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2.1 Introduction

Fort Irwin proposes to increase the current maneuverable training land and airspace to meet future training objectives for force-on-force training of heavy brigade and battalion-sized task forces.

This section provides a detailed discussion of the proposed alternatives under consideration for expanding the maneuver areas for training at Fort Irwin. The density of activity that occurs during maneuver training is limited by many factors, including terrain, off-limits areas, and other restrictions. In general, the maneuverable training area may be subdivided into high use, medium use, low use, and no use (off-limits and unusable) areas. The following definitions are provided for each area:

- ❖ **High Use:** Unlimited cross-country movement by all vehicle types.
- ❖ **Medium Use:** Movement by all vehicle types restricted to roads, staging or assembly areas. May be located throughout the area.
- ❖ **Low Use:** All vehicle types on roads, no staging areas, and dismounted (i.e. foot soldiers) traffic off roads.
- ❖ **No Use:** Off-limits (no entry to vehicles involved in the rotation except as authorized).

Figure 2.1-1 shows the configuration of these designated use areas throughout existing Fort Irwin and generalizes how use may continue into the study area, which includes the congressionally withdrawn lands. For a detailed description of operational and battle scenario information, refer to Appendix F (*NTC and Fort Irwin Operational Information*). For a detailed description of the NTC and surrounding airspace, refer to Appendix G (*Airspace Assessment Report*).

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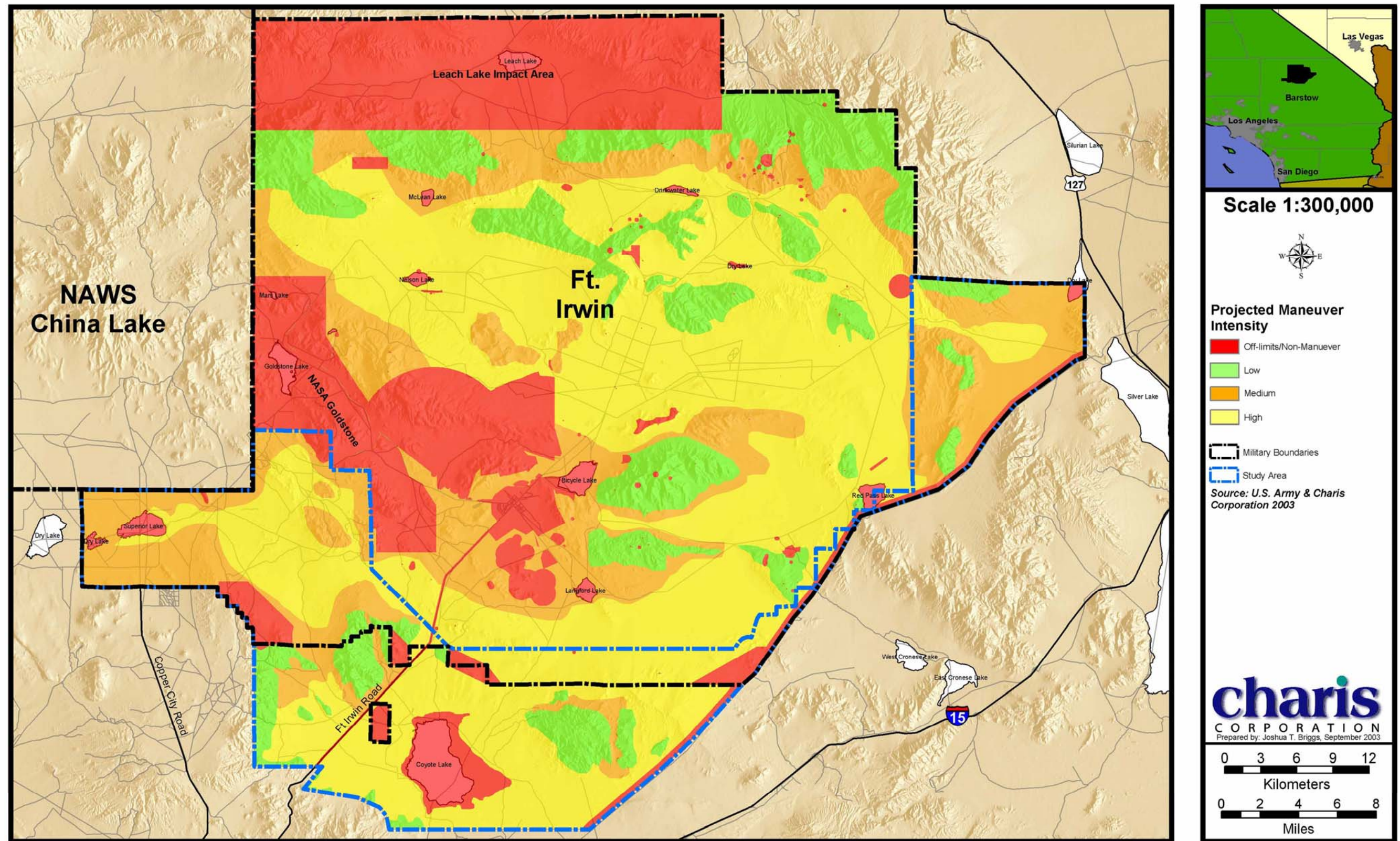


Figure 2.1-1: Projected Maneuver Intensity

Section 2.2 provides a complete description of the alternatives being evaluated under this proposal. Section 2.3 discusses alternatives carried forward for detailed analysis. Section 2.4 discusses the alternatives that were considered but later eliminated from further analysis.

The proposed use of additional lands for military training has the potential to create a wide range of environmental issues. The following list indicates specific areas that were analyzed to determine potential impacts. The anticipated environmental issues are:

- Air Quality
- Airspace
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources and Paleontology
- Environmental Justice
- Geology
- Hazardous Materials and Solid Waste
- Health and Safety
- Land Use
- Mining
- Noise
- Recreation
- Socio-Economics
- Soils
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Water Resources
- Wilderness Characteristics

2.2 Process for Identifying Alternatives

2.2.1 Evolution of Alternatives

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Army's Land Acquisition Project for the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, and Proposed Amendment to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan was distributed for public comment in 1997. The proposed alternative was for expansion to the east of Fort Irwin. This alternative was based on previous Biological Opinions and discussions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It did not provide Fort Irwin with the land it critically needed for an expanded maneuverable training area but did provide land that could be used for a new staging area and, based on discussions with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, it appeared to represent the only potential alternative for any expansion. Prior to publishing the Environmental Impact Statement in a final version and a record of decision, DA, in coordination with DOI, developed some additional alternatives that offered additional land that could expand Fort Irwin's maneuverable training area. This new approach was developed and reviewed between 1997 and 2000. Figure 2.2-1 shows the comparative evolution of proposed alternatives during this period.