



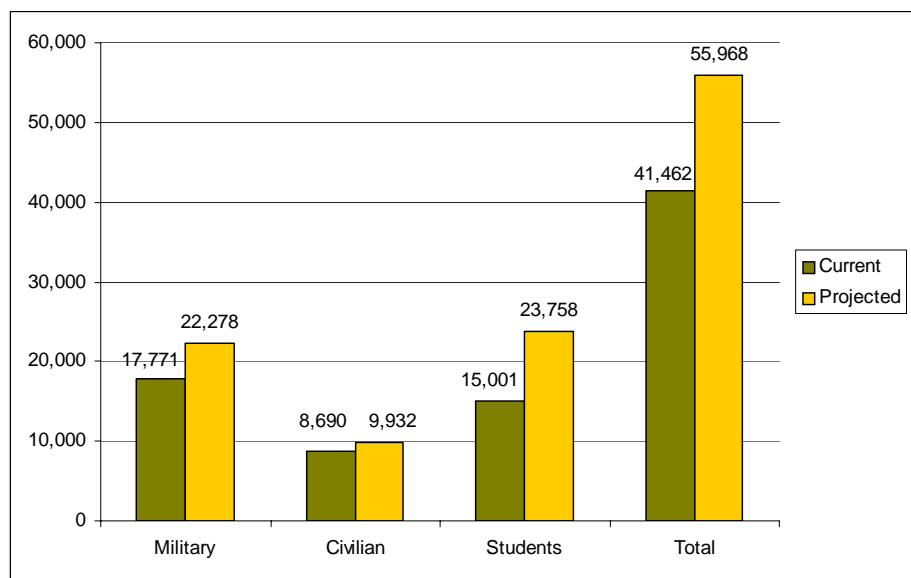
FORT BENNING TRANSFORMATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Department of Defense is reorganizing installation infrastructure to more efficiently and effectively support its force structure, increase operational readiness, and facilitate new ways of doing business. To meet these objectives, the U.S. Army is undergoing transformation activities that include: 1) the 2005 mandated Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC)-directed actions; 2) BRAC-discretionary actions; 3) the Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy (IGPBS) overseas restationing movements; 4) the Army Modular Force (AMF) initiative; and 5) other normal stationing activities in accordance with Army stationing regulations. All five of these strategic activities are interrelated to such an extent that they are, in effect, a single course of action or “Transformation.” Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the Army NEPA Regulation (32 Code of Federal Regulations Part 651), the Army is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the potential impacts of this proposed Transformation action at Fort Benning, Georgia.

The Proposed Transformation Action

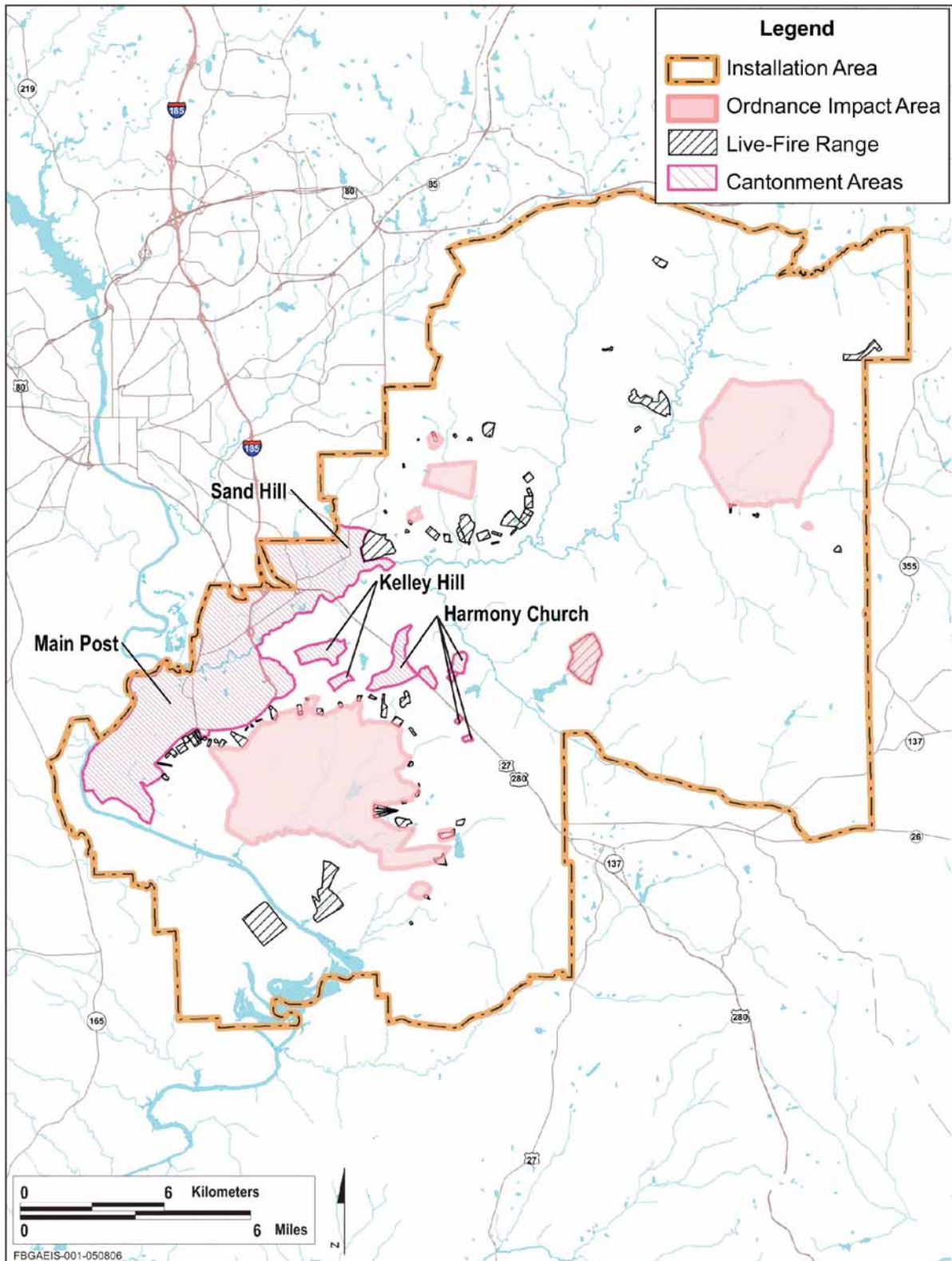
The underlying purpose for the Army’s proposed action is to implement the Transformation action (BRAC, IGPBS, AMF, and other stationing activities) at Fort Benning. The overarching need for the proposed Transformation action is to improve the ability of the United States to respond rapidly to challenges of the 21st century. The Army is legally bound to defend the Nation and its territories, support national policies and objectives, and defeat nations responsible for aggression that endanger the peace and security of the United States. To carry out these tasks, the Army must adapt to changing world conditions and must improve its capabilities to respond to a variety of circumstances across the full spectrum of military operations—this proposed Transformation action meets these U.S. Army goals.

To meet the various missions associated with the proposed Transformation action, the Army would provide the training and operational support at the Installation (both in the cantonment and range areas). This support includes, but is not limited to construction of: training ranges (e.g., rifle and machine gun, urban and engineer assault courses), Abram tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle maneuver areas, and facilities (headquarters/administrative offices, barracks, dining/lodging facilities, instructional classrooms, vehicle maintenance buildings, motor pools). In addition, construction and/or upgrades to road and utility infrastructure would occur to support all these activities. Once all Transformation activities are complete, there would be an approximate 35 percent increase (i.e., 14,506) in Fort Benning personnel (military, civilian, and student). The chart to the right provides an overview of personnel increases anticipated under the proposed Transformation action.



Estimated Gain in Fort Benning Personnel

All construction and/or upgrades would occur within Fort Benning boundaries (see figure below), which consist of approximately 181,275 acres of Army-managed land south of Columbus, GA and Phenix City, AL. Implementation of the proposed Transformation action would require construction, demolition, renovation, addition, and infrastructure improvements throughout the Fort Benning cantonment areas. Training range and maneuver area construction and/or refurbishment would occur across the approximate 170,500 acres set aside for such training and maneuvering activities.



Fort Benning Cantonment and Training Ranges

The proposed new facilities (in both the cantonment and range areas) were sited to:

- coincide with or complement existing missions, facility operations, and functions;
- use existing infrastructure to the greatest extent possible;
- minimize impacts to the environment (e.g., avoid sensitive species habitat); and
- locate Transformation activities on previously disturbed/developed locations.

There are more than 100 projects proposed under this Transformation EIS. The majority of these projects (about 85 percent) support BRAC-related activities within the cantonment areas and ranges. AMF initiatives account for about 16 percent of the total and other stationing actions for about 7 percent. Currently, there are no new IGPBS-specific construction activities proposed. Over the entire Installation, this Transformation proposal would introduce about 640 acres of land-disturbing activities in the cantonment areas and ranges. No action would be taken until the Record of Decision is signed in August 2007, necessary permits have been obtained, and applicable agency and Tribal agreements are in place. Construction and related activities are scheduled to continue through 2012.

An Overview of the National Environment Policy Act

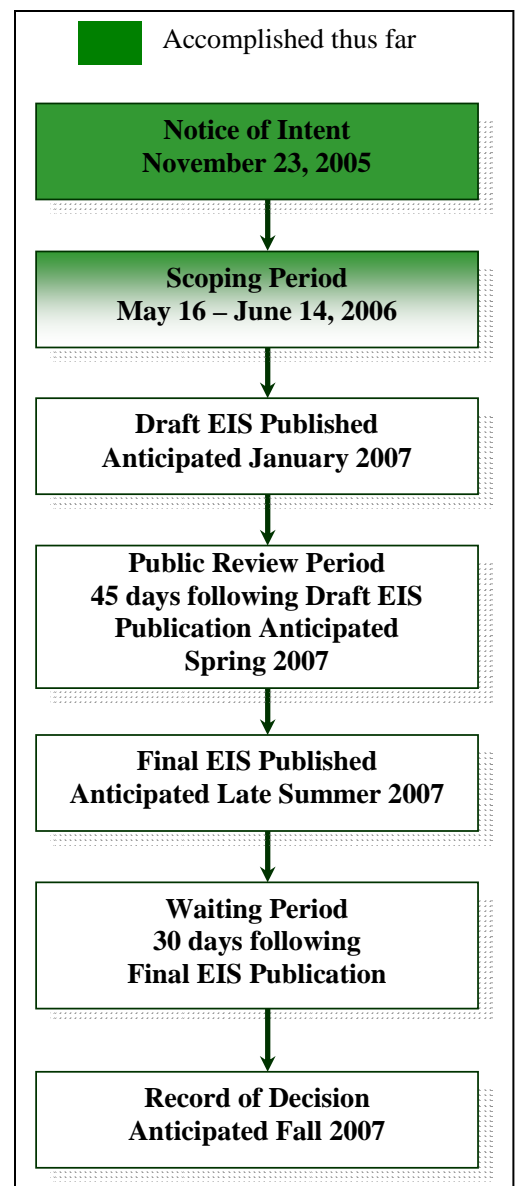
The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is the national charter for promoting productive harmony between humans and the environment and minimizing the impacts of federal actions. This law requires all federal agencies to consider potential environmental impacts in making decisions about those actions, thus this EIS. Public involvement is an essential part of the NEPA process and assists in the EIS analyses. Through involving the public and completing detailed environmental analysis, the NEPA process helps the decision-maker arrive at the best possible informed decision.

Informed Decision Making is Crucial

Informed decisions are based on a candid and factual presentation of environmental impacts. The Army is seeking public input as well as assistance in identifying reasonable alternatives. To prepare the EIS, the Army will collect data, conduct research, and analyze potential effects of the proposed action on the affected environment. Resources such as socioeconomic, transportation, noise, air and water quality, cultural resources, and potential effects on protected species will be examined. The type and extent of impacts resulting from the proposed Transformation action and any alternatives will be identified and the degree to which these impacts might potentially affect resources (directly, indirectly, and cumulatively) will be determined. In addition, appropriate mitigation measures for adverse impacts will be proposed.

The Environmental Analysis Process

The NEPA process began when the Army published a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* on November 23, 2005. This Notice announced the Army plan to conduct an EIS for the Fort Benning Transformation action. The scoping period began on May 16, 2006 with the announcement of the scoping meeting in the *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*. Although comments will be accepted throughout the NEPA process, the Army encourages submitting scoping comments no later than June 14, 2006 to ensure they are given full consideration in the EIS. During the scoping period, preparation of the EIS begins. Scoping comments, research, agency and tribal consultation, and various studies contribute to completion of the Draft EIS.



Once the Draft EIS is completed, it will be published and its availability announced in the *Federal Register* and local newspapers. This initiates the official 45-day public comment period. At this time, copies of the Draft EIS will be sent to federal, state, and local agencies, American Indian Tribes, and to those citizens expressing an interest in receiving a copy. An electronic version of the Draft EIS will also be available for downloading and review at: http://www.infantry.army.mil/EMD/_program_mgt/legal/index.htm. A public meeting will be held approximately 2 to 3 weeks following the Draft EIS publication. Through the comment process and at the meeting, the public will have the opportunity to express their concerns about the analyses and conclusions presented in the Draft EIS.

Following the 45-day public comment period, preparation of the Final EIS will begin. At this time, all relevant comments will be evaluated and the Final EIS revised (if necessary) to include consideration of these comments. Upon publication of the Final EIS, its availability will be announced in the *Federal Register* and local newspapers, and a 30-day waiting period will begin. Following this waiting period, the Record of Decision will be published and announced in local newspapers. This document will present the Army's decision regarding the Fort Benning Transformation proposal.

Why Scoping is Important?

Scoping is just one of the tools used by the Army to obtain public input during the NEPA process. The goal of this process is for the Army to make informed decisions about their actions that could potentially affect the environment. The Army then uses the input received during the scoping period to help identify issues for analysis. Issues raised during the scoping period are given full consideration and substantive and applicable issues will be addressed in the Draft EIS. In a sense, scoping helps guide the environmental studies conducted by the Army for the EIS.

However, scoping is not the only time when public input is critical to the NEPA process. Public input will also be solicited and a public meeting held following the Draft EIS publication. Comments on the Draft EIS help shape the final document and play an important role in determining the most suitable proposal for Army Transformation activities and the environment at Fort Benning.

The Public Scoping Period

By participating in the scoping process, the public helps Army representatives: identify public issues and concerns, define the scope of analysis, and identify reasonable alternatives. The public can provide input by:

1. Attending the open house scoping meeting, anytime between 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, 23 May, at the Founders Hall (Room 141) at the Elizabeth Bradley Turner Center, Columbus State University, or
2. Submitting written comments any time during the public scoping period that began on May 16, 2006 and ends June 14, 2006.

Written comments should be sent to Mr. John Brent (Fort Benning Environmental Management Division) at the address below. Although the Army will accept comments throughout the NEPA process, we recommend that scoping comments be sent by June 14, 2006 to ensure equitable consideration in the Draft EIS analysis.

**Mr. John Brent, Fort Benning Directorate of Public Works
Environmental Management Division
Bldg #6 (Meloy Hall), Room 310, Fort Benning, GA 31905**

Please note that scoping materials (e.g., display posters, comment and fact sheets, advertisement) may be downloaded from: http://www.infantry.army.mil/EMD/_program_mgt/legal/index.htm.