

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 Introduction

This Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) addresses the potential effects, beneficial and adverse, of the construction of six night vision scope pads and access roads, 2.2 miles of road improvements to the San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) Road, an approximately 467-foot section of bypass road construction on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the installation of an approximately 650-foot section of pedestrian fence and vehicle barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border near Tecate, California. All construction activities would take place from Tecate, California to just east of Tierra del Sol, California in San Diego County. These improvements have been proposed by the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) in an effort to enhance their capability to gain, maintain, and extend control of the U.S.-Mexico border.

This SEA will address new actions and update alternatives addressed in previous National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents. This document supplements the Final EA for Various Road Improvements from Canyon City, California to the Imperial County Line, California (Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS] 2003). This document is also tiered from four past NEPA documents: Final EA for Border Road and Fence Construction and Repair from Tecate to Canyon City, San Diego County, California (USACE 1993); Final EA for Border Road and Fence Construction and Repair from Campo to Jacumba, San Diego County, California (USACE 1994); Final EA for Border Road Maintenance and Construction, Tecate to Campo, San Diego County, California (USACE 1997); and the Final Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and Joint Task Force-Six (JTF-6) Activities (INS 2001).

1.2 Background and History

The background and history of the legacy INS, Regulatory Authority, San Diego Sector, Campo Station, and the BLM was described in detail in the original EA (INS 2003) and is incorporated herein by reference; however, some changes have been made to the associated agencies.

The Department of Homeland Security has the responsibility to regulate and control immigration. On November 25, 2002, Congress transferred all INS responsibilities to the

newly created Department of Homeland Security with the passage of the Homeland Security Act of 2002. The official transfer of responsibilities occurred on March 1, 2003, and the USBP was transferred into the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection within the Department of Homeland Security.

1.3 Location of the Proposed Action

The project area covers four sites between Tecate, California and Tierra del Sol, California (Figure 1-1). All four sites are within one mile of the U.S.-Mexico border and portions of all of the projects fall within the 60-foot Roosevelt right-of-way (ROW) along the international border. This ROW was set aside for the Federal government in the Presidential Proclamation dated May 27, 1907. All actions would occur within San Diego County.

1.4 Purpose and Need

The USBP is charged with the responsibility of protecting the sovereign borders of the U.S. It has been reported by the USBP that the U.S.-Mexico border is breached more than any other international border in the world. The border area is a large, diverse, and difficult boundary to effectively enforce without the use of dedicated tactical infrastructure (fences, roads, scope sites, etc.).

The purpose of these proposed actions is to create safer working conditions for the USBP and in so doing, deter undocumented alien (UDA) activities. UDAs pass through the border areas, threaten public lands, historical structures, and Federal and state protected species and habitat. Vehicles used by smugglers are continuously abandoned in National Parks and other natural and sensitive areas. Dealing with the detrimental effects of UDAs is becoming an ever-increasing burden on Federal and state land managers, private landowners, as well as the USBP. UDAs have trampled vegetation, started wildland fires, left litter, and abandoned vehicles throughout the entire border region (see Photograph 1).



Photograph 1: Trails created and litter left behind by UDAs near SDG&E Road.

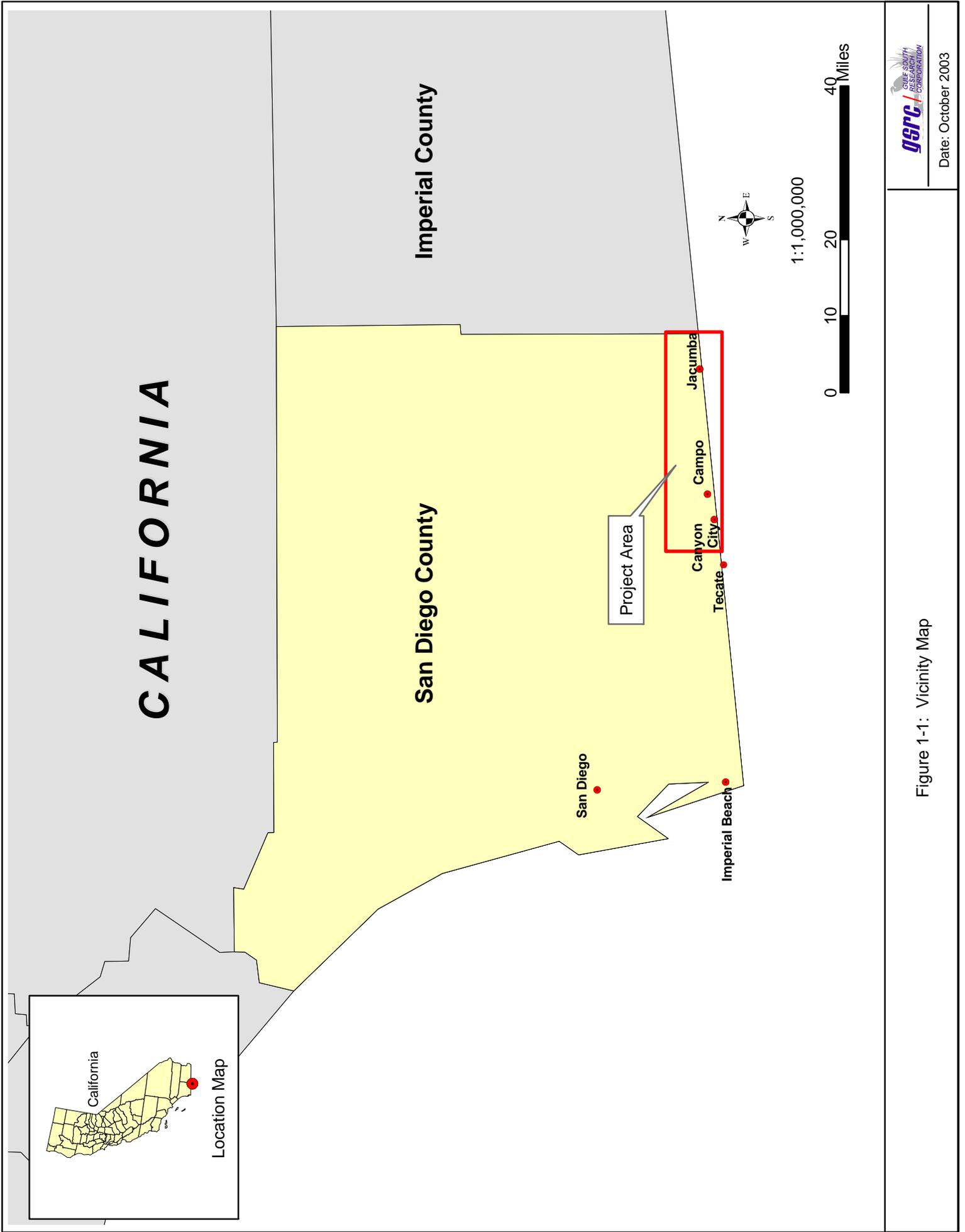


Figure 1-1: Vicinity Map

Furthermore, many UDAs attempt to enter the U.S. through harsh environments with dangerous conditions. Many regions along the border are vast, undeveloped areas that represent a danger to the UDAs from exposure to high temperatures in the summer and below freezing temperatures in the winter. The USBP agents are faced with increasing demands for rescuing UDAs from heatstroke, snakebites, dehydration, hypothermia, or from being lost. Detection of UDAs before they access these harsh environments will reduce injuries and help prevent the loss of life.

- Night Vision Scope Pad and Access Road Construction

There is a need to provide surveillance capabilities that would allow the USBP to quickly and effectively detect and apprehend UDAs and drug traffickers. The purpose of the proposed night vision scope pads, and associated access road construction, is to more effectively monitor a larger area, improve response time, reduce the enforcement footprint, and enhance the safety of the USBP agents. This is especially important at night when illegal entry attempts are highest. These night vision scope pads allow one agent to monitor an area with a much-improved field of vision. The scope pads and access roads also facilitate the USBP's mission to better gain and maintain control of the U.S.-Mexico border.

The need for the proposed scope pads and access roads is based on increased border activity and the limited manpower available to the USBP. Sites selected for scope pads provide a high-ground lookout in remote, hilly areas for the USBP to monitor larger areas.

- 2.2 miles of road improvements to SDG&E Road

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve 2.2 miles of roadway in order to reduce risks to the health and safety of USBP agents and to facilitate the USBP's mission to reduce illegal drug smuggling and UDA activity along the border region. A secondary purpose for the proposed project is to reduce road and vehicle maintenance costs.

The proposed improvement activities would consist of grading and filling road beds with a clean compactable material, applying road stabilizer, re-establishing ditch lines, and cleaning culverts and silt catch basins.

These improvements have been proposed by USBP in an effort to enhance the USBP's capability to gain, maintain, and extend control of the U.S./Mexico border. This maintenance project would not only increase operational efficiency within the area and reduce maintenance costs but also create a significantly safer working environment for USBP agents.

- Bypass Road Construction

The existing piece of border road proposed for replacement is located on private land. This road is in an area that is very steep and rocky and is in need of maintenance; however, the current landowner will not allow any reconstruction or maintenance activities. Due to the poor condition of the road and the lack of maintenance, traveling along this section of road has become a safety risk for USBP agents.

The need for the construction of the Bypass Road is to create a detour around this private section of road on land managed by the BLM. This would allow the USBP safer driving conditions, the ability to maintain the road when necessary, and quicker response times for apprehensions and rescues due to better road conditions.

- Pedestrian Fence and Vehicle Barriers

Border fences have proven to be an effective deterrent for pedestrian traffic in numerous areas (e.g., San Diego, Tecate, Jacumba), even though a single fence can be breached due to no enforcement on the south side of the fence. Fences are typically constructed in urban or developed areas and are usually constructed out of military surplus steel landing mat. These fences are generally 10-14 feet high and usually constructed within 6 feet of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Vehicle barriers typically consist of 4- to 5-inch horizontal, metal beams welded to vertical support beams with a concrete anchor. The barriers are approximately 3 feet high. They are usually constructed along the southern edge of existing roads, particularly along the U.S.-Mexico border. Other barrier designs are also used however. As the name implies, vehicle barriers are designed to impede illegal vehicle entry; however, they do not preclude pedestrian or wildlife movement, or the flow of water.

Since both fence and vehicle barriers have been proven effective in stopping illegal traffic, the USBP feels they are needed in areas of high foot and vehicle traffic to halt the continuous flow coming north across the border. For instance, during the month of

October 2003, the Cetis Hill area has experienced up to four vehicle drive-throughs per day. With a combination of barrier types, this effort would control both vehicle traffic traveling and pedestrian traffic. Due to the nearby road network, UDAs and smugglers can cross this low area undetected on foot or in vehicles and escape easily into the U.S. once they have breached the border. Thus, there is a need to place a combination of vehicle barriers and pedestrian fence in this area to halt UDA traffic. The purpose is to create a structure that would halt or substantially hinder illegal foot and vehicle traffic, without hindering the flow of water, in this area.

1.5 Environmental Regulations

The environmental requirements used in the development of this SEA were discussed in the original EA (INS 2003) and are incorporated herein by reference.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the alternatives considered in this SEA, relative to their ability to satisfy the USBP's purpose, mission, and need. Two alternatives will be addressed:

1. Proposed Action Alternative; and
2. No Action Alternative.

2.1 Proposed Action Alternative

After the Draft SEA was released, a new alignment for the Airport Mesa Road, which was addressed in the original EA (INS 2003), was evaluated. The new alignment would greatly reduce the impacts associated with the road construction described in the original EA. The new alignment would reduce the construction footprint from 7.4 to 5.1 acres and reduce the footprint within several drainages. This new alignment was surveyed for protected species and cultural resources, with negative results. Since this action was addressed in the original EA (INS 2003) and would result in reduced impacts it will be only briefly discussed in this SEA.

The Proposed Action Alternative addressed in this SEA consists of the construction of six night vision scope pads and access roads, 2.2 miles of road improvements/maintenance on the SDG&E Road, construction of an approximately 467-foot section of bypass road on land managed by the BLM, and the installation of an approximately 650-foot section of pedestrian fence and vehicle barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border.

2.1.1 Night Vision Scope Pad and Access Road Construction

Six night vision scope pads are proposed at high points near the U.S.-Mexico border. Approximately 2.06 miles of road construction and 2.2 miles of road improvements is required to install and operate the six scope pads.

2.1.1.1 Monument 241 Road

A new night vision scope pad and access road construction (approximately 0.23 mile) are proposed near Monument 241 along the U.S.-Mexico border (Figure 2-1). The proposed night vision scope pad would be at the end of the access road and would consist of a 20-foot by 20-foot permanent clearing—the minimal area to turn a USBP vehicle around—with an additional 20-foot by 20-foot temporary impact zone required during construction. Each site would be

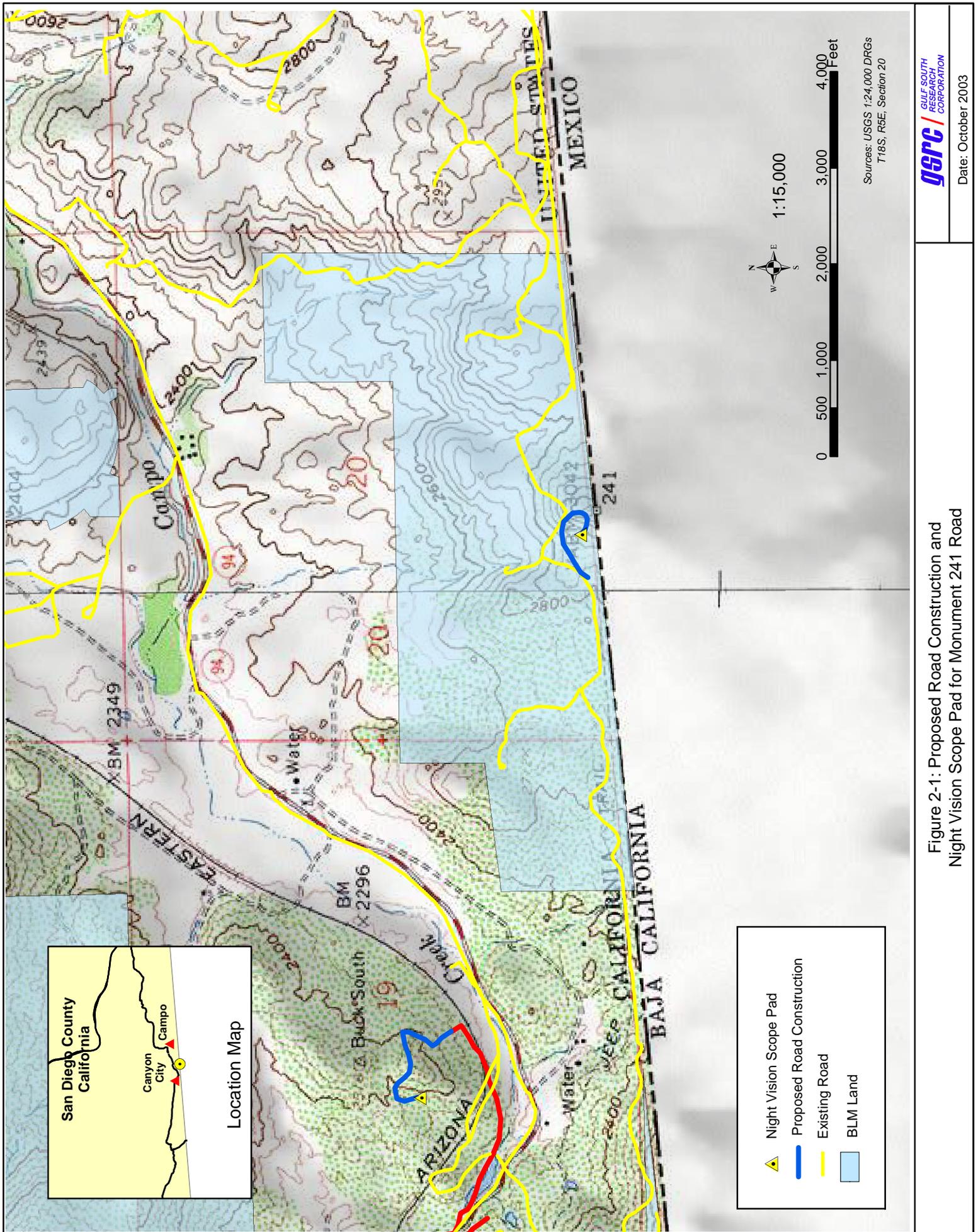


Figure 2-1: Proposed Road Construction and Night Vision Scope Pad for Monument 241 Road

mechanically and hand cleared of rock, vegetation, and debris to make room for a vehicle. The total area permanently impacted by the scope pad would be 400-square feet (ft²).

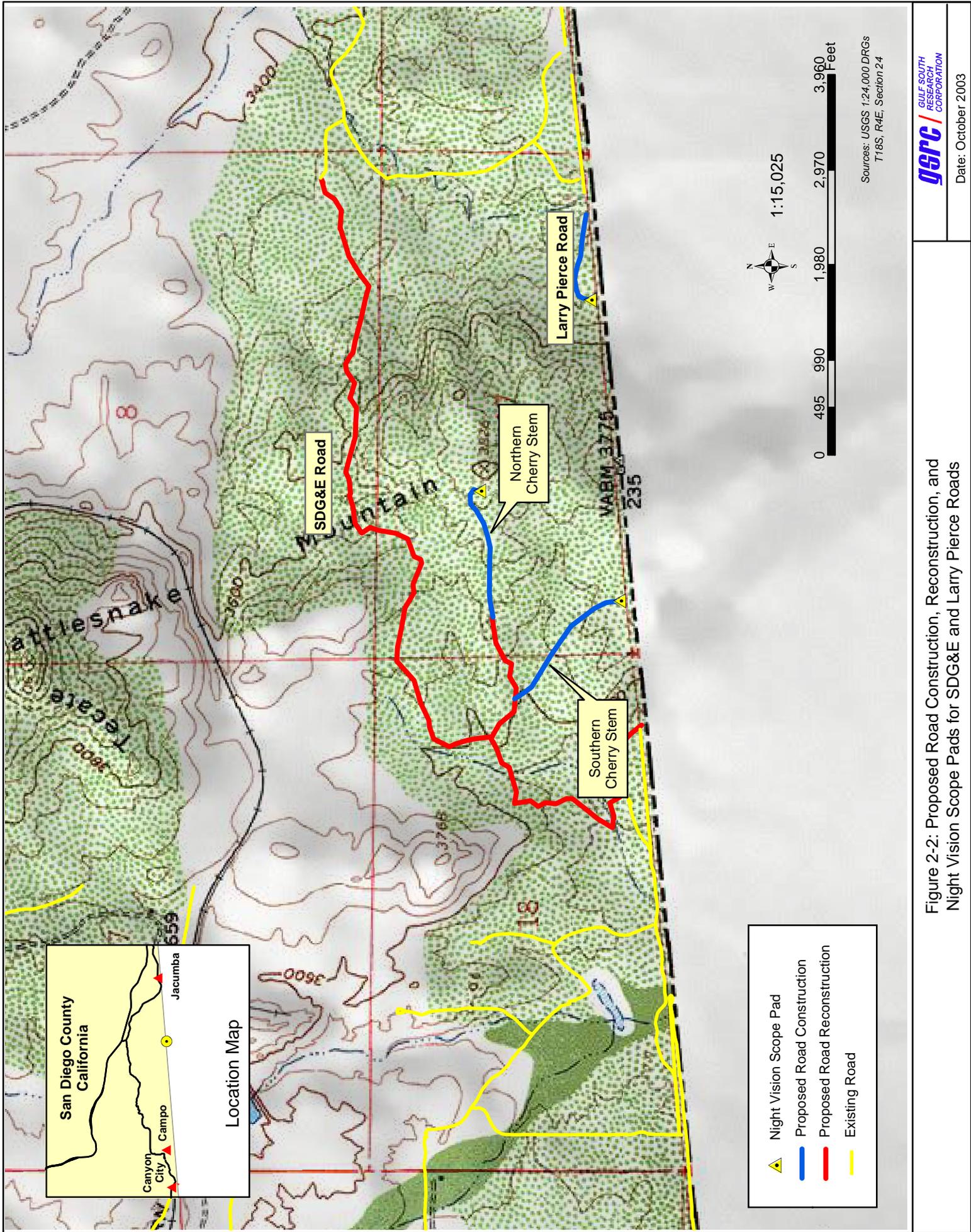
The finished access road surface would be approximately 14-foot wide with a 2- to 5-foot ditch/safety berm on either side of the proposed road. Cut and fill activities would be required for these activities; consequently, the permanent impact area would be approximately 50-foot wide. Due to the slope in the area the road is proposed, nuisance drainage culverts (i.e., one pipe) would be required approximately every 300-linear feet under the road and would remain within the proposed road's footprint. These culverts would be installed to drain the road surface and to handle small concentrations of stormwater. Rock or rip-rap would be placed downstream of the culverts to alleviate water flows and minimize erosion during storm events. Approximately 0.1 mile (or half of the proposed access road) is an existing two-tire track road where vegetation is very sparse. Approximately 1.4 acres would be impacted from the access road construction and scope pad.

2.1.1.2 Larry Pierce Road

Approximately 0.19 mile of access road construction and one night vision scope pad are proposed along the Larry Pierce Road (Figure 2-2). The finished road surface and night vision scope pad would use the same designs as described above for the Monument 241 Road. The proposed road alignment follows an existing two-tire track trail for a portion of the way. There is a small ephemeral drain, which would require a drainage structure. The footprint of the drainage structure would remain within the proposed road's footprint and rock or rip-rap would be placed downstream of the drainage structure to alleviate flows and minimize erosion. Approximately 1.16 acres would be impacted from the scope pad and access road construction and drainage structure.

2.1.1.3 SDG&E Cherry Stem Road

A total of 0.7 mile of access road construction is proposed for the two SDG&E Cherry Stem Roads (see Figure 2-2). This access road construction would lead to two night vision scope pads at selected high points off two branches, or cherry stems, of the main SDG&E Road. The finished road surface would use the same design as discussed for the Monument 241 scope pad and access road. Maintenance of these roads would be conducted by the USBP. The northern Cherry Stem would involve improvements and repairs to an existing road for



Sources: USGS 1:24,000 DRGS
T18S, R4E, Section 24

Figure 2-2: Proposed Road Construction, Reconstruction, and Night Vision Scope Pads for SDG&E and Larry Pierce Roads

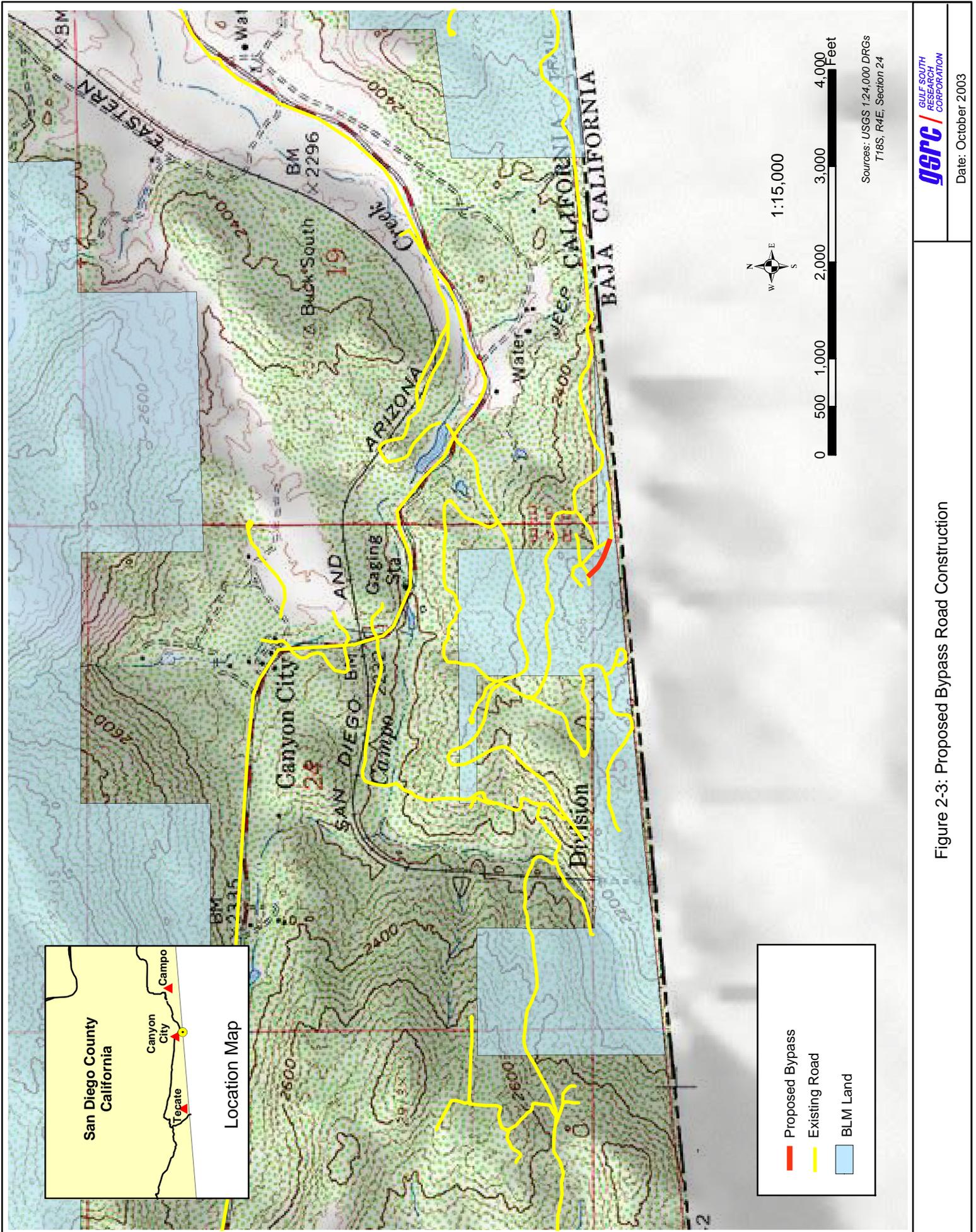
most of the route. The last 0.25 miles would require new construction. The southern Cherry Stem would require all new road construction and the installation of one drainage structure, similar to the one described for the Larry Pierce Road above. Approximately 4.24 acres would be impacted by this action.

2.1.1.4 SDG&E Road Improvements

Approximately 2.2 miles of road improvements would be made to the existing SDG&E Road in order to improve driving conditions and USBP agent safety and enhance response time for apprehensions (see Figure 2-2). These proposed road improvements would consist of grading and filling road beds with a clean compactable material, re-establishing ditch lines, cleaning culverts and silt catch basins, and applying road stabilizer such as PennzSuppress® or an equivalent product. No additional vegetation clearing would be required for this action. The existing road averages about 14 feet wide.

2.1.1.5 Airport Mesa Road

The old alignment for Airport Mesa road as previously discussed in the previously mentioned 2003 INS Final EA for Various Road Improvements from Canyon City, California to the Imperial County Line, San Diego County, California totaled approximately 1.23 miles of road construction. However, the new alignment would require new road construction for approximately 0.85 miles and is proposed to the top of Airport Mesa just east of Jacumba, California. This roadwork is planned so USBP can access the top of the mesa for two proposed scope pads. The finished road surface will be approximately 14-feet wide with a 2- to 5-foot ditch/safety berm on either side of the proposed road. Cut and fill activities would be required for these activities; consequently, the permanent impact area would be approximately 50-feet wide. Due to the slope on Airport Mesa, nuisance drainage culverts (i.e., one pipe) would be required approximately every 300-linear feet under the road and would remain within the proposed road's footprint. These culverts would be installed to drain the road surface and to handle small concentrations of stormwater. The original and revised alignments for the Airport Mesa Road are presented in Figure 2-3.



Approximately five small, ephemeral drainages would be impacted with the proposed road construction and would require culverts. Approximately 0.025 acre would be affected from the five culverts; however, the effects from installing the five culverts would remain within the proposed road's footprint. Approximately 7.45 acres would be permanently affected by the road construction on Airport Mesa, including the installation of the five culverts.

The two proposed night vision scope pads would be at the ends of the Airport Mesa Road and would consist of a 20-foot by 20-foot permanent clearing—the minimal area to turn a USBP vehicle around—with an additional 20-foot by 20-foot temporary impact zone required during construction. Each site would be mechanically and hand cleared of rock, vegetation, and debris to make room for a vehicle. The total area permanently impacted by each scope site would be 400-square feet (ft²). These scope pads, and the access roads on top of the mesa, remain in the same location as they were presented in the original EA, as can be seen in Figure 2-3.

In summary, access road construction in the four areas would consist of a 14-foot wide roadbed with a 2- to 5-foot ditch or safety berm on each side of the road (18- to 24-foot total width). With the required cut-and-fill activities along the slopes, the permanent impact area is expected to be 50 feet wide; there is no intent to create major roadways. Much of the proposed roadbeds have already been disturbed and would follow existing two-tire track trails. All culverts placed along the roadbeds would remain within the proposed road footprint and are included in the impacts. Road improvement activities would bring existing roads up to these standards. The proposed road construction or improvements would give the USBP agents sufficient room to safely access the scope sites. The total area permanently impacted by the road construction would be approximately 14.24 acres for the four scope pad access roads, including Airport Mesa. The total area permanently impacted from the placement of six night vision scope pads would be approximately 2,400 ft² (0.05 acre). An additional 2,400-ft² (0.05 acre) of total temporary impact area would be required; however, this area would be revegetated upon completion of the construction activities.

The night vision scope pads addressed for the Proposed Action would be created with the idea of converting the scope pads to RVS sites in the future. These future RVS sites would require separate NEPA documentation.

2.1.2 Bypass Road Construction

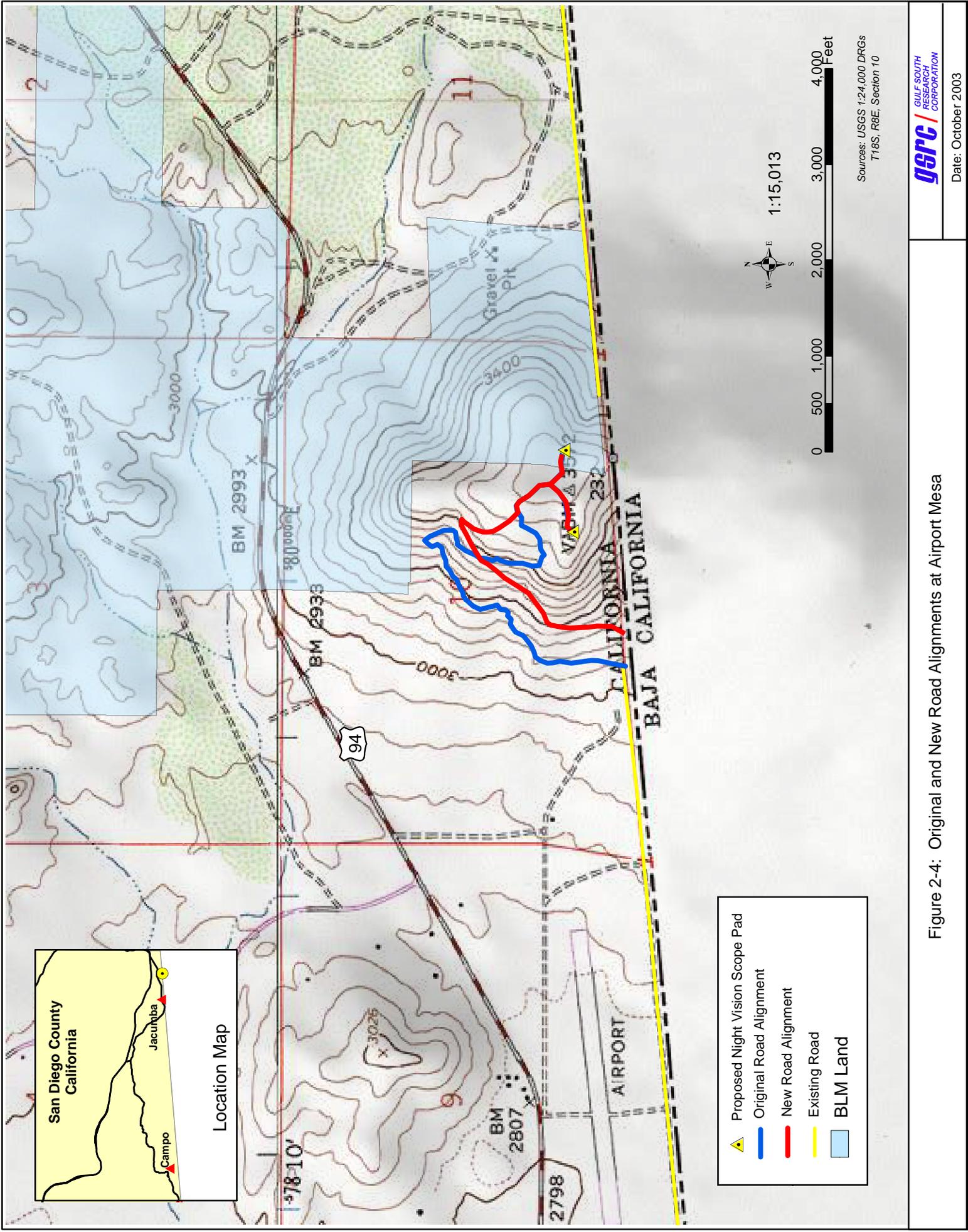
An approximately 467-foot long road would be constructed on land managed by the BLM to create a bypass around private property and would tie into the existing border road (Figure 2-4). This road would be approximately 14-feet wide with a 2- to 5-foot ditch/safety berm on either side of the proposed road. Cut and fill activities would be required for these activities; consequently, the permanent impact area would be approximately 50-feet wide. Due to the slope in the area the road is proposed, approximately two nuisance drainage culverts (i.e., one pipe) would be required under the road on either side of the hill and would remain within the proposed road's footprint. These culverts would be installed to drain the road surface and to handle small concentrations of stormwater. Approximately half of this proposed road would be new construction while the other half would be along an existing dirt road. Approximately 0.54 acre would be affected by this action.

2.1.3 Cetis Hill Barrier

Approximately 650 feet of pedestrian fence and vehicle barriers would be installed in a drainage area on the east side of Cetis Hill (Figure 2-5). Landing mat fence would be constructed in this area except for two stream crossings, where vehicle barriers would be installed. The vehicle barriers would span the streambeds (Figure 2-6), however, no poles would be placed in within the streambeds themselves. No trees would be cut or disturbed for the proposed pedestrian fence and vehicle barriers. All fence construction would stay within the 60-foot Roosevelt ROW and a temporary impact area would be expected approximately 5 feet on either side of the vehicle barriers and fence for a total of 0.15 acre affected from the installation.

2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, none of the actions included in the Proposed Action Alternative would occur, including night vision scope pad and access road construction, bypass road construction, or pedestrian and vehicle barriers.



Sources: USGS 1:24,000 DRGs
T18S, R8E, Section 10

Figure 2-4: Original and New Road Alignments at Airport Mesa

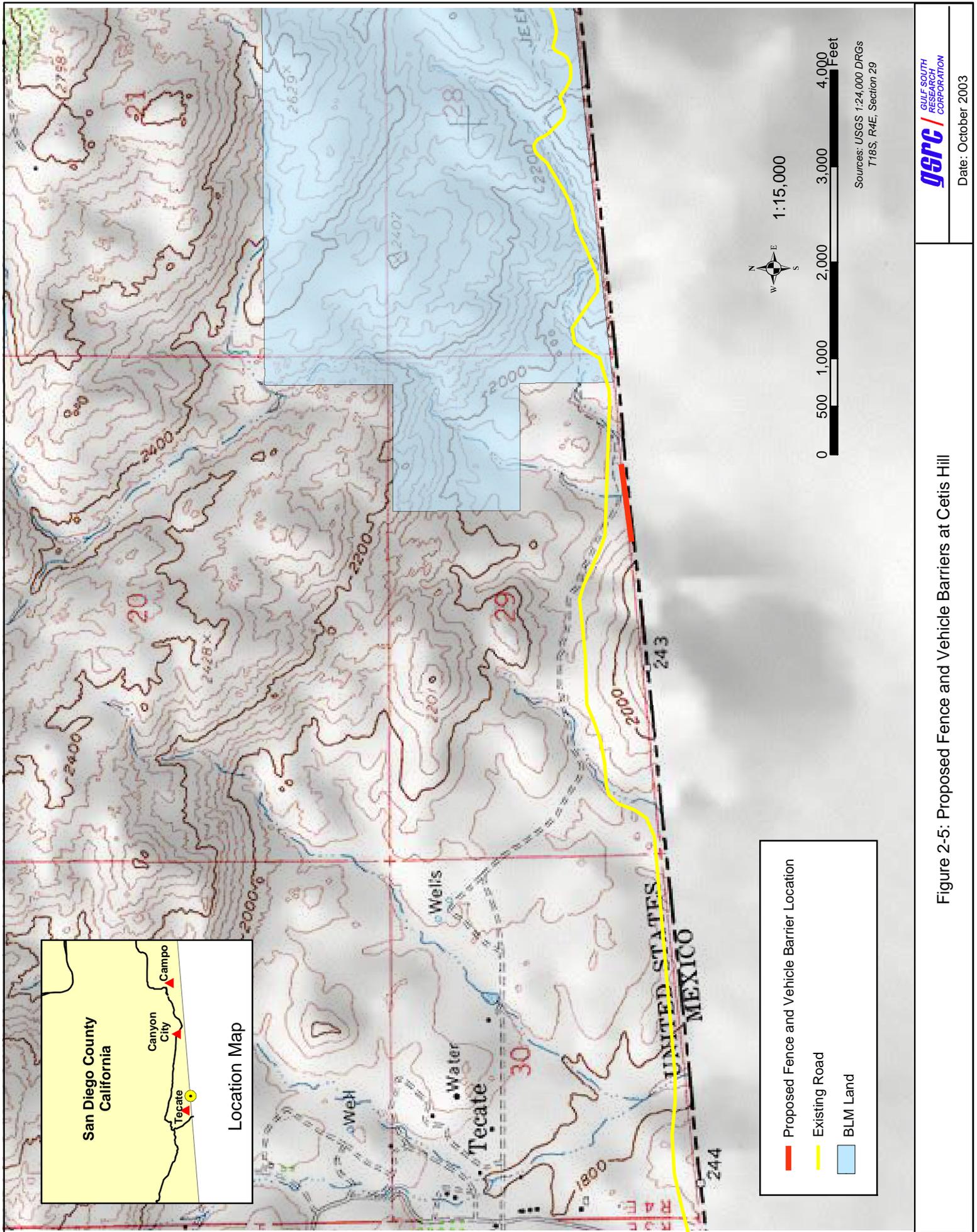


Figure 2-5: Proposed Fence and Vehicle Barriers at Cetus Hill

2.3 Summary

In summary, although the Proposed Action Alternative would have some minor impacts, it would significantly enhance the USBP’s mission to gain and maintain control of the border. This alternative would also enhance the ability of the USBP to deter and apprehend illegal entrants near the border, therefore resulting in less trans-border traffic and reduce the amount of enforcement actions that occur outside the immediate border vicinity. The Proposed Action Alternative is comprised of all of the following components/actions: night vision scope pads and access road construction, 2.2 miles of road improvements to the SDG&E Road, bypass road construction, and pedestrian and vehicle barriers. The general locations of each of these actions are depicted in Figure 2-7. A summary of the two alternatives, in comparison to the purpose and need for the action, is presented in Table 2-1 and Table 2-2 is a matrix of potential effects by specific resource.

Table 2-1: Alternative Matrix

Purpose and Need Requirements	Proposed Action Alternative	No Action Alternative
Enhance the detection of illegal activities, and ability to gain and maintain control of the U.S.-Mexico border	Yes	No
Ability to monitor a large area	Yes	No
Deterrence of UDAs	Yes	No
Enhance the safety of USBP agents	Yes	No
Improve USBP response time	Yes	No
Quick detection of UDAs	Yes	No
Reduce the amount of foot traffic and vehicle drive throughs at Cetus Hill	Yes	No
Protection to neighborhoods, businesses, and environmentally and culturally sensitive areas near the project area	Yes	No

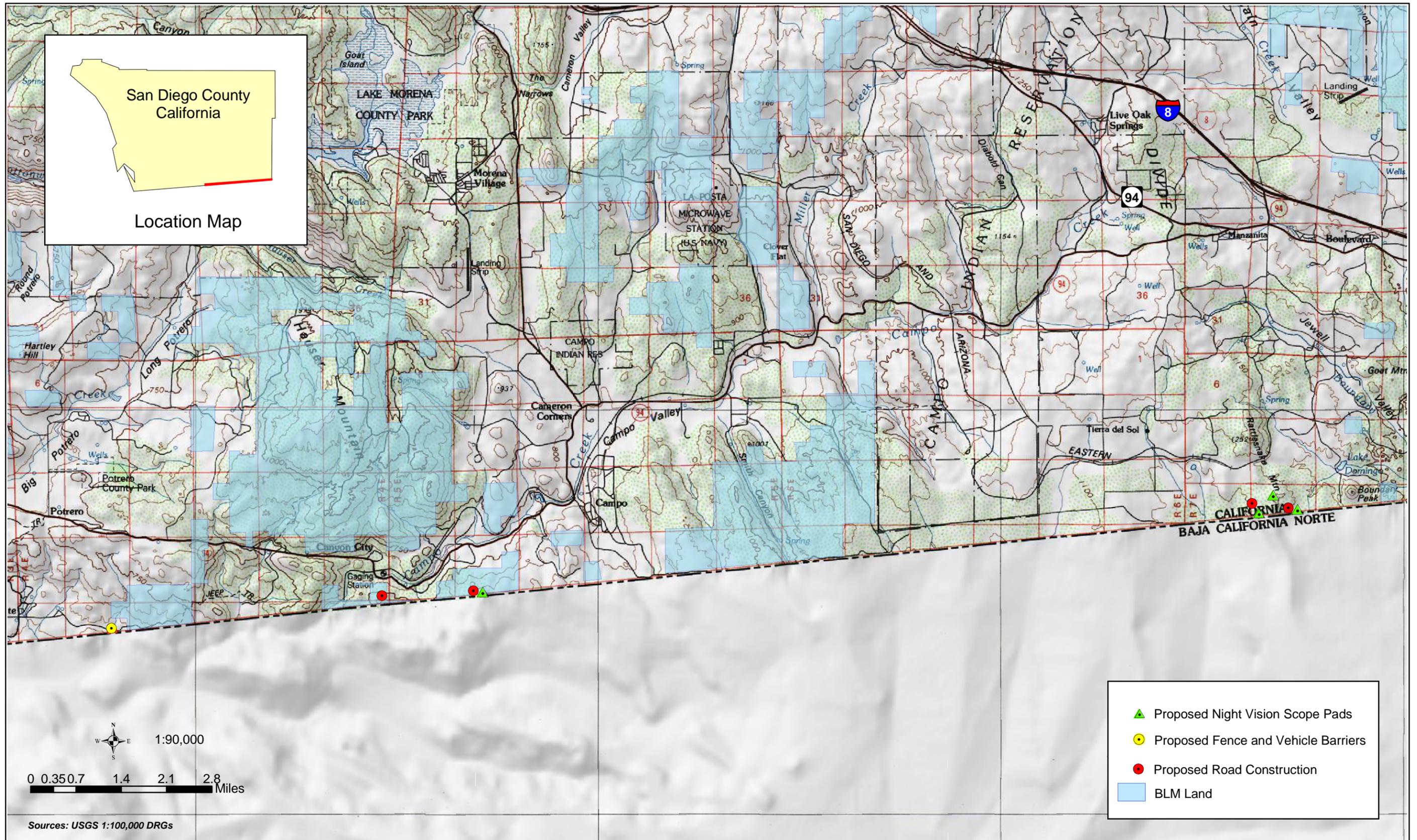


Figure 2-7: All Proposed Activities in the Project Area

Table 2-2: Matrix of Potential Impacts

Affected Environment	Proposed Action Alternative	No Action Alternative
Land Use	New scope pad and road construction (Monument 241, Larry Pierce, Airport Mesa, and Bypass roads) would convert 14.29 acres from open rangeland to roads	No impacts
Aesthetics	Scope pads would be placed on top of hill in six areas; temporary negative effects from on-site construction equipment; fencing/vehicle barriers would be installed in a new area	No direct impacts; UDAs would continue to cause long term indirect impacts from the creation of trails, littering, and wildland fires
Soils and Prime Farmland	All actions would permanently disturb soils; less than 18.71 acres of soil is expected to be permanently disturbed; no prime farmlands would be impacted	No direct impacts; UDAs would continue to cause long term indirect impacts from the creation of trails
Water Resources	No significant effects to water resources are expected; two drainage structures would be installed along the Larry Pierce and Southern Cherry Stem Roads; proposed vehicle barriers in the drain on the east side of Cetus Hill would not impede water flow; no support poles would be installed in streambeds at Cetus Hill	Vehicles would continue to cross though the drain on the east side of Cetus Hill causing negative impacts to water resources
Vegetation Communities	14.98 acres of vegetation would be disturbed with the Proposed Action Alternative: 14.29 acres for access road and scope pad construction , 0.54 acre for bypass road construction, and 0.15 acre for fence and vehicle barrier installation; however, much of the proposed road construction would be along existing trails; no trees would be cut or disturbed for barriers at Cetus Hill	No vegetation would be directly disturbed; indirect effects would continue from UDAs

Table 2-2: Matrix of Potential Impacts

Affected Environment	Proposed Action Alternative	No Action Alternative
Wildlife and Aquatic Resources	All actions would require vegetation disturbance and therefore would remove wildlife habitat; approximately 14.98 acres would be impacted; 650-foot section of proposed landing mat fence and vehicle barrier could impede wildlife movement	Heavy UDA traffic would continue across valuable wildlife habitat
Threatened and Endangered Species and Critical Habitat	No threatened or endangered species or critical habitat would be disturbed from any of the proposed activities	Heavy UDA traffic would continue across areas known to have protected species or valuable habitat in which protected species rely on
Air Quality	Short-term degradation in local air quality from construction equipment; however, impacts considered insignificant and below <i>de minimus</i> threshold	No additional impacts
Noise	Temporary increase in noise levels due to construction activities	No additional impacts
Cultural Resources	No impacts	The potential exists for UDA traffic to continue across possible cultural resource sites
Socioeconomics	Beneficial impacts would be expected to socioeconomics in the project area; increased safety to neighborhoods and surrounding communities	No impacts to housing and income; adverse impacts to the surrounding border towns and communities would continue
Environmental Justice and Protection of the Children	No impacts	No impacts