

Army/DoD Land Use Strategy

Final Project Report to the Army Environmental Policy Institute

The purpose of this study was to develop stakeholder input and provide ideas and recommendation for future strategic Army and DoD land use planning. In that regard, it is acknowledged that many of the conclusions and recommendations in this study may already be being addressed as part of the evolving Army Training Land Sustainability Program and Plan. As such, it is hoped that the completion of this study will help to both support and validate this key readiness planning effort.

The United States military has acquired lands for over 200 years based primarily upon immediate need. Due to the sheer size and importance of these lands, they have become national defense assets. The vast majority of these lands were obtained during the World War II time period when environmental regulations did not exist. In addition, detailed analysis in areas such as size, climate, physiologic regimes, and potential ecological resiliency were not necessarily accomplished during acquisition. Missions such as training soldiers, testing weapons, or research and development of new equipment were, have been, and will be, long-term requirements for land utilization. A Strategic Plan for managing those lands does not exist and efforts are required to ensure access to ranges for readiness and training and that ranges are sized correctly, protected, and sustainable for the future. The golden thread in this report is sustainability – how does the Army accomplish the missions of today without negative impact to either the missions of the future or communities surrounding Army lands?

This proposed Strategic Plan is a recommended a methodology to both acquire new lands and establish firm requirements for existing lands. A by-product of this planning effort will be a determination of land use capacity and need. There are five primary factors that bring focus to the need for a Strategic Plan for Army Land Use in the immediate future. First, the Army is presently going through a major transformation. The Interim Force goes into effect 2015 with the Objective Force in place by 2025. Unfortunately, the force structure will most likely be finalized after most of the land decisions to support that structure have been made. Second, the next round of BRAC will require a detailed justification for maintaining existing lands as well as acquiring any new lands. Concurrently, leases will be coming up for major Army lands and these leases need to be considered within the parameters of BRAC. Decisions made during BRAC will have significant impacts on Army Transformation. Third, encroachment issues will continue to grow and have negative impacts on accomplishing Army missions. Fourth, the cost of acquiring new lands, managing existing lands, and cleaning up prior-use lands will continue to escalate as a major component of the DoD budget. Fifth, when considering land withdrawals facing DoD, it is imperative to make long-term decisions about the Army's land needs. Decisions to give up lands will not be easily reversed. These needs support the requirement for a plan that looks out at least 25 years.

The key components of a Strategic Plan must include Mission, Vision, Goals, and Metrics. It is not within the scope of this work to define the Vision or Mission for utilization of Army lands. However, the recommendations set forth in this effort align

and support the overall mission of the Army. The recommendations include obtaining a detailed land inventory, establishing a data management system to capture this inventory in an interactive platform, studying emerging trends for training requirements, and establishing a set of current and future training needs in support of Army Transformation. Incorporating models in the data management system will enable both ecological and resiliency analysis needed to sustain the lands, integrate existing plans, and identify access capacity that can be returned.