

DEFENDING THE MILITARY MISSION

AT NAVAL AIR WEAPONS STATION CHINA LAKE

June 2017

Fact Sheet 2 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

Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) China Lake was founded by the U.S. Navy in 1943 and provides land to support the Navy's research. The facility covers more than 1.1 million acres with north and south ranges divided by a segment of land. NAWS China Lake is the Navy's largest single landholding, and it represents 85% of the Navy's land for training use and 38% of the Navy's land holdings worldwide. The infrastructure's value is roughly \$3 billion, and is comprised of 2,132 buildings and facilities. Also, it currently employs 620 active duty military, 4,166 civilian employees, and 1,734 contractors that work onboard the installation. (pg. 13)

Key Findings and Recommendations

An analysis of NAWS China Lake 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 on page 3.

Urban Development is expected to result in indirect encroachments (pg. 18)

1. Historic and future development and agricultural activities are using groundwater resources that have contributed to the Indian Wells Valley basin's critically overdrafted status. This is a serious sustainability issue for the base and surrounding communities.

Recommendation:

- 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 encroachment (pg. 26)

2. Though some renewable energy projects will likely occur in the vicinity of NAWS China Lake, it is unlikely that there will be encroachment provided that there is sufficient scrutiny of individual projects as they are proposed.



Recommendation:

- Care needs to be taken to ensure that each new renewable energy project is evaluated to prevent encroachment pressures on the military mission capabilities from occurring.

Electrical Transmission is expected to result in indirect encroachment (pg. 36)

3. West-Wide Energy Corridors (WWECS) are proposed and occur in airspace that is used by military activities.
4. The expansion footprint of new transmission lines or an increase in their height in the WWECS presents a concern about the biological adaptability of the facility.

Recommendations:

- Participate in the regional review of West-Wide Energy Corridors
- Encourage regional transmission planning to focus future development in areas of least impact to natural resources and biological connectivity.

Mining is expected to result in indirect encroachment (pg. 45)

5. Small-scale mining activity and areas with mineral potential occur between the two ranges of the facility.

6. The significant scope of mining activity south may not pose a direct source of encroachment on military missions, but may cause indirect pressure on NAWS China Lake.

Recommendation:

Encourage the Bureau of Land Management to evaluate the withdrawal of appropriate public lands from new mining exploration around the NAWS China Lake ranges.

Recreation Activity is expected to result in indirect encroachment (pg. 55)

7. A designated BLM open off-highway vehicle (OHV) area south of the facility is remote enough to reduce the likelihood of trespassing and other direct encroachment concerns.

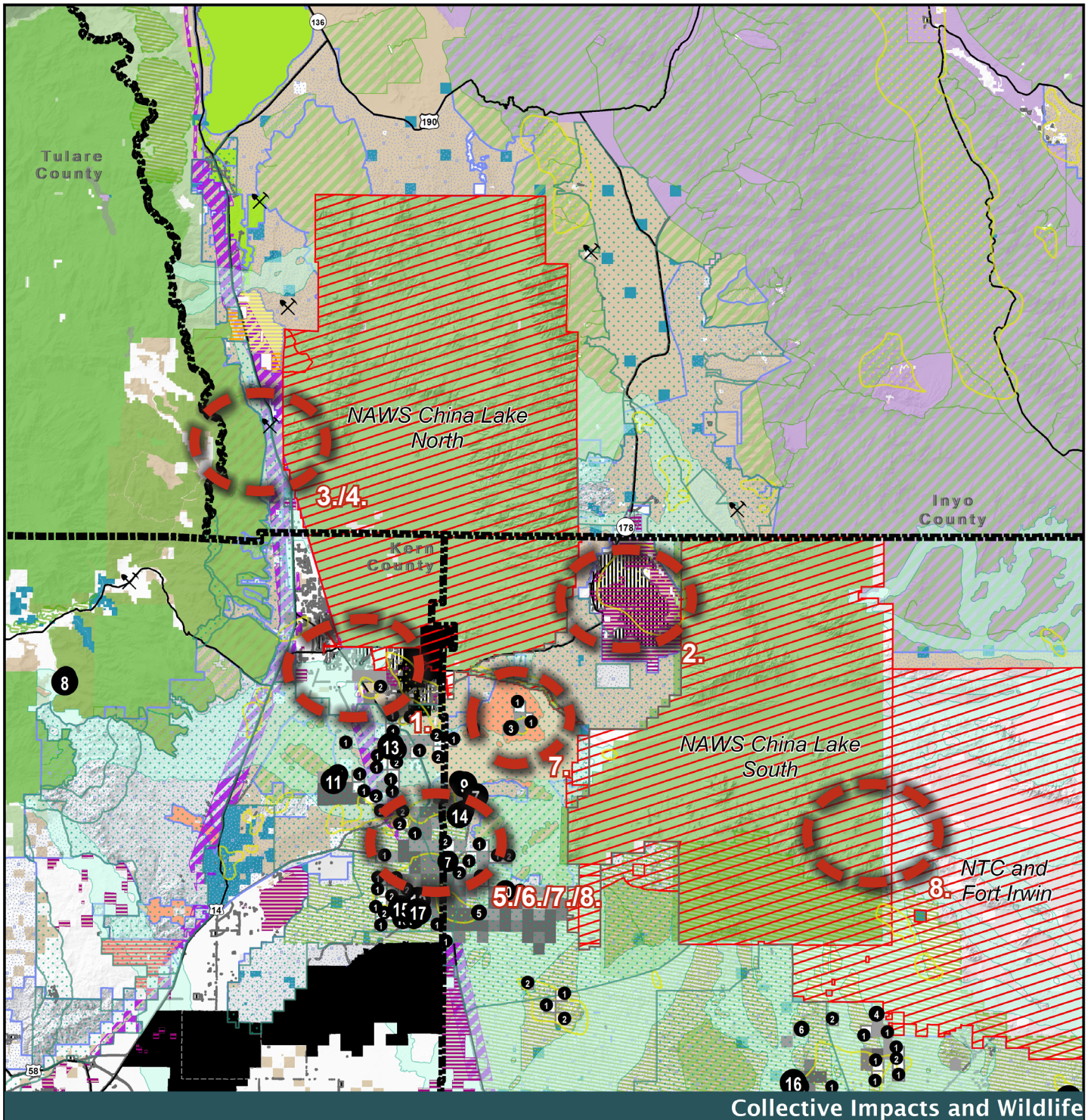
Recommendation:

- The wildlife corridors around NAWS China Lake should be managed by the BLM to reduce the impact of recreational activities.

Natural Resource Management is expected to result in indirect encroachment (pg. 65)

8. NAWS China Lake is an important component of preserving the habitat and ecological character of the California Desert, in part since it hosts over a million





1:750,000

Legend

Cal Desert Counties	Open OHV Areas	Area of Critical Environmental Concern	Native American Reservation	High Potential Mineral Locations
Military Facility	West-wide Energy Corridor Development	Wildlife Linkage	State Private	Active Mines
Major Roads	Focus Area (All Technologies)	Wilderness Area	City	
City Limits 2010	Geothermal	Critical Habitat	County	
Urban Areas	Solar and Geothermal	Wildland Blocks	Number of active mining claims 1 - 2	
Impervious Built-up Land	Variance Process Lands	California Lands Association	Number of active mining claims 3 - 6	
Recreation management areas		BLM	Number of active mining claims 7 - 17	
		USFS	Number of active mining claims 18 - 122	
		NPS		



acres of habitat, but also due to the biological connectivity that passes through the facility from Fort Irwin National Training Center.

9. Though better situated than most other California Desert facilities with respect to urban, mining, and recreation-based encroachment pressures, the facility should continue to enhance its viability by addressing the noted concerns in this report.

Recommendations:

- Monitor natural resource management activities and policies and keep the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) up to date.
- Continue to participate in planning and activities that serve to protect the Mojave Desert tortoise.
- The installation should be considered, and even integrated by the BLM as an important regional stakeholder in the preservation of flora and fauna to the broader region, as it may be that current BLM management policies are insufficient to achieve this goal.
- Continue active participation in the Desert Managers Group, to forward ongoing collaboration with regional military facilities and other interested parties around natural resource issues.
- Continued participation in the development of the state-mandated Groundwater Management Plan that seeks to eliminate unsustainable water use and large-scale groundwater extraction projects in the Indian Wells Valley and adjoining aquifers.

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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