right-of-Way
- Altamaha River

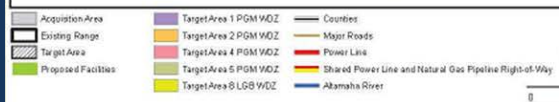
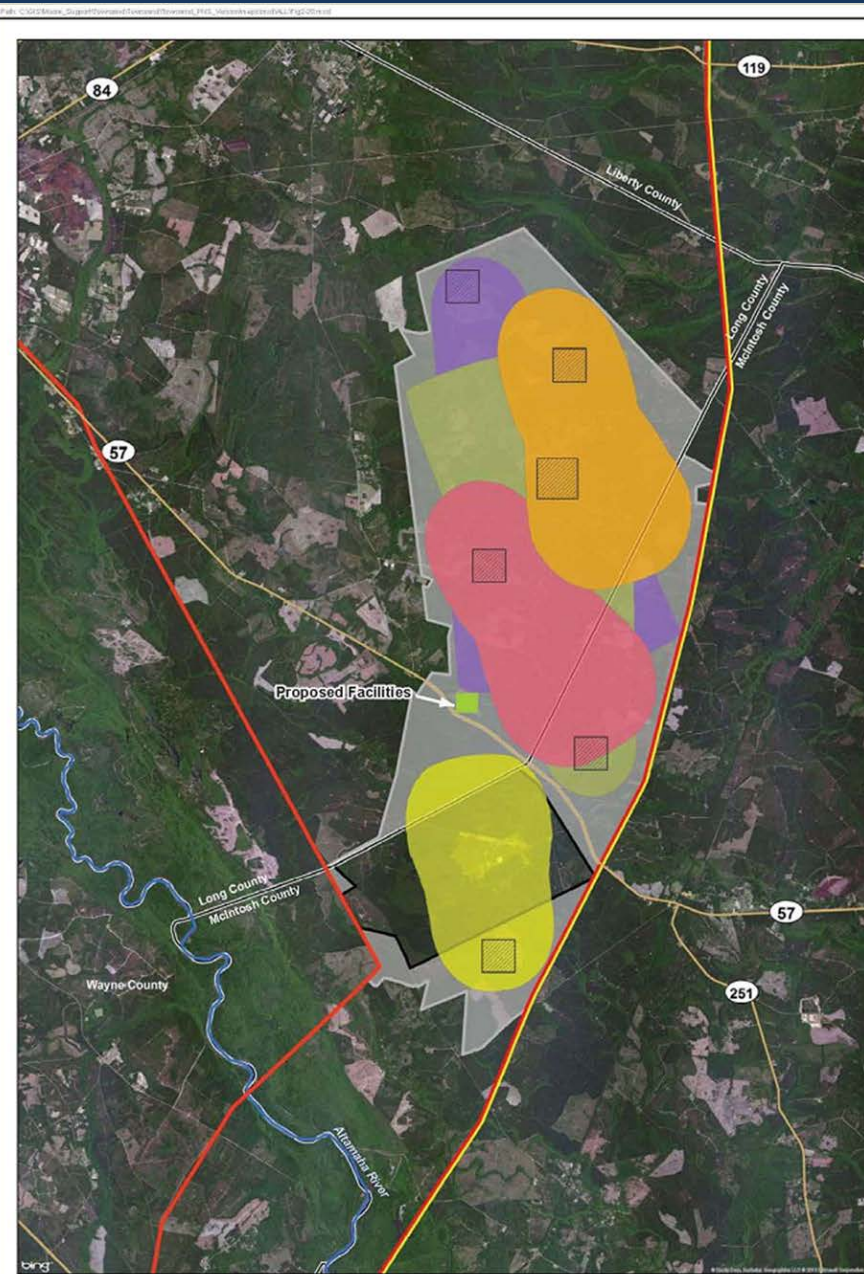


Alternative 4
Townsend Bombing Range
McIntosh and Long Counties, Georgia

Sources: Bing Maps 2013, Based on Lusk 2009, McFadden 2011

SELECTED
ALTERNATIVE

Alternative 4
Modeled WZDs



PGM = Precision-Guided Munition
WDZ = Weapon Danger Zone
LGB = Laser-Guided Bomb

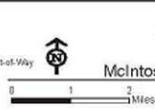


Figure 2-20
Alternative 4 Modeled WZDs
Townsend Bombing Range
McIntosh and Long Counties, Georgia
Sources: Bing Maps 2009, Based on Lusk 2009,
McFadden 2011, McFadden 2012



SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative 4



Best balance of operational capability and potential impacts to the environment

- Challenging and realistic training through a mix of targets, aim points, and attack headings
- Balances the Marine Corps' Training Requirement with minimizing impacts to the environment and the surrounding communities
- Developed by the Marine Corps in response to public comments during scoping

| Selected Alternative Alternative 4 | |
|--|-------------------|
| Acquisition Area | 1B+3 |
| Acreage | 28,630 |
| Target Areas | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 |
| Facilities | Observation Tower |
| Sorties | 4,234 |
| Training & Readiness Manual Percentage Met | 85% |
| Continuous Range Operations | Yes |
| Minimize Relocation of Private Citizens | Yes |



SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative 4



- Modernization under Alternative 4 includes four elements:
 - *Acquisition of Land.* The Marine Corps will acquire 28,630 acres of land (Acquisition Areas 1B and 3) in McIntosh County (8,520 acres) and Long County (20,110 acres).
 - *Termination of a Timber Easement.* The Marine Corps will acquire a 3,007-acre timber easement held by McIntosh County on DON-owned land within the current TBR boundary. The Marine Corps will purchase the timber easement from McIntosh County.
 - *Modification of Existing Restricted Airspace.* Restricted Area R-3007 airspace will be modified by extending the current 100-foot floor to ground level only over the land to be acquired (Acquisition Areas 1B and 3) to match the existing restricted airspace over the current range.
 - *Construction of Infrastructure to support PGM training.* The modernization will include the installation of target scoring equipment, tower construction, roadway construction/improvement, and six new target areas – Target Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AREAS

Socioeconomics



- The analysis in the preparation of the EIS revealed one significant environmental impact — the impact to socioeconomics.
- Acquisition, construction, and additional survey work would provide direct and indirect benefits to the local and state economy.
- Total Construction-Related Economic Impact = \$12.8M
- The Preferred Alternative would provide 12 new full-time jobs, which would have a minor, long-term benefit to the region.

| Preferred Alternative | |
|--|-----------|
| Alternative 4 (28,630 acres) | |
| <u>Long County</u> (258,240 acres) | |
| Acres Acquired | 20,110 |
| Annual Tax Loss | \$131,318 |
| Percent Total Taxes | 3.42% |
| <u>McIntosh County</u> (367,680 acres) | |
| Acres Acquired | 8,520 |
| Annual Tax Loss | \$35,469 |
| Percent Total Taxes | 0.60% |



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Final EIS



- **Final EIS released 22 March 2013**
 - OLA/Congressional Notification: 18 and 19 March 2013
 - 30-Day Wait Period: 22 March to 22 April 2013
- **Total of 26 comments received during 30-day wait period**
 - 12 comments expressed support for, or no concerns with, the Proposed Action
 - EPA, Region IV, confirmed initial comments were adequately addressed in the Final EIS; rated Final EIS as "Lack of Objections."
 - USDA NRCS and GA DNR Wildlife Resources Division submitted official responses stating they had no additional comments or concerns.
 - 14 comments expressed discontent or concern with the Proposed Action
 - Potential socioeconomic impacts and tax loss
 - Cultural and historical resources

No issues arose during this period that warranted changes to the Final EIS.



MAJOR PROJECT MILESTONES



Completed to Date

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ✓ Marine Requirement Oversight Council Approval | 2 Feb 2009 |
| ✓ Finalized training requirements and alternatives for the EIS | March 2010 |
| ✓ Published the Notice of Intent to conduct the EIS | 6 Aug 2010 |
| ✓ Held Public Scoping meetings and comments | Aug – Nov 2010 |
| ✓ Reviewed and summarized Scoping comments | Nov 2010 – June 2011 |
| ✓ Published the Notice of Availability for Draft EIS | 13 July 2012 |
| ✓ Held Public Comment Period meetings and review for Draft EIS | 13 July – 27 Aug 2012 |
| ✓ Review public comments on Draft EIS | Fall 2012 – Spring 2013 |
| ✓ Publish the Notice of Availability for Final EIS | 22 March 2013 |
| ✓ Held 30-day waiting period for Final EIS | 22 March – 22 April 2013 |
| ✓ Publish the Record of Decision | 31 January 2014 |



MAJOR PROJECT MILESTONES

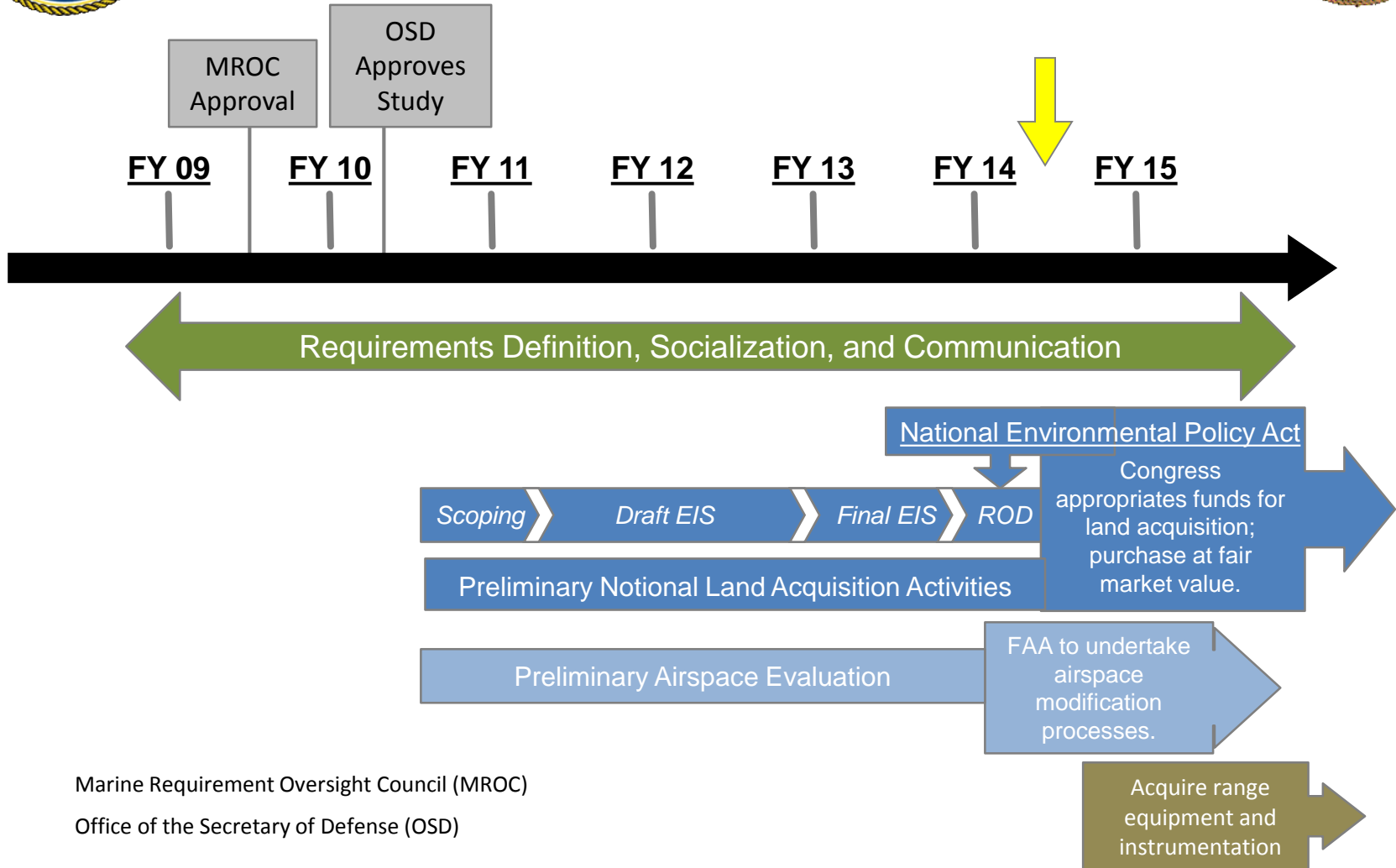


Upcoming

| | |
|---|-------------|
| • Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to undertake processes to consider establishment and modification of existing restricted airspace | 2014 – 2015 |
| • Congress to appropriate funds to pay for land acquisition and for range equipment and preparation. Fair market value will be offered for land or property interests identified for acquisition. | 2014 – 2016 |
| • The Marine Corps to begin the real estate acquisition process on lands for range expansion | 2014 – 2017 |
| • The Marine Corps to undertake range preparations for the installation of new targets, target scoring equipment, tower construction, and roadway construction/improvement | 2015 – 2018 |
| • TBR to reach initial PGM operational capability | 2017 |



PROJECT TIMELINE





CONCLUSION



- The Department of the Navy has decided to proceed with the Proposed Expansion and Modernization of TBR in McIntosh and Long Counties, Georgia, through the implementation of Alternative 4, as identified as the Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS, to include acquisition of Acquisition Areas 1B and 3.
- Modernization and expansion of TBR will significantly enhance the efficiency of training at the Marine Corps aviation training ranges on both coasts.
- Marine Corps and its partner, the Georgia Air National Guard, remain committed to continue working with federal, state and local leaders; resource and regulatory agencies; neighbors; and public stakeholders to keep them informed of project developments.



Questions?

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit: www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com

Contact: MCAS Beaufort Public Affairs Office 843-228-6123



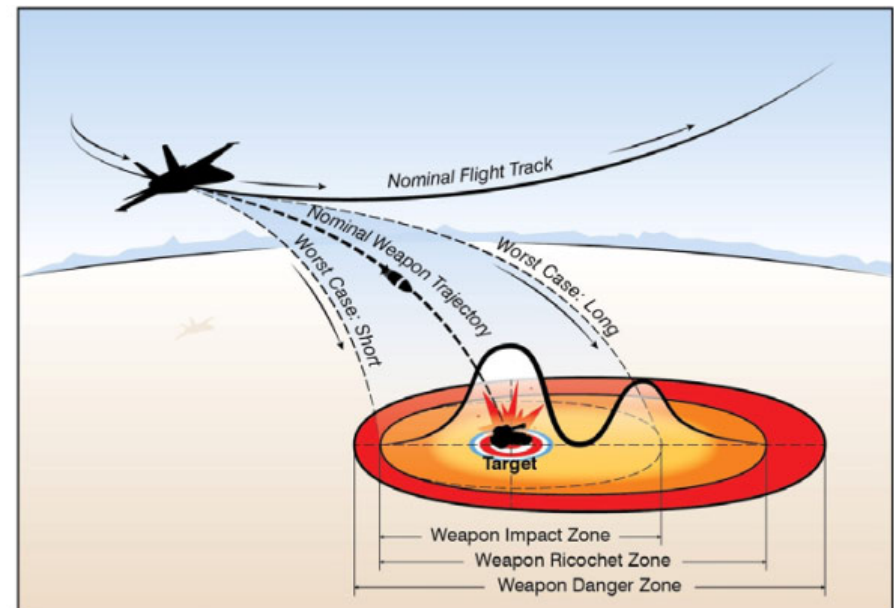
BACK-UP SLIDES



PRECISION-GUIDED MUNITIONS (PGM)



- PGM are a modern class of weapons that allow Marine aviators to precisely attack specific threats and targets, often referred to as “smart bombs.”
- PGM are guided, advanced weapons that have a laser or global positioning system able to correct the munitions flight path as it descends towards a specific target.
- PGM require larger safety zones, or “weapon danger zones” (WDZ)
- An example of a WDZ is shown here.





ALTERNATIVE LOCATIONS CONSIDERED





ALTERNATIVE LOCATIONS CONSIDERED



Comparison of Ranges Based on Range Evaluation Criteria

| Candidate Ranges | 1. Proximity | 2. Adequate Airspace | 3. Does Not Host Conflicting Military Operations |
|---------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|--|
| Fort Stewart, Georgia | 45 NM | YES | NO |
| Townsend Bombing Range, Georgia | 70 NM | YES | YES |
| Poinsett Range, South Carolina | 75 NM | NO | YES |
| Fort Jackson, South Carolina | 90 NM | NO | NO |
| Fort Gordon, Georgia | 96 NM | NO | YES |
| Grand Bay Range, Georgia | 146 NM | NO | NO |
| Camp Blanding, Florida | 160 NM | NO | NO |

* Installations within 165nm of MCAS Cherry Point that were considered and eliminated include: Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; Fort Pickett, Virginia; Dare County Range, North Carolina; and Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia.



BACKGROUND

Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort and MAG-31



- Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort is home to MAG-31 which has 6 operational F/A-18 squadrons.
- TBR is the primary air-to-ground training range for MAG-31.
 - TBR is located 70 nautical miles from Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort
 - TBR is within the local flying area of MAG-31's F/A-18s
 - Local flying area is the maximum distance an aircraft can travel, complete its mission, and return to base without refueling or landing.



BACKGROUND

Townsend Bombing Range



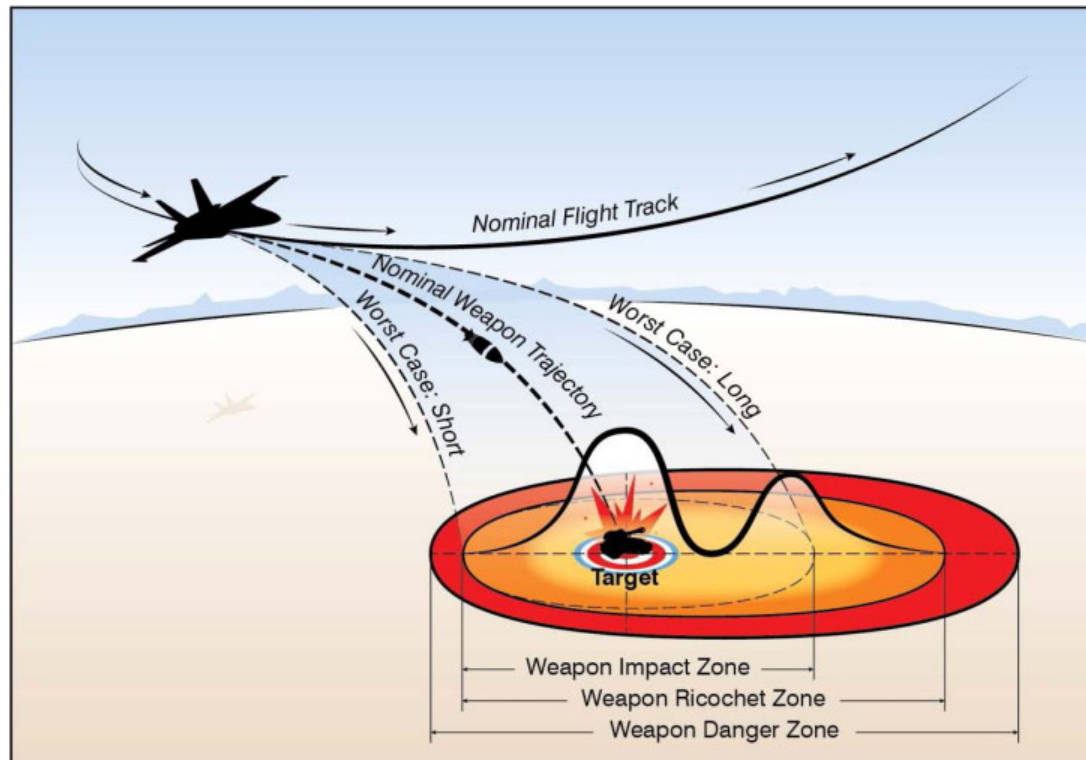
- TBR is 5,183 acres located in McIntosh County, Georgia.
- Training at TBR only involves the use of inert munitions.
 - Inert munitions contain no explosives, but may contain a small smoke charge (spotting charge) to assist in scoring the training event and providing feedback to the aircrew.
- TBR is owned by the Marine Corps and operated by the Georgia Air National Guard (GAANG).
- Air Force, Navy, and Army also use TBR for training activities.



WEAPON DANGER ZONES



- A Weapon Danger Zone is a 3-D zone that includes the ground and airspace to contain projectiles, fragments, debris and other components from air-to-ground training.



SOURCE: Ecology and Environment, Inc. 2012



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping and Draft EIS



- EIS had extensive public involvement and review.
- The Public Scoping Period was held in Fall 2010 and included two public meetings. Public feedback resulted in modifications to the alternatives studied and identified a new alternative for study.
 - Total of 110 comments
 - Study Area 2 removed
 - Acquisition Area 4 created (Areas 1B and 3)
- The Public Comment Period for the Draft EIS, which included two public meetings, occurred in Fall 2012 (13 July - 27 August). The Marine Corps received 100 comments.
- Public comments resulted in no changes in the Final EIS analysis concerning the nature or magnitude of impacts on any resources, and therefore, none to the conclusions.
- Adjustments made for the Final EIS improved the clarity, accuracy, and thoroughness of the analysis presented.



PUBLIC SCOPING



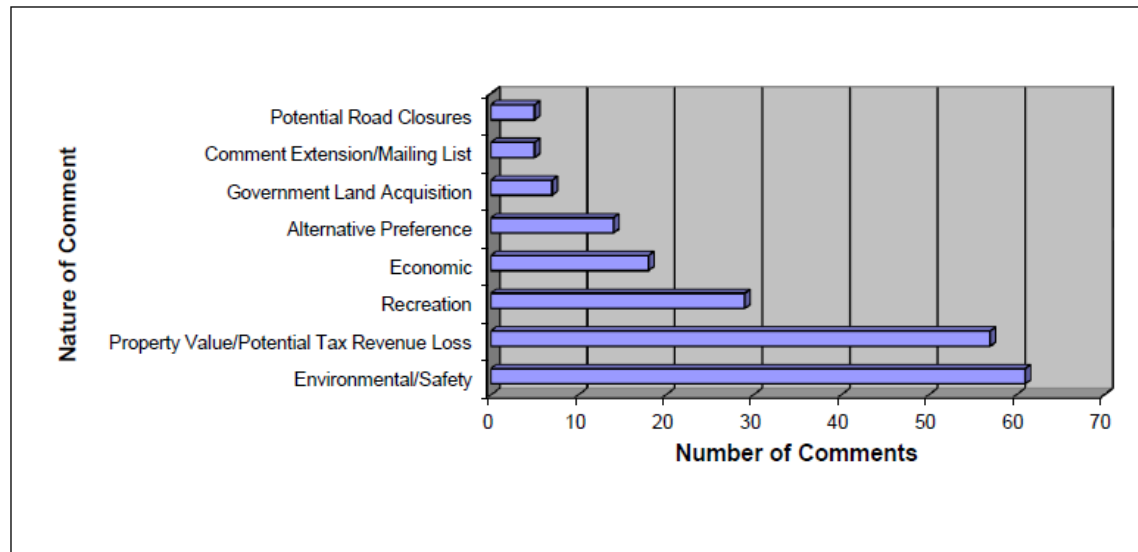
- On August 6, 2010, the Marine Corps issued its Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS and the first public comment period through the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) began.
- The Marine Corps presented the five original alternatives as well as the No Action Alternative.
- These alternatives ranged from acquiring approximately 12,000 acres to approximately 51,500 acres.
- During the Public Scoping Period, the Marine Corps sought public comment on the issues and impacts to be studied in the EIS.
- The Marine Corps received 110 comments, some of which raised multiple issues, during the Public Scoping Periods in the Fall 2010.



PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS



- Issues that were raised during the Scoping Period, include:
 - Biological and water resources
 - Economic well-being of surrounding communities (*property tax revenues, property values and impacts on economic development*)
 - Hunting, fishing and other recreation activities
 - Interests of the Marine Corps' encroachment prevention partners in preserving conservation values



MAJOR CHANGES SINCE SCOPING PERIOD



Removal Of Study Area 2 From Further Study

- In August 2011 the Marine Corps announced its decision to remove Study Area 2 from further consideration in the EIS.
 - Area 2 was southeast of the current boundary of TBR between the Altamaha River and the power line.
 - This decision eliminated the original Alternatives 4 and 5 and reduced the project's study area for potential land acquisition by 14,752 acres.
- After further analysis Study Area 2 was removed due to:
 - Inability to meet the minimum threshold training requirement.
 - Frequent flooding by the Altamaha River that leaves Study Area 2 inaccessible for range maintenance and clearance.

MAJOR CHANGES SINCE SCOPING PERIOD



Addition of a New Alternative

- During the preparation of the Draft EIS, the Marine Corps split Study Area 1 into two subareas – Study Areas 1A and 1B.
- The Marine Corps then developed a new fourth alternative – Study Area 1B and Area 3 (28,630 acres).
- The Marine Corps identified this alternative, Alternative 4, as the Preferred Alternative.
- Alternative 4 is the optimal alternative given both the operational and environmental impact factors considered together.



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE AREAS ANALYZED



- Airspace
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Hazardous Materials and Waste
- Land Use and Forestry Resources
- Noise
- Recreation
- **Socioeconomics**
- Transportation
- Topography, Geology, and Soils
- Utilities and Infrastructure
- Water Resources
- Wetlands



DRAFT TO FINAL EIS



- The most frequently cited comments on the Draft EIS noted the following environmental resources and areas of concern:
 - Socioeconomic resources
 - Public safety
 - Cultural resources
 - Noise
 - Forest management
 - Hunting/recreation
 - Natural resources
 - Transportation (road closures)