DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army

Record of Decision (ROD) for the Training Land Acquisition (Including Purchase and Lease) at Fort Polk, LA

AGENCY: Department of the Army, DoD.

ACTION: Notice of Availability (NOA).

SUMMARY: The Department of the Army announces the availability of its ROD which summarizes and documents its decision to proceed with Alternative 3, the acquisition of up to 100,000 acres of additional training land in Vernon and Rapides Parish in the areas South of Peason Ridge, and to the North and East of Fort Polk’s existing training lands. The decision considers the Army’s mission requirements at Fort Polk and the environmental analysis contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Training Land Acquisition at Fort Polk, Louisiana (March 2009). The ROD describes the Army’s decision to proceed with Alternative 3. This decision provides the Army with the most options and best opportunities to meet Fort Polk and the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) training needs and is also the environmentally preferred alternative.

ADDRESSES: For questions regarding the ROD, please contact Ms. Susan Walker, Fort Polk Public Affairs Office (PAO), 7033 Magnolia Road, Fort Polk, LA 71459–5342. A copy of the FEIS and ROD are available at the following Web site: http://www.jrtc-polk.army.mil/LandPurchase/index.html.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Susan Walker at (337) 531–9125 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST or e-mail Susan.T.Walker@conus.army.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Fort Polk FEIS analyzed the environmental, cultural and socioeconomic impacts of several acquisition location alternatives, each of which included the acquisition of up to 100,000 acres of land. Alternative 1 considered the acquisition of lands directly adjacent to Fort Polk’s existing training areas to the south of Peason Ridge and directly north and east of the main post. As part of Alternative 1, units would continue to lease lands to convoy to Peason Ridge to access training areas. Alternative 2 considered the acquisition of the land considered in Alternative 1, and, in addition, considered the acquisition of parcels that connect Peason Ridge with Fort Polk’s main post. Alternative 3, the Preferred Alternative and selected alternative, considered the acquisition of those lands considered in Alternative 2, and the acquisition of lands to the east of Fort Polk in Rapides Parish. The FEIS also analyzed the No Action Alternative, which evaluates the impacts of taking no action to acquire or use additional training land around Fort Polk. Under the No Action alternative, the purpose and need for the proposed action would not be met.

Alternative 3 has been selected by the Army because it has the most potential to allow the Army to acquire adequate maneuver training land to support the training requirements of the JRTC and Fort Polk’s resident units. Alternative 3 provides the best opportunities for the Army to acquire new lands that are compatible with Fort Polk’s training needs, and the implementation of this alternative will reduce future potential training land use conflicts between JRTC and Fort Polk’s resident units. The implementation of Alternative 3 will also attenuate adverse environmental impacts over a broader area and will ensure a greater amount of land is actively managed to promote increased sustainability and reduce environmental impacts.

In making its decision, the Army has determined that significant environmental impacts may occur from the selected alternative with regard to changes in land use and potentially from noise depending on which lands are eventually acquired as part of this decision. In addition to these potentially significant impacts, the Army anticipates that moderate impacts to soil resources, water resources, wetlands, biological resources, cultural resources, and socioeconomic would occur as a result of implementing the Proposed Action. To mitigate potential impacts, the Army will survey new lands for cultural and natural resources prior to training and will manage training activities to reduce noise impacts. The Army will provide recreational/hunting access to new lands to the extent practicable and will bring new lands under the framework of the installation’s existing environmental management programs. Substantive compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) will be accomplished through adherence to the Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan. Together with the FEIS, outline cultural resource management practices that would be
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
Department of the Army

Record of Decision (ROD) for the Development and Implementation of Range-Wide Mission and Major Capabilities at White Sands Missile Range (WSMR), NM

AGENCY: Department of the Army, DoD.

ACTION: Notice of availability (NOA).

SUMMARY: The Department of the Army announces the availability of the ROD that documents and summarizes the decision to proceed with implementing the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1) identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), including the following proposed land use changes: expansion of the Main Post and alterations in authorized uses of range areas; development of new and expanded infrastructure throughout the installation, and increase in the level of test activities; development of six new Specialized Areas (four for test operations and two to support small-scale military training); establishment of a Land Use and Airspace Strategy Plan and siting process for facilitating future tests and training activities at WSMR; and continued stationing of the Engineer Battalion and continued Main Post expansion for the Engineer Battalion, Brigade Combat Team (BCT) Modernization, and other ongoing tenant programs.

ADDRESSES: To request copies of the ROD, please contact: White Sands Test Center, Operations Office, Attention: Catherine Giblin, 124 Crozier Street, Building 124, Room B–15, White Sands Missile Range, NM 88002; fax: (575) 678–4082; e-mail: WSMREIS@conus.army.mil.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Monte Marlin, Public Affairs Office, Building 1782, Headquarters Avenue, White Sands Missile Range, NM 88002; (575) 678–1134; or e-mail monte.marlin@us.army.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The development and implementation of a land use and airspace plan is intended to more fully realize and integrate the capabilities of the WSMR primary mission (research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDTE)) with new training capabilities and potential future Army stationing decisions. Establishing new test and training capabilities requires changing land use designations within the current installation boundaries. These changes would support current and future requirements and allow off-road vehicle maneuver on designated portions of the installation. WSMR will maintain its current RDTE mission and continue to support testing objectives of all military services and Federal agencies.

In addition to consideration of a No Action Alternative (current test capabilities and land use designations with current levels of operations and activities), the FEIS assessed an additional alternative (Alternative 2) that would include all of the actions included in the Preferred Alternative plus potential future stationing of a Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT) (or comparable unit) by expanding the cantonment area and construction of supporting infrastructure and additional off-road maneuver areas for training on WSMR. On June 2, 2009, the Secretary of the Army announced a decision not to station an HBCT at WSMR in 2013; however, it was decided to retain the analysis in this FEIS to support implementation of potential future stationing decisions. After reviewing the alternatives presented in the FEIS, the Army has made the decision to implement the Preferred Alternative.

By choosing to implement the Preferred Alternative in the ROD, the Army expects direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts as a result of land use changes allowing for expanded off-road vehicle use, facilities and infrastructure construction, expanded test and training activities, and an increase in personnel to support expanded WSMR operations. Impacts analyzed include a wide range of environmental resource areas: land use, air quality, noise, geology and soils, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomic, transportation, utilities, hazardous and toxic substances, sustainability, and cumulative environmental effects. Significant impacts could occur to air quality, soils, water resources, socioeconomic resources, transportation, and utilities.

As part of the decision to implement the Preferred Alternative at WSMR, the Army will select environmental mitigation measures to minimize the impacts of this decision, including the implementation and continuation of existing environmental management programs, use of best management practices, and other specific mitigation measures.

The ROD outlines that the Preferred Alternative reflects the proper balance of initiatives for the protection of the environment, funding considerations, and the need for WSMR to expand its capabilities as a major range and test facility base to support future Army needs associated with Army Transformation, the Army Campaign Plan, modernization of the fighting force, Army Growth and Force Structure Realignment, Global Defense Posture Realignment, and other Army initiatives.

The ROD is available online at http://www.wsmr.army.mil.

Dated: May 12, 2010.
Addison D. Davis, IV,
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Environment, Safety and Occupational Health).

[FR Doc. 2010–12017 Filed 5–18–10; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3710–08–P