



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, YUMA
301 C STREET
YUMA AZ 85365-9498

6 June 2023

In Reply Refer To:
Environmental Sciences Division

Heather Whitlaw
Field Supervisor
Arizona Ecological Services Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
9828 N. 31st Avenue, Suite C3
Phoenix, Arizona 85051-2517

Dear Ms. Whitlaw:

The U.S. Army, on behalf of the U.S. Army Garrison Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), has requested a withdrawal and reservation for military purposes of approximately 22,000 acres of public land managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This withdrawal, if approved by Congress, would add to the existing 829,565 acres previously withdrawn for YPG and would extend the YPG boundary to Highway 95. The Army requires this additional land as a safety buffer for testing of advanced air delivery technologies and aviation systems, as well as more complex air delivery and tactical scenarios on existing drop zones on YPG. The Army, with BLM as a cooperating agency, is preparing a Legislative Environmental Impact Statement to address the regulatory requirements of the withdrawal process.

Pursuant to 43 CFR 2310.3-2(b)(3)(iv) the Army must prepare a biological assessment (BA) of any listed or proposed endangered or threatened species, and their critical habitat, which may occur on or in the vicinity of the requested withdrawal area in accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1536) (ESA). As an administrative function, the land withdrawal, if approved by Congress, would not alter the existing land use within the requested Highway 95 withdrawal area and there would be no additional impacts to listed species that were not already addressed in previous Section 7 Consultation (BO 22410-2007-F-0196 issued to BLM, and 02EAAZ00-2014-F-0161 issued to YPG). We are providing the attached BA as a thorough evaluation of these lands for potential effects to ESA-listed species. Any future actions within this area would require project-specific compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the ESA.

Table 1 provides a summary of ESA status and determination of effects. This species list was generated from an IPaC query. Some of those species were determined not to be present in the action area due to a lack of suitable habitat.

Table 1. Summary of ESA Status and Determinations

Common Name		Status	Determination	Reason
Sonoran Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana sonoriensis</i>	Endangered, Experimental Population, Non-Essential	No Affect	Action is administrative in nature. Current BO addresses ongoing activities that will not change under this action. Any future actions would be consulted on as appropriate.
Sonoran Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana sonoriensis</i>	Experimental, Non-Essential Population Kofa NWR (Treated as Threatened)	No Affect	Action is administrative in nature. Current BO addresses ongoing activities that will not change under this action. Any future actions would be consulted on as appropriate.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Threatened	No Affect	No suitable habitat in proximity to the project area.
Northern Mexican Garter Snake	<i>Thamnophis eques megalops</i>	Threatened	No Affect	No suitable habitat in proximity to the project area.

Per the Sikes Act, military management of these lands would be guided under the YPG Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan. YPG is committed to the collaborative approach to natural resource management presented in the plan. We look forward to continued cooperation with the USFWS, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and BLM for its implementation.

The non-essential experimental population of pronghorn, for purposes of section 7(a)(2) consultation treated as proposed for listing outside the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, while on the refuge it is treated as threatened. By definition, a "nonessential experimental population" is not essential to the continued existence of the species. Therefore, no proposed action impacting a population so designated could lead to a jeopardy determination for the entire species.

The analysis of potential effects of the requested public land withdrawal to Sonoran pronghorn (on Kofa National Wildlife Refuge), yellow-billed cuckoo, and northern Mexican Garter Snake resulted in ESA no effect determinations. Therefore, this letter is provided as a courtesy to document these determinations and to facilitate continued transparency and cooperation in the management of ESA-listed species on YPG. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Daniel Steward, Wildlife Biologist at 928-328-2125, email Daniel.m.steward.civ@army.mil. Thank you for your assistance in this effort.

Sincerely,



Patrick J. Driscoll
Acting Garrison Manager

Enclosure