

# DEFENDING THE MILITARY MISSION

AT THE MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

June 2017

## Fact Sheet 6 of 6

This fact sheet summarizes the information that is presented in more detail in the Sonoran Institute report titled *Evaluating Encroachment Pressures on the Military Mission in the California Desert Region*.

This document should be paired with Fact Sheet 1, which includes recommendations that apply broadly across the five studied military facilities in the California Desert region.

The report is available at <http://www.tiny.cc/CalDesertMilitary>



## The Military Mission and Environmental Health are Intertwined

Since 1952, Marines from across the United States have come to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms (MCAGCC 29 Palms) to train and prepare for combat roles in places around the globe. The MCAGCC 29 Palms is critical to the integrity of the U.S. Marine Corps' training initiatives and the success of U.S. military missions. Ensuring that the integrity of the facility and its contribution to the California Desert economy is critical. According to the MCAGCC 29 Palms, it provides an economic impact estimated to be \$1 billion, which equates to 52% of all the employment and 62% of all economic activity in the Morongo Basin. Additionally it provides about 2,000 civilian jobs, houses 11,000 active duty military personnel, and hosts about 400 contractors—total annual salary and wages from the facility equal about \$500 million per year. (pg. 14)

## Key Findings and Recommendations

An analysis of MCAGCC 29 Palms and the surrounding area identified the following concerns that may present a current or reasonably foreseeable encroachment threat. Each key finding is referenced by number in the map.

### Urban Development is expected to result in indirect encroachments (pg. 23)

1. Anticipated development should not directly impair the continuation of military uses around the MCAGCC 29 Palms.
2. Development poses a continued risk to the habitat linkages for plants and animals located on private lands in the communities of Twentynine Palms, Joshua Tree, and Yucca Valley.

### Recommendations:

- Engage proactively in local land-use planning and economic development efforts to identify compatible uses, activities, and businesses.
- Support the efforts of land conservation entities in pursuing federal funding assistance for acquisition and/or protection of corridors.





- Proactively engage in ground water resource planning with the surrounding communities to promote sustainable urban planning and water use.

**Renewable Energy is not expected to result in significant encroachment (pg. 34)**

3. Renewable energy development remains a concern, careful evaluation of energy projects can eliminate the potential for interference with low-level flight training, electromagnetic interference, constraints on water resources, and reduction of training areas.

**Electrical Transmission is expected to result in indirect encroachment (pg. 42)**

4. The development of multiple transmission lines could interrupt important wildlife connectivity
5. Transmission infrastructure is known to facilitate additional off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and the propagation of invasive species that can alter the fire regime and damage ecological integrity.

**Recommendations:**

- Participate in the regional review of West-Wide Energy Corridors.
- Proactively work to discourage the development of significant infrastructure in mapped wildlife corridors and/or adjacent habitat blocks.

**Mining Activity is expected to result in indirect encroachment (pg. 52)**

6. Mining activity could present challenges to the long-term viability of the local ecology through additional habitat fragmentation and the use of limited water resources.
7. If significantly expanded, mining operations near the MCAGCC 29 Palms could present additional demand for housing and urban development that could further impair wildlife connectivity around the installation.

**Recommendation:**

- Advocate for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to evaluate the withdrawal of appropriate public lands from new mining exploration.

**Recreation Activity is expected to result in direct encroachment (pg. 61)**

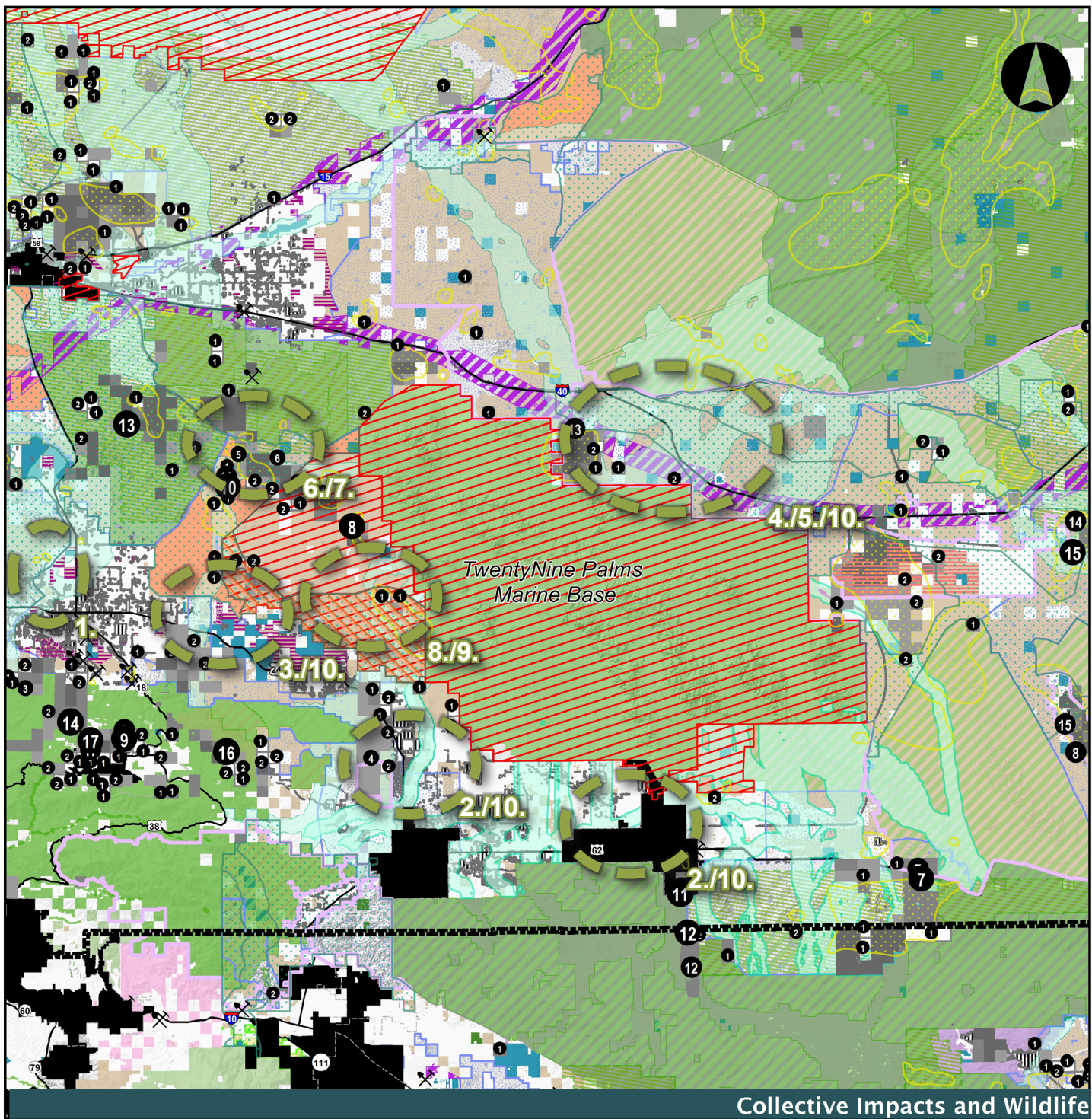
8. OHV recreation is an encroachment risk due to trespassing of users into training areas.
9. OHV-use areas could contribute to degradation of habitat for important species that share the landscape, which would create an indirect impact to the facility.

**Recommendations:**

- Work closely with the BLM to manage recreation activities adjacent to the military installation boundaries.







#### Legend

- Cal Desert Counties
- Military Facility
- Major Roads
- National Monuments
- City Limits 2010
- Urban Areas
- Impervious Built-up Land

- Recreation management areas
- Johnson OHV Shared Area
- Open OHV Areas
- West-wide Energy Corridor Development
- Focus Area (All Technologies)

- Variance Process Lands
- DRECP Variance Process Lands
- Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- Wildlife Linkage
- Wilderness Area
- Critical Habitat
- Wildland Blocks

- California Lands Association
- BLM
- USFS
- NPS
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Native American Reservation
- Other Federal
- State
- Private

- City
- County
- Number of active mining claims
- 1 - 2
- 3 - 6
- 7 - 17
- 18 - 122
- High Potential
- Mineral Locations
- Active Mines





- The wildlife corridors around the MCAGCC 29 Palms should be managed to reduce the impact of recreational activities.

**Natural Resource Management is expected to result in indirect encroachment (pg. 73)**

10. The installation faces a range of challenges from urban development, renewable energy siting, and OHV activities contribute to the fragmentation of habitat and the removal of viable biological connectivity.

**Recommendations:**

- Update the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) in association with the BLM's development of RMPs for the new Sand to Snow and Mojave Trails National Monuments.
- Provide leadership for Mojave desert tortoise's conservation to increase the population of breeding adults in the wild.
- Support the BLM as they develop the RMP for the new national monuments nearby in order to prevent additional degradation and incompatible uses in the area.
- Continue participating in the Desert Managers Group, to forward ongoing collaboration with regional military facilities and other interested parties around natural resource issues.

To learn more about our efforts to preserve military missions through environmental stewardship, visit our website or contact:

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## The Mission of the Sonoran Institute

The Sonoran Institute's mission is to connect people and communities with the natural resources that nourish and sustain them. We work at the nexus of commerce, community, and conservation to help people in the North American West build the communities they want to live in while preserving the values which brought them here. We envision a West where civil dialogue and collaboration are hallmarks of decision making, where people and wildlife live in harmony, and where clean water, air, and energy are assured.

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