



TOWNSEND BOMBING RANGE MODERNIZATION



FACT SHEET – *January 2014*

MARINE CORPS TRAINING REQUIREMENT

The Marine Corps is the nation's expeditionary force in readiness and must be prepared to deploy as an air-ground task force. The Marine Corps continues to successfully deter threats, prevent conflict, and provide humanitarian assistance because it conducts realistic training exercises. This realistic training, which includes air-to-ground training exercises and training exercises with various weapons systems, is essential for developing and maintaining the combat skills critical for wartime missions and real-world events. The Marine Corps requires that its aviators have access to ranges and airspace for training.

Marine Corps aviators must train to be highly skilled in multiple mission areas, including the delivery of precision-guided munitions (PGM) and use of air-to-ground weapons against a range of target types. PGM is a modern class of weapons that permits Marine aviators to attack and isolate specific targets. Currently, there are no Marine Corps air-to-ground training ranges on the East Coast with the capability to accommodate realistic PGM training. As a result, Marine aviators who are based on the East Coast must travel to ranges on the West Coast to train with PGM.

The inability to train with PGM at Townsend Bombing Range (TBR) has resulted in units at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort having to deploy to ranges on the West Coast to train with PGM. The ranges on the West Coast are more suited for large-scale, live-fire training. The inability to train with PGM at TBR detracts from the Marine Corps' ability to fully utilize the ranges on the West Coast to meet more advanced training requirements. This degrades the efficiency of these larger ranges by committing precious training time to more basic training. Individual aircrew training with inert PGM is more appropriately and efficiently performed at ranges within training flight distance of the home station.

PROPOSED ACTION OVERVIEW

The nature of modern combat and warfare technologies (including weapons) is evolving; the training ranges that prepare Marine aviators for these scenarios must also adapt to meet and to anticipate these changes. Current and future Marine Corps operations require aircrew expertise in the use of PGM. The Marine Corps proposed to modernize and expand TBR through the acquisition of land adjacent to the current range. This modernization provides an up-to-date air-to-ground training range within the local flying area (165 nautical miles) of MCAS Beaufort that could safely accommodate the use of inert (non-explosive) PGM, in addition to the inert weapons currently used at TBR. A sufficiently sized land area at TBR maintains public safety, enables the required training delivery of inert PGM, and allow for more realistic and effective training on a wider array of target types for greater aircrew competency.

Elements of the Modernization:

1. Acquisition of land
2. Termination of a timber easement
3. Modification of existing airspace
4. Construction of infrastructure to support PGM training

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit: www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com

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



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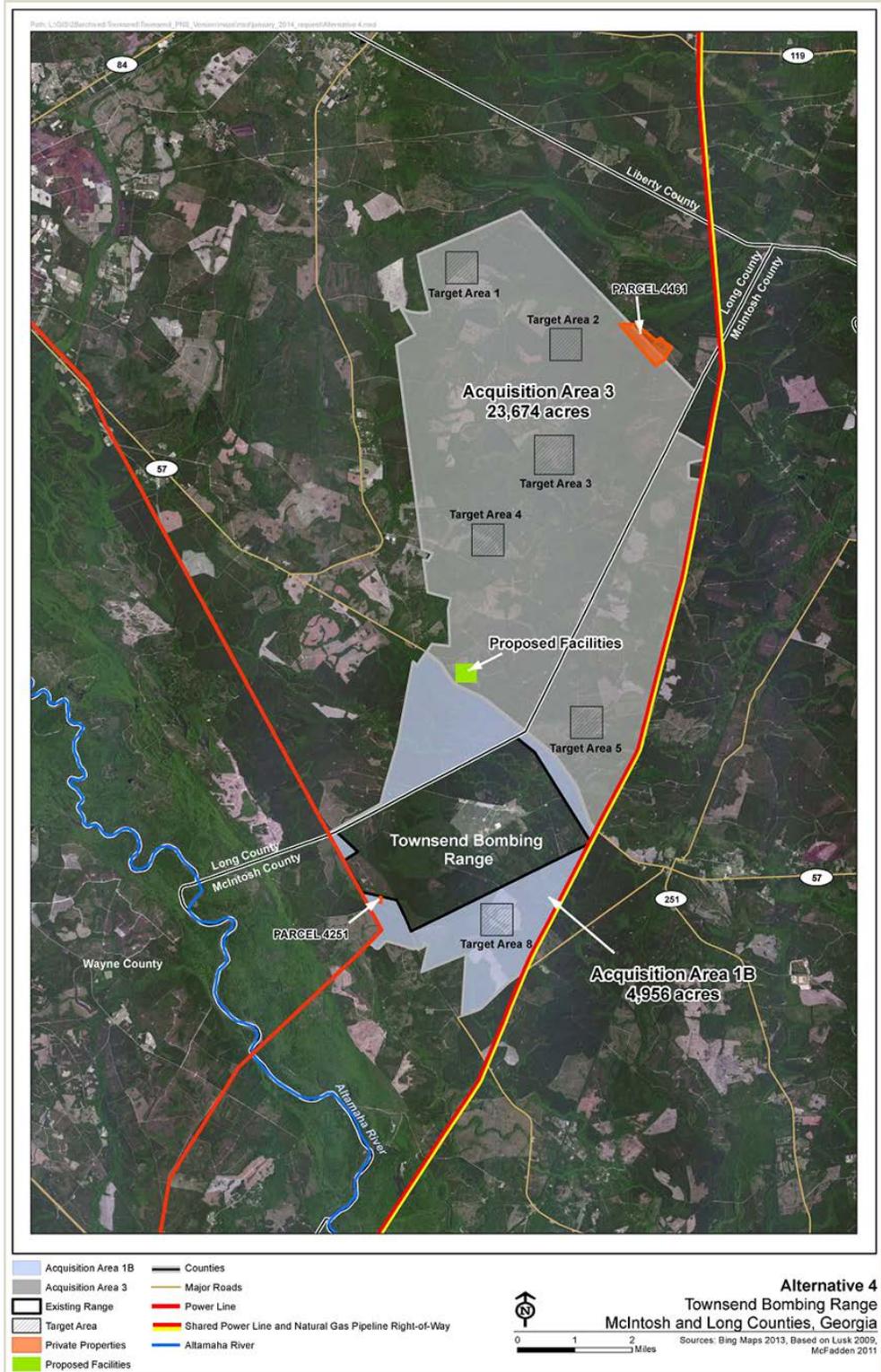


SELECTED ALTERNATIVE 4

The Department of the Navy (DON) published its Record of Decision (ROD) on the Proposed Expansion and Modernization of TBR in McIntosh and Long Counties, Georgia, in the *Federal Register* on January 31, 2014. The ROD documents the DON's decision to proceed with the Proposed Action through Alternative 4. The DON reached this decision after careful consideration of the purpose and need for the Proposed Action, the analysis and conclusions presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and comments received from federal, state, and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, tribal nations, and members of the public. The full version of the DON's ROD can be found on the project Web site: www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com.

The Marine Corps identified Alternative 4, Area 1B and Area 3 (28,630 acres), 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.

The Marine Corps and its partner, the Georgia Air National Guard, remains committed to working with federal, state and local leaders; resource and regulatory agencies; neighbors; and public stakeholders to keep them informed of project developments.



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BACKGROUND

TBR is the primary air-to-ground training range for aviation units stationed at MCAS Beaufort, home to Marine Aircraft Group 31 (MAG-31) and its six operational F/A-18 squadrons. TBR is located within the local flying area of MAG-31, an area defined as the maximum distance an aircraft can travel, complete its mission, and return to base without refueling or landing. MAG-31 utilizes the air-to-ground training range at TBR to remain the aviation force-in-readiness. TBR also supports training for other aviation units in the Marine Corps, as well as the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, and the Air National Guard.

TBR currently allows Marine aviators to accomplish less than half of their air-to-ground training requirements for the F/A-18 and does not allow for delivery of PGM under realistic training scenarios. The proposed expansion and modernization of TBR will allow training at TBR to fulfill up to 85% of the air-to-ground training specified in the current individual aircrew F/A-18 training syllabus, as opposed to TBR's present capacity of 47% of that training. The proposed expansion and modernization at TBR will provide aviators with the ability to train with inert PGM at TBR and conduct follow-on large-scale unit exercises with live ordnance at the ranges on the West Coast. This expansion will lead to more efficient Marine Corps training overall.

TBR MODERNIZATION IN BRIEF

- The Marine Corps and its partner, the Georgia Air National Guard, are committed to working with federal, state, and local leaders; resource and regulatory agencies; neighbors; and public stakeholders to keep them informed of project developments.
- The EIS assesses the potential impacts the proposed alternatives have on the human environment.
- Four alternatives and a "No Action" alternative were studied in the EIS. The Marine Corps studied a maximum of 34,861 acres for potential land acquisition in the Final EIS. The land studied is largely industrial forestland.
- The EIS process provides multiple opportunities for public comment. The Public Scoping Period, held in Fall 2010, included two public meetings. Two public meetings were also held in Fall 2012 during the Public Comment Period for the Draft EIS. The public was afforded the opportunity to submit comments on the Final EIS from March 22 to April 22. The Marine Corps evaluated over 200 public comments throughout the EIS process.
- The DON published its ROD in the *Federal Register* on January 31, 2014, documenting the DON's decision to proceed with the Proposed Action through the implementation of Alternative 4 as described in the Final EIS. Alternative 4 is identified as the Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS.
- Under Alternative 4, DON will acquire 28,630 acres of land (Acquisition Areas 1B and 3) in McIntosh County (8,520 acres) and Long County (20,110 acres).
- The DON will pay fair market value to McIntosh County to terminate a 3,007-acre timber easement held by McIntosh County on DON-owned land within the current TBR boundary.
- Land acquisition to provide for new training capabilities includes sufficient lands to protect public safety. Fair market value would be offered for land or property interests identified for acquisition.
- Any land acquisition and training operations conducted in any new training range area would ensure sufficient safety zones to allow for the public's continued safe use of Highway 57.
- Only minor modification to the current Restricted Area R-3007 airspace by extending the current 100-foot floor to ground level over the land to be acquired to match the existing restricted airspace over the current range.
- The DON has acknowledged the potential loss of tax revenues to local governments resulting from the Proposed Action and recognizes tax loss as a significant impact to both Long and McIntosh Counties. The DON remains committed to working with neighbors and stakeholders. Additional information is included on pages 14 and 15 in the full version of the ROD, which can be found on the project Web site: www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com.

The proposed expansion and modernization would allow training at TBR to fulfill up to 85% of the air-to-ground training specified in the current individual aircrew F/A-18 training syllabus, as opposed to TBR's present capacity of 47%.

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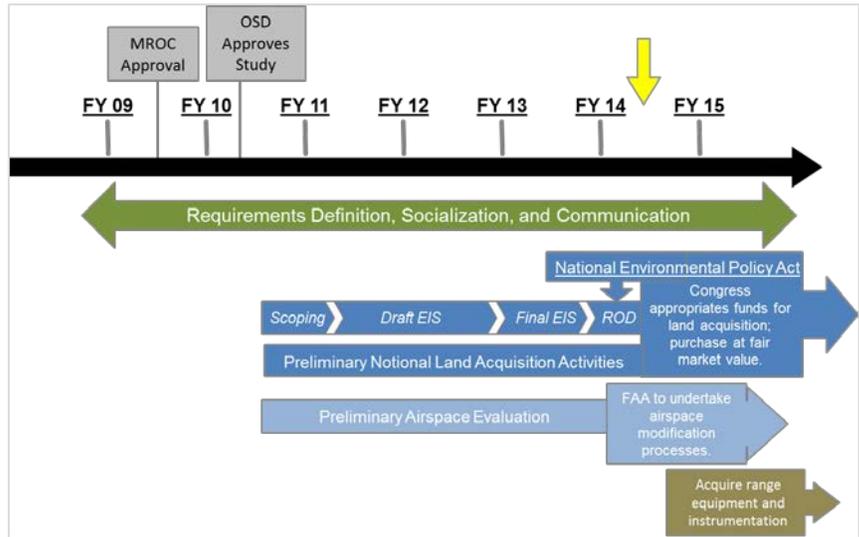


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PROJECT SCHEDULE:

Completed Milestones:

- The Notice of Intent was issued in the *Federal Register* on August 6, 2010.
- The publication of the Notice of Intent officially began the Public Scoping Period. The initial scoping period ran from August 6 to September 7, 2010. An additional scoping period occurred October 10 to November 8, 2010.
- Two public meetings were held during the Public Scoping Period on August 24 and 26, 2010. The first was in Long County, Georgia, and the second was in McIntosh County, Georgia.
- On July 13, 2012, the Notice of Availability for the Draft EIS was published in the *Federal Register*. The Marine Corps conducted a Public Comment Period from July 13 to September 27, 2012.
- Two public meetings were held during the Public Comment Period. The first was on August 7, 2012 in McIntosh County, Georgia. The second public meeting occurred on August 9, 2012 in Long County, Georgia.
- Following the comment period, the Marine Corps reviewed the public comments submitted on the Draft EIS to prepare the Final EIS. The comments and the Marine Corps' responses to these comments are published in the Final EIS.
- On March 22, 2013, the Notice of Availability for the Final EIS was published in the *Federal Register*. The public was afforded the opportunity to submit comments on the Final EIS from March 22 to April 22 during a 30-day waiting period before a final decision was made by the DON.



Current Status:

- The DON published its ROD in the *Federal Register* on January 31, 2014. The ROD documents the DON's decision to proceed with the Proposed Action through Alternative 4 as described in the Final EIS. The full version of the DON's ROD can be found on the project Web site: www.townsendbombingrangeeis.com.

Next Steps:

- FAA undertakes processes to consider establishment and modification of existing restricted airspace. (2014-2015)
- Congress appropriates 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 begins the real estate acquisition process on lands for range expansion. (2014-2017)
- The Marine Corps undertakes 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)

On January 31, 2014, the Department of the Navy published its Record of Decision to proceed with the Proposed Expansion and Modernization of TBR in McIntosh and Long Counties, Georgia, through the implementation of Alternative 4, identified in the EIS as the Preferred Alternative, to include acquisition of Acquisition Areas 1B and 3.

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