

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS
OF INTERSTATE 8 AND HIGHWAY 80 CHECKPOINTS
U.S. BORDER PATROL, SAN DIEGO SECTOR

Project History: U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) is a law enforcement entity of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) within Department of Homeland Security (DHS). USBP's priority mission is to prevent the entry of terrorists and their weapons of terrorism and to enforce the laws that protect the U.S. homeland. This is accomplished by the detection, interdiction, and apprehension of those who attempt to illegally enter or smuggle any person or contraband across the sovereign borders of the United States.

CBP prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to address the potential effects, beneficial and adverse, resulting from the proposed improvements and maintenance of two USBP checkpoints in its San Diego Sector, California. The checkpoints are located on Interstate 8 (I-8) and Old Highway 80 (Highway 80) east of Alpine, San Diego County, California. The proposed improvements would be implemented to enhance safety of USBP agents and the general public and to allow the checkpoints to operate more effectively.

This EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and analyzes the project alternatives and potential impacts on the human and natural environment from two action alternatives and a No Action Alternative.

Purpose and Need: CBP and USBP propose several improvements to two USBP checkpoints for the purpose of facilitating the safe and effective operation of the checkpoints. The need for the Proposed Action Alternative is to provide adequate space and facilities (e.g., administrative, detention, processing) for the agents and staff currently operating the checkpoints; an increase to the width of approach lanes to allow sufficient space to safely conduct primary inspections and to allow for the free flow of public traffic during times when the checkpoints are closed; adequate lighting to enhance security and detection capabilities; a means to operate the checkpoint during extremely hot or other inclement conditions; and a more safe, effective, and efficient work environment.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would include expansion of the current footprint at the I-8 and Highway 80 checkpoints and would include installation of lights, shade canopies, and other minor improvements. The expansion at I-8 would consist of construction of two new exit lanes from I-8 to the inspection area and construction of retaining walls and guard rails at the edge of the expansion area. This expansion would occur near the southern end of the existing checkpoint, within existing cut slopes that were created during construction of I-8. Other items to be installed/implemented at the I-8 checkpoint include:

1. A shade canopy over the expanded lane areas and near the secondary inspection area.
2. Permanent lights consisting of 10 light standards equipped with four luminaries each.
3. Hydraulic spike strip
4. Steel building over the existing hydraulic vehicle lift

5. Hydraulic crash bollards
6. K-rails and appropriate signage

Metal halide lamps would be installed on the permanent lights to provide the most accurate color-rendering index. Illumination would be directed down and toward the traffic lanes for inspection and safety purposes. Illumination intensity at ground level would be expected to achieve 24 foot-candles. Backshields would be placed on the lights to reduce or eliminate light trespass into vegetated areas adjacent to the checkpoint. Installation of the permanent lights would allow USBP to discontinue the use of all or most of the portable light generators that are currently used. This would result in a reduction in noise and air pollution. Power for the lights would be provided by underground lines from existing, adjacent electrical power poles.

The improvements at the Highway 80 checkpoint would involve ground disturbance and vegetation clearing to the current easement boundary, which is approximately 10 to 12 feet wide by 1,000 feet long. The paved area would be expanded to accommodate one access lane to the inspection stations off of the Highway 80 road surface. Other improvements proposed at the Highway 80 checkpoint include the following:

1. Shade canopy over the inspection area
2. Upgrade of the pad around the existing USBP water well
3. Permanent lights consisting of nine light standards with five luminaries each
4. Underground wastewater holding tank (which would be operated/maintained by licensed contractor)
5. New modular administrative building
6. Additional parking spaces
7. K rails and appropriate signage

Three coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*) are within the footprint of the expanded access lane and parking area. Every attempt to avoid removing these trees shall be carefully considered. The southernmost tree might require removal due to safety concerns, as it is near the beginning of the expanded lanes. Limbs would be trimmed on all three trees to provide proper vehicle clearance and line of sight for the agents working the checkpoint. If the oaks are removed, they would be replaced at up to a 5:1 ratio and their survival would be monitored for 7 years. Lights would be installed to provide security and enhance inspection. The lighting design would be similar to that described for the I-8 checkpoint. An encroachment permit would be required from the California Department of Transportation prior to implementation of the proposed activities.

Additionally, the continued maintenance, as well as potential renovations of or minor additions to the checkpoints, would be expected. Such activities could include, but are not limited to, minor renovations and additions to buildings such as realigning interior spaces of an existing building, adding a small storage shed to an existing building, installing a small antenna on an already existing antenna tower that does not cause the total height to exceed 200 feet; construction or installation of kennels and security systems are also included in these categories. Other maintenance activities could include routine upgrade, repair, and maintenance of the checkpoint buildings, roofs, parking area, grounds, or other facilities that would not result in a change of functional use (e.g., replacing door locks or windows, painting interior or exterior walls, resurfacing a road or parking lot, culvert maintenance, grounds maintenance, or replacing essential station components such as an air

conditioning unit).

Alternatives Considered: In addition to the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), two action alternatives were identified and considered during the planning stages of the proposed project and all are carried forward for analysis in this EA: the Proposed Action (Alternative 2) and the No Lane Expansion Alternative (Preferred Alternative; Alternative 3). Under Alternative 3, the expansion of the lanes at the I-8 checkpoint would not occur. The shade canopy would be installed across the entire width of the westbound lanes of I-8. Although the width of the approach lanes would not be increased, the other improvements under the No Lane Expansion Alternative would be sufficient to allow for safe primary inspections and to allow for the free flow of public traffic during times when the checkpoints are closed. All other improvements as described at both checkpoints would be implemented. The No Action Alternative has also been evaluated, as required by NEPA. The No Action Alternative would require the USBP agents to operate the checkpoints in their current condition. This alternative will serve as the baseline to which the two action alternatives will be compared.

Environmental Consequences: The No Lane Expansion Alternative would not have a new permanent impact at the I-8 checkpoint and would have a direct permanent impact on 0.12 acre at the Highway 80 checkpoint. It would minimize environmental impacts at the I-8 Checkpoint by keeping all improvements within the footprint of the existing checkpoint and not requiring any lane expansion. No previously documented cultural resources sites eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are located at the project sites. These construction activities would result in negligible to minor permanent impacts on soils, vegetation, general wildlife populations, and visual and aesthetic resources. Temporary and negligible adverse effects would occur on noise and air quality due to the construction activities. Minor permanent impacts on visual and aesthetic qualities would occur due to the installation of permanent light poles and fixtures. Some beneficial effects would occur also with the elimination of the temporary light generators through the reduction of noise, air emissions, and potential for spills of fuels and oils.

Because some plant species are present at the two project sites that serve as host plants for the larvae of Quino checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas editha quina*), CBP has determined that the project may affect, but would not likely adversely affect this endangered species. CBP informally consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). USFWS has informed CBP that they concur with CBP's determination.

Although several Federally-listed and state-listed species could potentially occur within the region of the project sites, none were observed during biological surveys. In addition, given the position of sites on and adjacent to I-8 and Highway 80, which generate constant noise, and the short duration of construction activities, no effects on other listed species would occur. However, CBP has committed to implementing best management practices (BMPs) to further ensure that impacts on least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) and southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) are avoided.

The potential impacts resulting from the No Lane Expansion Alternative (Preferred Alternative), in combination with impacts resulting from other development in the project region, would have minimal permanent cumulative effects on air quality, noise, aesthetics, and biological resources. No major impacts on any resources would occur regardless of the

alternative chosen.

Best Management Practices (BMPs): The following BMPs will be implemented to minimize impacts on the human and natural environment:

Water Resources: Proper maintenance of construction equipment and BMPs implemented during construction activities will minimize the possibility of accidental POL spills that could affect surface and groundwater quality. A Water Pollution Control Plan will be prepared pursuant to the June 2011 California Department of Transportation Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and Water Pollution Control Plan Preparation Manual. A Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan will be maintained to ensure that all are aware of its implementation requirements in the event of a spill. Proper BMPs, such as drip pans and absorbent mats under idle vehicles, as well as the use of silt fencing, straw bales, and construction during the dry season, will be implemented to prevent runoff (i.e., sediment flow) into Cottonwood Creek.

Air Quality: In order to minimize the amount of project-related dust emissions, the following management practices shall be implemented during project construction: (1) minimize land disturbance; and (2) water trucks shall be used to saturate exposed areas and control emissions of fugitive dust caused by hauling activities and vehicular travel on unpaved road surfaces. In addition, all construction equipment shall be maintained and operated in a manner that produces the least amount of emissions and maintains the lowest possible noise levels. Standard noise attenuation equipment, such as mufflers, must be used on all construction equipment and vehicles and must be maintained in good operating condition, free from leaks.

Protected Species: To avoid effects on southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell's vireo, should either species occur in Cottonwood Creek, construction activities at the Highway 80 checkpoint will be scheduled outside the birds' breeding/nesting season (i.e., construction would occur between September 1 and March 1). No nighttime construction will occur. Lighting will be shielded and pointed in a direction to prevent or substantially reduce trespass into the Cottonwood Creek riparian area.

To avoid potential effects on Quino checkerspot butterfly at the I-8 checkpoint, CBP has committed to have an on-site biological monitor present during any clearing and grubbing activities. The presence of an on-site biological monitor during the initial site preparation (i.e., clearing, grubbing, and grading) would also help to reduce or avoid impacts on other wildlife species, including migratory birds. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been completed, in accordance with the ESA Section 7 process.

Cultural Resources: Consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been completed and concurrence with CBP's determination that no historic properties would be adversely affected has been received. This completes the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process. If, during construction, cultural materials are uncovered, construction will cease until a qualified archaeologist can examine and evaluate the nature of the cultural resource and the California SHPO will be notified.

Light Pollution: In order to minimize the possibility of stray light affecting the night sky or Cottonwood Creek, both vertical and back lighting shields will be installed on each light fixture. All lights will be turned off when the checkpoint is not in operation and, to the

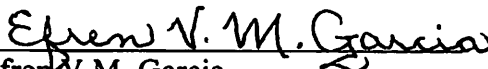
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Findings and Conclusions: No significant adverse impacts are anticipated for any resource analyzed within this document. Therefore, no further analysis or documentation (i.e., Environmental Impact Statement) is warranted. CBP, in implementing this decision, would employ all practical means to minimize the potential adverse impacts on the human and biological environment.

Project Proponent:


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