

crossings, however, will temporarily delay traffic on Fort Irwin Road but the effect is not considered significant.

4.13.5 Alternative V: East Gate/UTM 90

4.13.5.1 Impacts

National and State Highway Systems

Impacts to national and state highways would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I.

Secondary Roads

Impacts to secondary roads would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I.

Railroad System

Impacts to the railroad system would be the same as those discussed for Alternative III.

4.13.5.2 Mitigation

Mitigation for this alternative will be the same as outlined in Alternative I.

4.13.6 Alternative VI: No Action

In Alternative VI, current use of existing regional highways, secondary roads, and railroad system by the Army would continue. No impacts are expected from this alternative.

4.13.7 Cumulative Impacts

Significant cumulative impacts on the transportation system within the ROI are not expected from the proposed project, as no increase or decrease in current military or civilian vehicle use is planned or expected. Other reasonably foreseeable projects taken into consideration for potential cumulative impacts on transportation include the proposed replacement of the Pre-Positioned Fleet at Fort Irwin and proposed construction of a Rail Spur to Fort Irwin. These individual projects may or may not have impacts on local transportation. Cumulatively, planned projects for Fort Irwin including the rail spur may actually reduce impacts to transportation by reducing the number of vehicles hauling military equipment on Fort Irwin Road and I-15. Additionally, as more living units are built on Fort Irwin there will be a decrease in commuter traffic for soldiers currently having to live off-post due to housing shortages.

4.14 Socioeconomics

This section analyzes the potential impacts to existing social features and economic resources that may result from each alternative.

Impacts to Socioeconomics could be considered significant if the following occurred:

- ❖ long-term increase or decrease in population, employment; and/or
- ❖ long-term increase or decrease in local businesses occurs as a result of implementing the proposed action.

- ❖ long-term decrease or increase in private or commercial development potential.

The Army intends to use the new maneuver lands for training activities only. They would not be used for additional permanent facilities such as office space or military housing. The permanent and temporary population, and/or the military and civilian employment at Fort Irwin would not increase or decrease as a result of the proposed action.

4.14.1 Alternative I: East/West

4.14.1.1 Impacts

There is private property within the boundary of this alternative. The private property within this alternative would be purchased for just compensation. One family currently resides in the area designated for this alternative. The Silver Lake Mine is the single operating business in this alternative. This alternative would restrict access to the mine. The Silver Lake Mine would be purchased for just compensation and closed, or if retained, access to the mine would be permitted on a restricted and regulated basis due to the amount of limited resin.

The Army plans to construct improvements in the alternative before training would begin. Improvements would be contracted to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), which would subcontract the work to private contractors. Contracted construction would likely result in temporary short-term employment and revenue for surrounding communities. There could be an estimated \$41.2 million in contracts for maneuver training area improvements in this alternative. Beneficial impacts on local communities from increased employment and revenue are not considered significant due to the short-term nature of the contracts.

This alternative contains lands open to the public for recreational activities such as camping, rock hounding, horseback riding, land sailing, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, and sightseeing. Access to this area is now unrestricted and is available for recreational purposes. Recreational activities associated with the area are a source of some economic value to surrounding communities. The loss of this area would result in a decrease of recreational use, which could cause a subsequent decrease in revenue for surrounding communities. The decrease in recreation, and therefore the loss in revenue cannot be determined. However, recreational activity would likely continue on public lands unaffected by this alternative; therefore, the loss of revenue for surrounding communities is not expected to be significant.

The single most significant impact from this alternative would be the purchase of privately held land. The quantity of land will be set forth in the Biological Opinion for the proposed project; this document is expected to be issued in 2004. The land would be purchased for one of two purposes; first, for the purpose of eliminating private in-holdings within the proposed expansion area, and second, for mitigation to off-set the effects of the proposed project on threatened and endangered species.

4.14.1.2 Mitigation

The Army will purchase all private property within this alternative for just compensation.

4.14.2 Alternative II: East Gate/South

4.14.2.1 Impacts

There is private property within the boundary of this alternative. Less than 150 residents currently reside in the area designated for this alternative. Impacts to residents and businesses would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I. Selecting this alternative would impact the residents and business in this area and could be considered significant.

The Army plans to construct improvements in the alternative before training would begin. Improvements would be contracted to the USACOE, which would subcontract the work to private contractors. Contracted construction would likely result in temporary short-term employment and revenue for surrounding communities. There could be an estimated \$35.1 million contracted for maneuver training area improvements in this alternative. Economic impacts on local communities from increased employment and revenue are not considered significant due to the short-term nature of the contracts.

This alternative contains lands open to the public for recreational activities such as camping, rock hounding, horseback riding, land sailing, OHV use, and sightseeing. Access to this area would be restricted and would not be available for recreational purposes. Other economic impacts to surrounding communities and the region, will be the same as Alternative I.

4.14.2.2 Mitigation

The Army will purchase all private property within this alternative at just compensation.

4.14.3 Alternative III: East Gate

4.14.3.1 Impacts

There is private property within the boundary of this alternative. The Silver Lake Mine is the single operating business in this alternative. Impacts to the Silver Lake Mine would be the same as discussed for Alternative I. There are no current residents within this alternative; therefore, no residents would be impacted by this alternative. Selecting this alternative would impact the business in this area and could be considered significant.

The Army plans to construct improvements in the alternative before training would begin. Improvements would be contracted to the USACOE, which would subcontract the work to private contractors. Contracted construction would likely result in temporary short-term employment and revenue for surrounding communities. There could be an estimated \$6.2 million contracted for maneuver training area improvements in this alternative. Economic impacts on local communities from increased employment and revenue are not considered significant due to the short-term nature of the contracts.

Economic impacts to surrounding communities from the loss of recreational lands located within this alternative would be the same as Alternative I. Other economic impacts to the surrounding communities and region are the same as Alternative I.

4.14.3.2 Mitigation

The Army will purchase all private property within this alternative for just compensation.

4.14.4 Alternative IV: Southwest/East Gate/UTM 90

4.14.4.1 Impacts

There is private property within the boundary of this alternative. Less than 150 residents currently reside in the area designated for this alternative. Impacts to residents and businesses would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I. Selecting this alternative would impact the residents and business in this area and could be considered significant.

The Army plans to construct improvements in the alternative before training would begin. Improvements would be contracted to the USACOE, which would subcontract the work to private contractors. Contracted construction would likely result in temporary short-term employment and revenue for surrounding communities. There could be an estimated \$54.2 million contracted for maneuver training area improvements in this alternative. Economic impacts on local communities from increased employment and revenue are not considered significant due to the short-term nature of the contracts.

Economic impacts to surrounding communities from the loss of recreational lands located within this alternative would be the same as Alternative I. Other economic impacts to the surrounding communities and region are the same as Alternative I.

4.14.4.2 Mitigation

The Army will purchase all private property within this alternative at just compensation.

4.14.5 Alternative V: East Gate/UTM 90

4.14.5.1 Impacts

There is private property within the boundary of this alternative. Impacts to residents and businesses would be the same as those discussed for Alternative I.

The Army plans to construct improvements in the alternative before training would begin. Improvements would be contracted to the USACOE, which would subcontract the work to private contractors. Contracted construction would likely result in temporary short-term employment and revenue for surrounding communities. There could be an estimated \$7.5 million contracted for maneuver training area improvements in this alternative. Beneficial impacts on local communities from increased employment and revenue are not considered significant due to the short-term nature of the contracts.

Economic impacts to surrounding communities from the loss of recreational lands located within this alternative would be the same as Alternative I. Other economic impacts to the surrounding communities and region are the same as Alternative I.

4.14.5.2 Mitigation

The Army will purchase all private property within this alternative at just compensation.

4.14.6 Alternative VI: No Action

Under this alternative, no additional impacts on surrounding residents or businesses are expected to result, as current operations at Fort Irwin would continue unchanged. There could be an

estimated \$2.1 million contracted for maneuver training area improvements at Fort Irwin. Economic impacts on local communities from increased employment and revenue are not considered significant due to the short-term nature of the contracts.

4.14.7 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are anticipated to socioeconomics due to land purchases for mitigation and loss of private land within the alternatives. Due to the large volume of land purchased by the Wildlands Conservancy and past purchases as discussed under the Land Use section 4.9, a cumulatively significant impact will occur due to loss of private lands in the County tax base. Additionally, there will be a lost opportunity for future private development of the transferred lands further increasing the loss of tax base and opportunity for the County to develop in these areas. If the trends discussed under land use - cumulative impacts, continue, there will be a cumulative impact to the County and to the ROI due to this lost opportunity.

4.15 Wilderness Characteristics

Impacts to Wilderness could be considered significant if any of the following occurred:

- ❖ Loss of apparent naturalness,
- ❖ Loss of opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation,
- ❖ Loss of opportunity for solitude, and
- ❖ Disruption of special features, such as bighorn sheep habitat and wild burro management areas.

4.15.1 Alternative I: East/West

4.15.1.1 Impacts

Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) Within SDEIS Study Area

There are no WSAs in the Study Area.

Adjacent Wilderness and WSAs

Avawatz Mountains

None of the 52,330 acres of the Avawatz Mountains WSA occurs within this alternative. However, it is located directly adjacent to the north of the Eastgate portion of the study area. Although, only low to moderate use is projected for the eastern portions of the study area that borders the WSA, due to the proximity, there may be a significant and unavoidable impact on the wilderness values in the southern portion of this WSA. Visitors may be unable to feel isolated in the area. Opportunities for recreation, including primitive or unconfined opportunities, may be disturbed. These impacts will exacerbate the existing condition of the WSA, which is fragmented by roads and inholdings of patented mining claims.

Death Valley National Park Boundary