



FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
for

PROPOSED MODERNIZATION  
AND EXPANSION  
AT TOWNSEND BOMBING RANGE

PROJECT BRIEFING

Spring 2013





# BRIEFING PURPOSE



- 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.



# 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



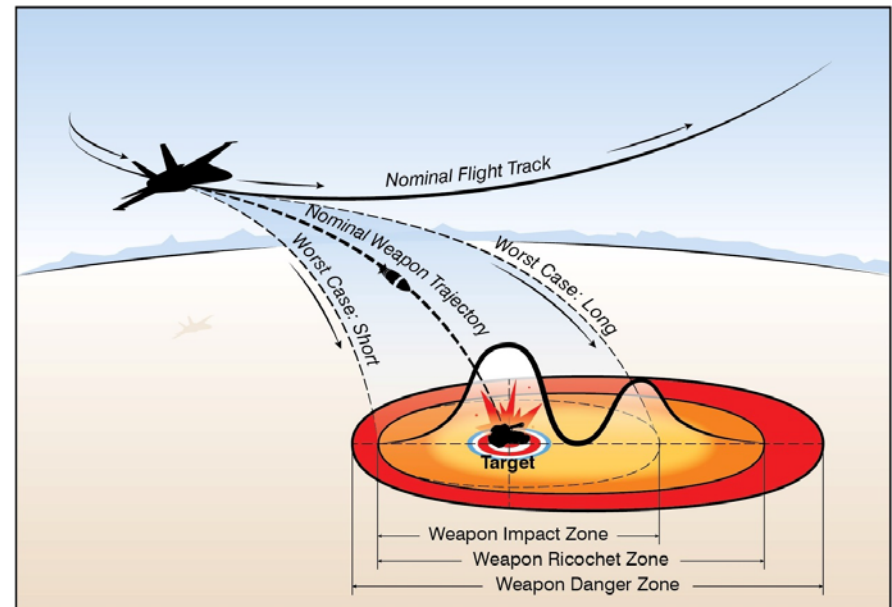
- In May 2003, Marine Aircraft Group 31 (MAG-31) submitted a Universal Needs Statement (UNS), which identified its requirement for an East Coast PGM range capability.
- In February 2009, the Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) approved studying the modernization of TBR to accommodate PGM training.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



# 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.



SOURCE: Ecology and Environment, Inc. 2012



# ALTERNATIVE LOCATIONS CONSIDERED







# ALTERNATIVE LOCATIONS CONSIDERED



## Comparison of Ranges Based on Range Evaluation Criteria

| <b>Candidate Ranges</b>         | <b>1. Proximity</b> | <b>2. Adequate Airspace</b> | <b>3. Does Not Host Conflicting Military Operations</b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 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.



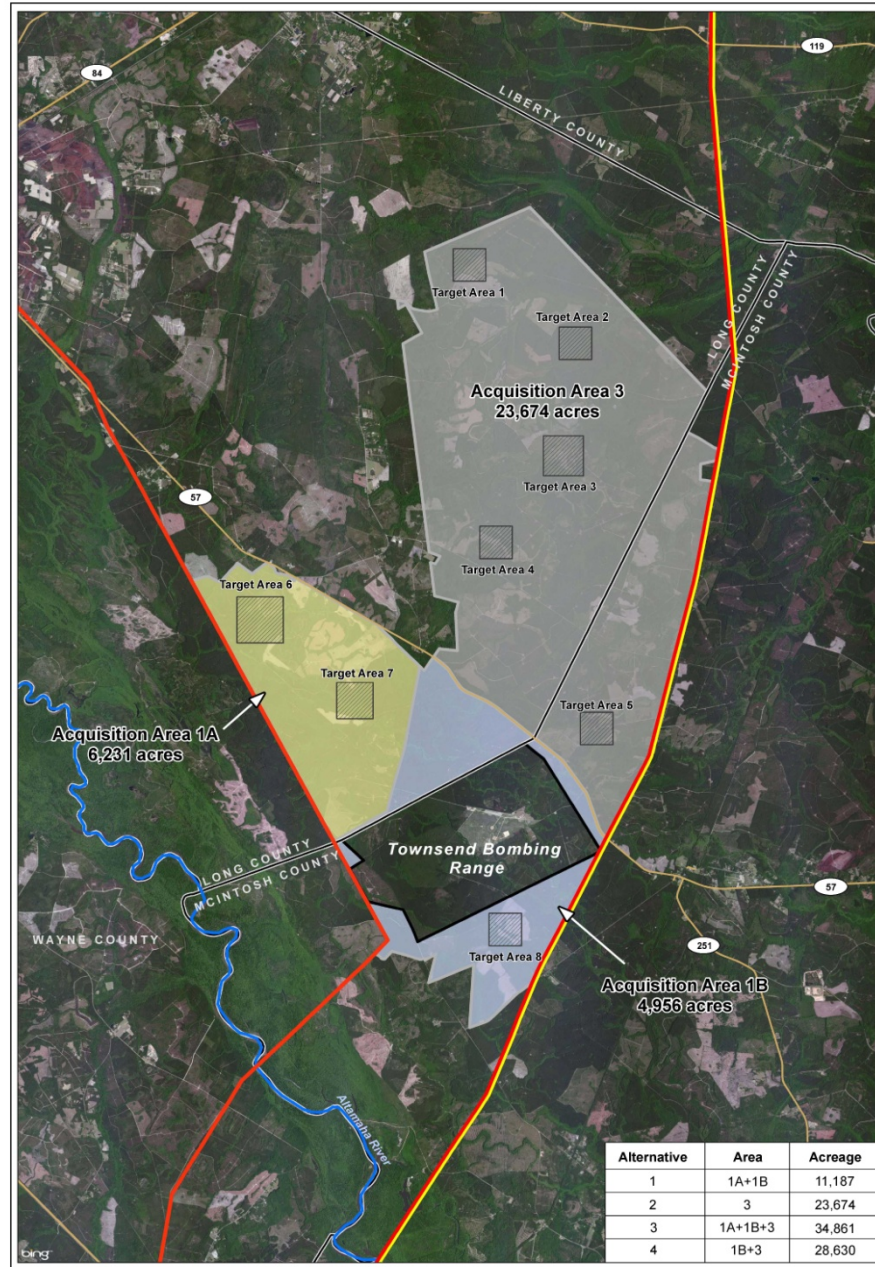
## PROPOSED ACTION



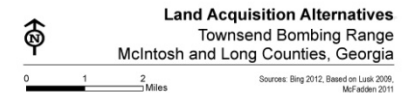
- The Marine Corps proposes to modernize and expand TBR to provide a modern and realistic air-to-ground training environment for the F/A-18 aircrew assigned to MAG-31 by accommodating the use of inert (with spotting-charges) PGM and the larger weapon danger zones their use requires.
- Modernization and expansion of TBR would involve 5 interrelated components:
  - Acquisition of land
  - Acquisition of timber easement
  - Modification of existing airspace
  - Construction of infrastructure to support PGM training
  - Improvement of training capabilities



# Townsend Bombing Range and Land Acquisition Alternatives



| Alternative | Area    | Acreege |
|-------------|---------|---------|
| 1           | 1A+1B   | 11,187  |
| 2           | 3       | 23,674  |
| 3           | 1A+1B+3 | 34,861  |
| 4           | 1B+3    | 28,630  |





# ACTION ALTERNATIVES

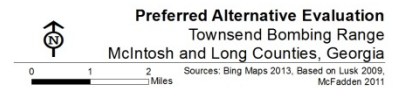
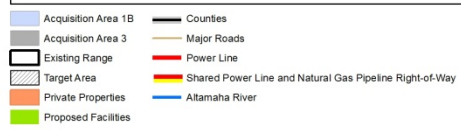
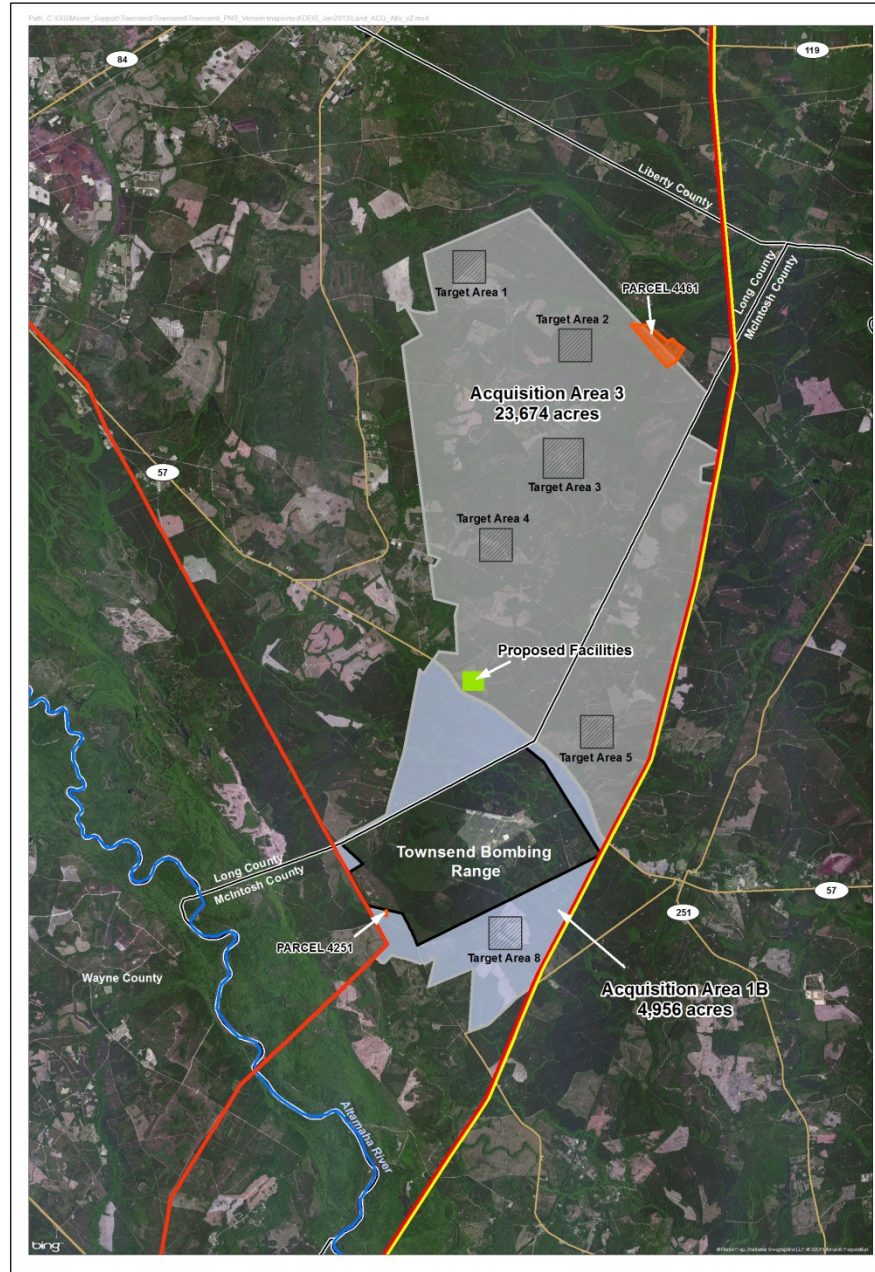


|  |                     | <u>Alternative</u>    |                          |                           |  |           |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|-----------|
|  |                     | <u>1</u>              | <u>2</u>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



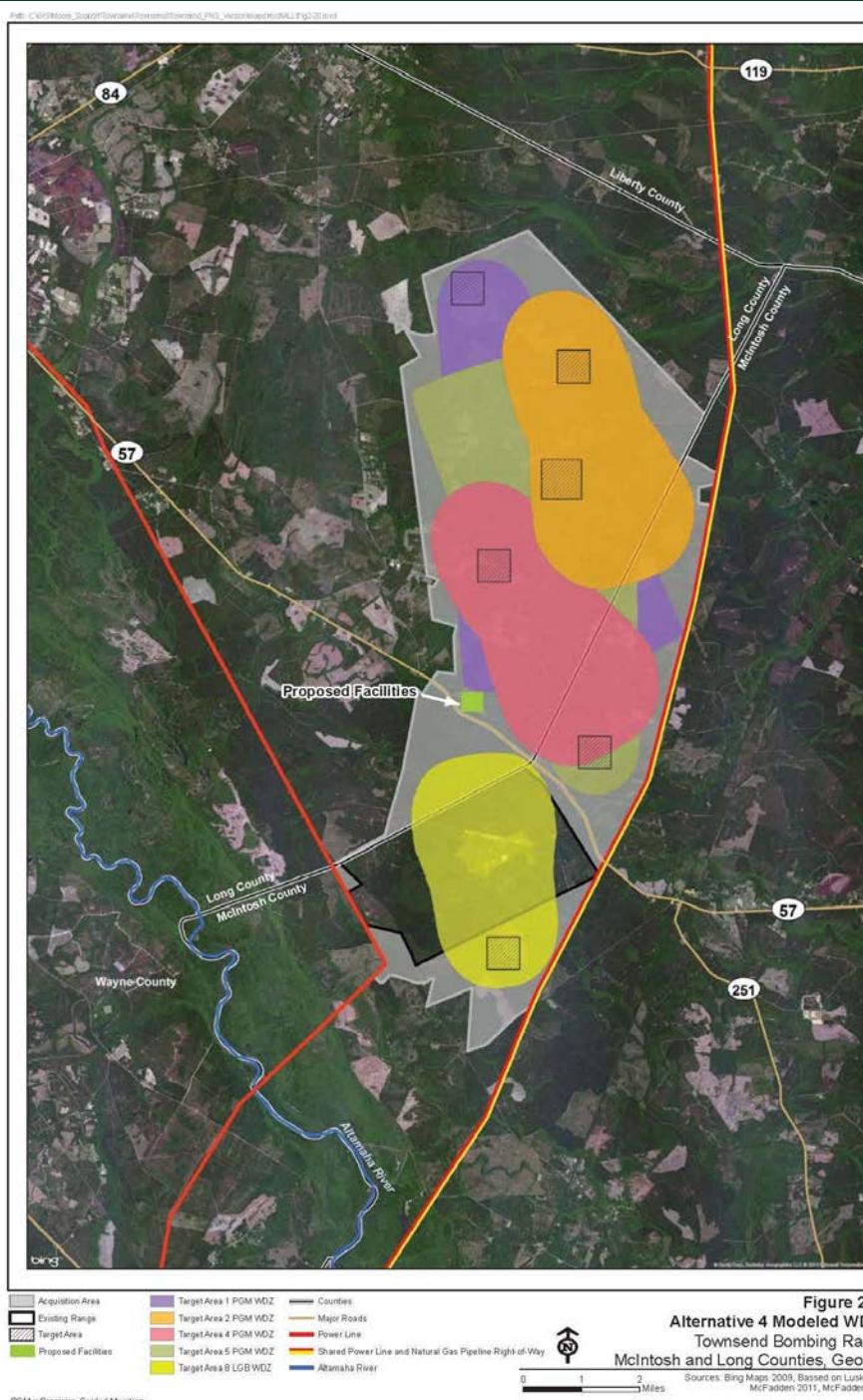
# PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

## Alternative 4



PREFERRED  
ALTERNATIVE

**Alternative 4**  
**Modeled WZDs**



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



# PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

## *Alternative 4*



*Best balance of operational capability and environmental impacts.*

- Alternative 4 includes the acquisition of Area 1B and Area 3 (28,630 acres)
- The Marine Corps developed Alternative 4 in response to public comments received during the Scoping Period.
- Alternative 4 offers the best balance of operational capability and environmental impact.
- Alternative 4 offers challenging and realistic training with inert PGM through a mix of targets, aim points, and attack headings.





# 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





# 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.

| <b>Preferred Alternative</b>           |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Alternative 4 (28,630 acres)</b>    |           |
| <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



- The EIS process provides multiple opportunities for public comment.
- 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 on the Draft EIS, which included two public meetings, occurred in Fall 2012 (13 July - 27 August).
- The Marine Corps received 100 comments on the Draft EIS during the Public Comment Period. All comments on the Draft EIS are included and addressed in the Final EIS.



# PUBLIC COMMENTS ON DRAFT 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)
- Adjustments made for the Final EIS improved the clarity, accuracy, and thoroughness of the analysis presented.
- Public comments resulted in no changes in the analysis concerning the nature or magnitude of impacts on any resources, and therefore, none to the conclusions.



# FINAL EIS AND RECORD OF DECISION



- On March 22, 2013, the Marine Corps published the Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Final EIS in the *Federal Register*.
- Regulations provide for a 30-day waiting period after the Final EIS is published before the agency may take final action. During that period, in addition to the Marine Corps' own internal review, agencies and the public can comment on the Final EIS.
- A Record of Decision (ROD) on the project will be published by the Department of the Navy in Summer 2013. If the ROD recommends land acquisition, Congress would review and approve funds for the purchase of lands at fair market value.



# MAJOR PROJECT MILESTONES



## *Completed to Date*

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| ✓ Marine Requirement Oversight Council Approval   | 2 Feb 2009              |
| ✓ Finalized detailed training requirements and established a range of reasonable alternatives for the EIS study | 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 of the Draft EIS   | 13 July 2012            |
| ✓ Held Public Comment Period for the Draft EIS  | 13 July – 27 Aug 2012   |
| ✓ Conduct public meetings on Draft EIS  | 7 and 9 Aug 2012        |
| ✓ Review public comments on Draft EIS   | Fall 2012 – Spring 2013 |
| ✓ Publish the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS   | 22 March 2013           |



# MAJOR PROJECT MILESTONES



## *Upcoming*

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| ▪ Consult with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on airspace modification processes | Ongoing     |
| ▪ Publish Record of Decision  | Summer 2013 |

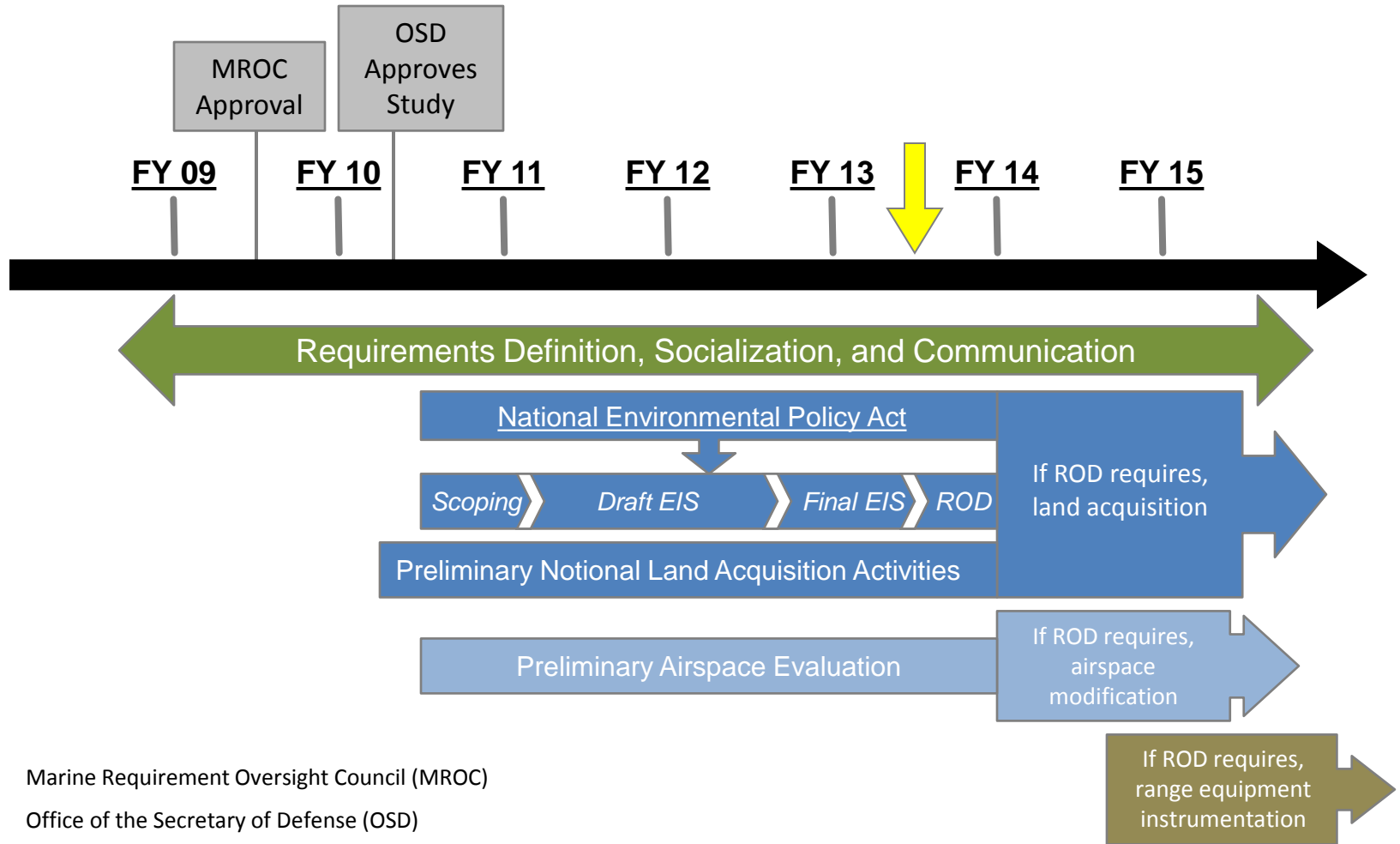
### **If Record of Decision determines to acquire land:**

- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| - Land Acquisition   | 2014 – 2016 |
| - Range Construction | 2015 – 2017 |





# PROJECT TIMELINE





# CONCLUSION



- Modernization and expansion of TBR would significantly enhance the efficiency of training at the Marine Corps aviation training ranges on both coasts.
  - It would allow East Coast units, especially those based at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, to be able to fulfill up to 85% of their air-to-ground training requirements at an East Coast range.
  - It would improve training capabilities for multiple services that currently use the range – including the Air Force, Army, and Navy.
- Preparation of the EIS provided opportunities for public review and comment.
  - The Marine Corps is committed to an open and transparent process that will lead to a fully informed Record of Decision.



# Questions?

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Visit: [www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com](http://www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com)  
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Post Office Box 180458, Tallahassee, Florida 32318  
Contact: Public Affairs Office 843-228-6123



# BACK-UP SLIDES



# 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.

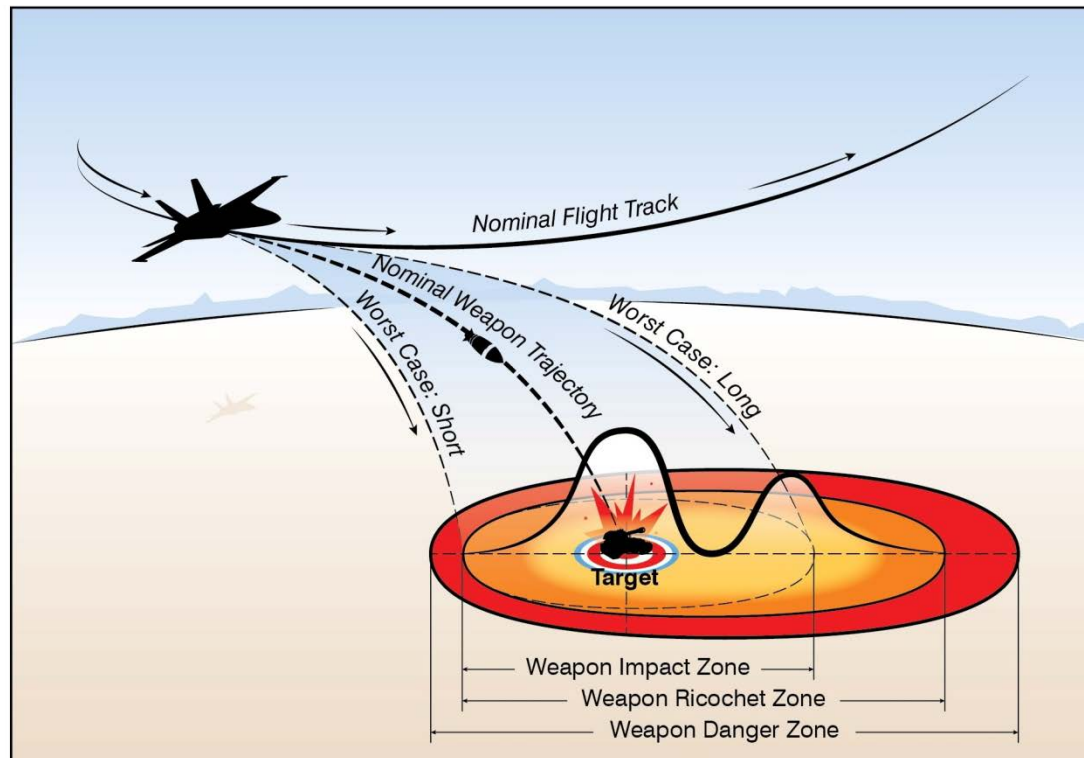




# WEAPON DANGER ZONES



- 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 SCOPING



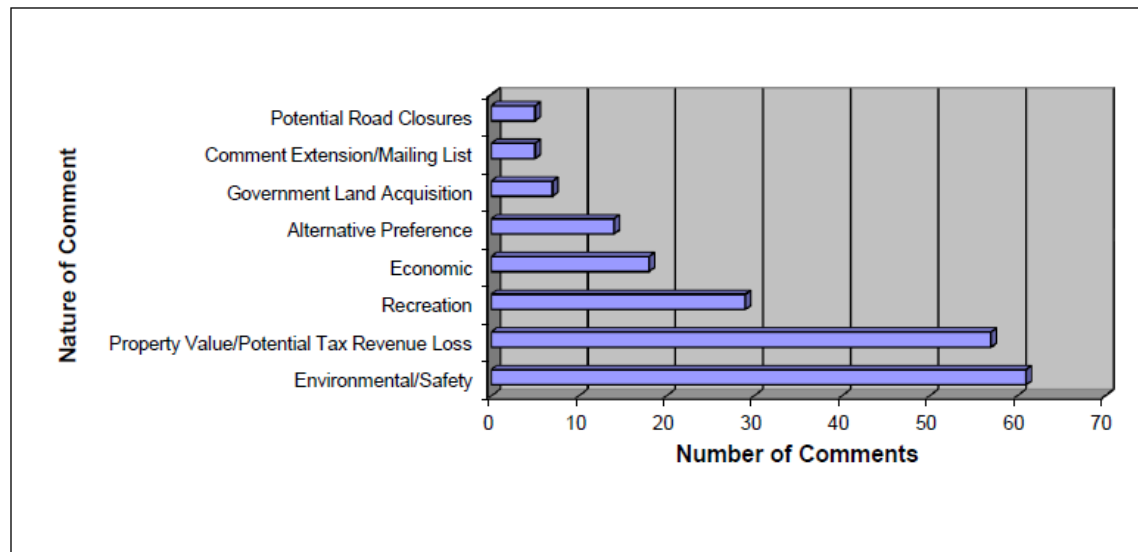
- On August 6, 2010, the Marine Corps issued its Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS and the first public comment period through the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) began.
- The Marine Corps presented the five original alternatives as well as the No Action Alternative.
- These alternatives ranged 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.