

11.0 DRAFT EIS PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS AND PARTICIPATION

11.1 PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The draft EIS for the proposed INRMP for the BMGR was distributed to the public at the end of February 2003. A Notice of Availability of the draft EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on 7 March 2003 (Volume 68, Number 45, page 11086) and stated the following.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
[ER-FRL-6638-2]

Environmental Impact Statements; Notice of Availability
AGENCY: Office of Federal Activities, weekly receipt of Environmental Impact
Statements Filed February 24, 2003 Through February 28, 2003 Pursuant to 40
CFR 1506.9...

EIS No. 030079, Draft EIS, UAF, AZ, Barry M. Goldwater Range (BMGR)
Proposed Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP),
Implementation, Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-
65) and Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670), Yuma, Pima and Maricopa Counties, AZ,
Comment Period Ends: May 7, 2003, Contact: Capt. Stephanie Dawley,
(623) 856-3823...

Dated: March 4, 2003
Joseph C. Montgomery,
Director, NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] Compliance Division,
Office of Federal Activities.
[FR Doc. 03-5482 Filed 3-7-03; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

In addition to the Notice of Availability, other methods were used to notify potentially interested persons about the hearings. Luke AFB arranged for notices to be published in local newspapers of the communities in which public hearings were held. A newsletter announcing the availability of the draft EIS, Community Report, and public hearings was mailed on 5 March 2003 to more than 500 persons on the current BMGR INRMP mailing list. The draft EIS and Community Report were posted on the Luke AFB web site, and were available for review at 17 libraries.

11.2 PUBLIC HEARINGS

Six public hearings were held from 31 March through 5 April 2003 to receive direct public comment on the draft EIS. With the exception of the hearing in Sells, the hearings began at 5:30 p.m. with an open house in which the public could review maps and display boards. A presentation providing an overview of the draft EIS began at 7:00 p.m. Chief Trial Judge of the Air Force, Colonel John Powers, presided over the public hearings. The public was invited to make oral or written comments. Oral comments were transcribed by a court reporter and are included in Chapter 12 of this final EIS. The hearing in Sells was scheduled to begin at 2 p.m. with a presentation at 3 p.m.; however, nobody from the public attended that hearing. The public hearings were held at the locations listed below:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Monday, 31 March 2003 Independence High School (Cafeteria) 6602 N. 75 th Avenue Glendale, AZ 85303 | 4. Thursday, 3 April 2003 Yuma Civic Center East Wing 1440 Desert Hills Drive Yuma, AZ 85365 |
| 2. Tuesday, 1 April 2003 El Rio Neighborhood Center 1390 W. Speedway Blvd. Tucson, AZ 85745 | 5. Friday, 4 April 2003 Ajo Community Center 290 E. Fifth St. Ajo, AZ 85321 |
| 3. Wednesday, 2 April 2003 Gila Bend High School 308 N. Martin Ave. Gila Bend, AZ 85337 | 6. Saturday, 5 April 2003 Legislative Chambers Sells, AZ |

A greeting station was located and staffed at the door. Public participants were asked to sign in and were provided with two handouts. One handout regarded public access and recreation opportunities under the alternative management strategies and the proposed action, and the other regarded the miles of road to be retained with each alternative. A pre-addressed mail-back written comment form was also provided and participants were invited to complete a speaker card if they wanted to make oral comments during the formal hearing.

The open house portion of the meetings included 13 display boards as follows:

- Planning Process Flowchart for the EIS and INRMP
- Resource Management Elements Addressed in the EIS for the Proposed INRMP
- Road Network Alternatives for BMGR—East
- Road Network Alternatives for BMGR—West
- Unroaded Areas Associated with Each Road Network Alternative
- Alternative Management Strategies for Recreation Services and Use Supervision
- Alternative Management Strategies for Wood Use and Native Plant Collection
- Alternative Management Strategies for Camping and Visitor Stay Limits
- Alternative Management Strategies for Hunting and Recreational Shooting
- Alternative Management Strategies for Rockhounding
- Cultural Resources Management on the BMGR
- Vegetative Communities on the BMGR
- Sonoran Pronghorn Sightings from 1994-2001

Most of these display boards are posted on the Luke AFB web site (www.luke.af.mil) under Barry M. Goldwater Range, Range Management Office, Environmental Issues, Download Documents.

Representatives from the Air Force, Marine Corps, USFWS, BLM, and AGFD, as well as contractor facilitators were available to explain the displays, to answer questions, and to encourage the public to provide comments on the information presented.

The public was offered several methods of recording comments. This included written comments on a comment form that could be submitted at the meeting or mailed later, oral comments recorded privately by a court reporter during the open house, and oral comments recorded by a court reporter during the formal hearing process.

11.3 PRIVACY ADVISORY

The draft EIS and Community Report included a privacy advisory in the request for comments on the draft EIS that included that, “Letters or other public comment documents provided to the Department of the Air Force or Department of the Navy may be published in the final EIS. Information provided will be used only to improve upon issues identified in the draft EIS. Comments will be addressed in the final EIS and made available to the public. However, only the name of the individual and specific comments will be disclosed.”

11.4 PARTICIPATION

11.4.1 Written and Oral Comments

During the 60-day public comment period, which concluded 7 May 2003, oral or written comments were received from federal agencies, state agencies, local agencies, Native American tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. Unless noted as an oral comment, written comments were received from the following:

Federal Agencies

- Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Department of the Interior, USFWS

State Agencies

- Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Arizona State Historic Preservation Office

State Government Representatives (oral comments)

- Joe Melton, Arizona Game and Fish Commission

Local Agencies

- Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department
- Pima County Board of Supervisors (Resolution)
- Town of Gila Bend (David Evertsen, Town Manager)
- Yuma County Board of Supervisors (Resolution)

Local Government Representatives (oral comments)

- Gail Gallagher on behalf of Yuma County
- Paul Johnson, Yuma City Council representative

Native American Groups

- Fort Mojave Indian Tribe Ahamakav Cultural Society
- Yavapai-Apache Nation
- Yavapai Cultural Preservation
- Yavapai Prescott Indian Tribe

Non-governmental Organizations

- Ajo, Arizona Reclamation Project
- Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Pecan Grove Garden Club
- Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Chapter
- Land and Water Fund of the Rockies
- Tucson Audubon Society
- Yuma Audubon Society
- Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club, Inc.

Three of the non-governmental organizations—Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, Yuma Audubon Society, and Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club, Inc.—submitted both oral and written comments.

The remaining 104 comments were from individuals. Of the individual comments, 93 were written, 11 were oral, and one individual provided both oral and written comments. As shown in Table 11-1, slightly more than half of the written comments (52 percent, or 48 of the 93 comments) were received from residents of Yuma. Residents of Ajo accounted for 30 percent and residents of Tucson submitted 10 percent of the comments from individuals. No more than one comment was received from individuals residing in the other seven Arizona and one Utah communities.

It was not always obvious if comments should be counted as an individual comment or as a comment on behalf of an organization. For example, one individual (Dale M. Marler) indicated that he was representing People for the USA, Yuma Chapter and State Organizations. However, his comment was not provided on letterhead and it is not known if those organizations were in support of his comments. Similarly, some individuals whom were known to be representatives of organizations or agencies appeared to make comments as individuals rather than on behalf of those organizations or agencies.

| Community | Number of Written Comments | Number of Oral Comments | Total Number of Comments | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| Ajo, Arizona | 28 | 6 | 34 | 32.5 |
| Eager, Arizona | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Fountain Hills, Arizona | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Gila Bend, Arizona | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Oro Valley, Arizona | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Phoenix, Arizona | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Saint George, Utah | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Somerton, Arizona | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Sonoita, Arizona | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Tucson, Arizona | 9 | | 9 | 8.5 |
| Yuma, Arizona | 48 | 3 | 51 | 49 |
| Why, Arizona | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 93 | 11 | 104 | 100 |

Note: The oral comments reflect the community in which the public hearing was held and may not be the community in which the commenter lives.

11.4.2 Public Hearings

A total of 73 members of the public attended the six public hearings introduced in Section 12.3. As shown in Table 11-2, the Yuma and Ajo hearings (with 27 participations each) had the greatest attendance by members of the public.

| | Glendale | Tucson | Gila Bend | Yuma | Ajo | Sells |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| General Public | 2 | 12 | 5 | 27 | 27 | 0 |
| Air Force | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Marine Corps | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| BLM | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| AGFD | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| USFWS | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Contractors | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Totals | 16 | 26 | 19 | 45 | 41 | 11 |

When registering, some members of the general public indicated they were affiliated with a particular organization. In all, 19 individuals from the general public attending the hearings indicated that they were affiliated with one of the 10 organizations or government agencies listed alphabetically in Table 11-3.

| | Glendale | Tucson | Gila Bend | Yuma | Ajo | Sells | TOTAL |
|--|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society | | 2 | 1 | | | | 3 |
| Arizona Game and Fish Commission | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Center for Biological Diversity | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| People for the U.S.A. | | | | 3 | | | 3 |
| Phoenix Zoo | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| San Lucy District of the Tohono O'odham Nation | | | | | 3 | | 3 |
| Town of Gila Bend | | | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Yuma Archaeological Society | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Yuma Audubon Society | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club | | | | 3 | | | 3 |
| Total | 1 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 19 |

When the public registered their attendance, they were invited to provide an address so they could be entered on the BMGR INRMP mailing list. Based on the addresses listed on the registration forms, the public came from the seven Arizona communities listed in Table 11-4. There was a correlation between hearing attendance and comments submitted by individuals within each community in that a greater number of comments were received from individuals in the communities with the greater representation at the public hearings (Table 11-4).

| Public Participant Address | Glendale | Tucson | Gila Bend | Yuma | Ajo | Sells | Total |
|----------------------------|----------|--------|-----------|------|-----|-------|-------|
| Ajo | | | | | 22 | | 22 |
| Gila Bend | | | 4 | | 2 | | 6 |
| Phoenix | 2 | | 1 | | | | 3 |
| Tacna | | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| Tucson | | 11 | | | | | 11 |
| Why | | | | | 2 | | 2 |
| Yuma | | | | 22 | | | 22 |

During the formal part of the hearings, there was one speaker at the Tucson hearing, three speakers in Gila Bend, five speakers in Yuma, six speakers in Ajo, and no speakers in Glendale or Sells. In addition, two people (Jon Fugate and Gail Gallagher) made oral comments in private, recorded by the court reporter, at the Yuma hearing.

11.5 OVERVIEW OF THE COMMENTS

The vast majority of the comments received on the draft EIS regarded the BMGR road network. These comments varied from general comments in support or opposition of road closures to comments on specific elements of road management actions specified for the motorized access

and unroaded area element of the draft EIS proposed action and alternatives. Many of the comments indicated support for the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club proposal for selection of the Alternative B road network (retaining all existing roads plus the Cabeza Prieta NWR bypass roads) or modifying Alternative C to keep several additional roads open to public access. Another major topic of comments was the damage being caused by illegal traffic from Mexico rather than by recreationists. Many commenters in the Ajo area expressed concern for the potential local socioeconomic impacts of implementation of the proposed action. Issues related to the declining Sonoran pronghorn population were also relatively prevalent in the comments. There were many additional general and specific comments received during the comment period, as will be further detailed in Chapter 12.