



June 28, 2022

Bureau of Land Management, Arizona
Attn: Michael Ouellett
One North Central Avenue
Suite 800
Phoenix, Arizona 85004

Re: Proposed Expansion of the Yuma Proving Ground

Submitted electronically: BLM_AZ-Withdrawal_Comments@blm.gov

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on proposed expansion of the US Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) located north of Yuma, Arizona.

AZSFWC is a 501c-3 organization dedicated to wildlife conservation, habitat improvement, youth recruitment and retention, as well as educating outdoor enthusiasts on issues important to their passions. AZSFWC member organizations reach across the spectrum of wildlife conservation, hunting, angling, shooting sports, youth orientated groups, outdoor recreation groups and businesses from across Arizona, representing more than 20,000 people.

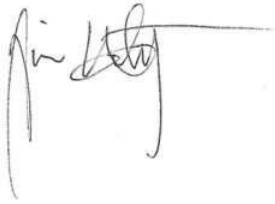
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has received an application from the US Army to expand the existing footprint of the YPG facility in southwestern Arizona. The additional area would provide a safety buffer for aerial drop testing/training and would be established by withdrawal of 22,000 acres of BLM lands located immediately west of Highway 95. The proposed withdrawal area is within Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZGFD) Game Management Units 43A and 43B. This is an important access point for individuals hunting desert bighorn sheep in the Chocolate Mountains and also provides opportunities for pursuing mule deer and small game.

AZSFWC realizes the importance of YPG to the Army mission and appreciates ongoing efforts to maintain hunting opportunities on the installation, as well as close coordination with AZGFD. We support the proposed withdrawal, with the understanding that the area would remain open for use by hunters and managed similarly to other hunting areas on YPG that support testing and training activities.

We would also suggest this process might present an opportunity to facilitate easier hunting access to the proximate YPG hunt area located on the east side of Highway 95. This area provides similar hunting opportunities as the area considered for withdrawal as

well as access to adjoining public lands managed by the BLM and Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. Our understanding is that there are few, if any conflicts with public use and YPG mission on that narrow strip of land. We encourage the BLM and YPG to explore options such as a land exchange or relaxation of the existing requirement for hunters to obtain range clearances before entering that particular area.

AZSFWC and 26 of our Member organizations (list attached) appreciate your consideration of these comments!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jim Unmacht", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jim Unmacht
Executive Director



AZSFWC Member Organizations Supporting Comments on Expansion of the US Army Yuma Proving Ground

Anglers United
AZ Antelope Foundation
AZ Bass Nation
AZ Big Game Super Raffle
AZ Council of Trout Unlimited
AZ Deer Association
AZ Desert Bighorn Sheep Society
AZ Elk Society
AZ Flycasters Club
AZ Houndsmen's Association
AZ Outdoor Sports
AZ Predator Callers
AZ State Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation
Christian Hunters of America
Diablo Trust
Mule Deer Foundation
No Excuse Hunting & Outdoors
Outdoor Experience 4 All
Southern AZ Quail Forever
Southwest Wildlife Foundation
SRT Outdoors
The Bass Federation of AZ
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trust for Public Land
Valley of the Sun Quail Forever
Yuma Valley Rod & Gun Club