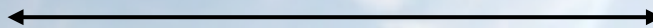




**Land Use Report  
— for the —  
U.S. ARMY YUMA PROVING GROUND  
HIGHWAY 95 WITHDRAWAL**



**U.S. ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT  
COMMAND  
and  
YUMA PROVING GROUND**

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### Acronyms and Abbreviations

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DOI	Department of the Interior
DZ	Drop Zone
EBS	Environmental Baseline Study
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
HWY	Highway
IAW	In Accordance With
KV	Kilovolt
ICRMP	Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan
INRMP	Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan
LEIS	Legislative Environmental Impact Statement
MSL	Mean Sea Level
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle
PL	Public Law
PLO	Public Land Order
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROW	Rights-of-Way
SSZ	Surface Safety Zone
SECA	Secretary of the Army
UAS	Unmanned Aerial System
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

Army	United States Army
USC	United States Code
YFO	BLM Yuma Field Office

## **1. Introduction**

The U.S. Army (Army), on behalf of the Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) has submitted an application to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the withdrawal and reservation of approximately 22,000 acres of public lands adjacent to the YPG located in Yuma and La Paz Counties, Arizona; Figure 1.3. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Los Angeles District Real Estate Branch on behalf of the YPG has submitted this application in accordance with (IAW) the Defense Withdrawal Act of 1958 (also referred to as the Engle Act, P.L. 85-337, 43 United States Code (USC) 155-158, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended (43 U.S.C. 1701); 43 U.S.C. 1714, “Withdrawal of lands;” and 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 2300, “Land Withdrawals;” consistent with BLM practices.

Over the past 20 years the Army’s Air Delivery and Aviation test mission areas have grown significantly in scale and complexity. Concurrent with this growth, other test, training, and commercial facilities have reduced the available land space to support the mission growth experienced. As the only Army test center where developmental Air Delivery testing is executed, YPG is a unique and unparalleled resource.

Air Delivery testing has been ongoing at YPG since the 1950’s and encompasses four distinct airdrop areas that are all impacted by land space limitations: 1) conventional cargo, 2) precision cargo, 3) paratrooper, and 4) spacecraft recovery parachutes. As the scale and complexity of each of these airdrop missions has grown, so has the requirement for additional buffer areas to provide for test personnel safety, public safety, and ensure that the systems are tested in operationally representative environments.

Under the Engle Act of 1958, only Congress can establish a withdrawal for defense purposes of this many acres. If enacted, this withdrawal would add to the existing 829,565 acres withdrawn for the Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) (under Public Land Order (PLO) No. 848 on July 1, 1952, as amended) for use by the Army in connection with the Yuma Test Station (currently known as YPG).

### **1.1 Purpose**

The Army is providing this Land Use Report to support the review and processing of the application for the requested HWY 95 withdrawal area (hereinafter referred to as the “project area”). The primary purposes of this land use report are to identify the present users of the lands, explain how the users would be affected by the withdrawal (if granted), and analyze the manner in which existing and potential resource uses would be compatible with the Army’s proposed use of the project area. This report’s conclusions are intended solely for those entities involved in the evaluation of the land use requirements of the YPG as part of the land withdrawal application process. No other conclusions or purposes, either expressed or implied, are intended.

### **1.2 Scope of Work**

In accordance with 43 CFR § 2310.3-2(b)(1), this report identifies the present users of the HWY 95 withdrawal application area. This report also explains how the present users would be

affected by the requested land withdrawal and analyzes whether existing and potential resource uses would be incompatible or conflict with the Army's proposed uses of the lands. As defined in 43 CFR § 2300.0-5, resource use means a land use having as its primary objective the preservation, conservation, enhancement, or development of the following resources:

1. Any renewable or nonrenewable natural resource indigenous to a particular land area, including, but not limited to, mineral, timber, forage, water, fish or wildlife resources or,
2. Any resource value associated with a particular land area, including but not limited to, watershed, power, scenic, wilderness, clean air or recreational values.

This report also specifies the provisions that would be made for the continuation, alteration, or termination of existing land uses.

### **1.3 Regulatory Framework**

The requested withdrawal would support the Army's need to provide sufficient safety buffers for high altitude and guided air delivery testing. The Army has requested an indefinite withdrawal to match the indefinite PLO No. 848 withdrawal term, as the Army foresees a continuing indefinite need for YPG and the requested HWY 95 Addition. This withdrawal, if enacted by Congress, would help ensure that YPG's mission-critical air delivery testing and range capabilities are available in the future.

The regulatory measures being taken to secure the additional withdrawal and military reservation at YPG are IAW applicable guidance provided by the Defense Withdrawal Act of 1958 (also referred to as the Engle Act, PL 85-337, 43 USC 155-158, and the procedures for processing federal land withdrawals (43 CFR 2310)).

The project area is comprised of approximately 22,000 acres of federal public land administered by the BLM Colorado River District Office, Yuma Field Office (YFO). Within the requested 22,000 acres, the State of Arizona owns 800 acres of the subsurface estate, and these subsurface acres are excepted from the withdrawal request. BLM manages this public land for multiple use and sustained yield in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (P. L. 94-579). The BLM YFO Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 2010) provides management guidance and direction for the public lands in the project area. The multiple land uses addressed in the YFO RMP include, but are not limited to, mineral and energy development, livestock grazing, wild horses and burros, off-highway vehicle travel on designated routes, recreation, visual resources, and protection of wilderness characteristics.

Figure 1. HWY 95 Withdrawal

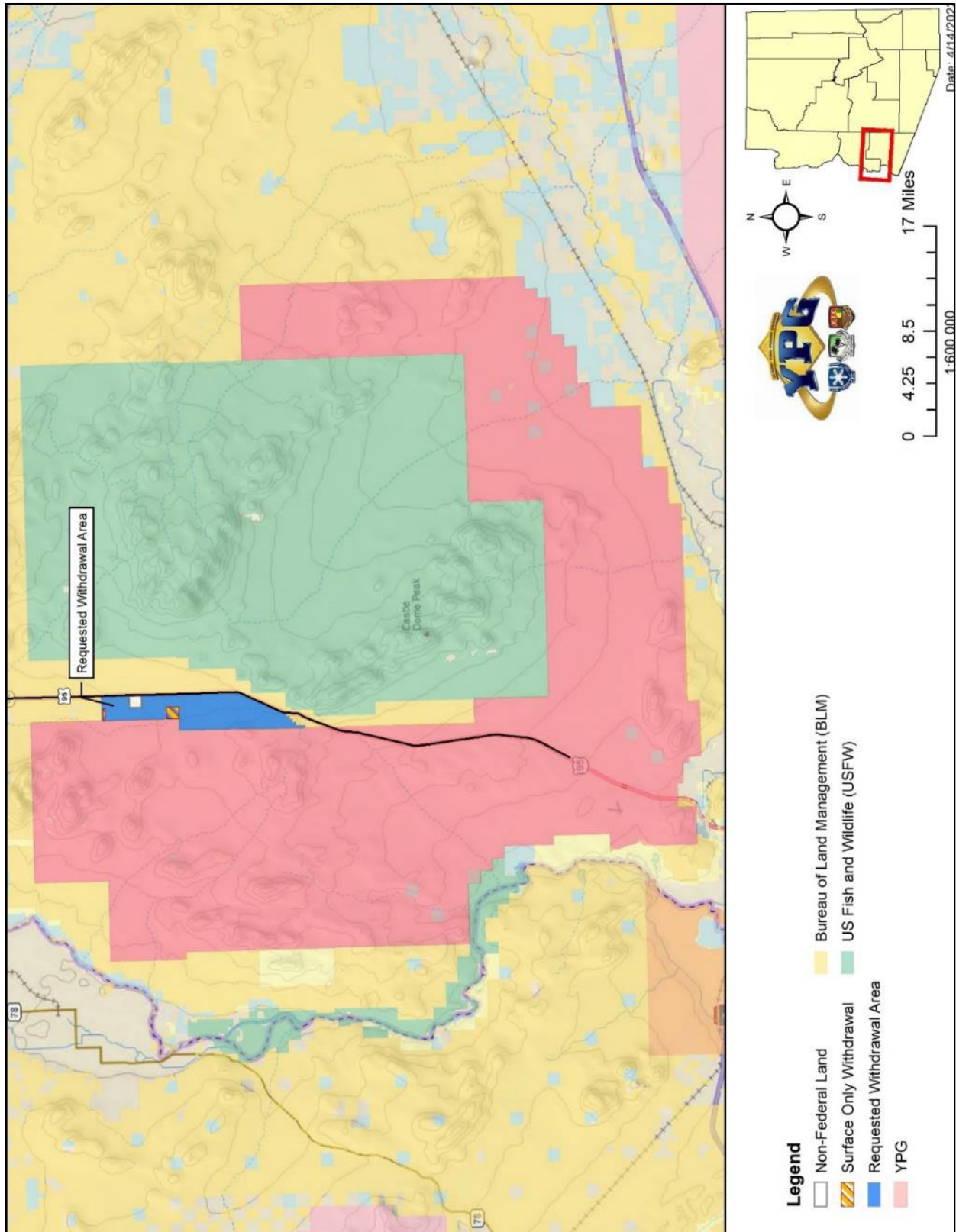
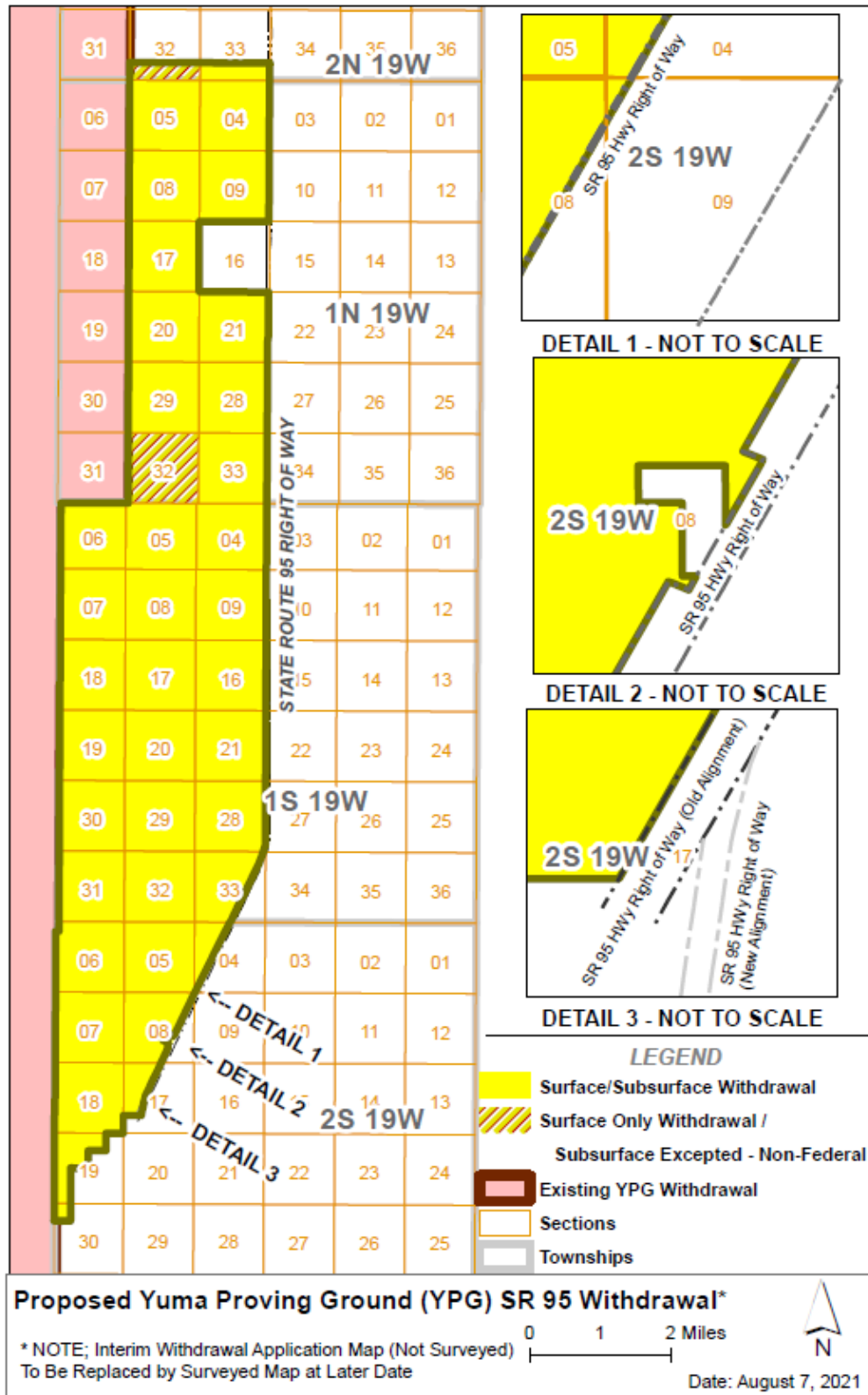




Figure 1.1 Continued: Hwy 95 Withdrawal



## **2. Purpose of the Requested Withdrawal**

The purpose of the requested YPG withdrawal is to provide approximately 22,000 acres of additional area for a precision air delivery system safety buffer area. YPG requires the withdrawal and reservation of these lands for military use as a research development test and evaluation (RDT&E) range operated by the Army.

The Army requires the capability to test parachute systems at higher altitudes than are currently possible, and to improve air delivery safety within the existing drop zones in case of aircrew release point errors and system failures. Furthermore, this land would support advances in air delivery and aviation systems technology, as well as more complex air delivery and tactical scenarios that have exceeded the available test capabilities within the existing YPG footprint.

## **3. Analysis of Impacts:**

Withdrawal of these additional lands would result in increased capability for Air Delivery to conduct airdrops at Corral and La Posa DZs in North Cibola Range. As loads are airdropped at higher altitudes or with guided parachutes, the Surface Safety Zone (SSZ) increases in size. The SSZ is an exclusion area that is established for each operation to ensure that people are not in harm's way when a load is released. With the additional land space, YPG can safely accommodate larger SSZs such as from higher altitude drops which are more operationally representative. The larger SSZs would decrease schedule delays and enable test programs to meet their objectives more effectively by reducing the number of days the airdrop altitude is lowered due to wind restrictions. Also, cargo airdrops near La Posa DZ can have release points east of the DZ. Currently, if the winds on a particular day show the release point or track of the payload over BLM land to the east of the DZ, the airdrop altitude is reduced significantly or the airdrop is canceled to limit the risk of landing on BLM land space.

Currently YPG's ability to conduct precision airdrop loads on La Posa DZ is severely altitude limited at approximately 8,000 ft mean sea level (MSL), which is operationally unrepresentative. The ability to accommodate larger SSZs would allow cargo loads to be airdropped from operationally representative altitudes near 18,000 ft MSL, provide redundancy to the Corral DZ capability, provide more flexible range scheduling and allow concurrent precision airdrop tests.

The ability to airdrop precision cargo loads on a single pass to geographically separated DZs is currently very limited and not operationally representative at YPG. The additional land space would allow airdrops to Corral and La Posa DZ on a single pass, which would be operationally representative airdrops as the two DZs are in different valleys with different wind conditions. This would significantly improve YPG's ability to conduct precision cargo airdrops by adding an operationally representative scenario.

At present, airdrops on La Posa DZ on the southern cleared portion are limited during busy airdrop test schedules and on portions of the DZ near BLM land due to the risk of landing on BLM land. By adding the land space east of La Posa DZ, the full width of the DZ could be utilized for planned impact points, which increases the volume of cargo loads that could be

airdropped prior to recovery operations. This would improve efficiency and increase the capacity of airdrop operations at La Posa DZ.

Currently, the YPG land space easterly of the center portion of the Cibola range is separated from HWY 95 by a narrow strip of BLM land (the requested withdrawal area) between HWY 95 and YPG. By withdrawing these additional lands west of HWY 95, the YPG boundary could be posted along HWY 95, making the highway a clear physical landmark. Additionally, HWY 95 could be a visual aid to aircrews for the boundary of the installation.

Having a clear physical landmark would also increase public safety by improving the public's ability to abide by the YPG boundary. In the past, there have been unintentional public intrusions from the BLM land space into YPG land space due to the public missing the YPG boundary posting. Public intrusions to YPG land space pose a risk to public safety and result in testing delays that increase costs and delay test programs. The additional land space would also improve the security of YPG test programs conducted near the current YPG boundary. The additional land space would reduce the likelihood of individuals accessing restricted areas, improving the security of test missions.

The subject property is in La Paz and Yuma counties in southwestern Arizona, approximately 50 miles north of the City of Yuma. The land is located west of U.S. Route 95 (HWY 95), between YPG's North Cibola Range to the west and Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) to the east (Figure 2). The southern and eastern boundary of the project area begins west of HWY 95 at approximate mile marker 74 and ends west of HWY 95 at mile marker 91. The project area location is shown on the Livingston Hills, Red Hill NE, Stone Cabin, Trigo Pass, and Tweed Mine United States Geological Survey (USGS) Quadrangle Maps.

#### **4. Legal Description of Project Area**

*(Surface and Subsurface)*

Gila and Salt River Meridian, Arizona

T. 1 N., R. 19 W.,  
sec. 4, lots 2 thru 4, lots 6, 7, 9, and 10, SW1/4NE1/4, S1/2NW1/4, SW1/4, and W1/2SE1/4;  
secs. 5 and 8;  
sec. 9, lots 2, 3, 5, and 6, W1/2NE1/4, W1/2, and W1/2SE1/4;  
secs. 17 and 20;  
sec. 21, lots 2, 3, 5, and 6, W1/2NE1/4, W1/2, and W1/2SE1/4;  
sec. 28, lots 2, 3, 5, and 6, W1/2NE1/4, W1/2, and W1/2SE1/4;  
sec. 29;  
sec. 33, lots 2, 3, 5, and 6, W1/2NE1/4, W1/2, and W1/2SE1/4.

T. 2 N., R. 19 W.,  
sec. 33, lot 1, S1/2SW1/4, and SW1/4SE1/4.

T. 1 S., R. 19 W.,  
secs. 4 thru 9 and secs. 16 thru 21;

sec. 28, lot 1, N1/2, SW1/4, N1/2SE1/4, and SW1/4SE1/4;  
secs. 29 thru 32;  
sec. 33, lots 2, 3, 6 and 7, NW1/4NE1/4, NW1/4, NE1/4SW1/4, and W1/2SW1/4.

T. 2 S., R. 19 W.,  
sec. 4, lots 4, 6, 7, and 10;  
secs. 5 thru 7;  
sec. 8, lots 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, and 12, W1/2NE1/4, W1/2, NW1/4NW1/4SE1/4,  
W1/2SW1/4NW1/4SE1/4, SE1/4SW1/4NW1/4SE1/4;  
sec. 9, lot 2;  
sec. 17, lots 2, 3, 4, and 7, W1/2NW1/4;  
sec. 18;  
sec. 19, lots 1 thru 4, NW1/4NE1/4, and E1/2NW1/4;  
sec. 30, lot 1.

The areas described contains 20,982.981 acres, according to the official plat of the survey of the said lands, on file with the BLM.

*(Surface Only; Subsurface Excepted - Non-Federal Ownership)*  
Gila and Salt River Meridian, Arizona

T. 1 N., R. 19 W.,  
sec. 32.

T. 2 N., R. 19 W.,  
sec. 32, S1/2SW1/4 and S1/2SE1/4.

The areas described aggregate 800 acres, according to the official plat of the survey of the said lands, on file with the BLM.

## **5. Landscape Setting**

The project area is in Yuma and La Paz Counties in the southwest corner of Arizona, approximately 50 miles north of the City of Yuma, AZ and 20 miles south of the town of Quartzsite, AZ (Figure 1). Neighboring land managers in the region include BLM, Yuma Proving Ground, and Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). There are private parcels totaling approximately 650 acres along the easterly boundaries of the project area.

The project area is part of the Sonoran Desert in southwestern Arizona. The region is relatively flat with low vegetation cover, made up of low mountain ranges and desert valleys. The climate is warm and arid, with a total annual precipitation of about 3.5 inches per year. Vegetation in the area is very sparse and is mostly concentrated along washes that only flow during infrequent rain events. Although the area encompasses many washes and arroyos, there are no perennial streams present. The only surface water is ephemeral pooling after rain events and is mostly concentrated where obstruction or depressions can hold water. The physiography and climate contribute to the land surface being relatively undeveloped, exhibiting natural environmental conditions and

vegetation densities similar to adjoining lands with expanses of creosote bush-bursage desert scrub.

The airspace above the project area as well as most of YPG, Kofa NWR, and neighboring areas is restricted for military operations. The airspace is not completely off-limits to private or commercial flights, but these flights are restricted to periods of non-use by YPG or other military users.

## 5.1 Present Land Users

Based on a review of the BLM Yuma Field Office RMP, active land use authorizations and field observations from surveys conducted for other technical reports, the primary types of land users within the project area include dispersed recreation, to include hunting and occasional OHV use, public and private utilities, and the County of Yuma maintained Cibola Lake Road. The existing rights-of-way within the project area are documented in Table 1 and shown in Figure 2. The requested withdrawal and reservation is subject to valid existing rights, and the project area will continue to be available for current authorized ROW use. If the requested withdrawal is enacted by Congress, the BLM will only issue any additional ROWs, outside of the Parker-Blaisdell utility corridor, for nonmilitary uses only with the concurrence of the Army.

The Yuma RMP identifies a one-milewide utility corridor, the Parker Blaisdell corridor, that runs parallel with, and is centered along HWY 95. The westerly one-half mile of this utility corridor overlaps the project area (BLM 2010). For potential ROW applications within this utility corridor, such as an additional transmission line ROW, BLM will first try and locate the requested ROW outside of the project area. If a requested new utility corridor ROW is of regional significance, and cannot be located outside of the withdrawal area, BLM will consult with the Army to mitigate as much as possible, any potential non-compatible impacts of such a ROW request. These rights-of-way applications will be analyzed on a case-by-case, site-specific basis.

There is very little utility infrastructure located within the project area. There are four 12-kv transmission lines located within the project area, two 12-kV transmission lines are owned by the Army and other two 12-kV transmission lines are owned by the Arizona Public Service (APS) utility. The two Army transmission lines run east-west through the project area and parallel Road 89 and Cibola Lake Road and serve YPG. One APS transmission line is located along the easterly boundary of the project area, just west and parallel to HWY 95. The second APS transmission line is barely within the project area, consisting of a few hundred linear feet that is easterly of and perpendicular to the larger APS line, and exits the project area across HWY 95.

Table 1. Rights-of-Way Within the Project Area.

<b>ROW Grantee</b>	<b>Project Description</b>	<b>BLM Case</b>
Army YPG	Road 89	AZA-32660
Army YPG	Road 89 12-kv Power line	AZA-32871
Army Corps of Engineers (for YPG)	Cibola Lake Road 12-kv transmission line	AZA-29682
County of Yuma	Cibola Lake Road	AZA-357142
Arizona Public Service	12-kv transmission parallel to Hwy 95	AZAR-32619
Arizona Public Service	12-kv transmission line across Hwy 95	AZA-38436

The project area is bordered to the east by HWY 95 and to the west by the YPG Cibola Range. An internal network of mostly dirt and unimproved roads, to include BLM designated roads west of HWY 95 provide access across the property and to the Cibola Range. A BLM designated dirt road, referred to as Old Yuma Road on some maps, is a north-south dirt road that runs through the central portion of the project area. This road originates in the town of Quartzsite to the north and eventually joins HWY 95 at approximate mile marker 77. Cibola Lake Road is a County maintained east-west gravel road that originates at mile marker 82 of HWY 95 and crosses the central portion of the Property. The road provides access across the Cibola Range to BLM managed lands, and the Cibola NWR to the west of YPG. An additional dirt road, Road 89, originates at mile marker 89 of HWY 95 and crosses through the northern portion of the Property. Road 89 also provides access to Cibola Range.

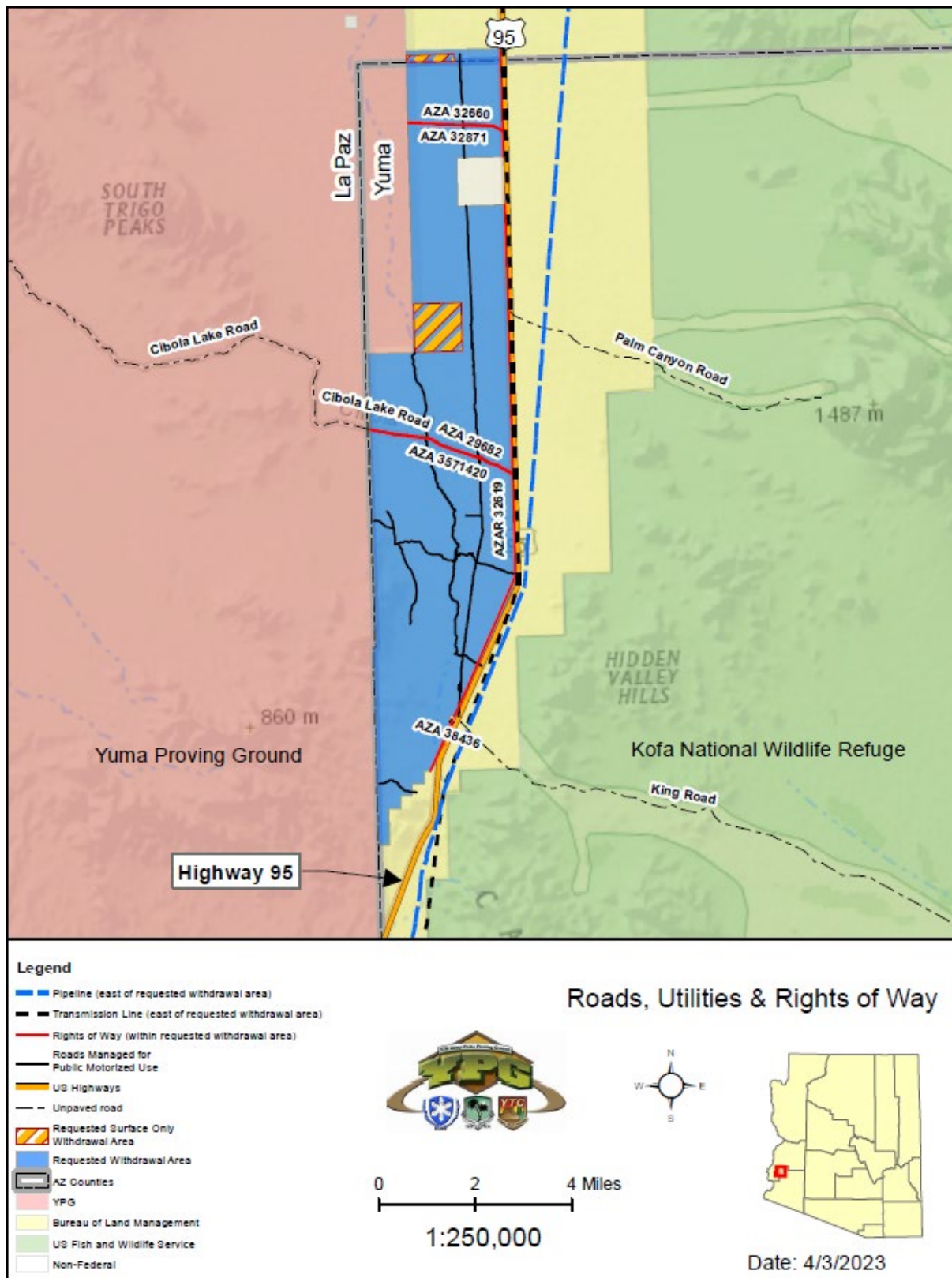
Since Cibola Lake Road is a County maintained road, YPG will coordinate with Yuma County on closure notice procedures during air delivery test operations.

In addition to the primary access roads mention above, there are BLM designated roads that offer recreational OHV use (see Figure 2.1). If the withdrawal request is approved by Congress, recreational OHV use would interfere with the scheduling of the air delivery testing schedules, and therefore would no longer be allowed within the project area.

In addition to the above uses, these lands are used for recreational hunting. If Congress enacts legislation for the requested withdrawal, YPG will expand its current recreational hunting permit system on the installation to the project area.

The are no structures, buildings, residences, or railroads located within the project area. Additionally, there are no renewable energy facilities, telecommunication sites, electrical substations, or wastewater facilities located within the project area. There are several legacy earthen berm catchment basins that are visible on aerial photography. Per discussion with the Arizona Department of Transportation, these catchment basins are not associated with drainage for HWY 95. These earthen berms are potential water catchment areas for legacy livestock operations.

Figure 2. Roads, Utilities and Rights of Way



## 5.2 Non-Federal Subsurface Estate

Approximately 800 acres of non-federal subsurface estate are located within with project area as shown in the continuation page of Figure 1. Currently these subsurface areas are owned by the State of Arizona and managed by the Arizona State Lands Department. Any lease or sale of these minerals would be administered in accordance with the Arizona State Lands Department or subsequent owners.

According to the Mineral Potential Report prepared by BLM in 2021, there is a low potential for the occurrence of locatable or saleable minerals in the project area and a moderate potential for leasable minerals. There are currently no proposals for mining development of any of the non-federal subsurface areas within the requested withdrawal area. If future proposals arise, the Army would coordinate with the Arizona State Lands Department and any potential lessees to determine how to access the area safely and without interfering with the military purpose of the surface area.

## 6. Resource Uses and Resource Values

The existing resource uses and values of the public lands comprising the project area summarized from goals in the management decisions for the Yuma RMP (BLM 2010). Resource uses and values discussed in the BLM's Yuma RMP but not present in or relevant to the project area are omitted from the discussion in this section and include cave resources, paleontological resources, wilderness characteristics, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, National Byways, National Trails, and Resource Conservation Areas. The goals identified in this discussion are specific to the project area.

### 6.1 Air Resources

BLM manages airborne emissions to protect, maintain and improve air quality associated with authorized uses and activities on public lands (BLM 2010). Mitigation measures are applied for uses and activities within and near adjoining communities, wilderness areas, and large particulate matter (i.e., dust) non- attainment and maintenance areas, especially concerning unpaved roads traversing public lands. All unpaved, bladed roads and established vehicle-use trails identified on the project area are presumed potential sources of air quality degradation within the requested project area, as is the case with other public lands in the arid Southwest.

### 6.2 Cultural Resources

BLM manages cultural resources to:

- Identify, preserve and protect cultural resources and ensure they are available for appropriate uses for present and future generations.
- Reduce threats, reduce or prevent damage, and resolve potential conflicts from naturally occurring or unauthorized human-caused damage or deteriorations.
- Manage assemblages of sites as cultural landscapes.

The proposed expansion area is not part of a designated Special Cultural Resource Area identified in the Yuma RMP (BLM 2010). The withdrawal of the project area would not affect



cultural resources and no cultural resource work is recommended for this withdrawal request.

### **6.3 Hazardous Materials and Public Safety**

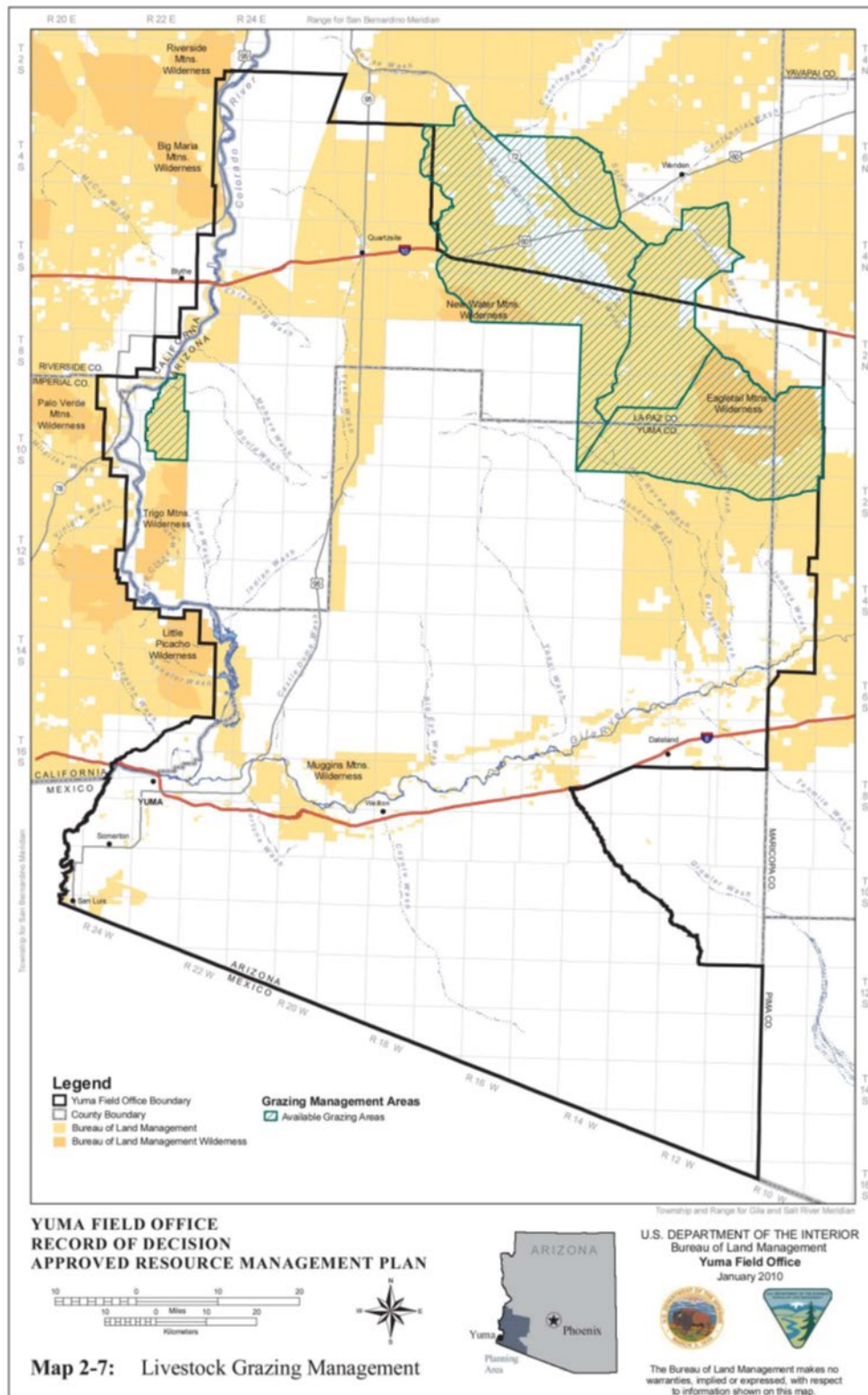
BLM manages public lands to protect public health and safety by minimizing or eliminating the potential for intentional or accidental releases of hazardous materials or wastes and solid waste (BLM 2010). The interim Environmental Baseline Study for the HWY 95 Land Withdrawal (EBS 2020) identified the project area as vacant, undeveloped desert land with very little historical or current land uses that would expose the property to hazardous materials. Information collected during the environmental records review and site reconnaissance has concluded there are no areas within the property or adjoining properties where the release, disposal, or migration of hazardous substances or petroleum products has occurred. (EBS 2020)

An approximately 2,000-acre portion of the project area lies within Stone Cabin Impact Area of the USACE designated Laguna Maneuver Area No. 10 Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) (J09AZ043910). This maneuver area was used from 1942 to 1944 to train troops and test equipment for fighting in a desert environment. The Stone Cabin Impact Area is a designated Munitions Response Site since it contains munitions and explosives of concern. In addition to these acres being a designated FUDS site, the BLM also classified this impact area in 1959 as being contaminated by high explosives since “these lands were used during World War II in connection with the maneuvers by units under the command of General Patton and it has been determined that the lands are so contaminated that clearance is impracticable, and no use of these lands should be permitted which would require disturbance of the surface”. If approved by Congress, YPG will incorporate these lands in their permitted hunting program, which requires hunters view a safety video that includes education on unexploded ordinance.

### **6.4 Livestock Grazing**

The project area is not available for livestock grazing. See Figure 3 excerpted from the Yuma Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan, January 2010.

Figure 3. Grazing Lands Availability (ARMP Map 2-7)



## 6.5 Mineral Resources

BLM supports mineral exploration and development on public lands in keeping with BLM's multiple-use mandate in accordance with existing leasing laws unless precluded from leasing by withdrawal or other laws and regulations. (BLM 2012a). Withdrawing the project area and reserving it for military purposes would preclude mineral resource development during the authorized withdrawal period.

BLM Prepared a Mineral Potential Report for the project area in 2022. This report concluded based on a review of existing literature, USGS geological map, and field observations of the project area, the lands as described in the report, have:

- low potential for the occurrence of locatable minerals,
- low potential for the occurrence of salable minerals,
- moderate potential for the occurrence of leasable minerals.

The report stated that there no mineral-related actions have occurred on or within the project area. Additionally, there are no active or pending mining claims on the project area. Finally, based on the lack of mineralization in or near the project area, the lack of any record of commercial mining production, and the lack of any exploration in or near the project area, the likelihood of an economically viable locatable minerals mining operation being developed there is negligible.

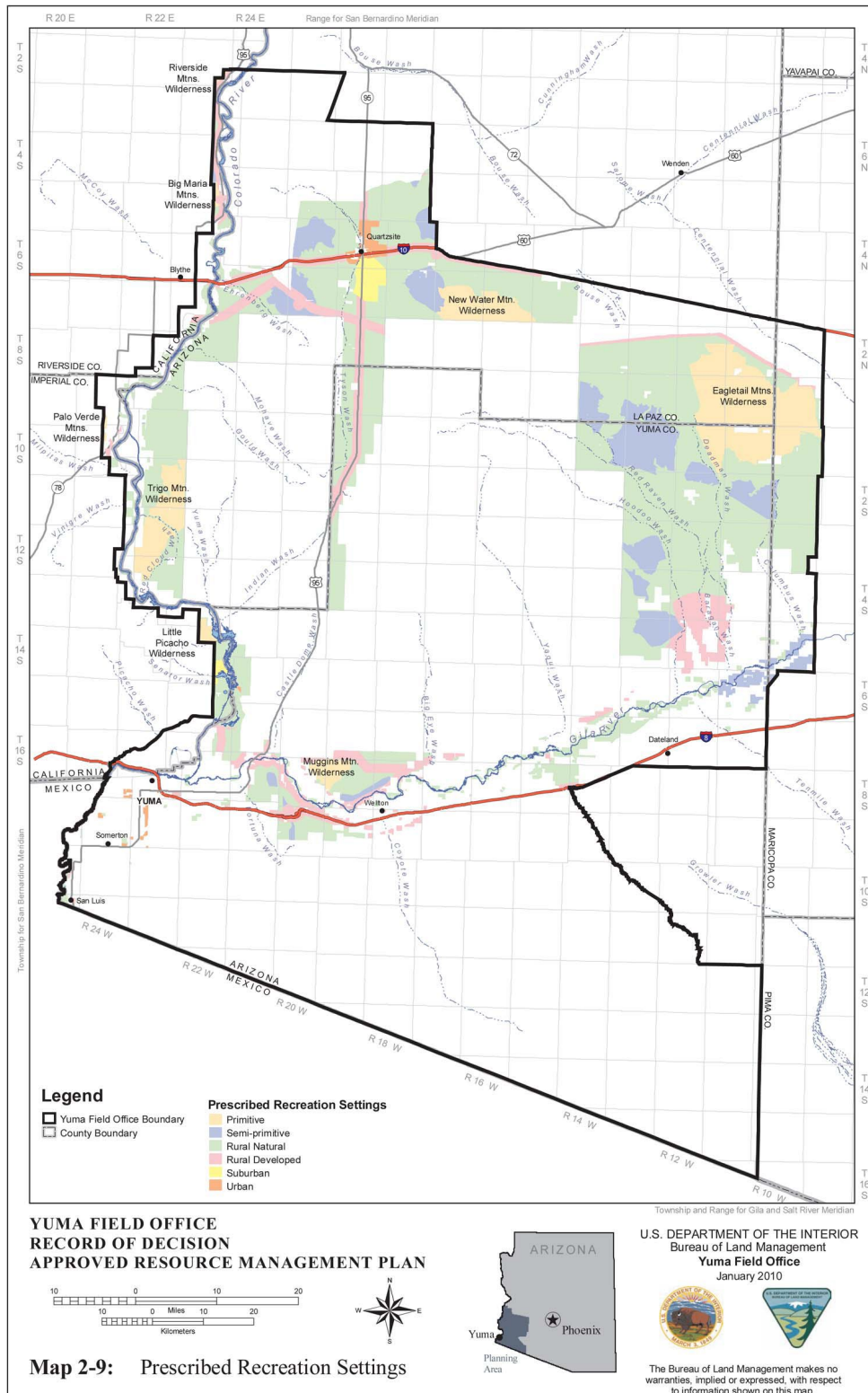
As a result of the above findings, the impact of the requested withdrawal on potential future mining activities is negligible.

## 6.6 Recreation Resources

These lands are part of a the La Posa Destination Special Recreation Management Area and are within the HWY 95 Recreation Management Zone with a prescribed recreation setting of Rural Natural in the Yuma RMP (BLM 2010). This recreation zone encompasses the Proposed HWY 95 National Scenic Byway corridor and provides interpretive opportunities to educate visitors about past and present military activities in the area. BLM designated a network of OHV trails within the project area as part of the La Posa Travel Management Plan (see Figure 2.1). These trails are used for access by hunters or other recreational users accessing these lands. No distinguishing topographic, geologic, or points of interest are known to exist in the project area. Several existing ephemeral water impoundments may serve as an attractant for hunting purposes.

As mentioned in Section 6.2 above, recreational OHV use within the project area will be precluded if the requested withdrawal and reservation is enacted by Congress. Hunting activity within the project area would be incorporated into YPG's existing permitted hunting program.

Figure 4. Yuma RMP Recreation Plan (ARMP Map 2-9)



## 6.7 Soil Resources

BLM manages soil resources to ensure watersheds are functioning properly and consistent with Land Health Standards (BLM 2010). Sensitive soils are maintained or improved to avoid accelerated erosion. The soils within this region are of the aridisol and entisol soil orders. Aridisols generally are older and more developed soils and are characterized by light-colored surface layers with low amounts of organic matter and at least one diagnostic sub-horizon. Some of the soils in project area are in the Gilman soil complex which are susceptible to medium to high levels of wind erosion.

The Gilman soil type, which is amenable to air delivery testing, was an important factor in YPG's placement of the existing La Posa Drop Zone. This soil type is also located within the project area.

## 6.8 Travel Management

The major roadway near the project area is HWY 95, a two-lane paved, rural, principal arterial roadway that runs generally north-south between Interstate 8 to the south and Interstate 10 to the north. HWY 95 is the principal access route to YPG and the project area, which lies between the Cibola Region of YPG and the Kofa NWR.

Concerning OHV travel, BLM classifies public land as open, closed or limited to designated routes in accordance with 43 CFR 8342.I (BLM 2012a). The Yuma RMP Planning Area includes designated roads, primitive roads and trails on public lands surrounding and including the project area. In addition, the La Posa travel management plan establishes several miles of primitive roads designated within the project area. These designated roads are both discussed in Section 5.1 and are mapped on Figure 2.1 above.

## 6.9 Vegetation Resources

The BLM Yuma Field Office manages vegetation for habitat, multiple use, and sustained yield. The desired future conditions ensure that vegetation resources are used at a sustainable level and that appropriate levels of dead, downed, and detached wood are present to provide wildlife habitat and reduce soil erosion (BLM 2010).

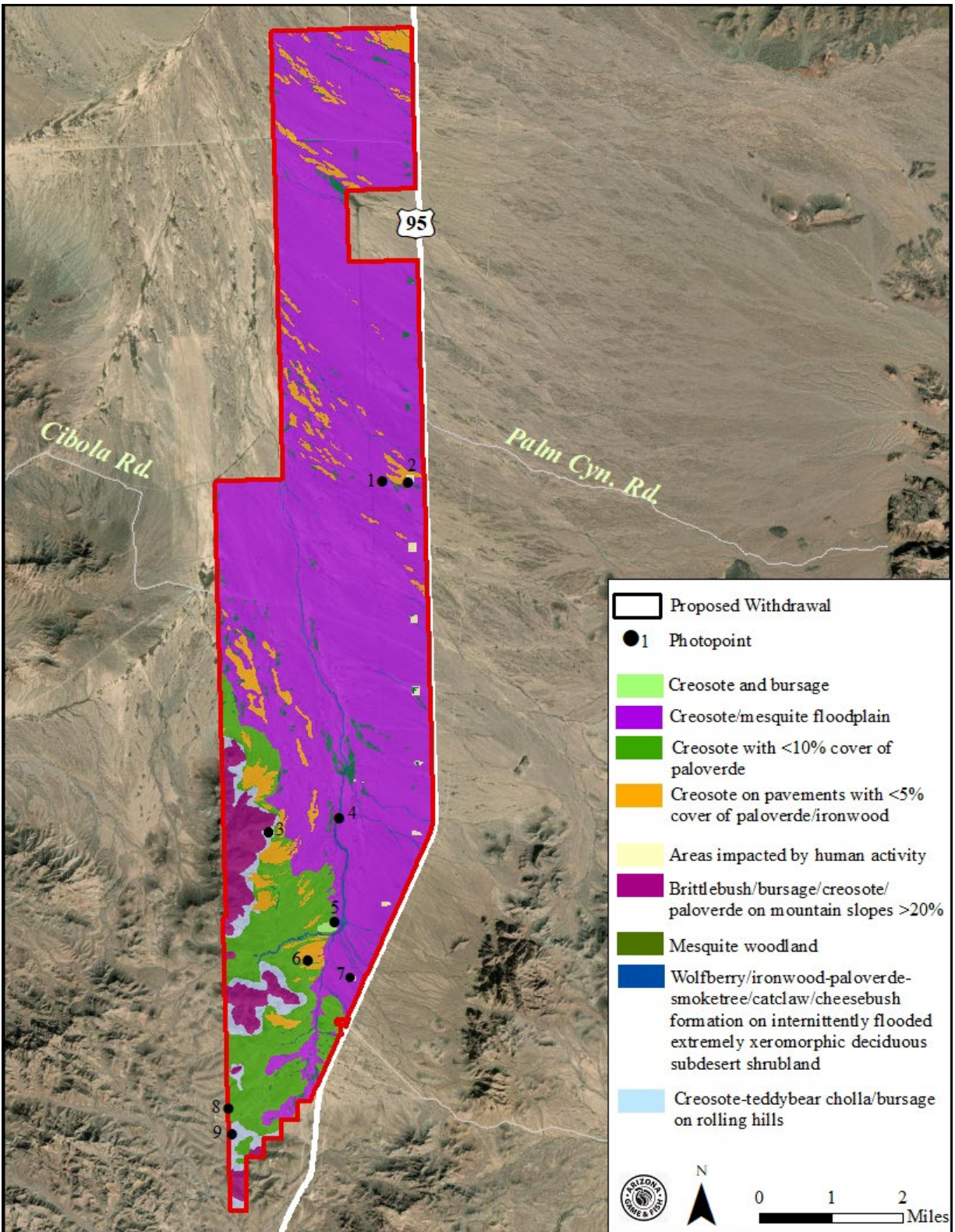
Arizona Game and Fish Department prepared the Vegetation Classification of The Requested HWY 95 Withdrawal (2022) report. The report documented 9 vegetation classes within the project area. Table 2 lists the vegetation classes and the number of acres they cover. As identified, Creosote/mesquite floodplain is the dominant class.

Table 2. Total surface area and land cover percentage of the vegetation classes documented within the project area.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>% Land Cover</b>
Creosote and bursage	23.39	0.11
Creosote/mesquite floodplain	16,123.58	73.85
Creosote with <10% cover of paloverde	2,374.34	10.87
Creosote on pavements with <5% cover of paloverde/ironwood	1,187.53	5.44
Areas impacted by human activity	43.41	0.20
Brittlebush/bursage/creosote/paloverde on mountain slopes >20%	916.21	4.20
Mesquite woodland	381.40	1.75
Wolfberry/ironwood-paloverde-smoketree/catclaw/cheesebush formation on intermittently flooded extremely xeromorphic deciduous subdesert shrubland	236.65	1.08
Creosote-teddybear cholla/bursage on rolling hills	547.14	2.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,833.65</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The report states that there is more topographic relief in the southern portion of the study area where mountain slopes were present, whereas the northern portion of the study area was more characteristic of valley bottoms. Thus, the southern portion of the study area supported a higher diversity of vegetation community types. The areas impacted by human activity consisted of rectangular depressions with graded and compacted soils that were associated with the retention of water originating from washes. These areas, which were variable in their condition, occurred at regular intervals along the eastern portion of the study area, and often supported mesquite woodland. Areas impacted by human activity represented the class with the smallest surface area.

Figure 5. Vegetation classification within the requested withdrawal area



## 6.10 Visual Resources

The Yuma RMP assigns a visual resource management class for all areas in the planning area based on an inventory of visual resources and management considerations for other land uses (RMP Map 2-9e). According to the RMP, the lands in the project area are categorized as Class II and Class III Visual Resource Management (VRM) areas (BLM 2010). The project area is primarily Class II (approximately 17,386 acres), except for an 0.5-mile buffer of Class III lands (approximately 4,428 acres) along HWY 95, which correlates with the Parker-Blaisdell utility corridor along HWY 95. BLM currently manages the visual resources located on the project area in accordance with these VRM classifications, the objective of which is to retain or partially retain the existing character of the landscape. Class II allows a low level of change that does not attract the attention of a casual observer and Class III allows a moderate level of change (BLM 2010). The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low.

## 6.11 Water Resources

There are no surface water resources in the project area, but several ephemeral washes cross the area. There is subsurface ground water.

There is no change from the existing withdrawal under PLO No. 848 regarding water use. All surface and groundwater rights currently utilized by the Army have been properly appropriated through the State of Arizona. The Army does not require additional water rights associated with the requested land withdrawal.

## 6.12 Wild Horse and Burro Management

A small portion of the Cibola-Trigo herd management area overlaps the project area. Wild horses and burros on YPG lands are managed by BLM IAW with the Cooperative Management Agreement between YPG and the BLM. Wild horse and burro management are also addressed in the YPG Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP).

## 6.13 Wildland Fire Management

BLM conducts wildland fire management to ensure fire fighter and public safety is the highest priority in every fire or fuels management activity (BLM 2012a). Wildland fuels are managed to protect the Wildland Urban Interface and meet resource management objectives. Additionally, the agency limits the extent of wildfires and the impact of wildland fire suppression efforts on wildlife, plant communities and natural and cultural features. Wildland fire and fuel management strategies on public lands, including the proposed expansion area, are considered within the context of landscape-scale resource conditions and interagency and community interactions and cooperation. A 2018 Memorandum of Understanding between BLM, Yuma Field Office and U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (BLM and YPG2018), establishes guidelines for cooperation in the response and assistance of wildland fire emergencies on YPG. The Memorandum would apply to the project area.



## 6.14 Wildlife Resources

The State of Arizona manages wildlife, while the BLM manages wildlife habitat. BLM will consider the goals and objectives of the AGFD's *Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (AGFD 2006)*, *Wildlife Management Program Strategic Plan (AGFD 2007)*, and subsequent *State Wildlife Action and Strategic Plans* when implementing management actions. Such plans identify wildlife species and habitats, assess threats to their survival, and identify long-term conservation actions.

The project area falls within the Desert Mountains Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHA). The WHA maintains well-distributed habitats and connective corridors to support wildlife. Portions of the project area are identified as a wildlife movement corridor, particularly for Desert Bighorn Sheep and Sonoran Desert Tortoise. A non-essential experimental population of federally endangered Sonoran Pronghorn seasonally occupy the project area.

In accordance with the Sikes Act, YPG implements a Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) (YPG 2017). The purpose of the INRMP is to guide and document the manner in which YPG sustains the military mission on the installation while managing the ecological health of natural resources. The INRMP ensures sound land management, environmental stewardship, and compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, and policy during mission and project planning activities resulting in no net loss of mission capacity from meeting our stewardship responsibilities.

A major component of management under the INRMP is coordination with US Fish and Wildlife Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department. Management actions under the INRMP are intended to sustain military mission while also furthering the conservation priorities of FWS and AZGFD. This includes management of wildlife as identified in Arizona's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) as well as Threatened and Endangered Species Management.

If Congress approves the requested withdrawal and reservation, the project area will be included within YPG's INRMP.

## 7. Provisions for Future Land Use

Should the withdrawal be approved, YPG would establish this area as a Research, Development, Test and Evaluation Range. YPG's primary benefit from these lands would be as an additional safety buffer for its air delivery mission. Future use of the land would include testing and training activities that are consistent with YPG's primary military mission. Any future Army actions on the requested withdrawal area would be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as well as any associated consultation procedures such as ESA Section 7 or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Casual use access by the public would not be allowed within the requested HWY 95 withdrawal area. Public access would only be granted to authorized individuals through range access procedures. There are currently no plans to erect new fencing, gates, or cattle guards to control access to the project area. Potential future requirements for these measures would be considered

if the requested HWY 95 withdrawal is enacted by Congress and if warranted by emerging security conditions.

Apart from the Cibola Lake Road and hunting access to the HWY 95 withdrawal lands, public access would not be allowed. Hunters seeking access to the requested withdrawal area would follow access procedures identified by the YPG Hunting Program provided the area is safe to enter. Hunting access passes may be issued to visitors who can then be granted access by YPG Range Control. Hunting areas may be periodically closed during military test or training events.

The natural and cultural resources associated with the proposed expansion area would be managed by YPG IAW the INRMP and the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP) for the YPG.

Future emergency response or recovery actions such as removal errant parachute loads, Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) or Aircraft Crashes or similar unplanned occurrences would be handled in accordance with YPG standard operating procedures. Access to the area would be restricted as necessary for safety.

Withdrawal and reservation of the project area would preclude appropriations by the public under the general land laws, including the U.S. mining laws and the mineral leasing and geothermal leasing laws for the duration of the withdrawal.

The withdrawal of the project area would not require a change in water use or water rights, or the construction of water-related infrastructure.

Approximately 640 acres of private land is surrounded by the project area. Contact with the landowners has been limited and initial indications are positive for the requested withdrawal project, with the increased safety zone footprint. The land is uninhabited and future plans for development is not anticipated

There are 800 acres of non-federal subsurface estate land within the withdrawal area that is owned by the State of Arizona and is managed by belonging to the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). Should the State or any subsequent holder of those minerals need access through the withdrawn area, they would coordinate with YPG and follow range access procedures to ensure personnel safety.

## **8. Economic Analysis**

### **8.1 Livestock Grazing**

This requested withdrawal would have no economic impact as the lands are not available for livestock grazing.

### **8.2 Recreation**

The requested withdrawal would have no economic impact on recreational use within the project area. Field studies conducted as part of the technical reports prepared for the BLM case file

suggest that existing recreational use is minimal in this area and there is an abundance of public land available for free recreational use surrounding the parcels requested for withdrawal. Use by hunters would still be managed through the YPG hunting program.

### **8.3 Natural and Cultural Resource Conservation and Management**

The proposed land use modifications would have no impact on the natural and cultural resources and resource values described in Section 7 and in the LEIS. YPG would manage the project area in accordance with the YPG INRMP and ICRMP.

### **8.4 Public Utilities**

Some public lands administered by the BLM Yuma Field Office carry designations to direct future utility corridors and renewable energy development into specific geographic areas. The Yuma RMP identifies a one-mile-wide utility corridor, the Parker Blaisdell corridor, that runs parallel to and is centered along HWY 95. The project area overlaps the westerly one-half mile of this utility corridor (BLM 2010). Withdrawal and reservation of the project area would likely preclude future utility and energy developments, that may interfere with the military purpose, for the duration of the withdrawal outside of this utility corridor. No economic impacts are foreseen because the project area is proximate to other lands in the region that have been evaluated and designated for future utility proposals.

### **8.5 Mineral Resources**

Withdrawal and reservation of the project area would preclude appropriations under the general land laws, including the U.S mining laws and the mineral leasing and geothermal leasing laws for the duration of the withdrawal. No known locatable or leasable mineral deposits were identified in the *Mineral Potential Report* (Sec. 4.1., Mineral Report 2022). Therefore, closing the withdrawal area to operations under the U.S. mining laws and mineral and geothermal leasing laws would unlikely have an adverse economic impact.

## **9. Conclusion**

The Army is providing this *Land Use Report* to support BLM's processing of the application for the requested withdrawal of the approximately 22,000-acre project area, as an expansion of YPG. The additional lands would provide sufficient safety buffer area for parachute air delivery testing.

The land surface is relatively undeveloped, exhibiting natural environmental conditions and vegetation densities similar to adjoining lands with expanses of creosote desert scrub. Water retention depressions or earthen berms, dirt roads and OHV tracks provide the most visible signs of human land use. For the most part land users on these lands are recreationists.

If the requested withdrawal of the project area is enacted by Congress, public surface access, with the exceptions described in Paragraph above, would not be allowed. Access would be controlled

through new entry control signs, and patrols by security officers. YPG currently has no plans to erect new fencing, or gates to control access to the project area.

Natural and cultural resources would be managed by YPG as part of its existing INRMP and ICRMP planning processes. Withdrawal and reservation of the project area would preclude public appropriations under the general land laws, including the U.S mining laws and the mineral leasing and geothermal leasing laws for the duration of the withdrawal.

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