

## **RECORD OF DECISION FOR TRAINING RANGE AND GARRISON SUPPORT FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION AT FORT STEWART, GEORGIA**

As the Executive Director of the U.S. Army Installation Management Command (IMCOM), I have reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) for the Training Range and Garrison Support Facilities Construction and Operation at Fort Stewart, Georgia. The Final EIS adequately addresses the potential environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts of the Army's proposed construction of 12 training ranges and two Garrison support facilities on Fort Stewart lands. The Final EIS, published in August 2010, is incorporated by reference in this Record of Decision (ROD). This ROD explains that the Army will proceed with its Preferred Alternative, Construct at Alternative B Sitings.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

Fort Stewart, located in southeastern Georgia, is the largest Army Installation east of the Mississippi River. It encompasses nearly 280,000 acres of land located in parts of Liberty, Long, Bryan, Evans, and Tattnall counties. The Army projects approximately 25,000 Soldiers will be assigned to Fort Stewart once all the directives set out in the Army Transformation, Army Modularity, Global Defense Posture Realignment (GDPR), Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BCRC), and Grow the Army (GTA) initiatives involving Fort Stewart are implemented.

### **2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The Army needs to build, update, and operate military training ranges and other facilities on Fort Stewart to ensure its Soldiers are proficiently trained across the full spectrum of military operations. All the projects analyzed in the Final EIS were common to both Alternatives B and C, and were divided into two categories: range construction and improvement projects and Garrison support projects.

As stated in Section 1.3 of the Final EIS, Fort Stewart needs additional facilities to support the Sky Warrior Unit's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle System, scheduled to arrive at Fort Stewart in 2011. This unit will not have adequate facilities when it arrives. During preparation of the EIS, Fort Stewart was scheduled to receive the 10<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion. As the Draft EIS neared completion, however, the move of the unit to Fort Stewart was cancelled. There is still a distinct possibility that either this unit or a similar-size unit will move to Fort Stewart in the near future as Army force management decisions typically fluctuate from year to year and may call for

additional units requiring similar facilities in the future. Therefore, the analysis of environmental impact of the construction of Engineering Battalion facilities was retained in the Final EIS. This is appropriate because of the ongoing transformation of the Army and the uncertainty of stationing decisions as the mission continues to evolve. It should also be noted that in June 2010, the Army withdrew funding for the construction of five of the 12 range projects evaluated in the Final EIS. The five ranges impacted by this decision are the Infantry Squad Battle Course, Qualification Training Range, 10/25 Meter Zero Range, Known Distance Range, and the Fire and Movement Range. Despite this decision, there is still the possibility that one or more of these ranges will be constructed at Fort Stewart in the future as funding becomes available. For this reason, these ranges remain part of the proposed action and part of this ROD.

Current ranges and training lands on Fort Stewart have reached or exceeded their capacity (or throughput) and accommodating training requirements of units on current ranges and training lands is challenging. The Army is already overusing many of its ranges on Fort Stewart by exceeding standard Army planning use factors for ranges. To accommodate this shortfall, the Army has been conducting more training on weekends and holidays. In addition, the overuse of ranges leaves less time for the Army to access the ranges to conduct required or necessary range maintenance and environmental stewardship activities. The construction of the Multipurpose Machine Gun Range, Modified Record Fire Ranges (one in FY11 and one in FY13), Qualification Training Range, Combat Pistol Qualification Range, Fire and Movement Range, and 10/25 meter Zero Range will address the Army's shortfalls in capacity at Fort Stewart.

Over the past several years, the Army has identified new training range needs and requirements to better prepare its forces for upcoming combat missions. Some modernization efforts include the ability to provide Soldiers with an immediate critique of training activities following training events. The construction of the Infantry Platoon Battle Course, Infantry Squad Battle Course, Digital Multipurpose Training Range, Known Distance Range, and Convoy Live Fire Range will provide Fort Stewart with an upgraded ability to train its Soldiers.

### 3.0 PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to construct and operate the following projects:

**Table 1. FY11-14 Project List**

<b>FY</b>	<b>Proposed Project</b>
<b>RANGE CONSTRUCTION &amp; OPERATIONS</b>	
2011	Multipurpose Machine Gun Range (MPMGR)
2011	Infantry Platoon Battle Course (IPBC)
2011	Modified Record Fire Range (MRFR)
2013	*Infantry Squad Battle Course (ISBC)
2013	*Qualification Training Range (QTR)
2013	Digital Multipurpose Training Range (DMPTR)
2013	*10 Meter / 25 Meter Zero Range (10/25 MR)
2013	Combat Pistol Qualification Course (CPQC)
2013	*Known Distance Range (KDR)
2013	*Fire and Movement Range (FMR)
2013	Modified Record Fire Range (MRFR)
2014	Convoy Live Fire Range (CLFR)
<b>GARRISON CONSTRUCTION &amp; OPERATIONS</b>	
2011	Engineer Battalion Facilities (EN BN)
2011	Sky Warrior Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Systems Facilities (UAVS)

*Note: Projects postponed due to funding denoted by an asterisk (\*).*

#### **4.0 PROPOSED ACTION ALTERNATIVES**

The projects considered in the Final EIS were identified from Fort Stewart's future year's development plan and will occur in FYs 11-14. The proposed training range and Garrison support facilities and their proposed action alternatives are discussed in Section 2.1 of the Final EIS. The No Action Alternative (Alternative A) and two project siting alternatives were carried forward in the Final EIS. Projects have a preferred (Alternative B) and alternate siting (Alternative C). Current mission impacts are discussed primarily as part of the No Action Alternative, as Fort Stewart is an active military Installation and hosts various training activities, land rehabilitation efforts, and range repairs and maintenance on a daily basis.

##### **4.1 Alternative A: No Action**

Under the No Action Alternative, the Army would continue its current mission and support activities on Fort Stewart using existing and previously programmed ranges and facilities. While this alternative would not meet the Army's purpose and need to construct new ranges and Garrison support facilities, it would result in the fewest impacts to the environment, and is therefore the environmentally preferred alternative. The No-Action Alternative consists of the following:

- Army Transformation, Army Modularity, BCRC, GDPR, and GTA actions are occurring, under which Fort Stewart is receiving relocated units;
- Training on existing ranges and established maneuver areas, plus construction and use of new ranges for which National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis is complete;
- Garrison construction for which NEPA analysis is complete;
- Minor Fort Stewart road improvements (intersection improvements, signal replacement, new signage, etc.) for which NEPA analysis is complete or in process;
- Continuing Fort Stewart's management plans (such as the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, etc.); and
- Maintenance and repair of Fort Stewart's existing infrastructure would continue, as currently done, and the Army will continue to use the current land and airspace training resources. Construction proposed under the action alternatives (B and C) would not occur.
- The Army would continue to overuse many of the existing ranges and training lands on Fort Stewart.

#### **4.2 Alternative B Sitings (Preferred) (Figure 1)**

Under Alternative B, the Army would construct, operate, and maintain the projects identified in Table 1 at the sites shown on Figure 1. Alternative B is preferred by the Army because these sitings better support operational needs. When developing Alternative B sitings, the Army utilized the site screening criteria outlined in Section 2.3 of the Final EIS. During initial planning, considerable efforts were made to avoid siting proposed ranges or facilities in locations with particular environmental resources, such as wetlands, protected species habitat, and cultural resource sites. Alternative B avoids direct impacts to cultural resources, has lesser natural resource impacts, and limits the expansion of noise zones into existing residential areas and off-Post communities; therefore, it is also the Army's preferred alternative.

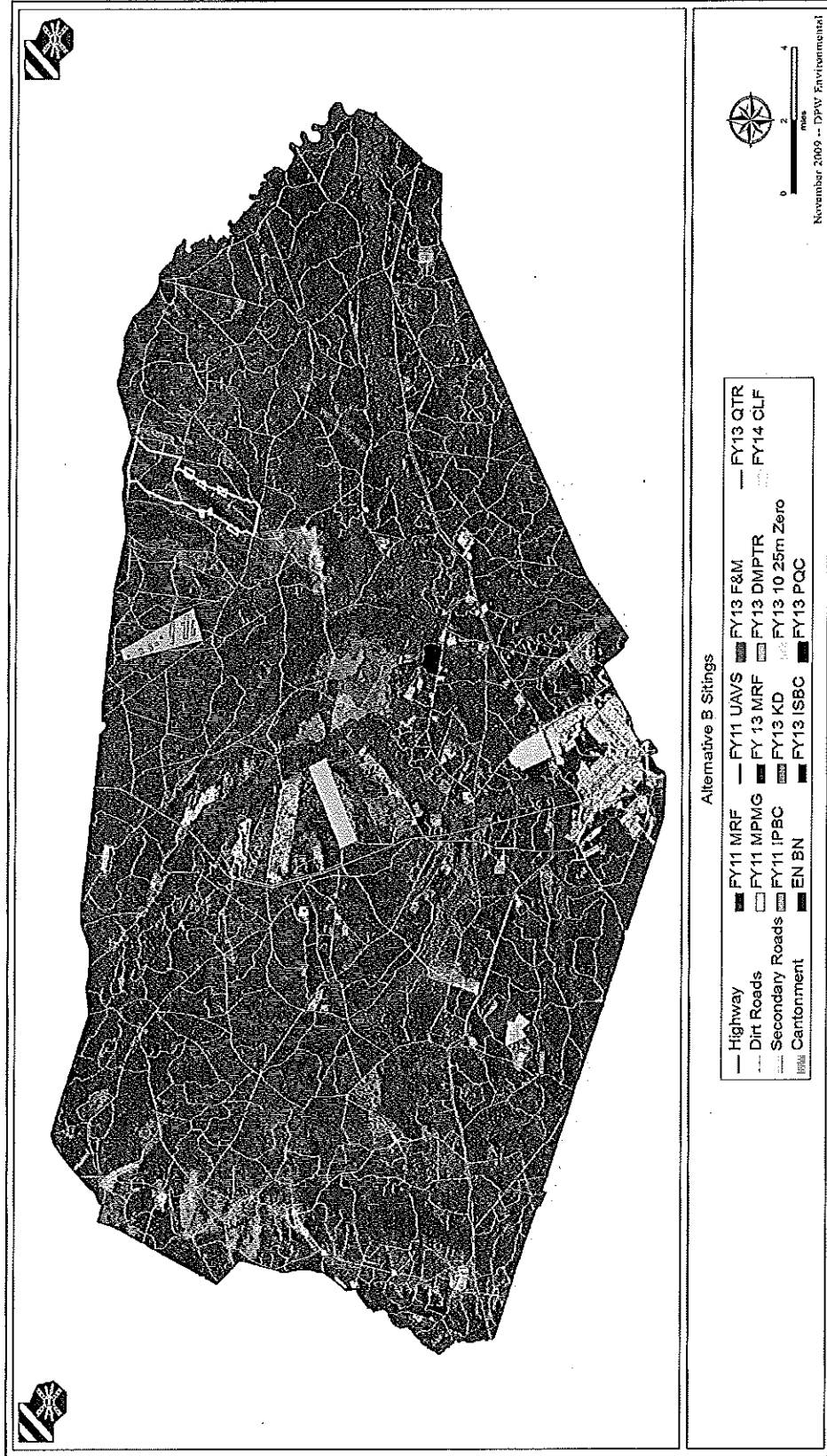


Figure 1: Construct and Operate at Alternative B Sitings (Preferred).

**4.3 Alternative C Sitings (Figure 2)**

Alternative C differs only in the siting of the projects, as shown on Figure 2. Overall, Alternative C would result in greater adverse environmental impacts and is not preferred operationally because the site screening criteria are better met with Alternative B, as the analysis shows in Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the Final EIS. These sites are feasible, however, so they are fully analyzed in the EIS.

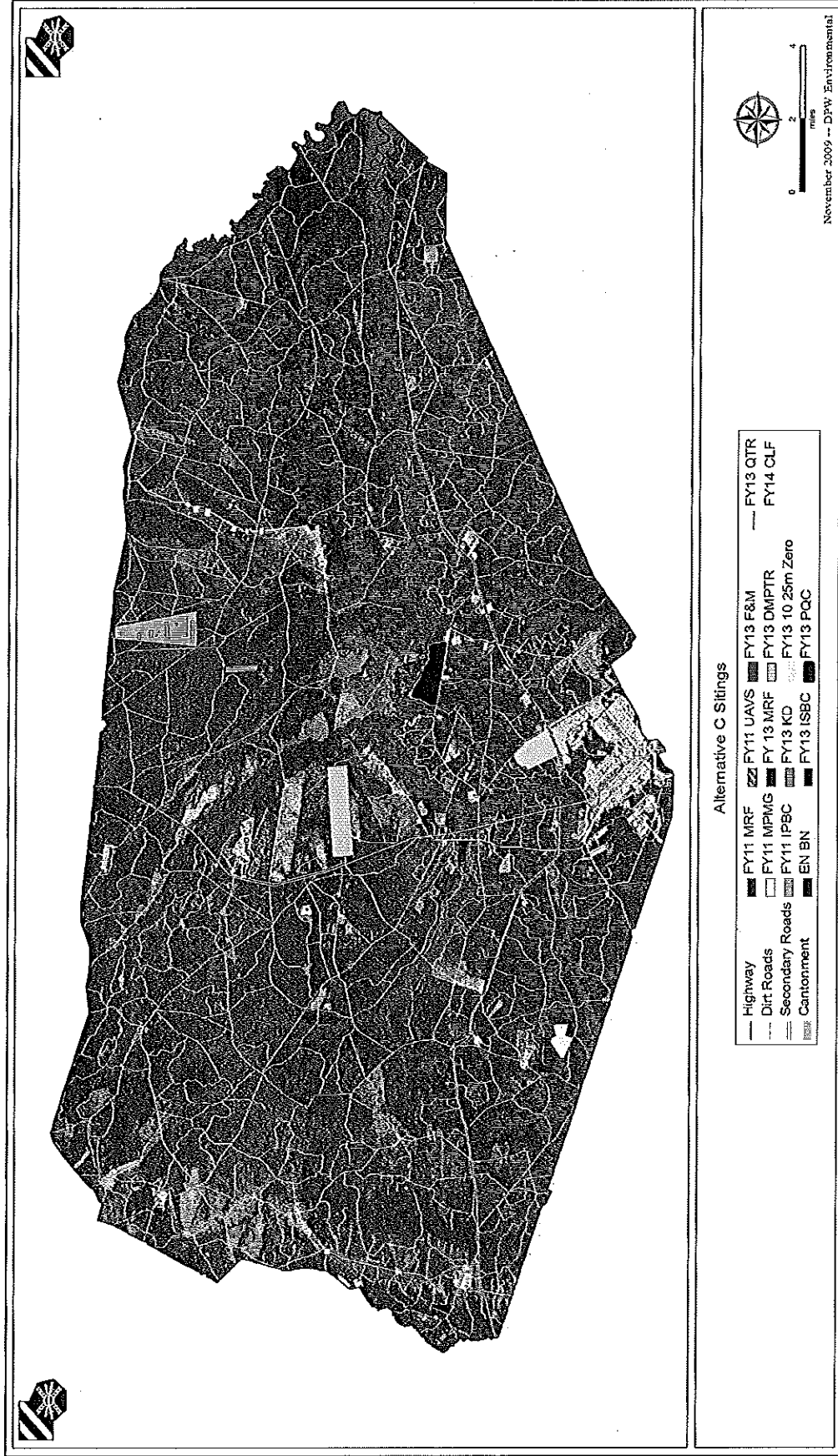


Figure 2: Construct and Operate at Alternative C Sitings.



#### **4.4 Alternatives Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Analysis**

Fort Stewart's Environmental Division, Master Planning Division, and DPTMS identified other alternative sitings for these projects; however, they did not meet the Screening Criteria and were therefore eliminated from detailed analysis. For example, construction of some of the ranges on these alternative sitings would have required shutting down adjacent ranges while in use, thereby interfering with the Installation's training Mission. Others alternative sitings would have adversely affected substantially more wetlands, protected species, or other environmental resources than the B and C sitings, and were non-preferred for those reasons.

These eliminated sitings are discussed in detail in Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the Final EIS, along with a brief explanation of their failure to meet the screening criteria outlined in Section 2.3 of the Final EIS.

#### **5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

The Final EIS includes information and analysis which explains how a determination of effect, and its significance, was reached for all of Fort Stewart's environmental and socioeconomic resources, to include air quality, water quality, protected species, wetlands, and others. In many cases, these determinations are based on more detailed analyses, ones too large and/or technical to include in the main body of the Final EIS. These supporting documents are included as appendices to the Final EIS and referenced accordingly.

**Soils.** Alternative A will have minor adverse effects to soils. The Installation will continue its infantry and mechanized training, to include impacts to soils from removal of or damage to vegetation, digging activities, ground disturbance from vehicles, and ammunition or explosives used in training events, all routinely mitigated by Integrated Training Area Management activities. Overall, Alternatives B or C would result in moderate adverse effect to soils, with effects reduced by implementation of appropriate BMPs, erosion control measures, and adherence to all permits, plans, and applicable regulations and guidelines.

**Air Quality.** Alternatives A, B, or C will have minor adverse effects to air quality. Air emissions from current training, construction, and traffic on and off Post and future proposed actions would not result in the Installation falling out of attainment under the Clean Air Act, violating its Title V Permit, general conformity rule, prevention of significant deterioration permitting, or any deterioration of air quality.

***Water Quality and Resources (Streams, Stormwater, Floodplains).*** Overall, Alternative A will have minor adverse effects to stormwater, surface water, and floodplains. No change from existing conditions would occur and all construction, operation, and maintenance projects already under way, and other applicable permits and are operating in adherence to their guidance. Alternative B will affect a total of 484.32 acres of floodplains. Construction of new projects must comply with all Federal, state, or local laws and regulations to minimize impacts to these water resources. There is no practicable alternative to locating these projects within floodplains. This is because of the low elevations on most of Fort Stewart, resulting in a lack of non-floodplain locations available for construction. Where unavoidable, construction contractors must utilize the state-specific additional BMPs for constructing within a floodplain, such as higher elevations for electrical pedestals/transformers, water hydrants, and sanitary lift stations, so these structures will not become inundated with floodwaters. Alternative C will have a greater affect on floodplains compared to Alternative B, impacting a total of 969.45 acres of floodplains.

***Water Quality & Resources (Wetlands).*** Alternative A will have a negligible-to-minor adverse effect to wetlands on Fort Stewart. Wetlands impacts will continue to undergo the required and appropriate mitigation and permitting. Additionally, training, personnel operations, and routine maintenance and monitoring activities on Fort Stewart would continue occur, resulting in minimal impacts to wetlands. These are minimized by BMPs and regular maintenance of roads, ranges, training lands, and developed areas, although traffic through wetlands is avoided and activities in wetland restoration areas monitored. Alternative B will have minor adverse effects to wetlands on Post, affecting a total of 184.3 acres of the Installation's approximate 91,000 acres of wetlands. There is no practicable alternative to locating these projects within wetlands, within the meaning of Executive Order 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*, which directs Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands wherever there is a practicable alternative. This is because approximately one-third of the Installation lands consist of wetlands. The Alternative C locations for the ranges will affect 409.56 acres of wetlands, a substantially greater amount than under Alternative B (which has 184.31 acres affected). Garrison construction projects will also impact more wetlands, 9.41 acres, compared to the 2.56 acres affected under Alternative B.

***Biological Resources (Protected Species).*** Alternative A will result in negligible adverse effects to protected species. Under this alternative, current training activities will continue across Fort Stewart. Units are briefed about what is / is not allowed within certain areas (such as within the

protective buffer surrounding individual red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) cavity trees. Alternative B project construction will result in no direct "take" or mortality of RCW. Sitings for ranges are anticipated to impact 1,669.6 acres of RCW Habitat Management Units (HMU), 44 RCW trees, 30 RCW partitions, 160.1 (primary) and 505.5 (secondary) acres of frosted flatwood salamander (FFS) pond buffers, 12.8 (potential) acres of potential FFS breeding ponds, 308.8 acres of gopher tortoise habitat, and 452.9 acres of eastern indigo snake HMU. Overall, this alternative will have moderate adverse effects to protected species. Formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been completed; the results are discussed in Section 7.0 of this ROD. Alternative C sitings for ranges will impact 1,648.2 acres of RCW HMU, 7 RCW trees, 18 RCW partitions, 98.6 (primary) and 328.2 (secondary) acres of FFS pond buffers, 12.6 acres of potential FFS breeding ponds, 665.1 acres of gopher tortoise habitat, and 844 acres of eastern indigo snake HMU.

***Biological Resources (Timber Resource Management).*** Alternative A would result in negligible adverse effects impacts to timber resource management. Range capabilities and timber management activities on Fort Stewart are ongoing and will continue under this alternative as planned in Fort Stewart's Timber Harvest Priority List. Most prescribed harvest activities are thinnings carried out to support troop training, endangered species management, and forest health. Timber harvests are already underway (and several pending) on the Garrison area and in the surrounding training lands for construction projects for which NEPA is complete. Alternative B will have minor adverse effects to timber resource management as a result of construction activities and/or changes in land use designations (resulting from construction). Alternative C will have minor adverse effects to timber resource management. Impacts would be similar in nature and acreage to those discussed under Alternative B.

***Biological Resources (Wildland Fire Management).*** Alternative A will result in negligible adverse effects to wildland fire management. Alternatives B and C will have minor adverse effects to wildland fire management on Post. Modification to the prescribed burn program on Fort Stewart will result from construction of the proposed ranges under Alternative B and C. Fort Stewart's Forestry Branch will be required to conduct additional prescribed burn the additional live-fire range footprints to help reduce occurrences of wildfires ignited in the range footprints during times of intense mission related training. This will increase the acres of range safety burning required during the dormant season to help reduce range wildfires. The change and increase of training activities associated with the change in land uses, particularly in the B-5 training area, would increase the potential for wildfires and limit the use of prescribed burning

because of the difficulties associated with smoke management and reduced access because of training. This would affect the reduction of woodland fuels and increase the incidence of wildfires and the associated smoke management concerns.

**Cultural Resources.** Alternative A has the potential for negligible adverse effects to cultural resources. Alternative B may result in minor adverse effects to eligible historic properties. All proposed project sitings have been inventoried for cultural resources and impacts have been reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and required consultations have been completed. There is a 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century homestead that is considered potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), but is not anticipated to be affected by the proposed action. There is a low potential for impact to four cemeteries from live fire, once the ranges are operational. Alternative C will result in minor adverse effects to cultural resources. An estimated 287 acres of survey and NRHP-site evaluation are pending under Alternative C and one site has been determined eligible for the NRHP. There is a low potential for impact to four cemeteries from live fire, once the ranges are operational under Alternative C.

**Noise.** Alternative A has the potential for negligible adverse effects. The acoustic environment of Fort Stewart would continue to be impacted by small- and large-caliber weaponry and aircraft overflight. Other activities, such as ground maneuver training and exercises resulting in noise created by personnel and vehicles, would continue to contribute noise on Fort Stewart, to the same levels and intensity as historically experienced. Alternatives B and C range construction, with the exception of the DMPTR, are small-caliber and will result in moderate adverse effects. Noise from construction, operation, and maintenance of the Sky Warrior UAVS and EN BN facilities would not extend beyond the boundaries of Fort Stewart.

**Land Use.** Overall, negligible adverse effects to land use are predicted as a result of Alternative A. Land use patterns within and outside Fort Stewart are unaffected and construction projects already underway will continue as planned and implement all land use-oriented requirements, such as adherence to Fort Stewart's Installation Design Guide, JLUS, and ACUB. These projects have already completed NEPA review and presented no land use concerns, as they are compatible with adjacent land uses and do not conflict with mission or environmental issues. Routine operations and maintenance activities also continue unaffected and result in no land use conflicts. Alternatives B and C will have minor adverse effects to land use on Fort Stewart. Continuing to work with local jurisdictions to implement land use controls help minimize inconsistencies and/or conflicts with adjacent land uses. Fort Stewart's leaders address

community concerns through these (and other) plans, with the objective of encouraging open, two-way dialogue regarding actions in the civilian and Fort Stewart communities, ensuring the two work and plan together.

***Infrastructure (Utilities).*** Under Alternative A, Fort Stewart's ranges and Garrison area will continue to use and generate the same types and amounts of utilities as are described under the affected environment and for which Fort Stewart is already managing. Minor increases in utilities usage may occur, once facilities currently under construction, operation, and maintenance go on line, but this is a small increase only and will not tax the utility systems to beyond what they can currently accommodate. Maintenance of existing utility systems will continue, as will Installation of new utilities in current construction, operation, and maintenance projects, for which NEPA (and infrastructure) analysis is complete. Overall, implementation of Alternative B or C would result in a minor adverse effect to utility systems/services.

***Infrastructure (Transportation).*** Negligible effects to transportation will occur under Alternatives A, B, or C.

***Safety.*** Alternative A would result in negligible effects to safety on Post. Negligible effects are also predicted as a result of Alternatives B or C, as safety requirements would conform with the Army's and installation's existing policies and procedures described in AR 385-63 (Range Safety) which outlines extensive requirements for maintaining safe operation of Army ranges and training infrastructure.

***Hazardous & Toxic Materials and/or Wastes.*** Negligible effects are predicted as a result of either Alternative A, B, or C. There will be no change in Fort Stewart's management of hazardous materials, toxic substances, hazardous waste, or contaminated sites. Fort Stewart will continue to manage existing sources of hazardous waste in accordance with the HWMP.

***Socioeconomics.*** Alternative A will result in negligible effects to existing socioeconomic resources. Fort Stewart will still receive approximately 1,000 Soldiers and their dependants over the next few years, in response to Army growth initiatives. Alternatives B or C would result in beneficial effects to socioeconomics. Construction of the new ranges and Garrison facilities may temporarily increase job opportunities for individuals living and/or working near Fort Stewart, resulting in potential temporary minor positive input into the local economy. Construction activities would add expenditures during the next few years.

## 6.0 FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE

Pursuant to Executive Orders 11988 (*Floodplain Management*) and 11990 (*Protection of Wetlands*), in order for the Army to construct in a floodplain or wetlands, it must find that there are no practicable alternatives to doing so and that all practicable measures have been taken to minimize harm to the floodplain and wetlands. The practicability of a given alternative or measure is evaluated by considering such pertinent factors as operational impact and environmental impact in light of the overall project purpose. This finding incorporates the Final EIS and its findings with respect to alternatives for the construction of FY11-14 training ranges and Garrison support facilities at Alternative B locations.

The Final EIS discusses reasonable alternatives for the proposed action, and specifically analyzes their impacts to wetlands and floodplains. Both action alternatives would have impacts: Alternative B would affect a total of 484.32 acres of floodplains, and 184.3 acres of wetlands; Alternative C would affect a total of 969.45 acres of floodplains, and 409.56 acres of wetlands. Alternative A, No Action, would not affect either wetlands or floodplains, but does not meet the purpose and need of the proposed action.

Fort Stewart is comprised of approximately 120,000 acres of floodplains and approximately 93,000 acres of wetlands. Because floodplains are linked to adjacent streams and rivers, the Installation will require engineers and contractors to design and construct so that runoff from rain events will not adversely impact (a) existing streams, (b) upstream systems, and (c) downstream systems within each of the Alternative B locations. This will help to maintain stormwater flow at the same levels during pre- and post-construction periods, which will contribute to the preservation of water storage and conveyance, and the filtering of pollutants from runoff.

The Installation will also require full compliance with the Georgia Erosion Sedimentation Control Act, and will mandate full utilization of Timber Harvest Best Management Practices (BMPs), National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements, site-specific Erosion and Sedimentation Pollution Control Plans (ESPCPs), and pre- and post-construction BMPs to reduce the potential adverse impacts to water bodies. The Installation also has a resident Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) advisor who will provide technical expertise during preparation of ESPCPs prior to Fort Stewart approving the final designs of the training ranges and Garrison support facilities. Periodic monitoring of on-going construction will also occur to ensure adherence to associated ESPCPs.

Most of the impacts to wetlands will not be caused by the addition of fill material to the wetland. Rather, most of the impacts to wetlands will be the result of vegetative maintenance required to maintain line-of-sight from weapon to target and grubbing / grading for target placement. The only impermeable surfaces associated with the training ranges will consist of the range operations area and will cover approximately 2% of each range footprint. The two Garrison support facilities will result in a higher percentage of impermeable surfaces within their footprints; however, their Alternative B locations were sited so that it will be easier to avoid and minimize floodplain and wetlands impacts during the design process. No wetlands impacts are predicted from the FY11 MRFR, ISBC, CPQC, KDR, and FMR. As currently sited, the FY13 MRFR, 10/25 MR, and CLFR would impact 2.75 acres of wetlands; however, it is anticipated that impacts will be eliminated during design.

Fort Stewart is applying for Clean Water Act Section 404 permits for wetland impacts associated with the two Garrison support facilities (EN BN and UAVS), and for the MPMGR, IPBC, DMPTR, and QTR. These projects make up 181.56 wetland impact acres associated with Alternative B. Following 33 CFR 332, *Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources*, the Installation will use purchased mitigation credits from a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) approved mitigation bank to compensate for “in-kind” aquatic resource losses from the construction of the MPMGR, IPBC, DMPTR, and QTR. Fort Stewart will use its on-post USACE approved mitigation bank to offset impacts from the two Garrison support facilities.

The Draft EIS was available for public review from April 2 to May 17, 2010. A request for additional information was received from the Environmental Protection Agency, Region IV. Fort Stewart’s response to EPA’s request is available for review in Appendix A of the Final EIS.

Taking into consideration the above information and the Final EIS, I find there is no practicable alternative to conducting the proposed action within the wetlands and floodplains. I further find that all practicable measures have been taken to minimize harm to wetlands and floodplains, and those measures are documented in the Final EIS and this Finding of No Practicable Alternative / Record of Decision. Because there is no practicable alternative to impacting wetlands, federal regulations require compensatory mitigation. Mitigation for wetland losses are proposed to occur at suitable locations on and off Fort Stewart. This finding fulfills the requirements of Executive Order 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*; and Executive Order 11988, *Floodplains Management*.

## 7.0 DECISION

I have considered the analysis of expected impacts to the natural and human environments presented in the Final EIS, supporting studies, and comments provided during formal public comment and review periods. I have also considered the comments submitted on 10 September 2010, by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pertaining to the Final EIS. The comments were centered on issues of water quality and aquatic resource (wetlands) impacts. I took these issues into account in making this decision. Some of the issues raised by the EPA have been resolved; others will be resolved during the permitting process for specific projects.

Regarding Clean Water Act permitting, many issues will be resolved when project designs are completed and permits are finalized. The issue on the use of the Savannah District procedures for determining compensatory mitigation requirements has now been resolved in favor of using those procedures. Another issue involves the watershed approach for mitigation. As mitigation is calculated for each project, Fort Stewart will determine whether credits in its watershed are available. Fort Stewart will also propose using credits it has already purchased in the Wilkinson-Oconee watershed, when appropriate. At the same time, Fort Stewart will have to obtain water quality certification from the state. Fort Stewart will work with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to resolve all issues, to include details on monitoring. Again, in order for the project to proceed, all certification and permitting issues will have to be resolved. This ROD specifically includes monitoring during and after construction to insure compliance with CWA Section 404 Permits.

The EPA letter incorporated comments made by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in its 30 June 2010 letter. Most of the issues raised in this letter have been resolved. For instance, the Final EIS reflects the most current data on impaired waters. The apparent discrepancy on nearest waters identified in Section 404 permits is because in many cases, those water bodies are not impaired. As discussed above, the overall certification issue and associated monitoring requirements will be worked out before individual projects can proceed. In some cases, more complete designs will be required before resolution can occur.



The state was especially concerned about Drainage Canal Tributary to Taylors Creek. This water body is downstream from the wastewater treatment plant and is entirely within the cantonment area of Fort Stewart. It will not be affected by any new or existing range operations. It is not listed as a Clean Water Act 303(d) impaired water. Despite this, I recognize that this remains an issue that will have to be resolved with the state in the future. Because it is not specifically tied to the impacts of projects in the EIS, however, resolution can await further discussions.

Given this, I have determined that there are no significant new circumstances or information raised during the waiting period after the Final EIS relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed actions or their impacts. Supplementation of the EIS is not required.

Based on this review, I have determined that the implementation of the training range and garrison support facility construction projects at the Alternative B sitings reflects the proper balance of initiatives for the protection of the environment, mission needs, and Soldier and Family quality of life considerations. Alternative B also allows the Army to better accomplish its sustainability goals on Fort Stewart because the sites are optimal for design, are functional, and are land-use compatible. Alternative B has fewer overall environmentally adverse impacts to environmental and socioeconomic resources, when compared to Alternative C. This alternative best allows Fort Stewart to ensure its Soldiers are proficiently trained across the full spectrum of military operations.

Implementation of the environmental mitigations discussed in Section 8.0 of this document will offset the potential adverse effects of this proposed action and help sustain the environment, allowing the Army to meet the purpose and need, while likewise sustaining the environment in which we serve. This decision will enable Fort Stewart to ensure its Soldiers are proficiently trained across the full spectrum of military operations.

## **8.0 MITIGATION AND MONITORING COMMITMENTS**

The Army is committed to sustaining and preserving the environment within its training lands and Garrison and is committed to being a good steward to its adjacent neighbors. During the course of this EIS, the Army has initiated and completed consultation with the USFWS, the Georgia SHPO, the federally recognized American Indian Tribes, and the U.S. Army Corps of

Engineers-Savannah District, who also served as a Cooperating Agency in this EIS. During the execution of the EIS process the Army held a series of public meetings publishing several notices and articles in local media sources to ensure effective communication and public outreach.

As part of the decision to implement the Proposed Action, the Army has adopted the environmental mitigation measures presented in Table 2. These measures are all of the practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the Proposed Action. These mitigation measures, which were identified in Section 6.3 of the Final EIS, will reduce the severity and extent of potential impacts of this decision. These measures were also utilized to prepare a Mitigation, Monitoring, and Enforcement Plan (MMEP), which will be adopted for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance phases of each range and Garrison facility construction project analyzed in the EIS. For those projects which have been cancelled or delayed, the MMEP will be enforced if they are carried forward in the future. Monitoring of mitigation efforts is also vital and includes methods to measure both enforcement and effectiveness of the mitigation proposed. This will ensure mitigation is conducted as described in this EIS and its MMEP.

**Table 2. Army Mitigation and Monitoring Commitments**

<b>Resource Area</b>	<b>Impact/Situation</b>	<b>Mitigation and Monitoring Commitment</b>
<b>Water Resources</b>	Wetland Mitigation	Per Section 404 permitting, compensatory mitigation credits will be purchased for both temporary and permanent impacts to all wetland habitats that will be affected by construction activities.
<b>Water Resources</b>	Wetland Monitoring	Conduct monitoring during and after construction to remain compliant with CWA Section 404 Permits.
<b>Biological Resources</b>	Red Cockaded Woodpecker	Create eight additional RCW recruitment clusters. Existing unoccupied recruitment clusters within 0.5 mile of the project area can count towards this total. To prevent capture by neighboring groups, place recruitment clusters

		no closer than 0.25 miles of an existing cluster. To achieve beneficial spatial arrangement and density requirements, strive to locate recruitment clusters within two miles and preferably no farther than one mile from existing or newly created recruitment clusters.
<b>Biological Resources</b>	Red Cockaded Woodpecker	Conduct a simulation study of the Fort Stewart RCW population to estimate stability such that the spatial distribution of territories and foraging partitions can be accounted for and perhaps maximized in future management plans and military construction projects.
<b>Biological Resources</b>	Red Cockaded Woodpecker / Forest Management	Conduct prescribed burns at least once every three years, preferably during the growing season; conduct annual burning for fire suppression in range areas; conduct timber thinning operations and conduct monitoring activities in RCW habitat surrounding the project area to determine the effectiveness of habitat management actions. Examples of monitoring activities to be conducted include inspecting cavities to determine activity status, banding adult and nestling RCWs, and determining group composition in recruitment clusters.
<b>Biological Resources</b>	Red Cockaded Woodpecker	Color band all RCWs occupying clusters identified in RPM #3 prior to impact. Monitor color banded RCWs post translocation. Record movements (e.g., as determined by confirmed presence in other RCW clusters) presence, and breeding status of color banded individuals during annual RCW monitoring. For a period of five years after range construction, provide annual reports to the USFWS's Coastal Georgia field office.

<b>Biological Resources</b>	Red Cockaded Woodpecker	Visit de-protected cavity trees once a year for five years and record any damage or destruction of trees in annual reports to the USFWS's Coastal Georgia field office.
<b>Biological Resources</b>	Forest Management	Educate personnel and troops on the dangers of wildland fire, potential ignition sources, the prevention measures to which they must adhere, and benefits of prescribed burning. Close affected highway corridors when necessary to facilitate less restrictive prescribed burning. Incorporate the "let burn" policy when feasible. Restrict the use of pyrotechnics, campfires, and live fire mission activities during high fire danger.
<b>Biological Resources</b>	Forest Management and Red Cockaded Woodpecker	Incorporate berms downrange of the firing lines on ranges to lessen impacts of wildfires to woodland resources and to further protect RCW habitat.
<b>Cultural Resources</b>	Cultural Site Management	Monitor impacts to cemeteries during construction of ranges and operation within SDZs. During the design phase of the proposed ranges, if it is determined there will likely be an impact to the cemeteries from live fire, protective berms or redesign will be considered. The Installation will consult with the appropriate stakeholders in accordance with the NHPA and NEPA to explore methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to historic properties in accordance with 36 CFR 800.
<b>Cultural Resources</b>	Cultural Site Management	Conduct additional surveys on site 9BN628, a moderate sized 19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century homestead along the proposed route for the Convoy Live Fire Range. This site is considered potentially eligible for NRHP but is not anticipated to be affected by the proposed action. Installation personnel will install additional site protection measures (e.g. signage, seibert stakes, etc...) and routinely monitor the site for impacts.
<b>Hazardous and Toxic Substances</b>	Monitoring	Range outflow will be monitored for potential contaminants within the soil and groundwater, such as RDX, perchlorates, lead, tungsten, etc., to ensure these contaminants will remain within

		the footprint and not migrate off site.
Land Use	Monitoring	Consult with the public and Georgia Wildlife Resources Division to maximize public hunting opportunities.
Noise	Monitoring	The Operational Noise Management Plan (ONMP) will be updated. This will assist the Installation to better inform the public if/when noise inquiries are made.

My decision for implementation of Alternative B includes implementation of environmental mitigations discussed in Section 8.0 of this document.



Mr. John B. Nerger  
Installation Management Command  
Executive Director



Date