

Final
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT 10.32 ACRE GOLDEN PASS TOWNSITE WITHDRAWAL FOR U.S.
ARMY GARRISON FORT SILL

U.S. Army Garrison (USAG) Fort Sill, OK (Fort Sill) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that analyzes and documents the environmental consequences that could result from transferring jurisdiction of 10.32 acres (Blocks 15, 34, 35, and 36) of the Golden Pass Townsite from BLM to Fort Sill. The EA has been developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 [NEPA, 42 U.S. Code (U.S.C.) 4321, et seq.]; *Department of Defense (DoD) NEPA Implementing Procedures* issued 30 June 2025; *Army Guidance for DoD NEPA Implementing Procedures* issued 8 August 2025; and Army Regulation (AR) 200-1 *Environmental Protection and Enhancement* dated 13 December 2007. The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), is participating as a cooperating agency during the preparation of this EA in accordance with an agreement between the USAG Fort Sill and the BLM New Mexico State Office. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) herein references the attached EA and serves as the final decision document for the Army.

The EA has been prepared to present and evaluate the proposed action and the no action alternative. Air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geological and soil resources, land use, noise, and water resources are addressed in the EA.

PURPOSE AND NEED:

The purpose of the proposed action is to ensure Fort Sill is able to continue to use the 10.32-acre Golden Pass Townsite for various training activities as it has done since 1941. Under the proposed action, the Secretary of the Interior would issue a new Public Land Order (PLO) transferring jurisdiction over these acres to the Army. The previous PLO transferring this jurisdiction expired in 2022. The withdrawal is needed in support of mission requirements to maintain Fort Sill's autonomous administrative authority over the entirety of its range complex.

ALTERNATIVES: Two alternatives were considered: the proposed action and the no action alternative. Each alternative is discussed below.

PROPOSED ACTION. Under the proposed action, jurisdiction of the 10.32 acres would be transferred by a PLO from BLM to Fort Sill for a 20-year period. The proposed action would allow Fort Sill to maintain its management authority over the four blocks of the Golden Pass Townsite. Because the 10.32 acres is completely surrounded by Fort Sill lands, there is no access to the parcels without entering the military reservation.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: As summarized below, implementation of the proposed action has no impacts to air quality, biological resources,

cultural resources, geological and soil resources, land use, noise, and water resources. No land withdrawal-specific best management practices (BMPs) or environmental commitments are identified in the EA; however, the use of best management practices by Fort Sill is assumed, when applicable, in the discussion of environmental consequences for each resource analyzed in the EA. Additionally, Fort Sill utilizes BMPs within the larger context of the installation that would also apply to the land parcels.

Air Quality

No change would be expected to air quality from the withdrawal of the Golden Pass Townsite land parcels. No new emissions would be expected. No effects would be expected to air quality from the no action alternative because BLM anticipates management of the 10.32 acres as open land in accordance with the BLM management goals and objectives as identified in the 2020 Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP); therefore, no additional criteria pollutants would be generated.

Biological Resources

The proposed withdrawal would have no effects on vegetation or wildlife. The withdrawal would not alter the environmental baseline or change existing military uses. There would be neither beneficial, nor adverse, effects on biological resources from the proposed action. Under the no action alternative, jurisdiction over the land would not be transferred to Fort Sill and biological resources would be managed by the BLM in accordance with the BLM management goals and objectives as identified in the 2020 RMP.

Cultural Resources

There are no identified cultural resources in the 10.32 acres. In addition, the four blocks comprising the 10.32 acres are indistinguishable from the surrounding lands with no physical evidence of the previous town's development. Fort Sill, with the concurrence of BLM, has determined that transfer of jurisdiction over the land from one federal agency to another is not an undertaking of the type with the potential to cause effects to historic properties, should any be present; therefore, under the regulations implementing Section 106 of the NHPA at 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), the agency official has no further obligations under Section 106 or these regulations.

Geological and Soil Resources

No significant impacts on geology and soils would be expected from implementing the proposed action. The proposed action would not change current land uses or cause loss of unique and sensitive soils or geologic features. The 10.32 acres has been used by the Army for military training purposes for decades. Any geological/soil degradation that could occur has already occurred during previous PLO withdrawal periods. Under the no action alternative, the 10.32 acres would

not be withdrawn for Army mission requirements; therefore, there would be no change to existing geological and soil resources.

Land Use

The proposed action would establish a new PLO to withdraw the Golden Pass Townsite for 20 years, which would be consistent with land use from 1941 to 2022. Therefore, land use at Fort Sill or in the vicinity would not change and there would be no significant impacts under the proposed action. Under the no action alternative, the Secretary of the DOI would not transfer jurisdiction over the 10.32 acres to the Army. Instead, the BLM Oklahoma Field Office would retain jurisdiction to manage the 10.32 acres in accordance with BLM management goals and objectives. Fort Sill would not have jurisdiction to manage the lands, resulting in a change in land use. It is anticipated that this land would remain open space under the no action alternative and be compatible with the surrounding military use.

Noise

No change would be expected to noise from land withdrawal of the Golden Pass Townsite. Implementation of the proposed action is anticipated to result in no significant increases in sound levels or expansions of the noise frequency spectrum. Therefore, no significant impacts to the natural environment would occur from the proposed action because any such effects have already been realized from past and current military training and other operations taking place in the immediate vicinity of the area. No change would be expected to noise from the no action alternative. Therefore, no overall change in effects on the natural environment attributable to human-caused noise sources would be expected from the no action alternative.

Water Resources

The proposed action would be consistent with current baseline conditions, and there would be no change to water resources from the proposed action. No construction or new land disturbance activities that would cause new erosion or runoff are associated with the proposed action. Effects on water resources would not reduce water availability or supply, exceed safe annual yield of water supplies, adversely affect water quality, threaten or damage hydrology, or violate water resources laws or regulations. Therefore, no impacts to water resources are anticipated to result from the proposed action. Under the no action alternative, the proposed withdrawal of the Golden Pass Townsite would not occur. BLM's management of the 10.32 acres as open land would also result in no change in potential impacts to water resources.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE. Under the no action alternative, the Secretary of the DOI would not transfer jurisdiction over the 10.32 acres to the Army for military use. Instead, the BLM, Oklahoma Field Office would retain jurisdiction to manage the 10.32 acres in accordance with the land use allocations and management goals and objectives identified in the 2020 RMP. The 10.32 acres is separated into four discontinuous parcels. Due to the indistinguishable nature of the parcels

from the surrounding Fort Sill lands, and the location of the land in a military training area within the Fort Sill installation boundary, the BLM's ability to feasibly use these public lands and resources would be difficult. The BLM anticipates it would leave the 10.32 acres as open space. If BLM retains jurisdictional authority over the 10.32 acres, Fort Sill would lose trainable land and not have autonomous administration of its range complex for mission requirements. Although the no action alternative does not meet the purpose and need of the proposed action, it has been carried forward for analysis in the EA as required under NEPA.

Preparation of this EA extended beyond the one-year time limit as required in the DoD NEPA Implementing Procedures, Section 1.5(e) issued 30 June 2025. By Memorandum dated 17 April 2025, the Fort Sill Garrison Commander approved a request to exceed the one-year time limit for the EA and extended the timeline to 30 September 2025 in conformance with the contract period of performance. Subsequently, by Memorandum dated 4 September 2025, the second request to extend the EA timeline was approved by the Garrison Commander and extended the timeline from 30 September 2025 to 10 April 2026 in conformance with the extensions to the period of performance. Both NEPA extensions were necessary due to governmental administrative issues which delayed review of the EA and its supporting documents.

FINDING:

In accordance with *DoD NEPA Implementing Procedures* – 1.5(d-f) and 1.6(a-b), I conclude that, based upon the results of the Final EA, implementation of the proposed action to withdraw the Golden Pass Townsite land parcels would not result in significant impacts and that an environmental impact statement is not required and will not be prepared. My decision is based on the analysis contained in the EA. This decision complies with legal requirements and has been made after taking into account all submitted information and considering the full range of reasonable alternatives and all environmental impacts. While this is the Army's determination for the EA, the final decision on the proposed Golden Pass Townsite land withdrawal action rests with the Secretary of the Interior.

Signature
Kevin A. Poole
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding

DATE