

APPENDIX A. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION, PUBLIC AND AGENCY PARTICIPATION

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT BLISS
1741 MARSHALL ROAD
FORT BLISS, TEXAS 79916

June 26, 2024

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment for the Addition of Obscurant Munitions Boxes,
Fort Bliss, Texas

Mr. David Gray
Acting Regional Administrator
US EPA Region 6
1201 Elm Street
Dallas, TX 78758

Dear Mr. Gray:

The United States (US) Army is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action to add obscurant munitions boxes within existing approved designated impact areas on the Fort Bliss Training Complex (FBTC). The FBTC consists of the South Training Areas, Doña Ana Range, and the McGregor Range. The EA is being prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (Title 42 United States Code § 4321 et seq.); regulations of the President's Council on Environmental Quality that implement NEPA procedures (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508); Army Regulation 200-1, Environmental Protection and Enhancement; and 32 CFR Part 651, Environmental Analysis of Army Actions.

The purpose of this proposed action is to expand obscurant munitions training capabilities at Fort Bliss by designating more areas within the FBTC that are suitable for obscurant munitions impacts and training. The proposed action is needed to ensure the full spectrum of training can be accomplished at Fort Bliss and training conflicts with other weapons systems are minimized. The EA will assess the potential environmental consequences associated with the proposed action and alternatives.

To consider possible environmental concerns, the Army is engaging early with all potentially affected resource agencies as it formulates the undertaking, accordingly, the Army is initiating consultation with your office. In support of this process, we request your input in identifying general or specific issues or areas of concern with actions.

Specific written comments including attachments may be submitted by email to usarmh.bliss.id-readiness.mbx.dpw-nepa-support@army.mil or via US postal mail, or in person (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays).

The mailing address is HQ, US Army Garrison, Fort Bliss, ATTN: AMIM-BLG-ZA, 1741 Marshall Road, Fort Bliss, TX 79916. We respectfully request that comments be submitted within 30 days of receipt of this letter.

Please direct any questions regarding the actions or the scoping process to the NEPA Program Manager, Environmental Division, Directorate of Public Works, at (915) 568-1455 or by the email address provided above.

The Army appreciates your interest in and support of its military mission at Fort Bliss. We thank you in advance for your assistance and look forward to your response.

Respectfully,



Yvette Waychus
Acting, Chief, Environmental Division
Directorate of Public Works

Enclosure



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna Road Ne
Albuquerque, NM 87113-1001
Phone: (505) 346-2525 Fax: (505) 346-2542



In Reply Refer To:
Project Code: 2024-0094974
Project Name: Fort Bliss OM EA

05/23/2024 17:08:43 UTC

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for your recent request for information on federally listed species and important wildlife habitats that may occur in your project area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has responsibility for certain species of New Mexico wildlife under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 as amended (16 USC 1531 *et seq.*), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as amended (16 USC 701-715), and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act as amended (16 USC 668-668(c)). We are providing the following guidance to assist you in determining which federally imperiled species may or may not occur within your project area, and to recommend some conservation measures that can be included in your project design.

The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and/or may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) under section 7(c) of the ESA of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Please feel free to contact us if you need more current information or assistance regarding the potential impacts to federally proposed, listed, and candidate species and federally designated and proposed critical habitat. Please note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the ESA, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

The purpose of the ESA is to provide a means whereby threatened and endangered species and

the ecosystems upon which they depend may be conserved. Under sections 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2) of the ESA and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 402 *et seq.*), Federal agencies are required to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of threatened and endangered species and to determine whether projects may affect threatened and endangered species and/or designated critical habitat.

A Biological Assessment is required for construction projects (or other undertakings having similar physical impacts) that are major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment as defined in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 42 USC 4332(2) (c)). For projects other than major construction activities, the Service suggests that a biological evaluation similar to a Biological Assessment be prepared to determine whether the project may affect listed or proposed species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat. Recommended contents of a Biological Assessment are described at 50 CFR 402.12.

If a Federal agency determines, based on the Biological Assessment or biological evaluation, that listed species and/or designated critical habitat may be affected by the proposed project, the agency is required to consult with the Service pursuant to 50 CFR 402. In addition, the Service recommends that candidate species, proposed species and proposed critical habitat be addressed within the consultation. More information on the regulations and procedures for section 7 consultation, including the role of permit or license applicants, can be found in the "Endangered Species Consultation Handbook" at <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/endangered-species-consultation-handbook.pdf>.

Candidate Species and Other Sensitive Species

A list of candidate and other sensitive species in your area is also attached. Candidate species and other sensitive species are species that have no legal protection under the ESA, although we recommend that candidate and other sensitive species be included in your surveys and considered for planning purposes. The Service monitors the status of these species. If significant declines occur, these species could potentially be listed. Therefore, actions that may contribute to their decline should be avoided.

Lists of sensitive species including State-listed endangered and threatened species are compiled by New Mexico State agencies. These lists, along with species information, can be found at the following websites.

Biota Information System of New Mexico (BISON-M): www.bison-m.org

New Mexico State Forestry. The New Mexico Endangered Plant Program:
<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/rare-plants/>

New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council, New Mexico Rare Plants: nmrareplants.unm.edu

Natural Heritage New Mexico, online species database: nhnm.unm.edu

WETLANDS AND FLOODPLAINS

Under Executive Orders 11988 and 11990, Federal agencies are required to minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and floodplains, and preserve and enhance their natural and beneficial values. These habitats should be conserved through avoidance, or mitigated to ensure that there would be no net loss of wetlands function and value.

We encourage you to use the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps in conjunction with ground-truthing to identify wetlands occurring in your project area. The Service's NWI program website, www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html, integrates digital map data with other resource information. We also recommend you contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for permitting requirements under section 404 of the Clean Water Act if your proposed action could impact floodplains or wetlands.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

In addition to responsibilities to protect threatened and endangered species under the ESA, there are additional responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) to protect native birds from project-related impacts. Any activity, intentional or unintentional, resulting in take of migratory birds, including eagles, is prohibited unless otherwise permitted by the Service (50 CFR 10.12 and 16 USC 668(a)). For more information regarding these Acts, see <https://www.fws.gov/program/migratory-bird-permit/what-we-do>.

The MBTA has no provision for allowing take of migratory birds that may be unintentionally killed or injured by otherwise lawful activities. It is the responsibility of the project proponent to comply with these Acts by identifying potential impacts to migratory birds and eagles within applicable NEPA documents (when there is a Federal nexus) or a Bird/Eagle Conservation Plan (when there is no Federal nexus). Proponents should implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize the production of project-related stressors or minimize the exposure of birds and their resources to the project-related stressors. For more information on avian stressors and recommended conservation measures, see <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/threats-birds>. We also recommend review of the Birds of Conservation Concern list (<https://www.fws.gov/media/birds-conservation-concern-2021>) to fully evaluate the effects to the birds at your site. This list identifies migratory and non-migratory bird species (beyond those already designated as federally threatened or endangered) that represent top conservation priorities for the Service, and are potentially threatened by disturbance, habitat impacts, or other project development activities.

In addition to MBTA and BGEPA, Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, obligates all Federal agencies that engage in or authorize activities that might affect migratory birds, to minimize those effects and encourage conservation measures that will improve bird populations. Executive Order 13186 thereby provides additional protection for both migratory birds and migratory bird habitat. Please visit <https://www.fws.gov/partner/council-conservation-migratory-birds> for information regarding the implementation of Executive Order 13186.

We suggest you contact the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division for information regarding State protected and at-risk species fish, wildlife, and plants.

For further consultation with the Service we recommend submitting inquiries or assessments electronically to our incoming email box at nmesfo@fws.gov, where it will be more promptly routed to the appropriate biologist for review.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. The Service encourages Federal agencies to include conservation of threatened and endangered species into their project planning to further the purposes of the Act. Please include the Consultation Code in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Note: IPaC has provided all available attachments because this project is in multiple field office jurisdictions.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Bald & Golden Eagles
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

OFFICIAL SPECIES LIST

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

This species list is provided by:

New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office

2105 Osuna Road Ne
Albuquerque, NM 87113-1001
(505) 346-2525

This project's location is within the jurisdiction of multiple offices. However, only one species list document will be provided for all offices. The species and critical habitats in this document reflect the aggregation of those that fall in each of the affiliated office's jurisdiction. Other offices affiliated with the project:

Austin Ecological Services Field Office

1505 Ferguson Lane

Austin, TX 78754-4501

(512) 937-7371

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2024-0094974

Project Name: Fort Bliss OM EA

Project Type: Military Operations

Project Description: Fort Bliss Obscurant Munitions EA; Dona Ana and McGregor Range

Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/@32.35817705,-106.06614420988288,14z>



Counties: New Mexico and Texas

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES

There is a total of 20 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species. Note that 2 of these species should be considered only under certain conditions.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries¹, as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

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1. [NOAA Fisheries](#), also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

MAMMALS

NAME	STATUS
<p>Mexican Wolf <i>Canis lupus baileyi</i></p> <p>Population: U.S.A. (portions of AZ and NM)see 17.84(k)</p> <p>No critical habitat has been designated for this species.</p> <p>Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3916</p>	Experimental Population, Non-Essential
<p>New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse <i>Zapus hudsonius luteus</i></p> <p>There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat.</p> <p>Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/7965</p>	Endangered
<p>Penasco Least Chipmunk <i>Tamias minimus atristriatus</i></p> <p>There is proposed critical habitat for this species.</p> <p>Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5126</p>	Proposed Endangered
<p>Tricolored Bat <i>Perimyotis subflavus</i></p> <p>No critical habitat has been designated for this species.</p> <p>Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10515</p>	Proposed Endangered

BIRDS

NAME	STATUS
<p>Mexican Spotted Owl <i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i></p> <p>There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location overlaps the critical habitat.</p> <p>Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8196</p>	Threatened
<p>Northern Aplomado Falcon <i>Falco femoralis septentrionalis</i></p> <p>Population: U.S.A (AZ, NM)</p> <p>No critical habitat has been designated for this species.</p> <p>Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1923</p>	Experimental Population, Non-Essential
<p>Northern Aplomado Falcon <i>Falco femoralis septentrionalis</i></p> <p>Population: Wherever found, except where listed as an experimental population</p> <p>No critical habitat has been designated for this species.</p> <p>Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1923</p>	Endangered
<p>Piping Plover <i>Charadrius melodus</i></p> <p>Population: [Atlantic Coast and Northern Great Plains populations] - Wherever found, except those areas where listed as endangered.</p> <p>There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat.</p> <p>This species only needs to be considered under the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind Energy Projects <p>Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6039</p>	Threatened
<p>Rufa Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus rufa</i></p> <p>There is proposed critical habitat for this species.</p> <p>This species only needs to be considered under the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind Energy Projects <p>Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1864</p>	Threatened

NAME	STATUS
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher <i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i> There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6749	Endangered
Yellow-billed Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus</i> Population: Western U.S. DPS There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3911	Threatened

FISHES

NAME	STATUS
Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout <i>Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/920	Candidate
Rio Grande Silvery Minnow <i>Hybognathus amarus</i> Population: Rio Grande, from Little Box Canyon to Amistad Dam No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1391	Experimental Population, Non- Essential

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Monarch Butterfly <i>Danaus plexippus</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743	Candidate

FLOWERING PLANTS

NAME	STATUS
Kuenzler Hedgehog Cactus <i>Echinocereus fendleri</i> var. <i>kuenzleri</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/2859	Threatened
Sacramento Mountains Thistle <i>Cirsium vinaceum</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/7486	Threatened
Sacramento Prickly Poppy <i>Argemone pleiacantha</i> ssp. <i>pinnatisecta</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3332	Endangered
Sneed Pincushion Cactus <i>Coryphantha sneedii</i> var. <i>sneedii</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4706	Endangered
Todsen's Pennyroyal <i>Hedeoma todsenii</i> There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat.	Endangered

NAME	STATUS
Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1081	
Wright's Marsh Thistle <i>Cirsium wrightii</i>	Threatened
Population:	
There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat.	
Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8963	

CRITICAL HABITATS

There is 1 critical habitat wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction.

NAME	STATUS
Mexican Spotted Owl <i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	Final
https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8196#crithab	

USFWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LANDS AND FISH HATCHERIES

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the [National Wildlife Refuge](#) system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

REFUGE INFORMATION WAS NOT AVAILABLE WHEN THIS SPECIES LIST WAS GENERATED. PLEASE CONTACT THE FIELD OFFICE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

BALD & GOLDEN EAGLES

Bald and golden eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act¹ and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act².

Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to bald or golden eagles, or their habitats³, should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate conservation measures, as described in the links below. Specifically, please review the ["Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles"](#).

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1. The [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](#) of 1940.
 2. The [Migratory Birds Treaty Act](#) of 1918.
 3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

There are likely bald eagles present in your project area. For additional information on bald eagles, refer to [Bald Eagle Nesting and Sensitivity to Human Activity](#)

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, see the PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY below to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Oct 15 to Jul 31

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read "[Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles](#)", specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (■)

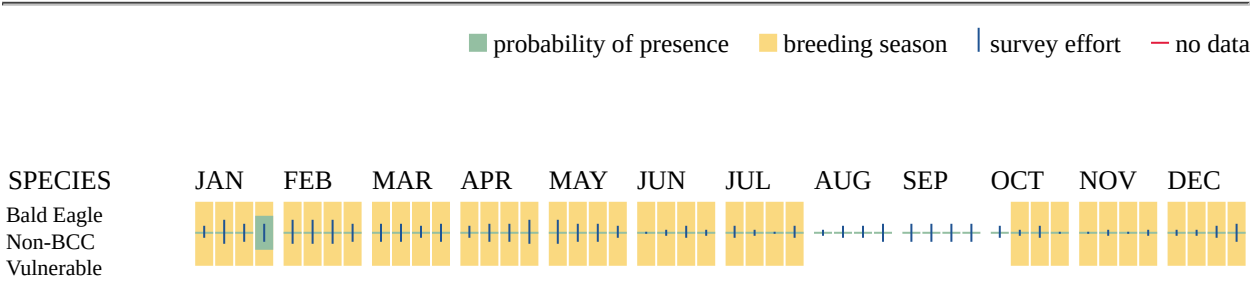
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)

Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (—)

A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management <https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management>
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds>
- Nationwide conservation measures for birds <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf>
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC <https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action>

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Certain birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act¹ and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act².

Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to migratory birds, eagles, and their habitats³ should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate conservation measures, as described in the links below. Specifically, please review the "[Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles](#)".

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1. The [Migratory Birds Treaty Act](#) of 1918.
 2. The [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](#) of 1940.
 3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, see the PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY below to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Baird's Sparrow <i>Centronyx bairdii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5113	Breeds elsewhere
Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Oct 15 to Jul 31

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Black-capped Vireo <i>Vireo atricapilla</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5716	Breeds Apr 1 to Sep 15
Black-chinned Sparrow <i>Spizella atrogularis</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9447	Breeds Apr 15 to Jul 31
Broad-tailed Hummingbird <i>Selasphorus platycercus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/11935	Breeds May 25 to Aug 21
Cactus Wren <i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus guttatus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8834	Breeds Mar 5 to Sep 30
Cassin's Sparrow <i>Peucaea cassinii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9512	Breeds Aug 1 to Oct 10
Chestnut-collared Longspur <i>Calcarius ornatus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9437	Breeds elsewhere
Clark's Grebe <i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10575	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 31
Eastern Meadowlark <i>Sturnella magna</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9455	Breeds Apr 25 to Aug 31
Evening Grosbeak <i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9465	Breeds May 15 to Aug 10
Ferruginous Hawk <i>Buteo regalis</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6038	Breeds Mar 15 to Aug 15

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Flammulated Owl <i>Psiloscops flammeolus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/7728	Breeds May 10 to Aug 15
Grace's Warbler <i>Setophaga graciae</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9514	Breeds May 20 to Jul 20
Henry's Common Nighthawk <i>Chordeiles minor henryi</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/11979	Breeds May 21 to Aug 25
Long-billed Curlew <i>Numenius americanus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5511	Breeds elsewhere
Mexican Whip-poor-will <i>Antrostomus arizonae</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10680	Breeds May 1 to Aug 20
Pinyon Jay <i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9420	Breeds Feb 15 to Jul 15
Scott's Oriole <i>Icterus parisorum</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/11968	Breeds May 21 to Aug 15
Sprague's Pipit <i>Anthus spragueii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8964	Breeds elsewhere
Thick-billed Longspur <i>Rhynchophanes mccownii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/11901	Breeds elsewhere
Varied Bunting <i>Passerina versicolor</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9725	Breeds Apr 25 to Sep 30

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Virginia's Warbler <i>Leiothlypis virginiae</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9441	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read "[Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles](#)", specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (■)

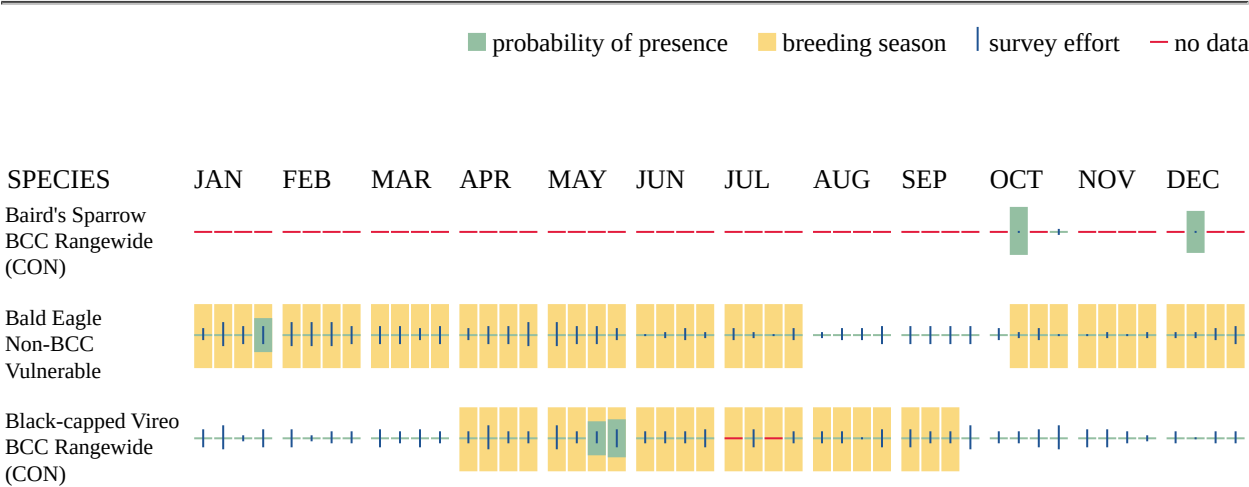
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

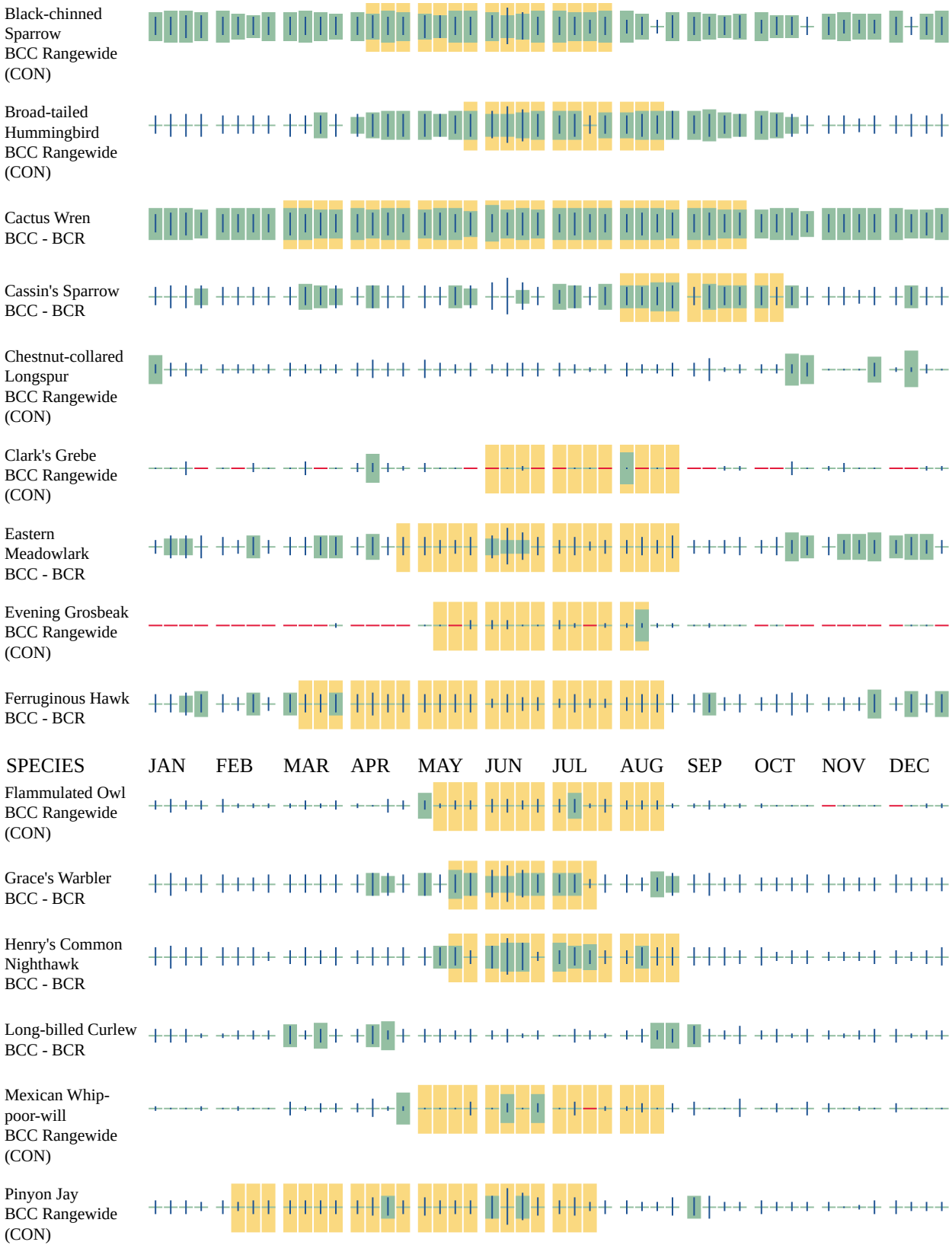
Survey Effort (|)

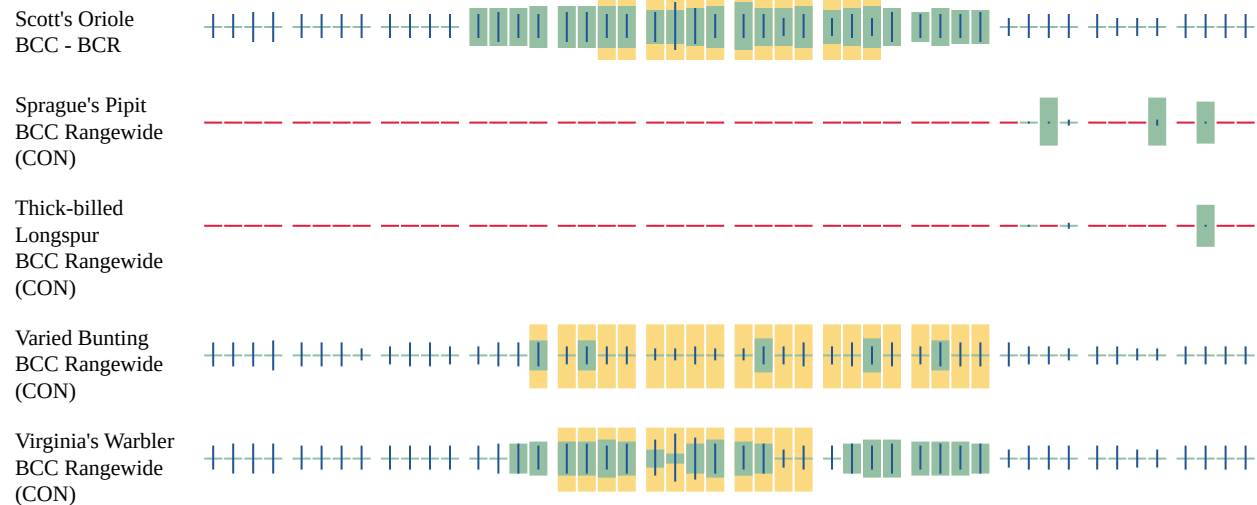
Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (—)

A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.







Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management <https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management>
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds>
- Nationwide conservation measures for birds <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf>
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC <https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action>

WETLANDS

Impacts to [NWI wetlands](#) and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District](#).

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

Due to your project's size, the list below may be incomplete, or the acreages reported may be inaccurate. For a full list, please contact the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife office or visit <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.HTML>

RIVERINE

- R4SBJx
- R4SB3Ax

- R4SBC
- R5UBH
- R4SB3J
- R4SB3Jx
- R4SB4J
- R4SB4Jx
- R4SBJ
- R4SB3A
- R4SBA

FRESHWATER POND

- PUSKx
- PUS2A
- PUSAh
- PUBFh
- PUBGh
- PUS2Ax
- PUBFx
- PUSJh
- PUBKx
- PUSCh
- PUSA
- PUSJ
- PUS2Jx
- PUBHx
- PUS1Jh
- PUSCx
- PUS2J
- PUBGx
- PUSAx
- PUBF

FRESHWATER EMERGENT WETLAND

- PEM1B
- PEM1J
- PEM1Fx
- PEM1Ch
- PEM1C

- PEM1A
- PEM1Jh
- PEM1Fh
- PEM1Cx
- PEM1Ah
- PEM1Jx
- PEM1Ax

FRESHWATER FORESTED/SHRUB WETLAND

- PSS1C
- PSS1Ah

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency: Army

Name: Elyse Maurer

Address:

City: Richland

State: WA

Zip: 99354

Email elyse.maurer@easbio.com

Phone:

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Lead Agency: Army



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT BLISS
1741 MARSHALL ROAD
FORT BLISS, TEXAS 79916

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment for the Addition of Obscurant Munitions Boxes,
Fort Bliss, Texas

Mr. Max Zuni
Governor
Pueblo de Isleta
117A Tribal Rd. 40., Bldg. 117-A
Isleta, NM 87022

Dear Governor Zuni:

The United States (US) Army is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with a proposed action to add obscurant munitions boxes within existing approved designated impact areas on the Fort Bliss Training Complex (FBTC). The FBTC consists of the South Training Areas, Doña Ana Range, and the McGregor Range. The EA is being prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (Title 42 United States Code § 4321 et seq.); regulations of the President's Council on Environmental Quality that implement NEPA procedures (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508); Army Regulation 200-1, Environmental Protection and Enhancement; and 32 CFR Part 651, Environmental Analysis of Army Actions.

The purpose of this proposed action is to expand obscurant munitions training capabilities at Fort Bliss by designating more areas within the FBTC that are suitable for obscurant munitions impacts and training. The proposed action is needed to ensure the full spectrum of training can be accomplished at Fort Bliss and training conflicts with other weapons systems are minimized. The EA will assess the potential environmental consequences associated with the proposed action and alternatives.

This letter is to invite formal consultation, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 and Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction 4710.02, Interactions with Federally Recognized Tribes, with all potentially affected Native American tribes for this proposed action. The Army will also comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act by informing you of the inadvertent discovery of archaeological or human remains and consulting on their disposition. The Army is inviting consultation with the following tribes: White Mountain Apache Tribe in Arizona; Comanche Nation, Kiowa Tribe, and Fort Sill Apache Tribe in Oklahoma; Mescalero Apache Tribe and Pueblo of Isleta in New Mexico; and Ysleta Del Sur tribe in Texas.

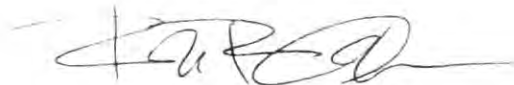
We request your assistance to identify properties of historic, cultural, or religious significance and request information on previously unrecorded sites, traditional cultural properties, or locations that are of religious and cultural significance to your Tribe within the project area. We also request your response that identifies any concerns of potential effects of the proposed action on significant cultural resources or any other tribal resources, tribal rights, or tribal lands that you believe have the potential to be significantly affected by the proposed action. A project location map is enclosed with this letter. Additional consultation will occur should there be any changes to the proposed action or project approach.

Specific written comments including attachments may be submitted by email to usarmy.bliss.id-readiness.mbx.dpw-nepa-support@army.mil or via US postal mail, or in person (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays). The mailing address is HQ, US Army Garrison, Fort Bliss, ATTN: AMIM-BLG-ZA, 11685 Sergeant Major Boulevard, Fort Bliss, TX 79918. We respectfully request that comments be submitted within 30 days of receipt of this letter.

Please direct any questions regarding the actions or the scoping process to the NEPA Program Manager, Environmental Division, Directorate of Public Works, at (915) 568-1455 or by the email address provided above.

The Army appreciates your interest in and support of its military mission at Fort Bliss. We thank you in advance for your assistance and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Gallagher", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brendan R. Gallagher
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding

Enclosure



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT BLISS
11685 SERGEANT MAJOR BOULEVARD
FORT BLISS, TEXAS 79918

April 08, 2025

Directorate of Public Works

Ms. Michelle Ensey
State Historic Preservation Officer
New Mexico Historic Preservation
407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236
Santa Fe, NM 87524

Dear Ms. Ensey:

The United States Army requests concurrence with its finding of No Adverse Effect of an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Proposed Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) evaluating potential environmental impacts from the Army's proposed action of the addition of obscurant munitions boxes within the Fort Bliss Training Complex (FBTC). This project constitutes a federal undertaking pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Section 800.16(y)). Accordingly, the Army is initiating NHPA Section 106 consultation with your office for its proposed undertaking. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (Title 42 United States Code § 4321 et seq.) (40 CFR § 1500-1508); Army Regulation 200-1, Environmental Protection and Enhancement; and 32 CFR § 651, Environmental Analysis of Army Actions.

Fort Bliss proposes to establish up to nine (9) additional obscurant munitions training locations within the Doña Ana and McGregor Range portions of the FBTC. There would be no construction or demolition associated with the proposed action. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) is limited to the physical effects within the nine (9) proposed obscurant munitions boxes. Nine (9) recorded archaeological sites are located within the APE. Of the nine (9) recorded archaeological sites, four (4) have been determined to not be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and five (5) have not been officially evaluated for eligibility. For this analysis, the five (5) unevaluated sites will be treated as eligible for listing in the NRHP until official determinations are made. Four (4) of the unevaluated sites are within proposed obscurant munitions box F and the fifth unevaluated site is within proposed obscurant munitions box G. These locations are prohibited and exempt from archaeological survey according to the Fort Bliss Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (2022-2027) and Programmatic Agreement (PA) due to safety concerns from unexploded ordnance, if determined eligible, the five unevaluated sites would have the potential to be at risk of adverse effects. However, according to the PA, military activities in

existing designated surface danger zones, such as these, are considered exempt undertakings and do not require Section 106 review. Additional details can be found in Section 3.9 of the attached Draft EA.

There are no NRHP-eligible or – listed historic buildings or structures or identified Traditional Cultural Properties within the APE. Accordingly, the Army has prepared a proposed FONSI to document the findings of the Draft EA.

The Army requests concurrence with its findings of No Adverse Effect. Comments or inquiries may be sent via postal or email (preferred) to Ms. Constance Parra, NEPA Program Manager, Environmental Division @ 915-568-9581 or email: usarmy.bliss.id-readiness.mbx.dpw-nepa-support@army.mil.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Elia Perez', written over a horizontal line.

Elia Perez
Cultural Resources Manager
Chief, Conservation Branch
Environmental Division, DPW

Enclosure



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT BLISS
1741 MARSHALL ROAD
FORT BLISS, TEXAS 79916

June 26, 2024

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment for the Addition of Obscurant Munitions Boxes,
Fort Bliss, Texas

Ms. Amy Lueders
Regional Director
US Fish and Wildlife Service
500 Gold Ave. SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Dear Ms. Lueders:

The United States (US) Army is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action to add obscurant munitions boxes within existing approved designated impact areas on the Fort Bliss Training Complex (FBTC). The FBTC consists of the South Training Areas, Doña Ana Range, and the McGregor Range. The EA is being prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (Title 42 United States Code § 4321 et seq.); regulations of the President's Council on Environmental Quality that implement NEPA procedures (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508); Army Regulation 200-1, Environmental Protection and Enhancement; and 32 CFR Part 651, Environmental Analysis of Army Actions.

The purpose of this proposed action is to expand obscurant munitions training capabilities at Fort Bliss by designating more areas within the FBTC that are suitable for obscurant munitions impacts and training. The proposed action is needed to ensure the full spectrum of training can be accomplished at Fort Bliss and training conflicts with other weapons systems are minimized. The EA will assess the potential environmental consequences associated with the proposed action and alternatives.

To consider possible environmental concerns, the Army is engaging early with all potentially affected resource agencies as it formulates the undertaking, accordingly, the Army is initiating consultation with your office. In support of this process, we request your input in identifying general or specific issues or areas of concern with actions.

Specific written comments including attachments may be submitted by email to usarmh.bliss.id-readiness.mbx.dpw-nepa-support@army.mil or via US postal mail, or in person (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays).

The mailing address is HQ, US Army Garrison, Fort Bliss, ATTN: AMIM-BLG-ZA, 1741 Marshall Road, Fort Bliss, TX 79916. We respectfully request that comments be submitted within 30 days of receipt of this letter.

Please direct any questions regarding the actions or the scoping process to the NEPA Program Manager, Environmental Division, Directorate of Public Works, at (915) 568-1455 or by the email address provided above.

The Army appreciates your interest in and support of its military mission at Fort Bliss. We thank you in advance for your assistance and look forward to your response.

Respectfully,



Yvette Waychus
Acting, Chief, Environmental Division
Directorate of Public Works

Enclosure

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT BLISS
11685 SERGEANT MAJOR BOULEVARD
FORT BLISS, TEXAS 79918

April 08, 2025

Directorate of Public Works

Ms. Michelle Ensey
State Historic Preservation Officer
New Mexico Historic Preservation
407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236
Santa Fe, NM 87524



HPD Log 125192

Dear Ms. Ensey:

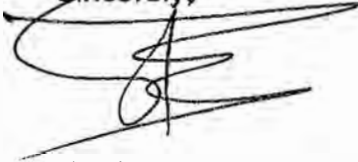
The United States Army requests concurrence with its finding of No Adverse Effect of an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Proposed Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) evaluating potential environmental impacts from the Army's proposed action of the addition of obscurant munitions boxes within the Fort Bliss Training Complex (FBTC). This project constitutes a federal undertaking pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Section 800.16(y)). Accordingly, the Army is initiating NHPA Section 106 consultation with your office for its proposed undertaking. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (Title 42 United States Code § 4321 et seq.) (40 CFR § 1500-1508); Army Regulation 200-1, Environmental Protection and Enhancement; and 32 CFR § 651, Environmental Analysis of Army Actions.

Fort Bliss proposes to establish up to nine (9) additional obscurant munitions training locations within the Doña Ana and McGregor Range portions of the FBTC. There would be no construction or demolition associated with the proposed action. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) is limited to the physical effects within the nine (9) proposed obscurant munitions boxes. Nine (9) recorded archaeological sites are located within the APE. Of the nine (9) recorded archaeological sites, four (4) have been determined to not be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and five (5) have not been officially evaluated for eligibility. For this analysis, the five (5) unevaluated sites will be treated as eligible for listing in the NRHP until official determinations are made. Four (4) of the unevaluated sites are within proposed obscurant munitions box F and the fifth unevaluated site is within proposed obscurant munitions box G. These locations are prohibited and exempt from archaeological survey according to the Fort Bliss Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (2022-2027) and Programmatic Agreement (PA) due to safety concerns from unexploded ordnance, if determined eligible, the five unevaluated sites would have the potential to be at risk of adverse effects. However, according to the PA, military activities in

existing designated surface danger zones, such as these, are considered exempt undertakings and do not require Section 106 review. Additional details can be found in Section 3.9 of the attached Draft EA.

There are no NRHP-eligible or -- listed historic buildings or structures or identified Traditional Cultural Properties within the APE. Accordingly, the Army has prepared a proposed FONSI to document the findings of the Draft EA.

The Army requests concurrence with its findings of No Adverse Effect. Comments or inquiries may be sent via postal or email (preferred) to Ms. Constance Parra, NEPA Program Manager, Environmental Division @ 915-568-9581 or email: usarmy.bliss.id-readiness.mbx.dpw-nepa-support@army.mil.

Sincerely,


Elia Perez
Cultural Resources Manager
Chief, Conservation Branch
Environmental Division, DPW

Enclosure

Concur with Recommendations as Proposed



for the NM SHPO, 5/1/2025



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
2105 Osuna Road NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113
Telephone 505-346-2525 Fax 505-346-2542
www.fws.gov/southwest/es/newmexico/

May 6, 2025

Cons. # 2024-0094974

ATTN: Ms. Claudia Ramirez
NEPA Program Manager
Environmental Division, Directorate of Public Works
624 Pleasonton Road
Fort Bliss, TX 79916

Dear Ms. Ramirez,

Thank you for your request for an informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq), as amended (Act). The United States Department of the Army (Army) proposes to establish up to nine additional obscurant munitions training locations within the Doña Ana and McGregor Range portions of the Fort Bliss Training Complex (Complex) on Fort Bliss Army Garrison (Fort Bliss) in Doña Ana and Otero counties, New Mexico. The total project area is up to approximately 6,881 acres and is situated within existing Designated Impact Areas that contain unexploded (dud) munitions (dudDED DIAs). Your request included a draft environmental assessment (EA) of the proposed action, the version of which is dated October 2024, and hereby incorporated by reference, which analyzed the effects of the proposed action on the following Federally listed or proposed species: New Mexico meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius luteus*), Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*), northern aplomado falcon (*Falco femoralis septentrionalis*) non-essential experimental population, piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), rufa red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii eximius*), yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), Kuenzler hedgehog cactus (*Echinocereus fendleri* var. *kuenzleri*), Sacramento Mountain thistle (*Cirsium vinaceum*), Sacramento prickly poppy (*Argemone pleiacantha* ssp. *pinnatisecta*), Sneed pincushion cactus (*Coryphantha sneedii* var. *sneedii*), Todsens pennyroyal (*Hedeoma todsenii*), Wright's marsh thistle (*Cirsium wrightii*), and monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*).

The Army made a determination that the proposed action “may affect, is not likely to adversely affect” the following Federally listed species or non-essential experimental populations of listed species: Mexican spotted owl, northern aplomado falcon non-essential experimental population, piping plover, rufa red knot, southwestern willow flycatcher, and yellow-billed cuckoo. The Service’s mapped habitat for rufa red knot does not include New Mexico and the subspecies is not expected to occur there. Therefore, we anticipate no effect from the proposed action and the Service does not need to concur on the effects determination or rufa red knot. The Army also made a determination that the proposed action “may affect, is not likely to adversely affect” the monarch butterfly, which is proposed for listing as a Federally threatened species. Conferencing on proposed species is not required unless the federal action is likely to jeopardize the species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat, and conferences would have to be adopted as a consultation if the action is ongoing after listing. At the current time, due to staffing and workload considerations, we are not able to participate in voluntary conferencing on this individual project until a final listing determination for the monarch butterfly is published. However, we do encourage implementation of the Department of Defense’s 7(a)(1) Conservation Strategy for the Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), published December 2024. No designated or proposed critical habitat for any species exists within Fort Bliss; therefore, no critical habitat will be affected. This letter transmits the Service’s concurrence pursuant to section 7 of the Act.

Additionally, the October 2024 EA included determinations of “no effect” for 7 species. Although the Act does not require Federal agencies to consult with the Service if the action agency determines their action will have “no effect” on threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat (50 CFR 402.12), we appreciate your consideration for the conservation of these species and notification of your “no effect” determinations.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is the establishment of up to nine additional obscurant munitions training locations within the Doña Ana and McGregor Range portions of the Complex. The proposed obscurant munitions training boxes range from approximately 362 acres to 1,447 acres in size, totaling up to approximately 6,881 acres. The proposed obscurant munition boxes would be located in the western part of the Doña Ana Range in the foothills of the Organ Mountains (boxes A–E) and in the central and southern part of the McGregor Range (boxes F–I). There would be no construction associated with designating obscurant munitions boxes.

Obscurant munitions boxes are designated areas, approved by the Range Officer, to support obscurant munitions training. Obscurant munitions boxes are designated as such because they pose a limited fire hazard threat from resulting munitions detonation due to their safety regulations, minimal vegetation cover, and intended use as duded impact areas. Training would be conducted within designated obscurant munitions boxes within existing duded DIAs. During training activities, obscurant munitions would be fired from designated firing points into these boxes.

Obscurant munitions refer to munitions that generate smoke (i.e., to obscure a position). Obscurants conceal material, screen targets, and create a state of confusion among enemy forces. Military obscurants are deployed from generators, smoke pots, field artillery, grenades, and mortars. When deployed from field artillery and mortars, obscurants are generally composed of white phosphorous and red phosphorous. Obscurant munitions evaluated under the proposed action include ordnance fired from howitzers, mortars, and tactical vehicles with smoke grenade launchers.

Dudded DIAs are actively in use for explosives training and, therefore, generally not suitable for wildlife habitation. However, mobile species may pass through dudged DIAs as they forage, migrate, or otherwise travel. Impacts to wildlife within the obscurant munition boxes would occur from loss of vegetation (i.e., habitat loss), direct disturbance from the impacts of obscurant munitions, and potential toxic effects of red and white phosphorous smoke and the various derivative phosphorous chemical compounds formed after detonations. Impacts to vegetation would be confined to the obscurant munition box areas. However, the various derivative phosphorous chemical compounds formed after detonations may be dispersed beyond obscurant munition box areas via wind and stormwater runoff.

While there is the potential for red and white phosphorous compounds (phosphine contamination) to enter stormwater runoff resulting in stormwater and surface water contamination, contaminated runoff toward surface waters and wetlands would be managed through surface water and stormwater best management practices (BMPs). BMPs may include avoiding the use of obscurant munitions during high wind or heavy precipitation events that could increase the probability of contaminant dispersal. If contamination was suspected, subsequent water resource studies would be conducted to evaluate the presence and extent of contamination. Proposed obscurant munitions boxes A, B, D, and E in the Doña Ana Range intersect, or are in the proximity of, ephemeral surface water features (streams that flow and contain water only for a short period of time during precipitation events). Proposed obscurant box F in the McGregor range is in the proximity of a wetland. Oak Canyon Creek is located within 1 mile of obscurant munitions boxes A, B, D, and E. Just under 1 mile of Oak Canyon Creek bisects the southwest corner of proposed obscurant munitions box A and is located about 0.13 mile west of the southwest perimeter of proposed obscurant munitions box B. Sulphur Canyon Creek is located approximately 200 feet from the southwest corner of proposed obscurant munitions box E where it meets with Soledad Canyon Creek. Soledad Canyon Creek terminates at the boundary of the proposed obscurant munitions box E. Within obscurant munitions box A, where Oak Canyon Creek bisects the southwest corner, red and white phosphorus would have the potential to enter surface water and result in phosphine contamination if low-oxygen water environments are present. Obscurant munitions boxes B and E, which are located within 0.13 mile of a named creek, would not likely result in red and white phosphorus entering surface water due to the localized impact from obscurant munitions and the use of BMPs. Box F, in the McGregor Range, is approximately 0.8 miles from a wetland. Water runoff potentially contaminated with red and white phosphorous that may damage wetland vegetation would be anticipated to be minimal.

Habitat for listed bird species does not occur within the action area. Additionally, none of Fort Bliss' three important plant communities—the black grama (*Bouteloua eriopoda*)

grasslands, sand sagebrush (*Artemisia filifolia*) community, or the shinnery oak (*Quercus havardii*) community—occur within the action area. On the Doña Ana Range, vegetation within the action area is primarily Foothill Desert Scrub and Foothill Desert Grass. Other vegetation associations within the box areas include Foothill Desert Shrubland and smaller areas of Creosote Piedmont Shrubland. The most common species associated with these vegetation communities is creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*). In the Foothill Desert Grassland community, side-oats grama grass (*Bouteloua curtipendula*) is a common species. In the central part of the McGregor Range, vegetation in proposed obscurant munition boxes G, H, and I is primarily Foothill Desert Scrub and Foothill Desert Shrubland, with small areas of Basin Desert Lowland Shrubland. Like the areas on the Doña Ana Range, creosote bush is a dominant species. Obscurant munition box F is in the southern part of the McGregor Range. The vegetation on this site is Basin Desert Shrubland (Coppice Dunes). Honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) is a common species in this association. The Basin Desert Shrubland association covers much of the southwestern part of the McGregor Range and approximately the eastern two-thirds of the Doña Ana Range.

Concurrence

Mexican Spotted Owl

The Mexican spotted owl occurs in forested mountains and canyonlands throughout the southwestern U.S. and Mexico. One sighting of Mexican spotted owl was historically reported from White Sands Missile Range near the boundary with Fort Bliss. Three additional sightings (including one individual located twice) of Mexican spotted owl have been historically reported on Fort Bliss in the Sacramento Mountains during the winter of 1989–1990. No nesting habitat for Mexican spotted owl occurs on Fort Bliss. Due to the few, historical sightings of Mexican spotted owl within Fort Bliss and the absence of forested areas within the action area, the Service concurs with your determination of “may affect, is not likely to adversely affect” for the Mexican spotted owl.

Northern Aplomado Falcon Non-essential Experimental Population

In southern New Mexico, the northern aplomado falcon occupies open yucca grasslands that include the grasslands of Otero Mesa on Fort Bliss. The northern aplomado falcon is a transient species on Fort Bliss. Areas of Fort Bliss with the highest habitat potential for this species are located on Otero Mesa, which are the large, ecologically intact grasslands on McGregor Range. Areas of Otero Mesa most suitable for aplomado falcons include the El Paso Draw, the southern part of Otero Mesa in Training Area 23, and the upper end of Prairie Valley, west of Antelope Well. Each of these areas is relatively shrub-free and includes broad, relatively flat drainages with fine-textured soils that promote high grass plant productivity and therefore high prey numbers. However, these areas of high habitat potential do not intersect the action area. No breeding of northern aplomado falcons has been documented on Fort Bliss, and northern aplomado falcons do not consistently inhabit the installation. Northern aplomado falcons were last detected on Otero Mesa within Fort Bliss in 2018. The northern aplomado falcon has been established as an experimental nonessential population under section 10(j) of the Act. For purposes of ESA section 7 consultation, any nonessential experimental population located outside a National Park or National Wildlife

Refuge System is treated as a proposed species. Due to the transient nature of northern aplomado falcon within Fort Bliss and because the best potential habitat for the falcon on Fort Bliss (areas of Otero Mesa where relatively large areas of intact grasslands remain) does not intersect the action area, the Service concurs with your determination of “may affect, is not likely to adversely affect” for the northern aplomado falcon.

Piping Plover

The piping plover occurs on sandflats or along bare shorelines of rivers, lakes, coasts, or other surface water features. Piping plover was observed once, in 1987, on Fort Bliss at the sewage lagoons. Piping plover individuals have a life expectancy of around 6 years, so we can assume that the observed individual is no longer extant. Due to the few historical sightings of piping plover within Fort Bliss and the absence of suitable habitat within the action area, the Service concurs with your determination of “may affect, is not likely to adversely affect” for the piping plover.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

Southwestern willow flycatcher inhabits dense riparian tree and shrub communities associated with rivers, swamps, and other wetlands, including lakes and reservoirs. Wintering habitats include brushy savanna edges, second growth shrubby clearings, pastures, and woodlands near water. Willow flycatchers (*Empidonax traillii*) were recorded in arroyos in the McGregor Range during breeding bird surveys conducted in 1996 and 1997 and were likely migrants, as appropriate nesting habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher does not exist on McGregor Range. Surveys have been conducted in the Organ Mountains on Fort Bliss and the species was not recorded there. Fort Bliss has no suitable breeding habitat. The most suitable riparian habitat for the federally listed southwestern willow flycatcher occurs on the west side of the Organ Mountains in Soledad Canyon. Suitable habitat does not exist within the east side of the Organ Mountains (i.e., the action area). Due to the few, historical sightings of southwestern willow flycatcher within Fort Bliss and the absence of suitable habitat within the action area, the Service concurs with your determination of “may affect, is not likely to adversely affect” for the southwestern willow flycatcher.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Yellow-billed cuckoos use wooded habitat with dense cover and water nearby, including woodlands with low, scrubby vegetation, overgrown orchards, abandoned farmland, and dense thickets along streams and marshes. Five sightings have been documented on Fort Bliss: Sacramento Mountains (1), Otero Mesa (3), and Organ Mountains (1). A pair of yellow-billed cuckoos most recently nested in the Organ Mountains on July 22, 1992 at Dripping Springs Natural Area in an arroyo that was vegetated with net-leaf hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*), oaks (*Quercus* spp.), and various sumacs (*Rhus* spp.). Due to the few, historical sightings of yellow-billed cuckoo within Fort Bliss and the absence of riparian woodlands within the action area, the Service concurs with your determination of “may affect, is not likely to adversely affect” for the yellow-billed cuckoo.

Conclusion

This concludes informal section 7 consultation with the Service for the obscurant boxes at Fort Bliss Army Garrison in Doña Ana and Otero counties, New Mexico with potential impacts to Mexican spotted owl, northern aplomado falcon non-essential experimental population, piping plover, southwestern willow flycatcher, and yellow-billed cuckoo. Please contact the Service if: 1) new information reveals changes to the action that may affect listed species in a manner or to an extent not previously considered, 2) the action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to the listed species not previously considered, or 3) a new species is listed, or critical habitat designated, that may be affected by the action.

We appreciate the Army's efforts to conserve at-risk, threatened, and endangered species and New Mexico's natural heritage. For further information, please contact Katie Sandbom of my staff at katie_sandbom@fws.gov. Please refer to consultation number 02ENNM00-2024-I-0094974 in future correspondence concerning this project.

Sincerely,

CHARLES HAYES

Digitally signed by CHARLES
HAYES
Date: 2025.05.06 15:09:10 -06'00'

for Shawn Sartorius
Field Supervisor

cc (electronic):

Chief, U.S. Department of Army, Environmental Division of Public Works, Fort Bliss, Texas
Military Lands Conservation Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southwest Regional
Office, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Species Lead Biologists (Mexican spotted owl, northern aplomado falcon non-essential
experimental population, piping plover, rufa red not, southwestern willow flycatcher,
yellow-billed cuckoo, monarch butterfly), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Director, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Santa Fe, New Mexico

State Forester, New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, Forestry
Division, Santa Fe, New Mexico