

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FNSI)
FLORIDA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF AN ARMY STANDARD
SCOUT RECONNAISSANCE RANGE
CAMP BLANDING JOINT TRAINING CENTER
CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA

1. Introduction

The Florida Army National Guard (FLARNG) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and evaluate potential environmental effects from the proposed construction of a new Department of the Army standard Scout Reconnaissance (Scout Recce) Range at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center (CBJTC) in Clay County, Florida (FL). This EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; 42 United States Code [USC] 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), and 32 CFR 651 (Environmental Analysis of Army Actions, Final Rule, 29 March 2002). As set forth in 10 USC §10501, and as described in Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5105.77, *National Guard Bureau (NGB)*, the NGB is a Joint Activity of the DoD, and as such must comply with the NEPA.

2. Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action. The Proposed Action includes the construction and operation of a Scout Recce Range at CBJTC, which entails two primary components: (1) the physical range footprint, and (2) the Surface Danger Zone (SDZ). The physical footprint includes firing positions, targetry, support structures, and other associated control and operations facilities, totaling approximately 7,520 square feet. The SDZ is the area where a projectile will impact upon return to earth, extending from a firing point to a distance downrange based on the projectiles fired and the weapon system used. The proposed Scout Recce Range requires consideration of SDZs as the SDZ for a firing point must be contained within the controlled boundaries of a training site for the range to be considered buildable and usable without a special waiver. The SDZ is not considered part of the range design under the Proposed Action but is a determining factor of range location and orientation.

The proposed Scout Recce Range would be located within the southwestern portion of CBJTC near the southern boundary of the existing Impact Area. Construction activities would require approximately 667 acres of land to be cleared and converted to maintained grassland to accommodate the range footprint and the small arms range operations and control area facilities. In addition, range construction would include the addition of lighting, utility extensions, and access and maintenance road development. Approximately 14,077 acres would be required to accommodate the SDZ during range operation, although this area would not be disturbed for range construction. The majority of the proposed SDZ would overlap pre-existing SDZ, including the CBJTC Impact Area. In total, overall CBJTC usage is anticipated to increase by 10 percent, with an additional 31,500 man-days, as a result of the Proposed Action.

The purpose of the new range is to provide the requisite range and training facilities at CBJTC for FLARNG units, including the 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team and other Department of Defense entities, to train and test scout vehicle crews on the skills necessary to detect, identify, engage, and defeat Stationary Infantry Targets, Moving Infantry Targets, Moving Armor Targets, and Stationary Armor Targets in a tactical array. Implementing the Proposed Action would support FLARNG competency in core combat arms skills and preparation for post-mobilization training. Army standardized Scout Recce Range facilities are designed to meet the training and qualification requirements of scout and reconnaissance vehicles through

a vehicle course and machine gun qualification lanes. These are critical elements in the Army and National Guard training strategy.

The Proposed Action is needed to: (1) ensure FLARNG provides complete range and training facilities for its units; 2) ensure attainment and maintenance of a full readiness posture of its combat units; and 3) meet mission training requirements for individual and collective tasks as set forth in Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-20.98, *Scout Platoon*. With presently available training facilities, the FLARNG can conduct only portions of the required training on the existing ranges at CBJTC, and must travel out-of-state to meet their full training requirements. As CBJTC serves as the primary ARNG training facility for the State of Florida, the Proposed Action is also needed to ensure the continued and long-term viability of the CBJTC as a training center capable of providing the land and resources necessary to support the FLARNG's and other military users' assigned training missions.

Alternatives Considered. The FLARNG evaluated two alternatives: 1) the Preferred Action Alternative, which would implement the Proposed Action, as described above; and 2) the No Action Alternative. In addition to the Preferred Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative, the FLARNG considered, but dismissed, the following alternatives: (1) use a training site at another installation, (2) implement a reduced-scale alternative, and (3) construct the Proposed Action in different locations at CBJTC. All alternatives were measured against established screening criteria and only the Preferred Action Alternative and No Action Alternative were selected for further consideration and detailed analysis. The Preferred Action Alternative best meets the screening criteria and provides the best combination of land and resources to sustain quality military training and to maintain and improve readiness. This alternative also provides numerous other advantages, such as having ample space to accommodate the range and being situated in an area with minimal environmental concerns.

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented and current installation operations would continue. The Scout Recce Range would not be installed and CBJTC's full training potential would continue to be limited. Required training would continue to be conducted in an inefficient manner at multiple, existing outdated ranges which would require soldiers to travel out-of-state and thereby restrict military readiness. While the No Action Alternative would not satisfy the purpose of or need for the Proposed Action, this alternative is carried forward to provide a comparative baseline against which to analyze the effects of the Proposed Action, as required in CEQ Regulations (40 CFR Part 1502.14).

3. Environmental Analysis

The potential environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action are fully described in the EA. The EA identifies the environmental resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action, and determines the significance of the impacts, if any, to each of these resources. Based on the EA's analysis, the FLARNG determined that the known and potential adverse impacts from the Proposed Action would be less than significant on land use and cover, air quality and climate, noise, geological resources, water resources, biological resources, socioeconomics, infrastructure, and hazardous and toxic materials and wastes. The implementation of Best Management Practices and Regulatory Compliance Measures specified in the EA would further avoid or reduce less-than-significant adverse impacts. The Proposed Action would have beneficial effects on socioeconomics and environmental justice, and no effect on cultural resources.

4. Mitigation

Under the Preferred Alternative, no significant adverse environmental impacts would be anticipated; therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

5. Regulations

The Proposed Action would not violate NEPA, the CEQ Regulations, 32 CFR Part 651, or other Federal, state, or local environmental regulations.

6. Commitment to Implementation

The NGB and the FLARNG affirm their commitment to implement this EA in accordance with NEPA. Implementation is dependent on funding, and this project will be a Military Construction (MILCON) funded project. The FLARNG and the NGB will ensure that adequate funds are provided to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in this EA.

7. Public Review and Comment

The final EA and draft FNSI will be made available for public review and comment for 30 days following publication of a public notice in the local newspaper *Clay Today*. A copy of the final EA and draft FNSI will be available for public review at the Bradford County Public Library. The public may obtain information on the status and progress of the EA, as well as submit written comments on the EA during the 30-day public review period, via US postal mail to Ms. Jackie Kelly, Conservation Program Team Lead, Construction and Facilities Management Office, Florida Army National Guard, 2305 State Road 207, Saint Augustine, FL 32086; or by e-mail: Jacqueline.d.kelly6.nfg@mail.mil.

8. Draft Finding of No Significant Impact

After careful review of the EA, I have concluded that implementation of the Proposed Action would not generate significant controversy or have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment. Per 32 CFR Part 651, the Final EA and draft FNSI will be made available for a 30-day public review and comment period. Once any public comments have been addressed and if a determination is made that the Proposed Action will have no significant impact, the FNSI will be signed and the action will be implemented. This analysis fulfills the requirements of NEPA and the CEQ Regulations. An Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared, and the NGB is issuing this FNSI.

Date

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