

**DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**U.S. ARMY GARRISON**  
**FORT GORDON, GEORGIA**

**Introduction**

Fort Gordon is situated in east-central Georgia, 9 miles southwest of the City of Augusta. It encompasses portions of Columbia, Jefferson, McDuffie, and Richmond counties, but lies primarily within Richmond County. Fort Gordon is subdivided into 49 training areas, two restricted impact areas, a main cantonment area, and an industrial cantonment area. Fort Gordon is approximately 55,590 acres, of which 5,590 acres are the main cantonment area, 13,000 acres are impact areas, and 37,000 acres are on-Post maneuver and training areas.

The Fort Gordon Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) coordinates the Integrated Training Area Management program, ecosystem management, and military training at Fort Gordon to ensure the sustainable use of training lands, maintenance and improvement of natural resources, protection of Federally protected species, and education of the users of the lands on Fort Gordon. The goal of the INRMP is to implement an ecosystem-based conservation program that provides for conservation and rehabilitation of natural resources in a manner consistent with the military mission; integrates and coordinates all installation natural resources management; provides for sustainable multiple uses of natural resources; and allows controlled public access for enjoyment of natural resources, subject to safety and military security considerations.

The (2015) INRMP for which this supplemental environmental assessment (SEA) has been prepared is a revision of the INRMP that was implemented at Fort Gordon in 2008. Notable changes in the 2008 INRMP that drive this revised SEA include:

- Changes to the 2008 Endangered Species Management Component (ESMC);
- Changes in the Army's list of Species at Risk (SAR), three of which require

special consideration at Fort Gordon;

- Changes in the list of “target species” that Fort Gordon monitors and manages;
- Fort Gordon assuming control of the Gillem Enclave, outside of Atlanta;
- Minor changes to public access and outreach.

An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared for the implementation of the original 2001 INRMP at Fort Gordon and an SEA was completed for the 2008 INRMP.

### **Purpose and Need**

The purpose of implementing the revised and updated INRMP is to provide a basis for managing the entire range of natural resources at Fort Gordon over the next five-year planning period (Fiscal Years (FY) 2014-2018). The INRMP lists important natural resource management goals and objectives and describes specific activities and projects that will be carried out to achieve these goals and objectives. The INRMP was originally prepared in 2001 and has been revised and updated twice, in 2008 and 2015, in compliance with the requirements of the Sikes Act (Title 16, United States Code 670) and the Sikes Act Improvement Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-85).

### **Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives**

**Proposed Action:** The United States Army Garrison, Fort Gordon proposes to implement the (2015) INRMP at Fort Gordon, Georgia. Implementation of an INRMP is a Federal mandate, authorized and funded by the U.S. Congress. Managed lands at Fort Gordon are currently managed in accordance with the INRMP prepared in 2008. The Sikes Act Improvement Amendment requires Department of Defense (DoD) installations to review their INRMPs every 5 years and update as necessary. The Proposed Action is in response to the mandated 5-year review.

**Alternatives Considered and Evaluated:** Because implementation of an INRMP is a Federal mandate, authorized and funded by the U.S. Congress, the only practical alternative is to comply with the mandate by implementing an INRMP. A No Action

Alternative was included as required by the CEQ regulations to identify the existing baseline conditions against which potential impacts were evaluated.

- **Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative):** Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative) is to implement the (2015) INRMP during the next five-year planning period (FY 2014 through 2018). The goals and objectives of the revised INRMP are essentially the same as those of the 2008 version, centering around the restoration of native ecosystems, the enhancement of biological diversity, the conservation of rare and endemic species, and the development of productive working relationships with resource agencies and interested members of the public. As in previous planning cycles, the installation's natural resources would be managed using an ecosystem-based management philosophy. The most notable changes in the (2015) INRMP concern the management guidelines for Fort Gordon's red-cockaded woodpeckers (RCW) as laid out in the Endangered Species Management Component of the document.
- **Alternative 2 - No Action Alternative:** Under the No Action Alternative, Fort Gordon would continue to manage natural resources under the INRMP that has been in place since 2008. Since there would be no change in resource management or to policies and procedures governing this management, this alternative is defined as the No Action Alternative.

## **Environmental Analysis**

**Environmental Consequences and Comparison of Alternatives:** The SEA, which is attached hereto and incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI), examined the potential effects of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1: INRMP Implementation) and No Action Alternative on seven resource areas and areas of environmental concern: geology and soils; water resources; floodplains and wetlands; ecological resources; cultural resources; land use; and infrastructure, utilities and facilities. Implementation of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1: INRMP Implementation) would result in a combination of short and long term impacts. It would likely result in positive impacts on soils and ecological resources. Potential negative impacts would be expected to surface water; wetlands; and archaeological resources.

Many of these impacts would be temporary and relatively minor. All impacts, short and long term, would be less than significant. The SEA identifies impact reduction measures (e.g. avoidance, best management practices (BMPs), and environmental compliance) to minimize potential environmental impacts.

**Cumulative Impacts:** Cumulative impacts result from the incremental effect of separate past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on the environment, regardless of what agency or person undertakes those actions. They can accrue from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over an extended period of time. Taken individually, environmental damage is incremental, occurring one action at a time. However, determining the significance of the collective actions requires an understanding of their effect on the larger environment.

Projects occurring on Fort Gordon (in addition to the Preferred Alternative) would be required to follow the BMPs described in the SEA. If these BMPs are properly implemented and maintained for each project, there would be only minor cumulative impacts. When necessary, appropriate state and federal agencies would be consulted, and impacts on the respective resources would be avoided by following the agency recommendations.

### **Public Review and Comments**

The SEA and draft FNSI were made available to federal, state, and local agencies and the public for review and comment for 30 days. A Notice of Availability for the SEA and draft FNSI were published in the *Augusta Chronicle*. During the public review and comment period, copies of the SEA were made available at the Fort Gordon Public Affairs Office (Building 33720, Darling Hall, Chamberlain Ave., Fort Gordon, GA), Woodworth Library (Building 33500, Rice Road, Fort Gordon, GA), and the Augusta-Richmond County Library (823 Telfair St., Augusta, GA). During and immediately following this public comment period, the Army collected, logged, and incorporated any comments received into the SEA and FNSI as necessary. The Army will prepare and release a final FNSI and SEA to the appropriate local, state, and federal repositories after receiving all comments. The signed FNSI and SEA will remain on record with the Fort Gordon, DPW, Environmental Division Office.

## **Finding of No Significant Impact**

The results of the analysis in the SEA, comments received within the public review period, and the needs of Fort Gordon have been considered by the Fort Gordon garrison. Based on these factors, the decision is to implement the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1: INRMP Implementation). Implementation of the Proposed Action will not have a significant impact on the quality of human life or natural environment.

This analysis fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), as well as the requirements of the Environmental Analysis of Army Actions (32 CFR 651). Therefore, issuance of a FNSI is warranted, and an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

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TODD TURNER  
Colonel, AV  
Commanding

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Date