



TOWNSEND BOMBING RANGE MODERNIZATION

PROJECT UPDATE — July 2012



Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

This Project Update Notice offers a means to provide easily accessible, wide-spread distribution of new project information. This information augments the regular update of project documents that can be found on the Townsend Bombing Range Environmental Impact Statement website. Please visit the website (www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com) to view these project documents for an overview and key background information on the project.

BACKGROUND:

On August 6, 2010, the United States Marine Corps (Marine Corps) published a Notice of Intent to produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to study alternatives to modernize Townsend Bombing Range (TBR), located in McIntosh County, Georgia, to better meet Marine Corps aviation training requirements. This publication of the Notice of Intent officially identified the 30-day Public Scoping Period, which was held August 6 through September 7, 2010. Due to a problem with the post office box, the Public Scoping Period was reopened from October 10 through November 8, 2010. During the Public Scoping Period, two public meetings were held (Ludowici on August 24 and Darien on August 26, 2010). The Marine Corps received 110 comments during the Public Scoping Periods. These comments helped to identify the issues and alternatives that were studied during the preparation of the Draft EIS.

TRAINING REQUIREMENT AND PROPOSED ACTION:

The Marine Corps continues to successfully deter threats, prevent conflict and provide humanitarian effort because it conducts realistic training exercises. These exercises allow the Marines to acquire and maintain critical combat skills at the level necessary to meet real-world events. In addition, Marine Corps aviators must train and be highly skilled in multiple mission areas, which include the delivery of precision-guided munitions and use of air-to-ground weapons against a range of target types. Precision-guided munitions are a modern class of weapons that permit Marine aviators to attack specific threats and isolate targets.

TBR is the primary air-to-ground training range for the aviation units stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, which is the home of Marine Aircraft Group 31. The Marine Corps proposes to modernize and expand TBR to provide a modern and realistic training environment for the Fighter/Attack 18 (F/A-18) Hornet aircrew by accommodating the use of inert (with spotting-charges) precision-guided munitions and the larger weapon danger zones their use requires. Weapon Danger Zones are sometimes informally known as "safety zones."

CHANGES SINCE THE PUBLIC SCOPING PERIOD:

- In August 2011 the Marine Corps announced its decision to remove Study Area 2, from further consideration in the EIS. Study Area 2 was located 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 from up to 51,580 acres to a maximum of 34,667 acres.
- During the preparation of the Draft EIS, the Marine Corps split Study Area 1 into two subareas, which are Study Areas 1A and 1B. The Marine Corps then developed a new fourth alternative, Alternative 4, which is Area 1B and Area 3 (28,436 acres). The Marine Corps identified Alternative 4 as the Preferred Alternative since it offers the best balance between operational capability and environmental impact.

TO COMMENT ON THE DRAFT EIS:

Mail: Townsend EIS Project Manager,
Post Office Box 180458, Tallahassee, Florida 32318
E-mail: townsendbombingrangeeis@ene.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit: www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com
Contact: Public Affairs Office 843-228-6123



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On July 13, 2012, the Marine Corps published the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the Federal Register. The Notice of Availability officially announced the publication of the Draft EIS and beginning of the 45-day public comment period for the Draft EIS. The comment period for the Draft EIS is being held from July 13 through August 27, 2012.

Public meetings will be held on Tuesday, August 7, 2012 in Darien, Georgia, and Thursday, August 9, 2012 in Ludowici, Georgia. A Final EIS will be published in Spring 2013. The Final EIS will directly address the comments from the public that were received on the Draft EIS.

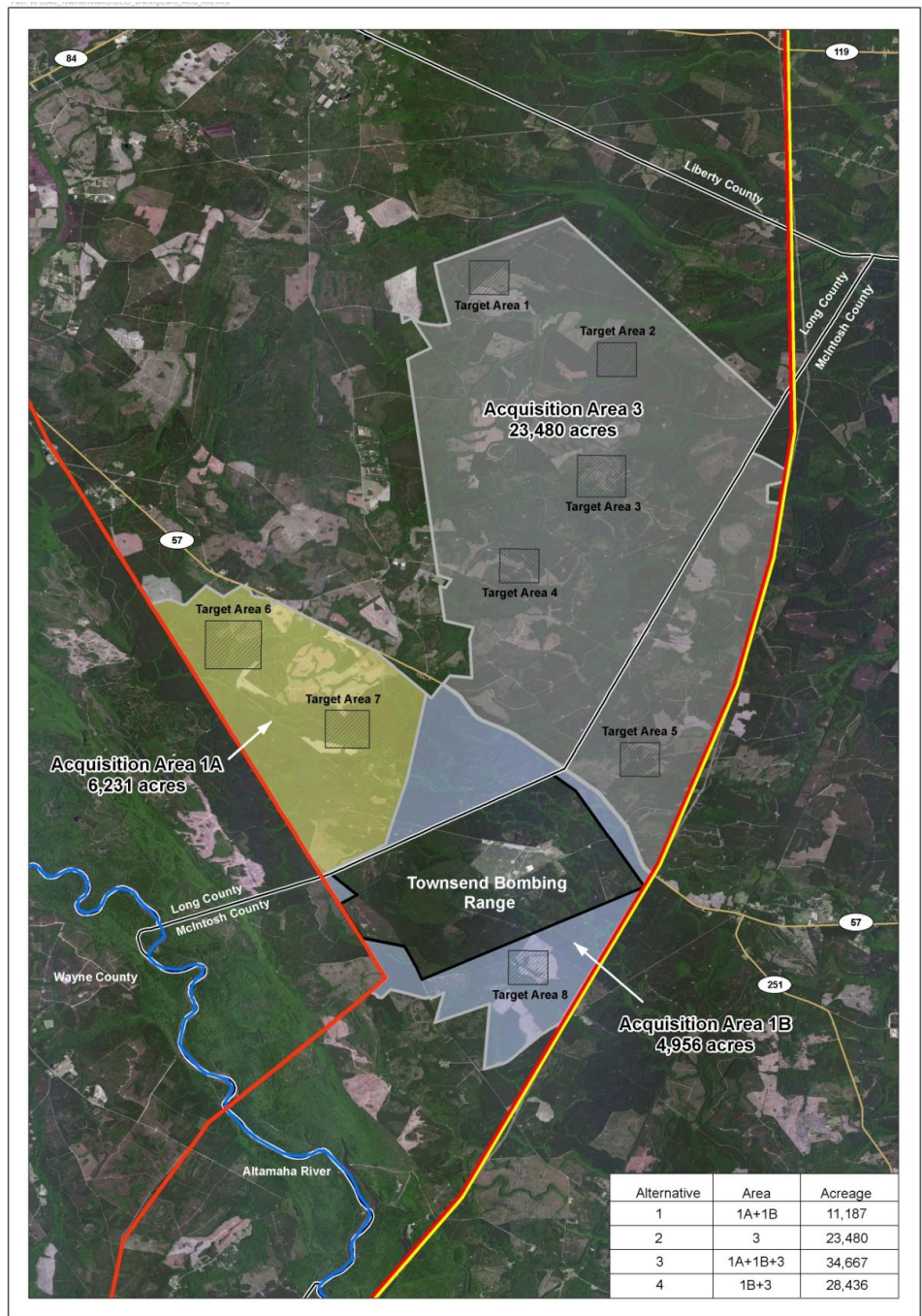
A Record of Decision on the project will be published by the Department of the Navy Summer 2013.

If the Record of Decision recommends land acquisition, Congress would have to review and approve funds for the purchase of lands at fair market value.

NEXT STEPS:

The Marine Corps welcomes comments from the public on the Draft EIS. Comments can be submitted during the 45-day comment period (July 13 through August 27, 2012). Please see the information in the tan box below to submit your comment or for more information please visit:

www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com.



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