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SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN U.S. BORDER PATROL NACO-DOUGLAS CORRIDOR COCHISE COUNTY, ARIZONA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
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FOR INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN

U.S. BORDER PATROL NACO-DOUGLAS CORRIDOR

COCHISE COUNTY, ARIZONA

May 2003

Lead Agency:
Department of Homeland Security
Headquarters Facilities and Engineering
425 I Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Point of Contact:
Mr. Charles Parsons
Environmental Officer
P.O. Box 30080
24000 Avila Road
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677-0080
Fax 949-360-2985

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROPOSED ACTION:

This document supplements the current and future alternatives analyzed in the Final EA for Infrastructure within U.S. Border Patrol Naco-Douglas Corridor, Cochise County, Arizona (INS 2000), herein referred to as the Corridor EA. This Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) addresses the potential for effects, beneficial and adverse, of proposed infrastructure construction and improvements along the U.S.-Mexico border by the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Border Patrol (USBP).

The Preferred Alternative (Proposed Action) involves infrastructure construction activities that consist of primary and secondary pedestrian barrier fencing, vehicle barrier fencing, roads (all weather patrol, maintenance, and drag), lighting, and associated drainage structures within the USBP Naco and Douglas Stations' Areas of Operation (AO).

PURPOSE AND NEED:

The purpose of the programs and improvements discussed in this SEA is to facilitate USBP law enforcement along the identified section of the U.S.-Mexico border as mandated by Federal laws. The need for these programs is to gain, maintain, and extend control of the U.S.-Mexico border. The major goals of the USBP enforcement strategy and the purpose of the proposed infrastructure components in this document are:

- Deter illegal entries
- Enhance the safety of USBP agents
- Reduce the current enforcement footprint
- Create a defensible and enforceable zone that reduces illegal crossings and drug smuggling operations
- Enhance response time for USBP agents

The USBP's primary function is to detect and deter the unlawful entry of undocumented aliens (UDAS) and smuggling along the U.S. land borders. Deterrence can be created only when certainty of apprehension is achieved. The degree of current illegal activity, in addition to the level of enforcement advantage needed to gain, maintain and extend control of the border are the key factors that represent a strong need for the proposed border infrastructure system. In addition to the purpose and need stated above, the proposed border infrastructure system has been planned in compliance with the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* (IIRIRA) of 1996.

ALTERNATIVES ADDRESSED:

Three alternatives were carried forward in this SEA for detailed analysis of potential impacts to the natural and human environment. They include the No Action, the Preferred Alternative and the Full Build Out Alternative. Other alternatives were considered throughout the development of the SEA, but have been eliminated from further consideration as operationally non-effective and/or non-responsive relative to the spirit and intent of IIRIRA. Those alternatives carried forward are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The No Action Alternative would allow for the planned or current infrastructure projects which were identified in the 2000 Corridor EA. This SEA would suffice as the subsequent NEPA document required by the 2000 Corridor EA Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The infrastructure to be completed under the No Action Alternative include: 14 miles of primary pedestrian fence, 3.25 miles of vehicle barriers, 29 miles of patrol roads upgrade improvements, and 11 miles of permanent lighting.

The Preferred Alternative includes only those infrastructure components that are considered essential to gain and maintain immediate control of the border. This alternative includes various types of infrastructure such as roads, fences, and lights at specified locations throughout the project corridor to develop an effective, safe, and defensible border control system. The infrastructure to be completed within the guidelines of the Preferred Alternative include: 22.4 miles of primary fence and primary fence maintenance roads, 18 miles of secondary fence, 8.2 miles of vehicle barriers, 44.7 miles of patrol roads, 7 miles of maintenance roads, 12.8 miles of drag roads, 60 low water crossings, and 13 miles of permanent lighting. The USBP believes that some areas can be controlled using vehicle barriers rather than fencing. Vehicle barriers would be installed to the maximum extent practicable in lieu of pedestrian fences, based on intelligence data gathered by the USBP.

The Full Build Out Alternative would require major construction activities and involves the combination of primary and secondary fencing, permanent lighting, and upgrades to various roadways across the 49-mile project corridor. The infrastructure to be implemented includes: 30.6 miles of primary fence, 49 miles of secondary fence, 43.8 miles of patrol roads, 46.8 miles of maintenance roads, 43.6 miles of drag roads, 60 new low water crossings, and 31 miles of permanent lighting.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE:

The Preferred Alternative would result in direct impacts to 420 acres of vegetation/wildlife habitat, including 19 acres of floodplain, 5 acres of potential jurisdictional wetlands and 12 acres of Waters of the U.S. Approximately 12 National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible cultural resource sites would be impacted; however, proper mitigation measures would be implemented to ensure mitigation of each impacted site. Approximately 0.2 acres of the spikedace (*Meda fulgida*) and loach minnow (*Tiaroga cobitis*) critical habitat would be impacted as a result of installation of vehicle barriers and low water crossings across the San Pedro River. Withdrawals from the Douglas and Upper San Pedro ground water basins would contribute to the yearly recharge deficit that has been occurring in these basins for some time.

Other impacts associated with this alternative are temporary impacts (i.e., regional income, air quality, noise, etc.) associated with the construction process of the border infrastructure system. Existing conditions of these resources would return upon completion of the proposed project. The indirect beneficial impacts associated with this alternative include reduction and possible elimination of trampling of sensitive habitats, reduced soil erosion, reduced fugitive dust due to USBP operations, and a safer environment in the border region.

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