FINAL

FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE

Tertiary Wastewater Treatment Plant at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center

INTRODUCTION

The Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command (MAGTFTC) prepared this Final Finding of No Practicable Alternative confirming compliance with Executive Order (E.O.) 11988 – *Floodplain Management* and E.O. 11990 – *Protection of Wetlands*, issued pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. Ch. 55) and applicable to all levels of analysis. In addition, this FONPA provides associated regulatory determinations, including use of a NEPA categorical exclusion (CATEX). The documents discussed herein are incorporated by reference.

PROJECT AREA

Located at the Combat Center in eastern San Bernardino County (Mojave Desert), the approximate 210-acre project includes the existing wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) site and its ponds (200 acres) and the nearby Ocotillo Golf Course irrigation ponds (10 acres).[1] The WWTP site overlaps a portion of the approximate 570-acre Mesquite Lake dry playa. See Figures 1 to 2.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Combat Center needs a WWTP that – complies with current environmental regulations, is economically and technologically feasible to construct, and is sustainable to operate. Additional specific criteria that informed the development of alternatives are listed below.

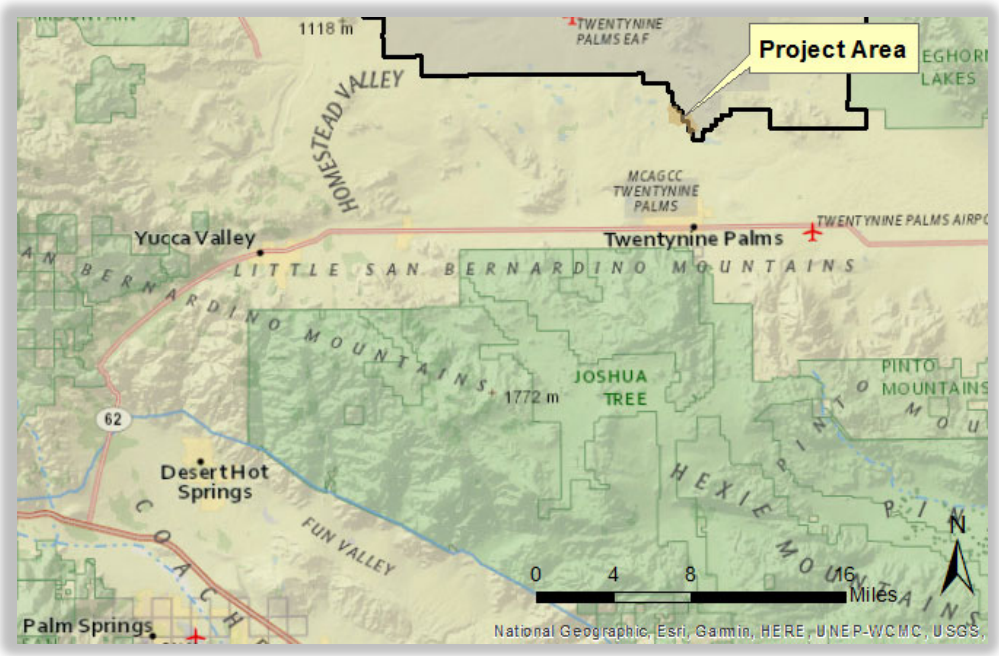
- Provide facilities to reliably treat wastewater per state requirements (22 California Code of Regulations, Division 4, Chapter 3, *Water Recycling Criteria*).
- Provide facilities that are easy to operate and maintain.
- Provide odor control to minimize the potential for odors to migrate offsite.
- Provide storage and pumping for recycled water.
- Treat solids to federal Class B standards (40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 503, *Standards for the Use or Disposal of Sewage Sludge*).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Proposed Action was determined to be the only practicable alternative. Other alternatives considered, but dismissed, are summarized below.

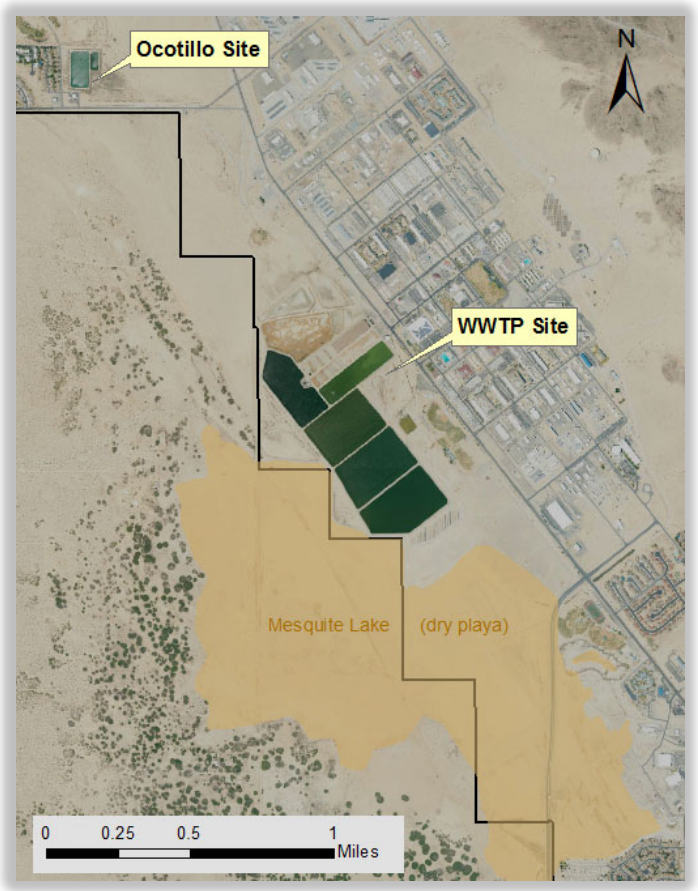
- No Action. MAGTFTC cannot meet current and emerging regulatory standards or reuse treated wastewater with 1950 treatment technology.
- Renovation/Modernization. Components of the current wastewater plant cannot be modernized due to its outdated 1950 treatment process.
- Lease/Privatize Operations. There is no municipality within 50 miles that can support the Combat Center. The City of Twentynine Palms is constructing a WWTP for its needs only.[2]
- New Location Outside of Dry Playa. This alternative was not carried forward due to the significant cost increase and environmental impacts that would occur with developing a new (undisturbed) location, including the need to install new utility lines and connections.

[1] The FONPA is based on available information in documents and geospatial data (minor variations may exist).
[2] For more information, see https://www.ci.twentynine-palms.ca.us/wastewater.



Source: ESRI (National Geographic) and Combat Center geospatial data (September 12, 2023).

Figure 1 – Vicinity Map



Source: Combat Center geospatial data (September 8, 2023). Not all existing ponds are filled.

Figure 2 – Project Area

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action involves constructing a new WWTP capable of treating up to 3 million gallons of wastewater per day, with a reduced footprint at the existing WWTP site. Approximately 5 – 10 acres of Ponds 2 and 3 would be used for the new WWTP. Incidental work would occur at the Ocotillo Golf Course irrigation ponds and to connect the new facilities and infrastructure at both sites to existing water and electrical lines. Pond A (approximately 20 acres) would remain to support the new WWTP. See Figures 3 to 5.[3] Notable aspects of the proposed action are summarized below. For operational security, detailed design drawings are not available for public review per Marine Corp Order 3070.2.

Pre-Construction Activities:

- Demolish infrastructure (e.g., structures, pump station, utility segments, pavement, etc.).
- Disconnect the existing system from the existing waterlines.
- Set up a staging area at the northern extent of Ponds 2 and 3.
- Drain and decommission Ponds 1, 2, 3, C, D, G, H, and the Ocotillo ponds. Water would be transferred to the new WWTP for treatment/reuse per existing permit requirements.
- Build up a portion of Ponds 2 and 3, with soil fill from existing borrow pits at the Combat Center, to elevate the area 2 feet above the 100-year flood level.

Construction Activities:

- WWTP. Construct new facilities to support the new treatment process: preliminary treatment (e.g., screening and grit removal), followed by secondary treatment (e.g., anoxic and aerobic processes using bioreactors, clarifiers, and pump systems), and ending with tertiary treatment (e.g., filtration and chemical disinfection). Sludge generated would be open air dried in sand for 3 months, resulting in Class B solids that could be disposed in the Combat Center landfill.
- New Above Ground Storage Tanks. A 1.5-million-gallon above ground storage tank (AST) for recycled water would be installed at the WWTP site, with Pond A containing any overflow. At the Ocotillo site, recycled water pumped from the WWTP would be stored in another 1.5-million-gallon AST, constructed on the former Ocotillo ponds, with the existing non-potable well used as a back-up for irrigation water.
- Infrastructure. The WWTP and Ocotillo sites would tie into the Combat Center's existing waterlines, (minimal replumbing) and 12.47kV and 4.16kV electrical infrastructure (site infrastructure tied-in to existing poles). Gravel access routes would be established, as needed, with a perimeter fence at the WWTP site.

Restoration of Ponds. MAGTFTC is evaluating restoration options for the approximately 150 to 155 acres of ponds that would be decommissioned (remainder of Ponds 2, 3; Ponds 1, C, D, G, H; and the Ocotillo ponds). The area could be left for water retention, backfilled and allowed to re-vegetate naturally, or involve more extensive restoration activities.[4]

Recycled Water Use. Treated wastewater would be stored in ASTs and used for washing down the WWTP, irrigating the golf course, and any other non-potable water needs at the Combat Center.

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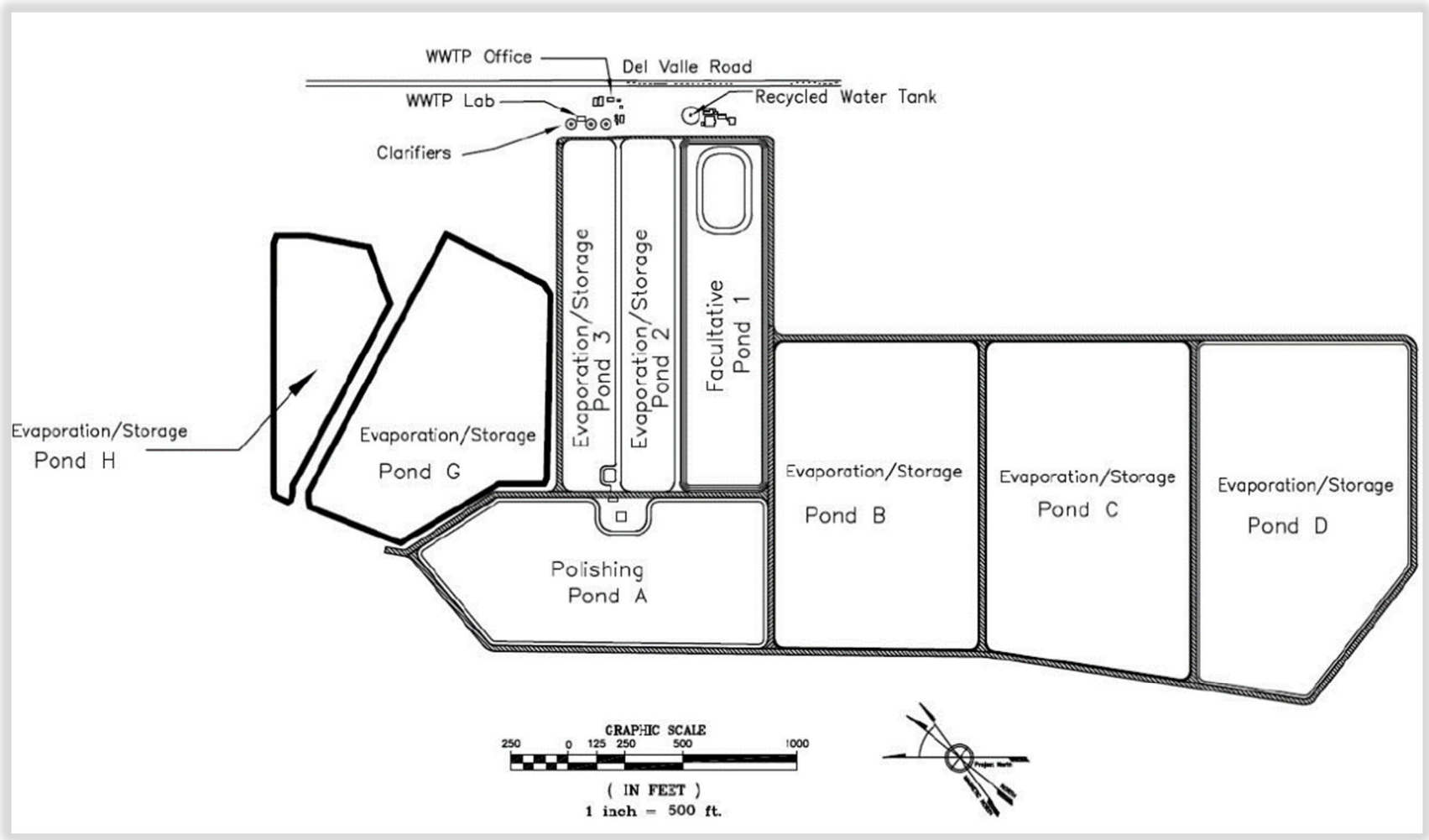
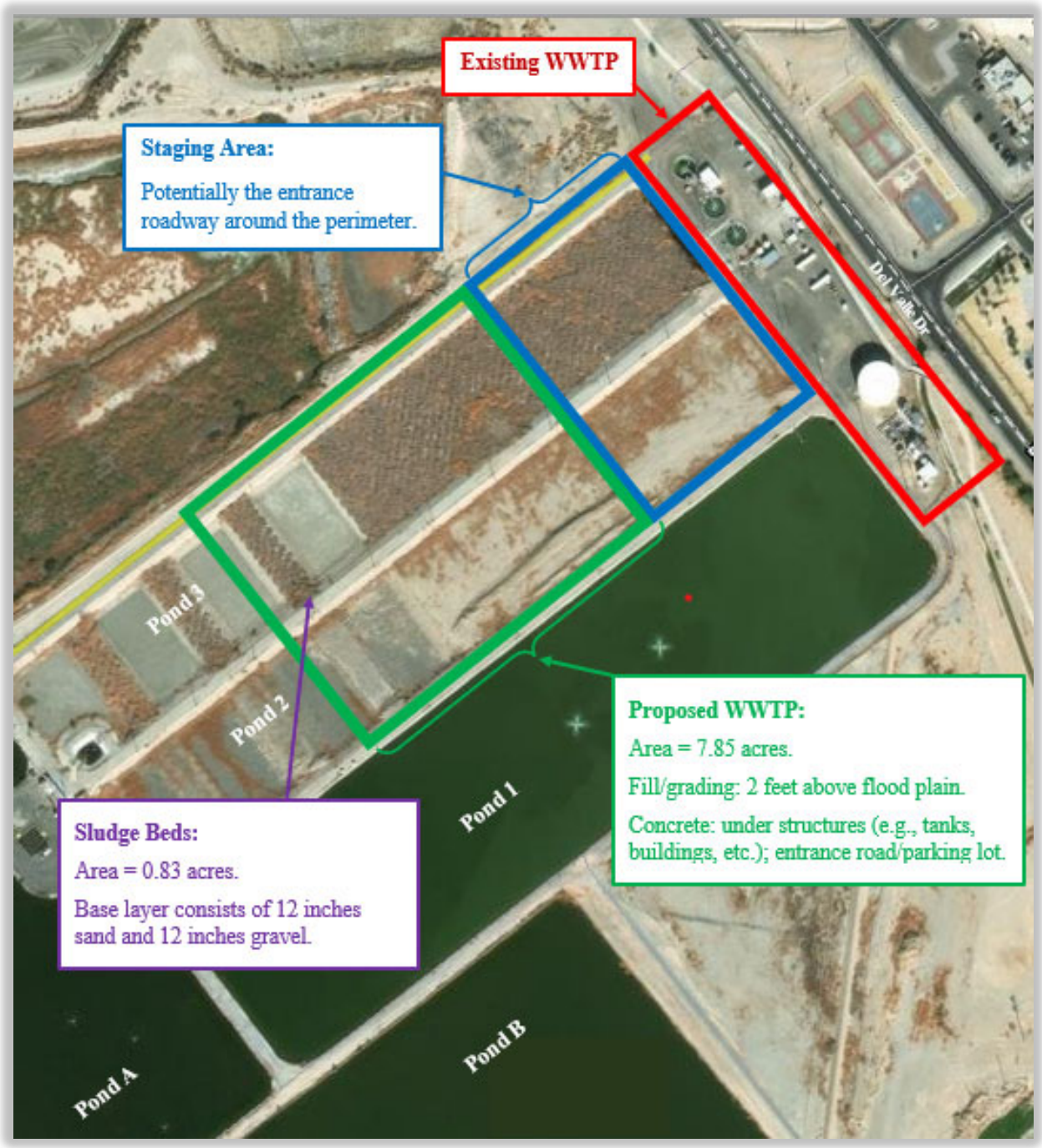
[3] Per geospatial data, the total acreage of the existing WWTP ponds is approximately 160 acres. Pond 1 = 13 acres; Pond 2 = 8 acres; Pond 3 = 8 acres; Pond A = 20 acres; Pond B = 26 acres; Pond C = 28 acres; Pond D = 27 acres; Pond G = 20 acres; and Pond H = 9 acres.

[4] Future natural resource management projects may be authorized under NEPA CATEX 45 (32 CFR §775.6(f)(45).



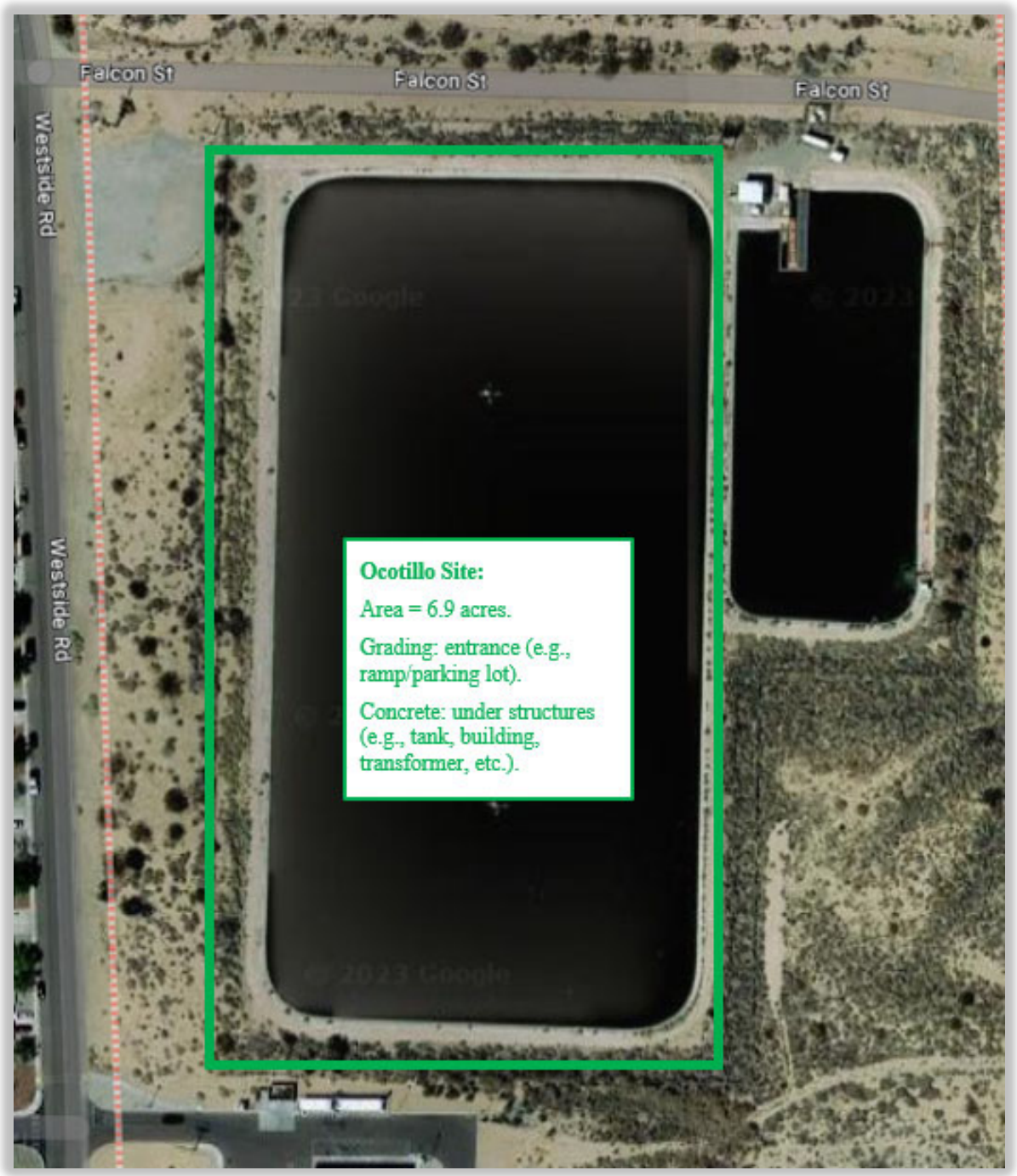
Source: Order R7-2020-0003 (https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/coloradoriver/board_decisions/adopted_orders/).

Figure 3 - Existing WWTP Layout



Source: Preliminary design drawing overlay on Combat Center geospatial data (September 14, 2023).

Figure 4 – Proposed WWTP Site Layout



Source: Preliminary design drawing overlay on Combat Center geospatial data (September 14, 2023).

Figure 5 – Proposed Ocotillo Site Layout

FLOODPLAIN CONSIDERATIONS

Available data indicates the WWTP site was constructed on the Mesquite Lake dry playa in the early 1950s (Photo 1). The playa receives drainage from areas within the larger 138,000-acre watershed and the WWTP site could be inundated by a 100-year flood at 1768.5 feet above sea level (Figure 6). Despite the potential flood risk, the site has not been totally inundated by any precipitation event, in recent history, including recent tropical storm Hilary in August 2023 (only ponding observed).[5]

Because there are no practicable alternatives to siting the new WWTP in a floodplain (see *Alternatives Considered*), compliance with E.O. 11988 would require elevating the new WWTP above the 100-year flood level by soil fill. Accounting for the 200-year or 500-year flood level[6] would be impracticable and not a wise use of federal funds. The Combat Center's developed area and its subsurface infrastructure may be in the 200-year or 500-year floodplain. While historic flooding of the developed area has occurred, [7] there has not been any recent flooding issue in the developed area or project area, including the precipitation from recent tropical storm Hilary. This suggests that the Combat Center's existing stormwater management infrastructure is effective and that the changing climate may result in more extreme weather events, but not necessarily increased precipitation (see *Climate Change*).

Executive Order 13690, *Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input*, was reinstated by Executive Order 14030, *Climate-Related Financial Risk*, and amended E.O. 11988 to include a national security exception. MAGTFTC can rely on the 100-year flood level for mission critical requirements related to a national security interest and is not required to adhere to the *Federal Flood Risk Management Standard* discussed under E.O. 136090.[8] The applicability of the national security exception and the level of flood protection needed for the proposed action would be confirmed during project design, which is underway. If the proposed action is designed based on the 100-year flood event scenario, it is possible that other floodproofing features could be integrated into the design. This would ensure installation operations, including training, would not be impaired because of constructing a utility in a floodplain.

Consistent with E.O. 11988, the proposed action's demolition and construction activities would not result in new or increased impacts to the playa, compared to existing conditions. This is because, the new WWTP would – occupy a smaller area of the existing site, with any adverse effects to the playa having already occurred during initial development (circa 1950s); be elevated above the base flood level by soil fill (protecting the facility); involve restoring some existing ponds (promoting natural functions); be located on the dry portion of the playa, northeast of the fault line and with a greater depth to groundwater where water quality is preserved by the overlying hard clayey-silt loam soils (see Photo 1). In addition, the proposed action is not anticipated to result in increased flood hazards to adjacent communities (e.g., military housing and City of Twentynine Palms). This is based on – the effectiveness of Combat Center stormwater channels directing flow away from developed areas and towards the playa; minimal flooding of playa in recent history; the sand dunes along the playa's

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[5] Floodplains are not mapped at the Combat Center, thus, best available data for compliance with the executive orders includes a 1993 delineation of Mesquite Lake and use of geographic information systems to estimate flood levels.

[6] A critical action exists if the risk of flooding would be too great. For example, where flooding could render important utilities inoperable. See guidance document at: https://www.energy.gov/nepa/articles/floodplain-management-guidelines-implementing-eo-11988-water-resources-council-1978.

[7] Floods in the 1970s and 1990s affected some buildings in the developed area of Mainside, north of the project area.

[8] See recent guidance document at: https://www.fema.gov/floodplain-management/intergovernmental/federal-flood-risk-management-standard.

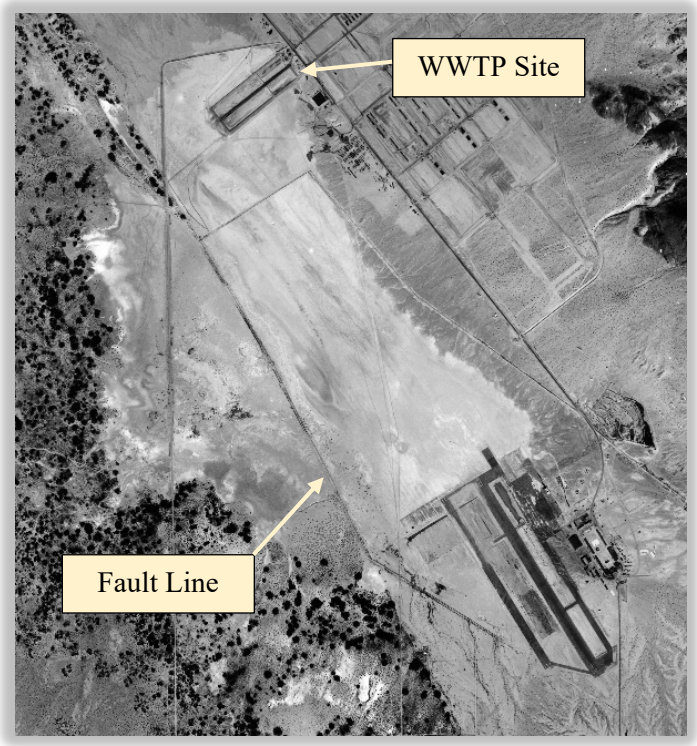
southwest boundary may slow or stop off-site flow; limited development outside the Combat Center boundary; and the effectiveness of the City of Twentynine Palms stormwater channels to redirect flow.

WETLAND CONSIDERATIONS

Available data indicates that the project area, including the dry playa and man-made ponds, may contain wetlands within the scope of E.O. 11990 (see Figure 7). The authority for E.O. 11990 is NEPA, but its definition of wetland aligns with the Clean Water Act. Prior Waters of the U.S. delineations (1993 and 1994) confirm the playa has an ordinary highwater line, some wetland indicators (e.g., vegetation and hydrology), but is not a three-parameter wetland (no hydric soils). Despite this, the playa may provide some functions attributed to wetlands to include flood storage, sediment and nutrient trapping, wildlife values, and groundwater recharge in the wet portion of the playa (southeast of the fault line in Photo 1).

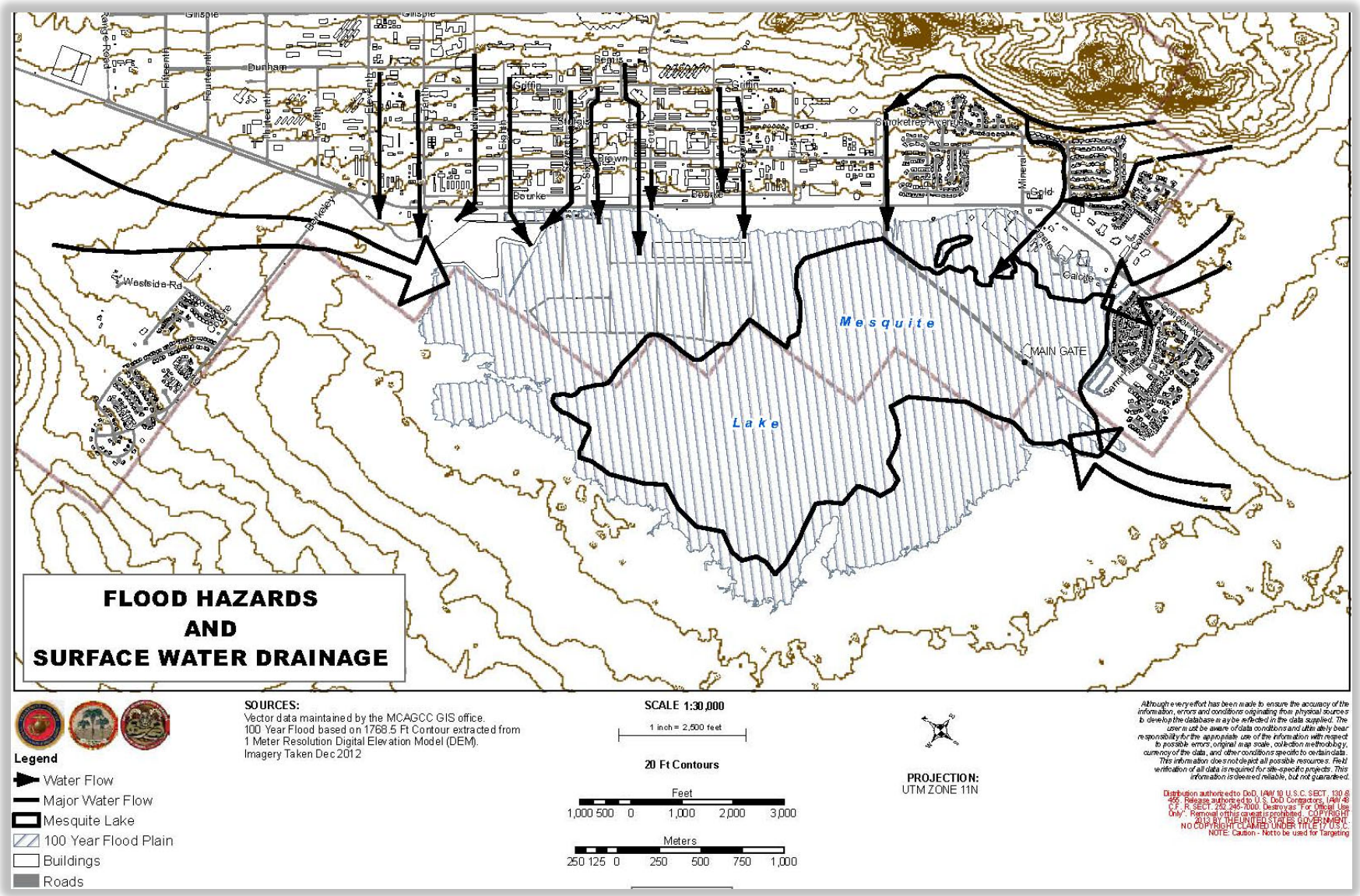
For the same reasons discussed under *Floodplain Considerations*, there is no practicable alternative for implementing the proposed action in the dry playa.

Consistent with E.O. 11990, the proposed action's demolition and construction activities would not result in new or increased impacts to the dry playa or any portion that may have some characteristics of wetlands and provide some wetland functions. This is because the new WWTP would occupy a smaller area of the existing site that is already disturbed from initial development (circa 1950s) and soil fill would only be used in a portion of Ponds 2 and 3 (footprint of new WWTP). The artificial wetlands (man-made ponds) that would be drained at the WWTP and Ocotillo sites are not federally regulated (see *Clean Water Act*). Despite this, MAGTFTC would obtain a state permit to ensure protection of water resources (see *Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act*).



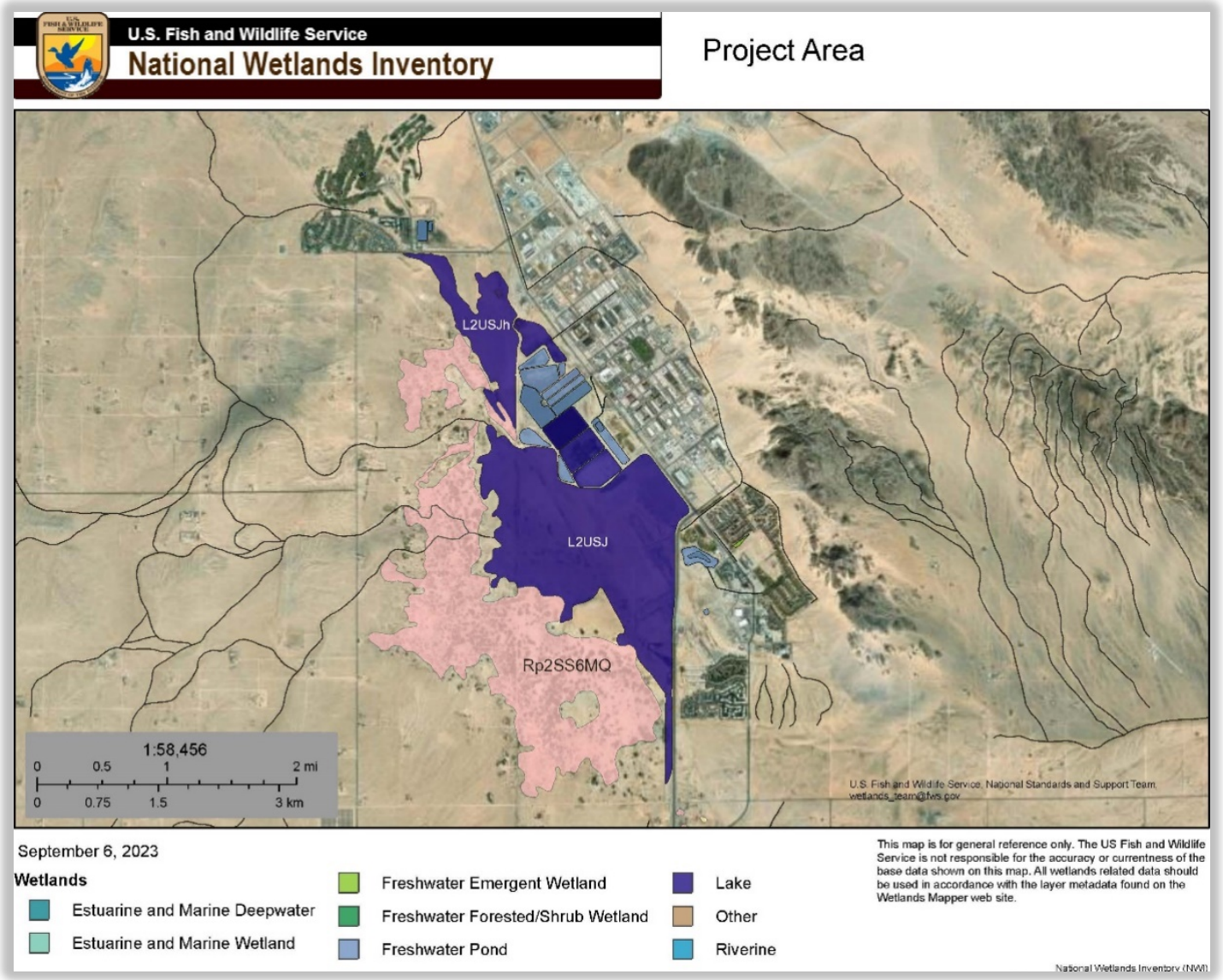
Source: U.C. Santa Barbara (https://www.library.ucsb.edu/geospatial/aerial-photography).

Photo 1 – Mesquite Lake (1952)



Source: Combat Center geospatial data (August 2023).

Figure 6 – Area Potentially Subject to Inundation by Base Flood Levels



Source: National Wetlands Inventory (https://fwsprimary.wim.usgs.gov/wetlands/apps/wetlands-mapper/).

Figure 7 – Project Area Wetlands

OTHER REGULATORY DETERMINATIONS

Endangered Species Act (ESA). Implementing the proposed action in the existing area of disturbance (project area) would result in "no effect" to the desert tortoise. However, desert tortoise exclusion fencing would be required around the project area and periodically monitored per the current version of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Field Manual (Gopherus agassizii)*.[9] This is based on the project's year-round duration and that the project area is located adjacent to undeveloped areas where tortoise have been observed, including the areas in and around Ocotillo housing, the golf course, and along Morongo Road to the west of the project area. Once the proposed action is complete, MAGTFTC would monitor the effectiveness of vector control built into the proposed action (see *Natural Resources*). While the proposed action would reduce some existing water subsidies by removing man-made ponds, benefiting the tortoise, the new WWTP may result in a new subsidy (sludge drying beds), benefiting tortoise predators (e.g., ravens and coyotes). Based on future findings, MAGTFTC may implement WWTP-specific mitigation consistent with MAGTFTC's efforts under the Recovery and Sustainment Partnership Initiative.[10]

Clean Air Act (CAA). The proposed action conforms to Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District Rule 2002 (General Federal Actions Conformity) and is exempt from the Conformity Determination requirements, because emissions are below the *de minimis* threshold for all applicable pollutants. For additional details, see the Record of Non-Applicability in Enclosure (1). The proposed action would comply with all other relevant rules (e.g., fugitive dust, generators, etc.), which would be confirmed during the project design process.

Clean Water Act (CWA). Implementing the proposed action in the existing area of disturbance (project area) would not require a CWA permit under Section 402 or Section 404; thus, there is no requirement for a state water quality certification under Section 401. This is because the dry playa and artificial wetlands (man-made ponds) are not Waters of the United States and thus not regulated under the CWA, as confirmed in a 2018 jurisdictional determination.[11]

Climate Change (E.O. 13653, 13990 & 14008). Implementing the proposed action in a floodplain is not anticipated to result in impacts to the new facilities or infrastructure, or effects to the floodplain itself considering climate change predictions. In the Mojave Desert, there may be more extreme weather events (e.g., flash floods) but precipitation is not anticipated to increase.[12] Because the project area has not flooded in recent history (just ponding) and precipitation is not anticipated to increase under a changing climate, elevating the new WWTP above the 100-year base flood level would be sufficient (see *Floodplain and Wetland Considerations*). With regards to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the proposed action, there would be a short-term increase in GHG emissions during the construction phase and a decrease in GHG emissions during the operational phase. Based on available data, it was conservatively estimated that the proposed action would generate an average of 937 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO_2e) per year during the construction phase. This can be equated to the annual energy use of 118 homes or driving 209 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles per year. Operational emissions were determined using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency calculation methodologies with the assumption that the plant would be operating 24 hours per

[9] Available at: https://fws.gov/media/desert-tortoise-field-manual.

[10] For more information, see the 2022 Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) for Common Raven Management and 2023 Supplemental EA for Ongoing and Future Actions, at: https://www.29palms.marines.mil/Staff-offices/Environmental-Affairs/.

[11] Available at: https://permits.ops.usace.army.mil/orm-public (DA # SPL-2012-00589-SLP).

[12] See 2023 Supplemental EA, Ch. 3.3, at: https://www.29palms.marines.mil/Staff-offices/Environmental-Affairs/.

day, 365 days per year at maximum capacity (3,000,000 gallons treated per day). It was conservatively estimated that the proposed action will generate 3,547 metric tons of CO_2e per year.[13] Most of these emissions (2,408 metric tons of fugitive CO_2e) are attributed to fugitive emissions associated with the treatment process. A direct comparison of overall operational emissions cannot be made due to limited available data, but fugitive emissions associated with the wastewater treatment process are estimated annually.[14] In calendar year 2021, it was estimated that the existing WWTP generated 6,249 metric tons of fugitive CO_2e. Despite the increase in throughput associated with the proposed action, the annual fugitive emissions are expected to decrease by approximately 3,841 metric tons CO_2e. This reduction can be equated to removing 855 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles from the road each year. The reduction in fugitive emissions can be attributed to utilizing a more efficient treatment process; anaerobic treatment processes, such as lagoons, emit substantially more methane.[15] Therefore, the proposed action would result in an overall reduction in GHG emissions, an environmental benefit.

Environmental Justice & Protection of Children (E.O. 12898, 13045, 13296, 14008 & 14096). To minimize off-site impacts to the adjacent communities, including sensitive receptors and environmental justice populations, construction noise would be limited to standard working hours per the City of Twentynine Palms' municipal code (7 a.m. to 7 p.m. excluding Sundays and Federal holidays; from May through September, construction activities can begin at 6 a.m.),[16] fugitive dust emissions managed per applicable MDAQMD Rules (see *Clean Air Act*), and spill response protocols would be in place prior to the operations (see *Safety*). This would ensure no disproportionate adverse health or safety risk to sensitive receptors, including environmental justice populations and children.

NEPA. The proposed action is within the scope of CATEX #33 – new construction within the existing WWTP site and Ocotillo Golf Course irrigation ponds and tying in to existing electrical and water utilities; consistent with existing land uses; and implemented per applicable environmental regulations (32 CFR §775.6(f) (33)). As explained in this FONPA, there are no extraordinary circumstances that preclude the use of a CATEX or suggest use of a CATEX is improper (32 CFR §775.6(e)). EAs have been required for projects in the project area in 1994 and 2015 but it was due to complex scope *(Non-Potable Water System Improvements and Recreation Complex)* and new development in the dry playa (*Construction, Operation, and Decommissioning of a Solar Photovoltaic System)*, respectively.

National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 consultation for the proposed action was completed in September 2022, with a determination of no adverse effect to historic properties. The California State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the determination. MAGTFTC would notify the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians of any inadvertent discovery, as requested.

Natural Resources. Based on available data, the dry playa and artificial wetlands (man-made ponds) provide habitat values to a variety of wildlife, notably birds and aquatic invertebrates (e.g., fairy shrimp). Most bird species occurring at the Combat Center are non-resident and the invertebrates are not ESA-listed. After tropical storm Hilary (August 2023), water ponded in the dry playa and birds were observed foraging. While the proposed action would drain most of the existing ponds, Pond A and the remainder of the dry playa would continue to provide habitat values to resident and migratory

[13] U.S. EPA Greenhouse Equivalencies Calculator, at: https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator#results.

[14] MAGTFTC annually calculates fugitive emissions associated with the WWTP as part of the required Comprehensive Emissions Inventory Report.

[15] See e.g., Global Methane Initiative, 2013. Municipal Wastewater Methane: Reducing Emissions, Advancing Recovery, and Use Opportunities, at: https://www.globalmethane.org.

[16] Article 4, Ch. 19.80, Noise Control, https://library.municode.com/ca/twentynine_palms/codes/code_of_ordinances.

bird species. The new WWTP would result in improved operating conditions (e.g., odor reduction) that may minimize its potential to attract wildlife. This benefit could be offset by other features (e.g., open-air sludge drying beds, chlorine contact basin, and intake vents) and continued use of Pond A, all having the potential to attract wildlife (e.g., scavengers), including bird species. Adverse effects to wildlife are not anticipated because – the features of the new WWTP have existed as part of the existing WWTP with no apparent impacts to wildlife; chemicals are not anticipated in the sludge beds; the chlorine contact basin would be covered and use low chemical concentrations; and intake vents would be covered to prevent entrapment of wildlife. Once the proposed action is complete and the facility is operational, MAGTFTC would monitor for the presence of non-native invasive plant species at the project area, as the pond and soil fill could promote the proliferation and spread of invasive species. If present, MAGTFTC would treat invasive plant species.[17] To ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (minimize incidental take) and E.O. 13186, *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, periodic bird nest surveys are required prior to work occurring during the general nesting season each year (February to September). Surveys would be required prior to construction, during construction, and during future operations.

Pollution Prevention. The proposed action would minimize pollution as part of design and during demolition and construction. Debris capable of being recycled (e.g., metal) would be diverted to the Combat Center's recycling yard, with the remainder of non-recyclable and non-hazardous waste transported to the Combat Center landfill.

Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act. For the protection of water resources, MAGTFTC would obtain a new permit ("Waste Discharge Report") from the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado River Basin Region, for the construction and operation of the upgraded facilities and infrastructure in the project area. The existing WDR (Order R7-2020-00) would be superseded by the new permit.[18]

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Although not currently anticipated, the proposed action could require hazardous waste disposal. Any construction debris or excess soil from the project area would be sampled and characterized per federal and state law before being transported and disposed of at the Combat Center landfill (non-hazardous waste) or to an approved off-site treatment, storage, and disposal facility (hazardous waste).

Safety. During operations, the new WWTP would require use of chemicals (e.g., chlorine) and involve exposure to sewage waste (e.g., viruses, pathogens, etc.), presenting occupational hazards. These same chemicals and risks are associated with the existing WWTP. Occupational safety measures (e.g., personal protective equipment) would be developed for operations and maintenance of the new WWTP. Safety data sheets would be maintained with the Combat Center Fire Department in the event of a spill and to ensure compliance with response and reporting requirements of the *Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensations, and Liability Act* and *Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act.* This would also ensure no adverse effects to any off-site sensitive receptors.

Sustainability. The proposed action would result in reductions in energy and water use by integrating sustainability considerations into the design (e.g., increased energy efficiency of systems, low flow fixtures, various pumps, etc.). By decommissioning most of the existing ponds, wastewater lost through evaporation would be reduced. This would lead to increased recycled water availability for Combat Center operations (e.g., irrigation) and decreased use or reliance on potable water as the backup supply, protecting the limited groundwater resource.

[17] Prior independent NEPA coverage exists in the 2023 Supplemental EA. See footnote 9.
[18] Available at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/coloradoriver/board_decisions/adopted_orders/.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A Draft FONPA was made available to the public for 15 days (September 26 to October 10, 2023), providing the required public notice and allowing for public review and comment on the proposed action per E.O. 11988 and E.O. 11990. No public comments were submitted to MAGTFTC.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, there is no practicable alternative to the location of the proposed action, and it would be designed and implemented to – not increase the risk of flood loss (protecting the federal investment in new facilities and infrastructure); not increase any risk to human health and safety (onsite or offsite); and not affect additional acreage of Mesquite Lake dry playa, preserving the natural and beneficial uses of the remainder of the playa to include any floodplain and wetland functions. Because the proposed action was sited and is being designed to avoid and minimize impacts to the environment, including the Mesquite Lake dry playa, there is no need for additional mitigation under NEPA.

DECISION

After this FONPA is signed the decision to apply a NEPA CATEX would be confirmed. Thereafter, the project design would be confirmed, and the proposed action implemented subject to any pre-construction requirements.

Kelsey L Duckworth

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Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps
Director, Environmental Affairs
Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command
Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center

16 October 2023

Date

ENCLOSURE 1

CLEAN AIR ACT RECORD OF NON-APPLICABILITY

RECORD OF NON-APPLICABILITY FOR CLEAN AIR ACT CONFORMITY

Introduction

The EPA published Determining Conformity of General Federal Actions to State or Federal Implementation Plans; Final Rule, in the November 30, 1993, Federal Register (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] parts 6, 51, and 93). On April 5, 2010, the EPA finalized revisions to the General Conformity Rule (75 Federal Register 17253–17279). The U.S. Department of the Navy (Navy) published Navy Guidance for Compliance with the Clean Air Act (CAA) General Conformity Rule (July 30, 2013), as referenced in Chief of Naval Operations Manual M-5090.1, Environmental Readiness Program Manual dated June 25, 2021. These publications provide implementing guidance to document CAA Conformity Determination requirements. This RONA is provided to document compliance of the Proposed Action.

Federal regulations state that "no department, agency, or instrumentality of the Federal Government shall engage in, support in any way or provide financial assistance for, license or permit, or approve any activity that does not conform to an applicable State Implementation Plan." It is the responsibility of the federal agency to determine whether a federal action conforms to the applicable State Implementation Plan before the action is taken (40 CFR section 51.850[a]).

Federal actions may be exempt from conformity determinations if their emissions do not exceed designated *de minimis* levels for the criteria pollutants of nonattainment or maintenance in the areas of the federal action (40 CFR section 51.853[b]). The Proposed Action falls under the Record of Non-Applicability (RONA) category and is documented with this RONA.

Proposed Action

Action Proponent: Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command (MAGTFTC)

Location: Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC), Twentynine Palms, California

Affected Area(s): Mojave Desert Air Basin, designated as Severe-15 for the 2008 and 2015 8-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards and Moderate Nonattainment for PM_{10}.

Proposed Action Name: Project P-1231 (Wastewater Treatment Plant)

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action consist of constructing a new wastewater treatment plant (WWTP), conducting incidental work at the Ocotillo golf course irrigation ponds, and connecting the new facilities and infrastructure to the existing water and electrical lines.

Emissions Summary: The proposed action would occur within an ozone and PM_{10} nonattainment area. Ozone is a secondary pollutant tracked by its precursor, Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC). As a result, Proposed Action emissions were evaluated to assess compliance with the General Conformity Rule *de minimis* thresholds for NO_x, VOC, and PM_{10} (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: *De minimis* Levels for 2008 and 2015 Ozone Severe-15 Nonattainment Area

Criteria Pollutant/Precursor	*De minimis* Levels (Tons/Year)
NO_x	25
VOC	25

NO_x = nitrogen oxides, VOC = volatile organic compounds

Table 2: *De minimis* Levels for 1987 PM_{10} Moderate Nonattainment Area

Criteria Pollutant/Precursor	*De minimis* Levels (Tons/Year)
PM_{10}	100

PM_{10} = Particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter

Air emissions analyzed under the Proposed Action mainly occur from construction and operation activities. Emissions were conservatively estimated using the California Emissions Estimator Model® (CalEEMod). Table 3 shows that the maximum estimated emissions of applicable pollutants would be well below the conformity *de minimis* levels for the MDAB Ozone Severe-15 Nonattainment Area and PM_{10} Moderate Nonattainment Area. Therefore, emissions from the Proposed Action would show conformity under the CAA.

Table 3: Criteria Pollutant Emissions (Tons/Year)

Yearly Activity	**NO_x**	**VOC**	**PM_{10}**
Construction (2024)	3.55	0.35	11.5
Construction (2025)	4.60	0.48	13.7
Construction (2026)	3.59	0.36	10.2
Operations (2026+)	0.01	0.03	< 0.005
General Conformity Applicability Thresholds	25	25	100
Exceeds threshold?	No	No	No

1) Table includes criteria pollutant precursors (e.g., volatile organic compounds).
2) Ozone is a secondary pollutant tracked by its precursor, NO_x and VOC.
3) NO_x = nitrogen oxides, VOC = Volatile Organic Compound, PM_{10} = Particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter

Conformity Determination Exemption

The Proposed Action conforms to Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District Rule 2002 (Federal General Conformity) and is exempt from the Conformity Determination requirements based on the determination that the emissions are below the *de minimis* threshold for all applicable pollutants.

Emissions Evaluation Conclusion

The Marine Corps concludes that *de minimis* thresholds for affected pollutants would not be exceeded as a result of implementation of the Proposed Action. The emissions data supporting that conclusion is shown in Table 3, presented herein. The calculations, methodology, data, and references are contained in the Air Quality Applicability Analysis, located in the project record. Based on this analysis, the Marine Corps concludes that further formal Conformity Determination procedures are not required, resulting in this RONA.

RONA Preparation

Name / Position: Lillian Dugan, MAGTFTC Air Resources Manager

Date Prepared: 14 September 2023

Signature: