

boaters in the waters north of Tinian. Therefore, Alternative 2 would result in less than significant impacts to public access during training events.

4.1.4.2 Construction

Because there would be no difference in the proposed facilities between Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, construction impacts would be the same for Alternative 2 as described for Alternative 1.

4.2 Land Use and Recreation

4.2.1 Approach to Analysis

The analysis of land use and recreation impacts focuses on the compatibility and consistency of the Proposed Action with existing land use plans and policies and recreational uses in and outside of the Military Lease Area.

Compatibility and consistency with existing land use plans, policies, and other agreements was analyzed by comparing land use and management under the Proposed Action to the requirements of: (1) *The Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America* (The Covenant), which was approved and became effective on March 24, 1976; (2) the *Technical Agreement Regarding Use of Land to Be Leased by the United States in the Northern Mariana Islands* (Technical Agreement) signed on February 15, 1975; (3) the 1983 Lease Agreement, subsequently amended in 1988, 1994, 1999, and 2023, (4) the 1999 Conservation Agreement in relation to Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion 1-2-98-F-07 and signed in conjunction with the 1999 Lease Amendment, and (5) the 2019 Commonwealth Ports Authority Lease as amended in 2023. This analysis considered proposed land uses identified in the 2019 CNMI Public Land Use Plan Update as the baseline for comparison. Analysis of impacts to recreation considered restrictions on public access to the Military Lease Area from training, along with potential disruptions from construction activities.

4.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, impacts of training on land use would continue consistent with The Covenant, Technical Agreement, and leases. Public access for recreation would not change. As a result, there would be no impact on land use or recreation.

4.2.3 Alternative 1

4.2.3.1 Compatibility and Consistency with Existing Land Use Plans and Policies

Training

Under Alternative 1, the entirety of the Military Lease Area would be used as a training area. Training events would continue and would increase over the No Action Alternative by approximately 15 percent. Ground and aviation training events that would occur in the Military Lease Area would be the same or similar to those currently authorized for Tinian under prior environmental analyses. Alternative 1 would expand training infrastructure to include two live-fire ranges (Multi-Purpose Maneuver Range and an Explosives Training Range), improvements to North Field, 13 Landing Zones throughout the Military Lease Area, and the establishment of a Base Camp, surface radar towers, and other supporting infrastructure.

Non-live-fire training could occur throughout the Military Lease Area. Live-fire training would only occur in the Multi-Purpose Maneuver Range and the Explosives Training Range. No training areas would include the former Tinian Mortar Range and designated areas to protect natural and cultural resources (Figure 4.2-1). Should the proposed Atgidon Landfill site be constructed and permitted, no training would be allowed in that area.

Proposed training in the Military Lease Area and creation of a Live-Virtual-Constructive training environment would be compatible and consistent with Sections 802 and 803 of the Covenant, the Technical Agreement, and the 1983 Lease Agreement, as amended. The Covenant and these agreements specifically provide that the Military Lease Area on Tinian is made available to the U.S. to enable it to carry out its defense responsibilities. In addition, the two proposed live-fire ranges would be located wholly within Military Lease Area, remote from the residential and commercial land uses in the village of San Jose.

The use of 110 acres of cleared area within the former USAGM property for a Base Camp would be consistent with the authorized military use of the Military Lease Area. Training in the Military Lease Area under Alternative 1 would be compliant with existing agreements and would be consistent with the Comprehensive Public Land Use Plan Update (CNMI Department of Public Lands 2019) which identifies this area as set aside for military use and not for public uses.

Some of the proposed Landing Zones and the Base Camp well fields were specifically sited to avoid existing agricultural uses. In addition, the closest training area to the southern Military Lease Area border, Landing Zone 1, is approximately 1.5 miles from private residential property and the potential future homesteads planned for the Kastiyu and Carolina neighborhoods.

Three project components would be located outside of the Military Lease Area: the aircraft shelter, the biosecurity site, and communication towers on Saipan. The aircraft shelter would be consistent with adjacent land uses of the U.S. Air Force Divert airfield facilities and TNI. The biosecurity site at the Port of Tinian would be in an area that is designated as Grant of Public Domain Land and would require a new lease or other agreement with the CNMI Commonwealth Ports Authority. The biosecurity site would function to prevent the spread of invasive pests from incoming vessels. Therefore, the biosecurity site would be compatible with other uses along the port frontage.

The USAGM site on Saipan already contains communications equipment and additional communication equipment at the site would be compatible with the existing land use. Once USAGM functions cease at the Saipan site, a new lease from the CNMI would be required for this location, which is designated as public land.

As described above, project components both inside and outside of the Military Lease Area would be compatible and consistent with existing land use plans, policies, and agreements and would not result in changes to land uses. As a result, training under Alternative 1 has no impact to land use plans and policies.



Figure 4.2-1 Restricted (No Training) Areas Within the Military Lease Area

Construction

Construction of facilities and vegetation clearing under Alternative 1 would not occur within current agricultural areas in the Military Lease Area or near the future homestead areas planned in the Kastiyu and Carolina areas located outside of the Military Lease Area. Existing land use plans and policies allow for construction of military facilities within the Military Lease Area. Therefore, construction and vegetation clearing activities would be compatible and consistent with existing plans. Construction of the aircraft shelter would require negotiation of additional rights under the 2019 Commonwealth Ports Authority lease and amendment of the TNI Airport Layout Plan. The biosecurity site at the Port of Tinian would require negotiation of additional rights with the Commonwealth Ports Authority but would be located on land that has already been cleared, would be compatible with existing surrounding port uses, and would not impede use of the small boat ramp and marina. Placement of additional communication equipment at the former Saipan USAGM site would be consistent with the existing communications infrastructure at the site.

Proposed Landing Zones 2 and 6 (both 600 feet by 600 feet), a new access road to Landing Zone 6 (24 feet wide by 458 feet in length), and a new access road to the Explosives Training Range (24 feet wide by 2,800 feet in length) would be constructed within the 936-acre Natural Resources Conservation Area (Figure 4.2-2). Approximately 19 acres, or 2 percent of the conservation area land use would be affected by the Landing Zones and roads. This impact to the Natural Resources Conservation Area would be coordinated through consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Habitat impacts are discussed in Section 4.4 Biological Resources.

With successful adoption of new leases and agreements, Alternative 1 construction would be compatible and consistent with existing land use plans and policies and would not result in changes to land use within or outside the Military Lease Area. Therefore, the impact to land use would be less than significant.

4.2.3.2 Recreation

Training

Under Alternative 1, training would continue and would increase over the No Action Alternative by approximately 15 percent, resulting in temporary restrictions on public access to portions of the Military Lease Area. These temporary restrictions could affect visitors' ability to participate in recreation activities within training areas that are temporarily closed for training events. For example, training events conducted on the Multi-Purpose Maneuver Range would result in the temporary closures of land and sea space within the surface danger zones. These closures could affect access to, and use of, recreation sites such as cultural sites, public coastal areas (in-water and shoreline areas), scenic viewpoints, and beaches located within those surface danger zones. During these temporary closures, visitors and boaters would still have access to other beaches, scenic viewpoints, cultural sites, and fishing locations for recreation use. Surface danger zones would not impact popular dive sites around the island (Figure 4.2-3). However, when the Multi-Purpose Maneuver Range is active, boaters may need to traverse around the surface danger zone.

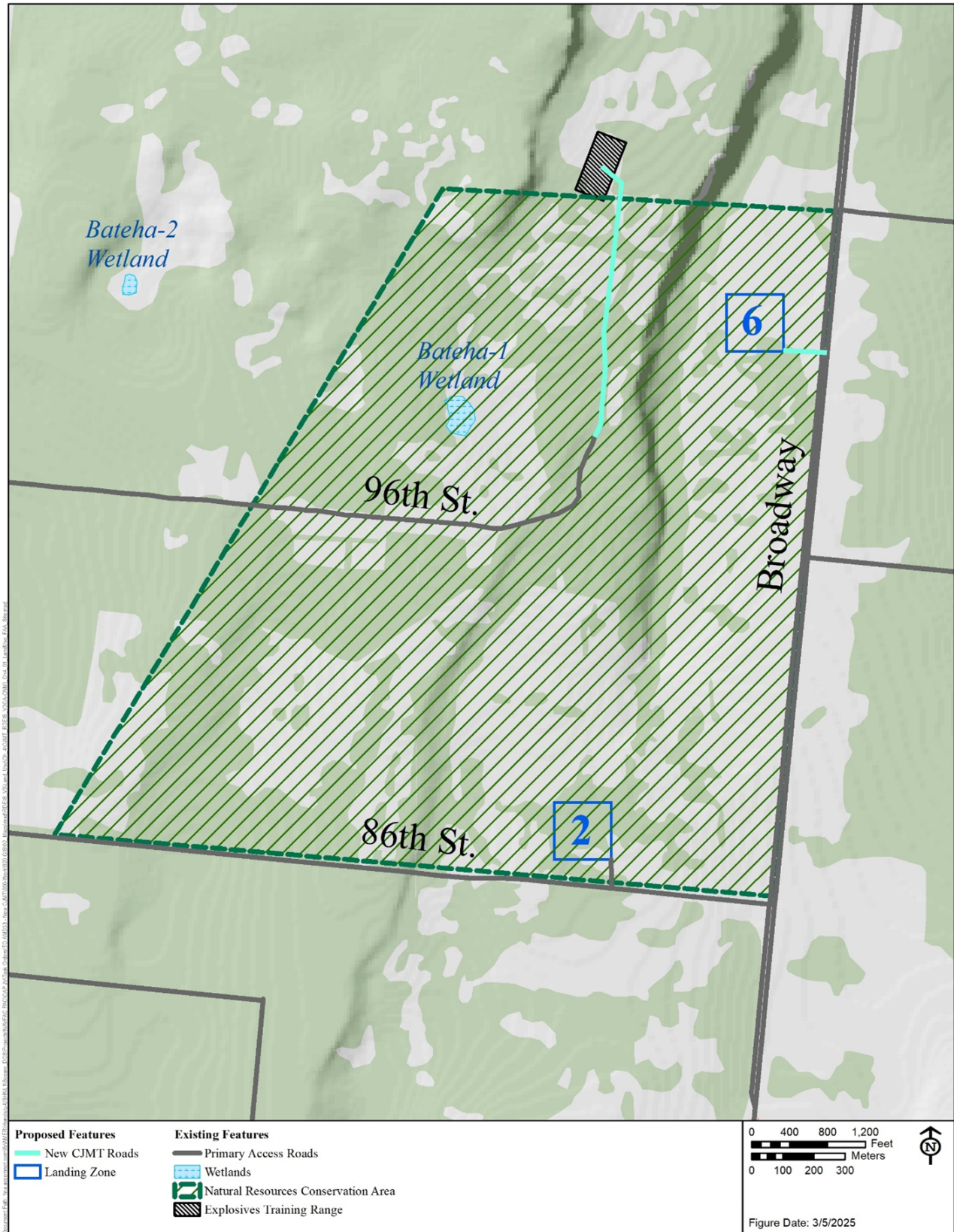


Figure 4.2-2 Proposed Action Features Within the Natural Resources Conservation Area



Figure 4.2-3 Proposed Action Features Near Tinian Dive Sites

Though recreation sites may be open and accessible during training events, the presence of training personnel or equipment may alter the experience for visitors at shrines and memorials, cultural sites, shoreline fishing areas, beaches, and scenic viewpoints. The presence of personnel and/or equipment near any one recreation site would be intermittent and would temporarily change the ability of visitors to participate in public recreation uses. However, there would be other recreation areas unrestricted to the public. As a result, training under Alternative 1 would result in less than significant impacts to recreation.

Construction

Construction under Alternative 1 would not change public recreation uses. However, construction activities, particularly at the Multi-Purpose Maneuver Range, Explosives Training Range, and surface radar sites, may affect visitor experiences at recreational, cultural, or scenic sites where there is a natural and undeveloped recreational setting. These construction impacts under Alternative 1 would be intermittent and temporary, resulting in a less than significant impact on recreation.

4.2.4 Alternative 2

4.2.4.1 Compatibility and Consistency with Existing Land Use Plans and Policies

Training

Under Alternative 2, training would continue and would increase over the No Action Alternative by approximately 5 percent, which is approximately 10 percent less than Alternative 1. Therefore, like Alternative 1 training, Alternative 2 training would also be compatible and consistent with existing land use plans, policies, and agreements and would not result in changes to land uses. Training under Alternative 2 would have no impact to land use plans and policies.

Construction

There would be no difference in facilities construction between Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, so construction impacts would also be less than significant for Alternative 2. Alternative 2 construction impacts would be compatible and consistent with existing land use plans, policies, and agreements and would not result in changes to land use in the Military Lease Area.

4.2.4.2 Recreation

Training

Alternative 2 training would continue and would increase over the No Action Alternative by approximately 5 percent, which is approximately 10 percent less than Alternative 1. This would result in the public experiencing a decrease in the frequency and duration of temporary access restrictions to areas within the Military Lease Area compared to Alternative 1. No other changes to training, including location and types of training, would result from Alternative 2. Alternative 2 would result in less than significant impacts to recreation during training events.

Construction

There would be no difference in facilities construction between Alternative 1 and Alternative 2. Therefore, construction impacts to recreation would also be less than significant for Alternative 2.