

## **5.0 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES**

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NEPA requires that environmental analysis include identification of “. . . any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented.” Irreversible and irretrievable resource commitments are related to the use of nonrenewable resources and the effects that the use of these resources have on future generations. Irreversible effects primarily result from use or destruction of a specific resource (e.g., energy and minerals) that cannot be replaced within a reasonable time frame.

Irretrievable resource commitments involve the loss in value of an affected resource that cannot be restored as a result of the action (e.g., extinction of a threatened or endangered species or the disturbance of a cultural site). The proposed training range would result in few direct and indirect commitments of resources; these would be related mainly to construction of the range components.

For the proposed alternatives, most resource commitments are neither irreversible nor irretrievable. Most impacts are short term and temporary. Others that may have a longer effect can be reduced through appropriate measures. Those resources that may have a possible irreversible or irretrievable commitment are discussed below.

The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes at the Duck Valley Reservation have expressed concern about possible disturbance to sacred sites and other traditional cultural resources. Although not precisely identified, the Shoshone-Paiute have indicated that locations of religious importance and traditional use would be impacted by construction and use of some emitter sites and no-drop targets. They have also expressed strong concerns about the effects of overflights on traditional resources. Impacts to sacred sites and measures that could potentially reduce or eliminate these impacts can be identified only through consultation with the affected Native American groups, as required by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and Executive Order 13007. Efforts to consult with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes have occurred and will continue. If avoidance or other mitigation measures are determined by the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to be inadequate for eliminating impacts to traditional resources then the commitment of this resource may be irreversible or irretrievable.

Within the 12,000-acre training range, construction and use of the primary ordnance impact area and maintenance facility would have a high probability of an irretrievable commitment of vegetation. For Alternative B – Clover Butte, the loss of 24 acres of big sagebrush would constitute an irretrievable commitment of a resource. For Alternative C and D, approximately 15 and 169 acres, respectively, of shrubsteppe habitat would be lost. For Alternative D, the loss of individual slick spot peppergrass plants within 7.3 acres of the primary ordnance impact area, would result in an irretrievable commitment of resources.

Although it would be an outcome with a very low probability, conversion or loss of habitat for the entire 12,000-acre training range would result in a greater irretrievable commitment of the resource. If the entire 12,000-acre target area is considered lost habitat, then, under the Clover Butte Alternative, approximately 4,197 acres of big sagebrush would be an irretrievable commitment of resource. Both sage grouse and pronghorn antelope are dependent on shrubsteppe habitat. The amount of shrubsteppe habitat at Clover Butte is less than that found in the Grasmere Alternative but twice as much as that found in the Juniper Butte Alternative. No riparian habitat occurs in Clover Butte. For the Grasmere Alternative, about 6,553 acres of shrubsteppe habitat would be an irretrievable commitment of resource. The draws and canyons of the Grasmere site contain about 84.5 acres of riparian habitat that could potentially be lost. The wetland and riparian habitat found in Grasmere also are unique and surpass any other wetland or riparian habitat found in the other target areas in overall species diversity. Under the Juniper Butte Alternative, about 1,876 acres of shrubsteppe habitat would be an irretrievable commitment of resource. The shrubsteppe community is composed almost exclusively of rabbitbrush and is the least diverse among the target areas.

Construction and maintenance of targets and facilities during range development and use would require the consumption of limited quantities of aggregate, steel, concrete, petroleum, oil, and lubricants. The commitment of these resources would apply irrespective of the alternative selected.

Some soil disturbance and loss would occur as a result of the Enhanced Training in Idaho proposal. However, by following best management practices, the loss of soil would be very localized and slight.

Use of training ordnance during operations would involve a commitment of certain quantities of steel, concrete, and titanium tetrachloride. None of these items is considered rare and the long-term commitment of these resources would not have a substantial effect on their future availability. The commitment would apply irrespective of the alternative selected.

All alternatives, including the No-Action Alternative, would require fuel use by aircraft and surface vehicles. Training would continue under all alternatives so aircraft fuel use would potentially be similar regardless of the selected alternative.

Changing world situations and shifts in the strategies for national defense defined by the President and Congress dictate the training activities and support needs for all armed services. In the future, should such changes and shifts alter the training requirements, the Air Force would evaluate possible options to fulfill those requirements. Such changes could mean a removal or reduction of a range, as occurred when Department of Defense (DoD) returned over 300,000 acres of the old Saylor Creek Range to the public in 1963. If the range was no longer needed for training in the future, the Air Force would relinquish the withdrawn land to BLM. The Federal Land Policy Management Act describes this process for such relinquishment, including any appropriate site restoration, in accordance with the Resource Management Plan.