

Camp Bullis Update

There is a lot of interest surrounding the Fort Sam/Camp Bullis base situation and more specifically what the future holds in store for the land that surrounds Camp Bullis (CB). Fort Sam's 8,594 civilian jobs, \$1.2 billion civilian payroll is tied to Camp Bullis and its survival. CB is a 27,994-acre camp that has firing and grenade ranges within its perimeters. For more than a decade, the CB base has been dealing with encroaching development that is negatively impacting its facility which trains all four branches of the military conducting exercises in combat-like situations with soon-to-be deployed medic teams, as well as allowing for civilian usages which include numerous community benefits.

The debate has raised a number of key issues. Developers look to build on land near the perimeter fence of the CB base which in turn could potentially cause one or more endangered species to relocate onto CB land. This leaves less land for the military to utilize in practicing its training drills. Encroaching development also creates ambient light issues, making it very difficult for dark night training exercises to occur. Other issues need to be addressed as well, to include: noise, water quality/water quantity and traffic (separate from noise).

One important point must be noted. There are only four major tracts of land that can still be developed surrounding this base. These lands comprise less than 1,000 acres. One of the four property owners is seeking to place a self-imposed, conservation easement on a significant portion of their property. Additionally, there may be some smaller tracts of land at play that are not discussed here. Thus, it would seem that there is not a real potential at this late stage of the game to create much of a true buffer around the base as has been touted in a number of articles.

"We have a training facility that we absolutely need to train our medics," said an Express News source, Major General Russell Czerw, Fort Sam's commanding general. "It's vital to us during the day and during the night; and anything that inhibits our ability to train could be detrimental." A Senate panel recently approved \$719 million for construction projects at Ft. Sam next year. By 2011 it is anticipated that the post will have grown by one-third because of gains from the last round of military base closures; in numbers, we are talking about an increase to approximately 37,250 military and civilian workers that could now be at risk.

A \$300,000 grant was approved in June by the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) which is part of the US Department of Defense to fund this Joint Land Use Study (JLUS). To read more about the OEA, log onto www.oea.gov. To qualify for an OEA grant, communities are required to provide a 10% non-federal match; the City's contribution is being made in in-kind services. This JLUS was approved in an effort to determine the developmental impact on training operations at this post over the course of the months leading up to January 2009 when the 81st Legislative Session convenes in Austin, where far-reaching measures may be sought.

So what is being done to try to remedy this situation and how does the San Antonio Board of REALTORS® (SABOR) fit into this equation? Recently, SABOR was asked to sit on both the Executive and Advisory JLUS Committee levels for both Camp Bullis and Lackland AFB. Please note that Lackland AFB, similar to Camp Bullis, is also experiencing problems of encroaching development as well as other related issues. A third JLUS committee may be formed in coming weeks to assess Randolph AFB issues. The JLUS' objective is to find ways to have compatible

development while preserving the missions of these installations (and potentially other bases throughout the state).

In both cases, stakeholders and interested parties will review various criteria to present recommendations in coming months on how best to develop and maintain lands adjacent to these bases while preserving the private property rights of those who own the property. Ultimately, it has been suggested that a broad-based approach be written, agreed to by stakeholders and brought forward to the state level (legislatively) so that recommendations can be considered, written into law and implemented. A multijurisdictional oversight board would be charged with comprehensive planning and land use control with an ultimate benefit to the state's 11 major installations. Thus, costly studies, construction delays and other such uncertainties could potentially be minimized by utilizing the information derived from these committees.

This will certainly be a worthy ambition for those who work toward this goal without compromising the rights of those who own the adjacent property.

According to the Express News, San Antonio's Mayor Hardberger stated that the closure of Camp Bullis seemed drastic and an unlikely possibility, but he vowed to do his part to help control growth. "I don't think the Army is going away. My motivation is one, I think, of obligation and loyalty to long partners of San Antonio – namely the Army," Hardberger said. "I think we ought to look at the positive of that. Why wouldn't we want to treat them right? We need the Army and we cherish that relationship, and we're going to keep our end of it."

Sources: SA Express-News, Gene Dawson – Pape Dawson Engineers, James Henderson – Deputy Director, Office of Military Affairs

Lands immediately adjacent to Camp Bullis in Bexar County that aren't in the Cibolo Creek floodplain include four major tracts that have not been developed. There may be some smaller parcels that could be developed, but the major tracts are:

- 1. The 280 acre remaining Dominion property.*
- 2. The 100 acre Rim property.*
- 3. The 285 acre Stein tract.*
- 4. The 184 acre Classen tract.*

The facts about these tracts:

1. Dominion Tract

The Dominion tract is the last piece of development in the Dominion. The Dominion already includes three miles of developed common property line with existing houses and Camp Bullis. The Dominion has over a decade of bird studies and habitat areas have been shown as open space on the master plan since 1983. No bird habitat is being cleared.

2. Rim 100 Acres

This tract shares a 1,200-foot common boundary with Camp Bullis and is adjacent to Eisenhower Park. The Rim developer has agreed not to develop this property until bird studies are complete. The bird studies have been completed for this year and one bird was found on the north end of the property adjacent to Camp Bullis.

3. Stein Tract

The Stein tract is north of Rogers Ranch and is projected to be a one-acre or greater lot development. Bird studies on this property indicate one bird on about 20 acres.

4. Classen Tract

The Classen tract is on the west side of the Stone Oak development. It is the remaining piece that requires an extension of Hardy Oak. There is currently a 184-acre request for annexation of this property into the City of San Antonio. Anywhere from 88 to 160 acres of this property will be put in a conservation easement. No birds have been found on this property.

Based on the above, there are only 3 to 4 birds on adjacent property and their habitat is being protected.