

**Finding of No Significant Impact
for Environmental Assessment
for the U.S. Border Patrol Station and
Sector Headquarters,
El Paso, Texas**

FINAL

**Department of Homeland Security
Customs and Border Control
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20229**

JUNE 2004

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Office of Border Protection and Sector Headquarters
El Paso, Texas

PROJECT HISTORY: The Office of Border Patrol (OBP) is proposing to build a new Border Patrol Station (BPS) and Sector Headquarters in El Paso, Texas. The proposed facilities would integrate mission requirements, increase the efficiency of current operations, and provide infrastructure and facilities to meet the current and projected growth of the Border Patrol in El Paso, Texas.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is the Federal agency responsible for enforcing the laws on the admission of aliens into the United States. As part of CBP, the OBP is responsible for maintaining control of the borders of the U.S. The OBP's mission is to prevent the entry of those who illegally enter or smuggle persons or contraband by detection, interdiction and apprehension.

PURPOSE AND NEED: The current BPS and Sector Headquarters are located at the intersection of Hawkins Boulevard and Montana Avenue in a heavily congested area of El Paso. The existing facility does not provide sufficient space for current and future Border Patrol operations. Commercial development on all sides of the current compound has prevented the Border Patrol from expanding on site

The OBP in El Paso has experienced a significant increase in workload and mission requirements and its workforce. The need for additional workspace and support equipment has correspondingly increased. The proposed action would resolve the workforce/ workspace conflict for the Border Patrol in El Paso, Texas.

ALTERNATIVES: There were two sites under consideration for the construction and operation of the proposed Border Patrol Station and Sector Headquarters.

- Site 1, or the preferred site, consists of approximately 45-acres located on the southeastern corner of Castner Range (near the intersection of Interstate 54 and Hondo Pass Road).
- Site 2 (Northern Public Service Board Site) is a 45-acre parcel located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Interstate 54 and McCombs Street. Both sites are located within the city limits of El Paso. Site 1 is owned by the United States Department of Defense (Fort Bliss), while the Public Service Board of El Paso holds Site 2. The building site plan would be the same for both alternatives.
- The no-action alternative is the only other viable alternative to the proposed new facilities. Under the no-action alternative, construction of the new Border Patrol Station and Sector Headquarters would not occur. Current space constraints would continue to impact the operation of the Border Patrol in El Paso. Additionally, there would not be enough room at the existing facilities to support the expected continual growth of Border Patrol operations. Although there would not be any significant environmental impacts as a result of the no-action alternative, the future mission and objectives of the Border Patrol could be compromised.

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PROPOSED ACTION: Under the Proposed Action, the OBP will construct a 45-acre compound in a an closed Fort Bliss firing range at the base of the Castner Range in El Paso, Texas. The new station would cover approximately 60% of the 45-acres. This station will cover 150,000 square feet of offices and buildings and other facilities will include a sally port, dog kennels, parking, seized vehicle temporary storage area, a fuel island, a wash station, a 100-foot communication tower, an indoor firing range, and a two-bay vehicle maintenance shop. Additional space would be required to accommodate the administrative offices associated with the proposed Sector Headquarters.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES: No significant adverse effects to the natural or human environment are expected upon implementation of the proposed action. The total project is expected to disturb a maximum 45-acres. Although, ground disturbance would be required, it will not significantly affect land use, transportation, hazardous materials or waste, biological resources, geology and soils, water resources, air quality, socioeconomics, environmental justice, noise, cultural resources, or aesthetics. Visual impacts of the new facility will be minimal.

All Munitions Explosives Constituents and munitions debris will be cleared from the site and a clearance certificate provided to the CBP prior to any construction activities. Additionally, several mitigation measures will be implemented as part of the proposed action. These mitigation measures include:

- 1) The construction of two hawk towers to encourage re-colonization of the species;
- 2) The removal, preservation, and replanting of vegetation on site;
- 3) The seeding of Mexican Gold Poppies after construction to ensure the continued health of the poppy population; and
- 4) The use of a local architect in order to ensure the regional sensitivity to the surrounding environment is incorporated into the design of the facilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN MEASURES: Construction impacts will be temporary and minimal; therefore, environmental design measures are only described for those resources with potential for impacts. Environmental design measures to be implemented by the Border Patrol, El Paso Sector for the proposed action include:

- Every effort will be made to preserve all arroyos and natural drainages during the construction, design and operation of the facility.
- Plants native to the Franklin Mountains or northern Chihuahuan Desert will be used in the landscape on site.
- Southwestern desert architecture will be incorporated into the design of the facilities and associated compounds.

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- All unexploded ordnance will be removed prior to any construction activities. All clean-up activities will be coordinated with the appropriate local, state, and federal agencies in accordance with all applicable regulations.
- If any cultural remains other than those noted in the archeological report, are discovered during construction activities, activities will stop and the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer and a qualified archaeologist will be notified immediately in order to assess the significance of the remains and determine appropriate mitigation measures.
- In order to minimize the amount of project-related dust emissions, the following management practices shall be implemented by the contractor during project construction: (1) minimize land disturbance; (2) water trucks shall be used to wet exposed areas and control emissions of fugitive dust caused by grading and hauling activities and vehicular travel on unpaved road surfaces; and (3) truck and trailer beds shall be covered when hauling dirt and aggregate. In addition, all construction equipment shall be maintained and operated in a manner that produces the least amount of emissions and maintains the lowest possible noise levels. Standard noise attenuation equipment, such as mufflers, must be used on all construction equipment and vehicles and must be maintained in good operating condition, free from leaks and holes. All construction ingress and egress to the proposed site will occur from a single entrance on the access road to U.S. Highway 54.
- Proper maintenance of construction equipment and best management practices during construction activities shall be used. This will minimize the possibility of accidental spills of fuels or lubricants that, if they occurred, could affect surface and ground water quality. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will also be implemented into design plans and will include techniques such as silt fences and tracking controls.
- To minimize potential impacts from hazardous and regulated materials, all fuels, waste oils, and solvents will be collected and stored in tanks or drums within a secondary containment that consists of an impervious floor and bermed sidewalls capable of containing the volume of the largest container stored therein. The refueling of vehicles will be completed following accepted guidelines, and all vehicles will have drip pans during storage to contain minor spills and drips. Although it will be unlikely for a major spill to occur, any spill of 5 gallons or more will be contained immediately within an earthen dike, and the application of an absorbent (e.g., granular, pillow, sock, etc.) will be used to absorb and contain the spill. Any major spill of 5 gallons or more of a hazardous or regulated substance will be reported immediately to the on-site environmental personnel who will notify appropriate local, state, and federal agencies.

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- A Spill Prevention Control, Containment, and Countermeasures Plan will be in place and all personnel will be briefed on the implementation and responsibilities of this plan. All non-recyclable hazardous and regulated wastes will be collected, characterized, labeled, stored, transported, and disposed of in accordance with all Federal, state, and local regulations, including proper waste manifesting procedures.

FINDING: Based upon the results of the environmental assessment and the environmental design measures to be incorporated as part of the proposed action, it has been concluded that the proposed action will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment. Therefore, no further environmental impact analysis is warranted.



Kevin Feeney,

Environmental Program Manager

Customs and Border Protection

6/10/04

Date