

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Army Training Land Retention at Pōhakuloa Training Area, Hawai'i

April 08, 2022

Q-1. What is the Pōhakuloa Training Area (PTA) and what is it used for?

A-1: PTA is on the island of Hawai'i and encompasses approximately 132,000 acres of land for the specific purpose of preparing military personnel for the rigors of combat. U.S. Army Hawaii (USARHAW) conducts training at PTA to meet its federally mandated mission of readiness. Training at installations such as PTA helps the Army fulfill its role in national defense. Users of PTA – including the Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army Reserve, Hawaii Army National Guard, Hawaii Air National Guard, State and County of Hawai'i first responders and firefighters, Hawai'i Civil Defense Agency, Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency, State Office of Homeland Security, Hawai'i Police Department, and others – rely on the installation to meet agency-specific mission and readiness requirements. PTA is the largest contiguous live-fire range and maneuver training area in Hawai'i and is considered the Pacific region's premier military training center. It is the only U.S. training area in the Pacific region where USARHAW units can complete all mission-essential tasks, including austere-environment training, and the only U.S. training area in Hawai'i that can accommodate larger than company-sized units for live-fire and maneuver exercises.

Q-2. What is the history of military training at PTA and how would PTA support future military needs?

A-2: During World War II, the U.S. Marine Corps trained on the land now known as PTA. PTA was formally established in 1956 through a maneuver agreement between the Territory of Hawai'i and the Army. In 1964, the State of Hawai'i granted the Army a 65-year lease of approximately 23,000 acres of land adjacent to PTA for military purposes. Utilities, critical infrastructure, maneuver area, and key training facilities now sit on this tract of leased land. Some of these human-made features are not available elsewhere in Hawai'i. The parcel also provides access between the PTA cantonment area and approximately 84,000 acres of adjacent, federally owned land at PTA. The state-owned land has been key to PTA's ability to support numerous training requirements, including austere-environment training, for USARHAW, other military services, and state/local agencies. The Army's Proposed Action is to retain up to approximately 23,000 acres of state-owned land at PTA in support of continued military training.

Q-3. Why is the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being prepared?

A-3: The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires federal agencies to examine the potential effects of proposed federal actions on the human environment.

Under Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 343 and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) Chapter 11-200.1 – collectively referred to as the Hawai'i Environmental Policy Act (HEPA) – use of state lands is a trigger that requires environmental disclosure. An EIS-level analysis is being conducted because, in accordance with HAR Section 11-200.1-14(d)(2), the accepting authority (i.e., the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources) has determined through its judgment and experience that the applicant's Proposed Action may have a significant environmental effect.

NEPA regulations regarding environmental assessments and EISs are guided by the Council on Environmental Quality (Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), Parts 1500–1508). Army NEPA implementation regulations are in Title 32, C.F.R., Part 651.

The Army intends to prepare a single EIS, compliant with NEPA and HEPA regulations, to facilitate concurrent public review and processing at the federal and state level.

Q-4. What is the difference between NEPA and HEPA?

A-4: NEPA is a federal statute, whereas HEPA is a statute of the State of Hawaii.

Q-5. What agency is undertaking the EIS?

A-5: The project proponent undertaking the EIS is U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii (USAG-HI). The preparer of the EIS is the Department of the Army.

Q-6. What Proposed Action is considered in the Draft EIS?

A-6: The Proposed Action is to retain up to approximately 23,000 acres of state-owned land at PTA in support of continued military training. The Army would retain the state-owned land prior to the 2029 expiration of the lease to limit impacts on training. The alternatives considered are: 1) Full Retention (of approximately 23,000 acres); 2) Modified Retention (of approximately 19,700 acres); 3) Minimum Retention and Access (of approximately 10,100 acres and 11 miles of roads and training trails); and 4) No-Action Alternative (under which the lease lapses in 2029 and the Army loses access to the land).

Q-7. What is the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action?

A-7: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to enable USARHAW to continue to conduct military training on the state-owned land within PTA to meet ongoing training requirements. The Proposed Action is needed to preserve limited maneuver area, provide austere-environment training, enable access between major parcels of federally owned land, maintain substantial infrastructure investments, allow for future facility and infrastructure modernization, and maximize use of the existing impact area.

Q-8. What resources are analyzed in the Draft EIS?

A-8: The Draft EIS analyzes land use, biological resources, cultural resources, hazardous and toxic materials/wastes, air quality, greenhouse gases, noise, geology, topography, soils, water resources, socioeconomics, environmental justice, transportation, traffic, airspace, electromagnetic spectrum, utilities, human health, and safety. The Draft EIS quantitatively and qualitatively analyzes and evaluates the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the Proposed Action.

Q-9. What resources may be significantly impacted by implementation of the Proposed Action?

A-9: The Draft EIS indicates that under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, continued public access restrictions on land used for traditional and customary practices will result in significant but mitigable adverse impacts to cultural resources. These significant impacts can be mitigated through appropriate consultation with Native Hawaiians and/or other interested groups. Impacts can also be mitigated through provision of public access to promote and protect cultural beliefs, practices, and resources. Impacts to other resources are less than significant for all action alternatives. The No-Action Alternative would have significant adverse impacts on biological resources, socioeconomics, and utilities.

Q-10. What types of land retention is the Army considering?

A-10: Title 10 of the U.S. Code identifies the authorized land interests for Army retention of non-federal land, which include fee title, lease, and easement. After the Army issues the Record of Decision, the Army would negotiate with the state regarding the most appropriate land retention method(s) for the selected alternative.

Q-11. When is the public comment period for the Draft EIS?

A-11: The 60-day public comment period for the Draft EIS begins April 8, 2022, and ends June 7, 2022. Federal, state, and local agencies, Native Hawaiian organizations, and the general public are invited to participate in public meetings and to comment on the Draft EIS.

All comments must be postmarked or received by 11:59 p.m. Hawai'i Standard Time on June 7, 2022. After the public comment period ends, written comments regarding the Draft EIS will be reviewed and considered in preparing a Final EIS.

Q-12. Will there be any public meetings to discuss the Draft EIS?

A-12: Public meetings will be held in April 2022 to provide information on the Draft EIS and to enhance the opportunity for public input. Public meetings will be held in accordance with current COVID-19 restrictions. Information regarding how to participate in the public meetings and how to submit comments is available on the EIS website: <https://home.army.mil/hawaii/index.php/PTAEIS>.

Q-13. How can the public submit comments?

A-13: Written comments should be submitted through the EIS website (<https://home.army.mil/hawaii/index.php/PTAEIS>), emailed to atlr-pta-eis@g70.design, mailed to ATLR PTA EIS Comments, P.O. Box 3444, Honolulu, HI 96801-3444, or provided during public meetings. Comments must be postmarked or received by June 7, 2022.

Q-14. Will the public have additional opportunities to participate in the NEPA/HEPA process?

A-14: Public outreach will occur during the 60-day Draft EIS comment period. Written comments on the Draft EIS will be accepted for 60 days after publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register*. When the Final EIS is ready, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will publish a NOA in the *Federal Register*, which will initiate a 30-day waiting period. The Army will complete the NEPA process by issuing a Record of Decision no sooner than 30 days following publication of the EPA's NOA in the *Federal Register*.

As to the HEPA process, written comments will be accepted for 60 days after publication of the Draft EIS NOA in *The Environmental Notice* (i.e., the State Environmental Review Program's publication). A similar NOA will be published in *The Environmental Notice* regarding the Final EIS. The Hawai'i Board of Land and Natural Resources will conduct an acceptability determination regarding the Final EIS.

Q-15. When will the Final EIS be completed?

A-15: It is estimated the Final EIS will be available in May 2023.