

Path Forward

⇒ **Published Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and began 90-day DEIS Public Comment Period, February 25 – May 26, 2011.**



◆ **Public Comment Meetings April 12 (Joshua Tree), 13 (Ontario) and 14 (Victorville).**

◆ **Complete Final EIS, December 2011.**



◆ **Issue Record of Decision (ROD), April 2012.**

◆ **Then, if required by the ROD:**

◆ **Submit Completed Military Land Withdrawal Application to BLM, 2012.**

◆ **Submit proposed land withdrawal legislation to Congress, 2012.**

◆ **If Congress approves land withdrawal, prepare Resource Management Plan or amend existing Plan, 2012-2014.**

◆ **Purchase non-federal lands at fair market value, 2012-2014.**

⇒ **Request that the FAA commence rule making to consider establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace, 2012, with goal to complete the process by 2013.**

◆ **Complete necessary training range improvements, 2014.**

◆ **Implement and sustain required mitigation, 2014 and beyond.**

◆ **Commence MEB training, 2015.**



Good Neighbor Pledge

The Marine Corps has studied reasonable alternatives for establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace near the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, 29 Palms, CA as part of our effort to meet requirements for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver Marine Expeditionary Brigade training.

The Marine Corps pledges to seek only that airspace needed to meet training requirements, and to operate any such airspace in a manner that releases it for use by all aircraft in the National Airspace System when it is not needed for training.

Throughout the National Environmental Policy Act and FAA rulemaking processes, stakeholders have had and will have opportunities to provide input on proposed actions that could meet the requirement for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire maneuver Marine Expeditionary Brigade training.

We look forward to working with you throughout these processes, receiving your comments, and using them to develop the right plan to meet this Marine Corps training requirement, while we also do our part to help preserve the region's resources for generations to come.

Proposed Land Acquisition and Special Use Airspace Establishment in Support of Marine Expeditionary Brigade Sustained, Combined-Arms, Live-Fire and Maneuver Training



Airspace Facts

February 2011



**For Further Information Contact:
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Why Study Training Land Acquisition and Airspace Establishment at 29 Palms?

- ◆ Marines must “train as they fight” to respond immediately to any contingency around the globe. With the end of the Cold War, and from lessons learned from recent military operations, a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is the Marine Corps’ primary contingency response force.
- ◆ MEB training requires range capability that can support sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver.
- ◆ A MEB is approximately 15,000 Marines, built around a brigade Ground Combat Element and a like-sized Air Combat Element. It also includes command and logistic elements.
- ◆ The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) is the Marine Corps’ center for combined-arms excellence. A Center for Naval Analyses study concluded that expanding MCAGCC is necessary to execute sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training.
- ◆ Ranges at MCAGCC and within the DoD inventory cannot support these MEB training requirements.
- ◆ The Marine Requirements Oversight Council validated the MEB training requirement and authorized action to pursue additional training land and airspace at MCAGCC.
- ◆ The Undersecretary of Defense approved a Department of Navy request to go forward with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate alternatives, impacts from and mitigation for the acquisition of land and establishment of Special Use Airspace to meet the MEB training requirement.
- ◆ The EIS will be developed in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
- ◆ Opportunities for public involvement will be scheduled several times throughout the multi-year EIS process.

Frequently Asked Questions

◆ Is land expansion and establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace a “done deal”?

No. The Marine Corps is preparing an EIS — an Environmental Impact Statement — studying a range of reasonable alternatives to meet Marine Corps MEB training requirements. The public has had and will have opportunities to comment on this study, including on the Draft EIS published on 25 February 2011. The Marine Corps has selected a preferred alternative in the DEIS — Alternative 6 — that is the optimal alternative considering operation and environmental impact factors together.



How would any new airspace modification occur to the range at MCGCC?

If the Record of Decision (ROD) following the EIS determines Special Use Airspace establishment or modification should be implemented to support any proposed land acquisition, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) would undertake rulemaking to determine whether any Special Use Airspace would be added to the MCAGCC range complex and, if so, how much and what type.

◆ Would this place any new requirements on commercial airline or civil aviation flights over or near MCAGCC?

Current MCAGCC airspace restrictions might be extended over any newly acquired training lands due to safety issues involved with live-fire training. The Marine Corps will work with the FAA and aviation stakeholders on airspace issues examined under NEPA and in the FAA rulemaking process.

◆ Why would MEB training require more airspace?



A MEB is a Marine Air Ground Task Force. To support MEB training, while also providing for public safety, the Marine Corps would require training airspace for its use of artillery,

mortars, ground-launched missiles, tank guns, machine guns, small arms weapons, and airborne weapons such as missiles and bombs. The FAA would ensure that air traffic is routed around MCAGCC during training activities that involve such weapons. Any Special Use Airspace established or modified would be managed, as it is now, to release it for use by the National Airspace System when not needed for military training.

◆ How does the public express its views of the project alternatives?



Three public meetings are being held to allow for the public review of and comment on the DEIS. The public can also submit written, e-mail or

telephonic comments on the DEIS between February 25 and May 26, 2011. All comments will be analyzed and reviewed in preparing the Final EIS and the Record of Decision.

◆ How long will it take to make a decision?

The EIS process started in October 2008, and will take approximately three years to complete. That includes time for EIS public review and public meetings, and analyzing public comments. The Department of the Navy issued a Draft EIS 25 February 2011. A Final EIS is scheduled to be released in December 2011, and a Record of Decision in April 2012. Any requested military land withdrawal or acquisition would have to be approved by Congress and the President. If necessary, the FAA would then



undertake its airspace rulemaking process to consider the establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace to meet this MEB training requirement. Public hearings and stakeholder involvement would occur during the FAA process.