

# Naval Construction Battalion Center Gulfport and Special Areas Joint Land Use Study Implementation

Training Notification Strategies

---



Prepared by:



2316 Killearn Center Boulevard Suite 102  
Tallahassee, Florida 32309

December 2019

## Contact Information

### Gulf Regional Planning Commission:

Jeff Loftus  
Project Manager  
Gulf Regional Planning Commission  
1635 Pops Ferry RD, Suite G  
Biloxi, Mississippi 39532

### Stantec:

Raymond W. Greer, AICP  
Project Manager  
2613 Killlearn Center Boulevard, Suite 102  
Tallahassee, Florida 32309  
Phone: 850.878.5001  
Fax: 850.878.5941

Disclaimer: This study was prepared under contract with the Gulf Regional Planning Commission, Mississippi, with financial support from the Office of Economic Adjustment, Department of Defense and the Mississippi Development Authority. The content does not necessarily reflect the views of the Office of Economic Adjustment and the Mississippi Development Authority.

# Table of Contents

---

Introduction .....1

Website Updates.....1

Public Alert System .....2

Social Media.....3

E-mail Messages .....4

Call-in Number .....5

AtHOC and WAAN .....5

Informational Signs .....5

Summary Recommendations.....9

Appendix A: Example Documents

## Introduction

Complaints regarding the off-installation effects from military training can lead to training hours and activities being curtailed. This can affect an installation's ability to carry out its training mission and which can affect troop readiness. One way to mitigate the effects of training activities on the Installations' neighbors is to thoroughly and regularly communicate when training will be occurring and what the off-base impacts may be. This would allow those affected by the training to plan accordingly and would help minimize issues with off-installation impacts.

There are three essential components of communication – a message, a sender, and a receiver. The message is sent through a communication channel. There are two ways in which the message can be disseminated - through pushing information out (sender driven), or having users pull information in (receiver driven). Both avenues of communication are valid; however, relying on the receiver to know when and where to go to retrieve the information runs the risk of the information being accessed at the wrong time, or not at all.

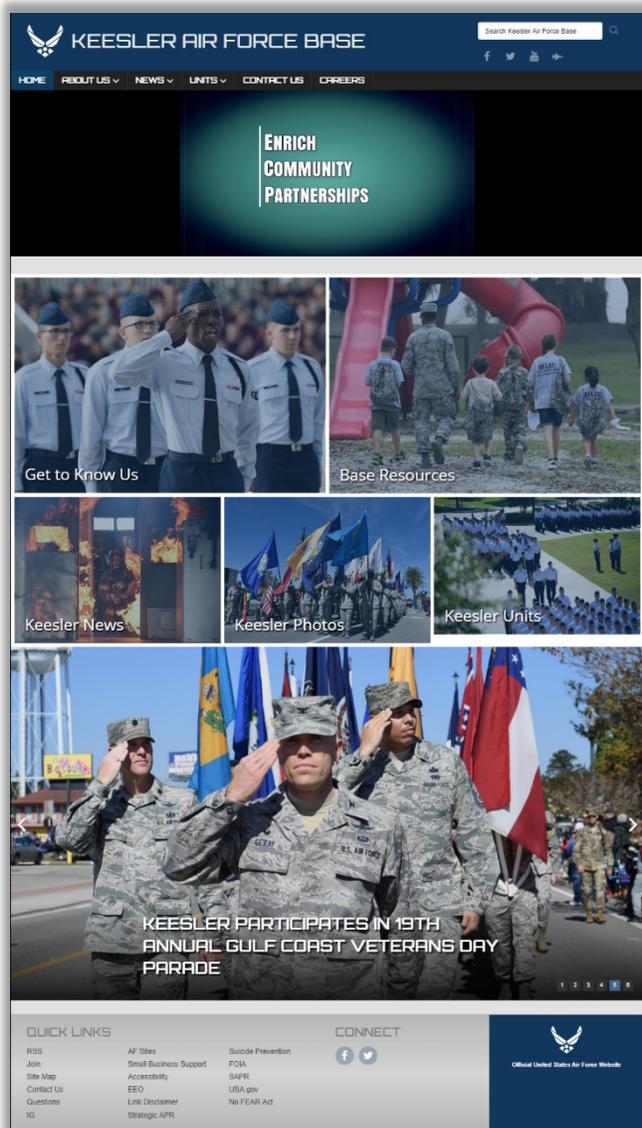
The following strategies are presented as a way to get NCBC + Special Areas' and Keesler Air Force Base's information out to as many people as possible in as timely a fashion as possible. While one method may be more effective than others, an array of communication channels is best to reach the maximum number of people as possible and ensure that any disruptions are anticipated and therefore less bothersome.

## Website Updates

All of the installations within the NCBC + Special Areas have a website. Keesler Air Force Base has a website as well. Most individuals turn to the internet as their first source of information. This would be a good place to post training schedules to notify the public when trainings are to occur, and what impacts are likely. A link presented on the front page of the Installation's website leading to a page containing information about training schedules and anticipated off-installation impacts would provide a distinct source of information about training schedules. This webpage could be updated as often as necessary to provide up-to-date information about training schedules.



A screenshot of the NCBC website, accessed 12/9/2019.



A screenshot of Keesler AFB's website. Accessed 12/9/2019.

Website updates rely on members of the public to pull information that they want to know. The information is presented passively for people to check at will. This relies on those affected by the Installations' trainings to retrieve the information themselves. This could present a problem if the individuals do not know where to go to get the information, or do not check it frequently enough to keep up with changing training schedules.

### Public Alert System

A public alert system provides text messages to subscribers regarding important information. Many municipalities use text-based Public Alert Systems to notify residents of emergencies, boil water notices, events, and other important information. It is a good way to notify a large number of people simultaneously. Advertisers also use text-based alert systems of sales or events taking place. According to Alert Media (<https://www.alertmedia.com/text-notification-system/>), 50% of 30 to 49-year-olds use texts as their primary mode of communication. Companies using text-based alert systems report a high open rate of the text (98%), versus a much lower rate of opening for e-mail messages (20%).

There are generally two types of messaging systems: Short Message Service (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS). MMS was built using the same technology as SMS to allow SMS users to send multimedia content. It's most popularly used to send pictures, but can also be used to send audio, phone contacts, and video files. An SMS service would most likely serve the needs of NCBC + Special Areas, unless maps or graphics need to be sent.

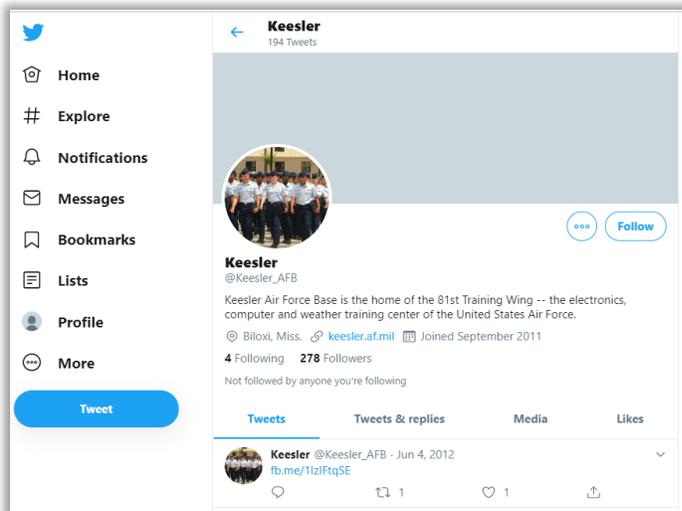
SMS text messaging services operate by having subscribers text a word to a specific number, which then enrolls them in the text messaging service. Notifications of how to sign up for the service can be placed on webpages, newspapers, fliers, billboards, radio, television, or anywhere else advertising is usually found. If a subscriber no longer wants to receive text messages, opting out is usually simple and consists of texting the word "Stop" to a message received.



A screenshot from the City of D'Iberville's website showing how to subscribe to the City's text messaging system.

The cost of a text messaging service varies by the number of people receiving the text messages. The cost ranges from \$50 per month for a small number of text alerts (<2,500) to \$150 per month for up to 20,000 messages. A price-per receiver plan is also available, with costs ranging from 5 to 9 cents per message. A monthly plan that allows the Installation to send as many messages to recipients as possible would give the Installation flexibility to accommodate changing training schedules.

The Installation can purchase and operate an SMS text messaging system themselves, or they may be able to set up a Memorandum of Understanding to use local municipalities' text messaging systems. The Cities of D'Iberville, Biloxi, and Gulfport, all have alert systems that may be able to be used, based upon the frequency of needed updates regarding training activities.

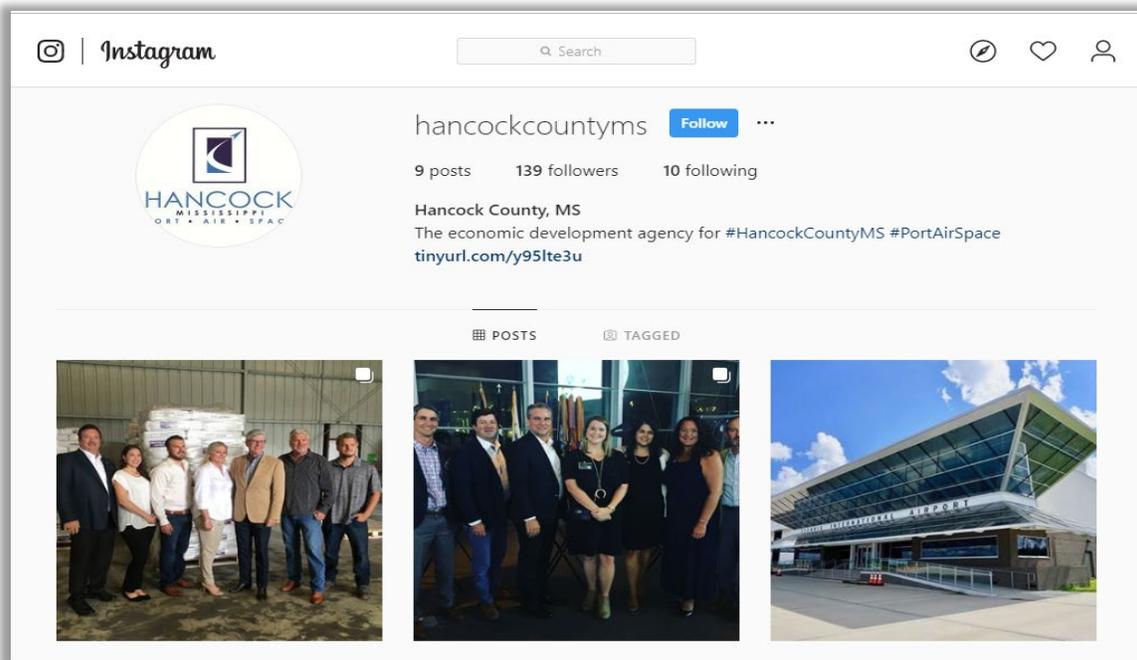


A screenshot of Keesler AFB's Twitter feed. Accessed 12/10/2019.

## Social Media

Social media has become a very good way to reach out to individuals. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other platforms allow individuals, businesses, and public entities to stay in contact with a large number of individuals. Facebook is an online social media and social networking service that allows people to post pictures and comments and see the posts of people they have "friended" on the application. The posts of companies and institutions can be viewed by "liking" an institution's page. Instagram is a photo and video-sharing networking service; people with an

Instagram account "follow" each other and can see each other's posts. Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service on which users post and interact with messages known as "tweets" of up to 280 characters.



A screenshot of Hancock County's Instagram page. Accessed 12/10/2019.

Through these applications one post can reach thousands of people. However, with the sheer volume of Facebook posts, Instagram posts, and Tweets, an update regarding training activities at NCBC + Special Areas may be missed in individual user's newsfeeds. The Installation's account can be checked for postings regarding training activities, but many users may not do this on a regular basis.

Twitter's platform enables users to send and receive tweets via text message. While this hybrid may allow the Installation to use Twitter to send out notifications that would be received as a text message, there is no guarantee that all users who follow the Installation on Twitter would have their account set up to receive messages in this fashion.

## E-mail Messages

Another electronic option for notifying individuals about training activities is to send out e-mail messages notifying those who have subscribed to the service of training activities. While e-mail messages are cheaper than SMS text messages, they have a lower open rate, and some receivers may ignore them.

Many of the municipalities within the areas around the Installations already have e-mail programs in place to notify residents of emergencies. The Cities of Biloxi, Gulfport, and Harrison County all have e-mail services in place that could be used to notify residents of training activities.

**City of Gulfport List**

Email Address

First Name

Last Name



Website page to sign up for the City of Gulfport's email list. Accessed 12/10/2019.

## Call-in Number

A lower-tech version of a notification system is a call-in number. For the cost of a telephone line, the installation could record a message stating the time and place of the next training event. If none are planned, the recording could state that instead. Users wanting to know when the next training event would be could call the number and listen to the recording. This method requires the user to know where and when to retrieve information, which may prove inconvenient for users.

## AtHOC and WAAN

The AtHOC Notification system is an interactive crisis warning system that allows senior leaders to inform base personnel of urgent information. The system is for use by all Active Military, Military Dependents, Civilian Federal Employees, and Contractors. It is used by NCBC Gulfport to quickly pass important information via a computer-based program. Its alerts include severe weather, road and gate closings, and hazardous areas on base due to road construction. While this system is good for notifying on-base personnel of important information, it is not available to the public at large.



*A screenshot from BlackBerry AtHOC's home website. Accessed 12/10/2019.*

The Wide Area Alert Network (WAAN) is a tool that Region Commanders and installation commanding officers utilize to alert the workforce to destructive weather hazards, emergencies, severe traffic conditions, force protection condition changes, etc., both during and after working hours. The automated telephone notification system, one of four sub-systems of the WAAN, enables registered users to receive telephonic, email, and text alerts on devices they designate. Like AtHOC, this alert system is available only to on-base personnel of important information.

## Informational Signs

### ***Western Maneuver Area***

The Western Maneuver Area (WMA) is a 3,200-acre facility located in Hancock County. The entirety of the site is within the Stennis Acoustic Buffer Zone. The Pearl River forms the western border of the WMA and serves as the border between Louisiana and Mississippi; the land west of the Pearl River lies within the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area. The land surrounding the WMA on both the Louisiana



*An informational sign located at the Waukon City Park, Waukon, Iowa. This sign depicts information regarding the watershed, water quality, and the water cycle; a similar sign containing information regarding military training on the Pearl River could be placed at Boat Ramps providing access to the River.*

should be used in conjunction with one or more of the methods described above to notify residents of training activities on all of the NCBC + Special Areas locations. An electronic sign or flashing light to notify boaters when they are entering the training area is also needed.

In addition, outreach through boating associations and marinas would help to notify boaters of the presence of training in the area. This outreach should take the form of pamphlets or fliers that could be picked up by boaters at marinas and sent out as an email to boating associations' contact lists. These informational brochures are relatively low-cost (printing and materials for the pamphlets; only time for the e-mail) and would reach the targeted audience.

Training information, including time and place, could be added to all Coast Guard publications. This would provide another avenue to disseminate information to the community.

Currently, there is no requirement in the Mississippi code of regulations to have a radio on a boat. However, many boats do have a VHF radio on board. VHF radio is intended mainly for

and Mississippi sides is restricted due to the Stennis Acoustic Buffer Zone and the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area. The Pearl River is used by both the military to conduct trainings as well as by the public for recreational boating and fishing. These two uses sharing the same space have the potential for conflict.

Informational signs, put up at boat ramps that provide access to the river, detailing the location and type of training that takes place on the River would provide needed information to the boating public about the presence of military personnel in the River and the measures that should be taken to preserve everyone's safety. These signs



*One of the WMA's current notification sign for training activity along the Pearl River. It features a phone number to call for information regarding the training schedule.*

short range communications, generally 5-10 miles. The US Coast Guard maintains a radio frequency specifically for distress calls and reserves other frequencies for boater communication. One option could be to maintain a radio frequency to broadcast time and location details of training, much like the National Weather Service broadcasts weather information on specific radio channels. This option is one of the most expensive, as a radio broadcast will have to be maintained.



*A sign notifying members of the public of the potential danger of trespassing into the Woolmarket Range while training is taking place (above). Signs like these could be augmented with information about signing up for training text alerts or flashing lights that would notify people when training was taking place like that at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina (right).*



### ***Woolmarket Range***

Woolmarket Range is a 2,483-acre facility located within Harrison County and the Desoto National Forest that is part of the NCBC + Special Areas. The majority of the land around Woolmarket Range is conservation land is not developed. A residential subdivision along with county facilities and a school is located south of the Installation, across Highway 67. To the southwest and directly adjacent to the Small Arms Range is a private gun club.

The Range is located within the growing community of Woolmarket. Although much of the development came after the establishment of the Range, the residents and visitors to the area are not always aware of the training that takes place and the sounds emanating because of it. Noise is typically generated from three small arms bays and a counter-IED training area. Other non-routine training events have also occurred creating noise for nearby residents.

The current use patterns of conservation, public facilities, low and medium density residential, and commercial are predominately compatible with the training exercises and activities taking place on the base. The majority of off-site impacts generated by the installation are noise from small arms ranges and Counter-



*The gate at Woolmarket Small Arms Range. Note the red flag behind the gate, used to indicate that training is taking place at the range.*

Improvised Explosive Device training that create noise and vibrations that can be heard and felt at the school and residential neighborhood. In addition, the neighboring private gun club allows the firing of larger caliber weapons and could generate more noise than the Small Arms Range.

Flashing signs, put up at points that provide access to Desoto National Forest, notifying people of when training is taking place would provide needed information to the public regarding the measures that should be taken to preserve everyone's safety. These signs should be used in conjunction with one or more of the methods described above to notify residents of training activities on all of the NCBC + Special Areas locations.

The Range currently employs a flag system to notify people of training activities. However, many people may not know the significance of the flags. An electronic sign could be used to notify residents, teachers, students, and passersby of out-of-the ordinary training activities, such as night training, or training with especially loud explosives. at the Woolmarket Range.



*An electronic sign at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. Photo courtesy <http://www.ledticker.com/outdoorledsigns.html>.*

## Summary Recommendations

Information systems that push information out to users reach more people than systems that require users to pull the information that they need. In order to reach the most users the most efficient way, a combination of methods to disseminate training information should be used. The Installation should use the Cities' and Counties' notification systems to alert users of ongoing training, or develop their own, or a combination of the two, depending on how often it needs to be used. This, in combination with posts to Installation websites would serve to notify the largest number of people. Table 1, below, summarizes the social media and public notification platforms available for each local government.

Table 1: Available Public Notification Platforms

	Text Alerts	E-mail Alerts	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram
Keesler AFB	X	X	✓	✓	✓
NCBC	X	X	✓	✓	X
City of Gulfport	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
City of Long Beach	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Hancock County	X	X	✓	✓	✓
Harrison County	✓	✓	✓	X	X
City of Biloxi	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
City of D'Iberville	✓	X	✓	✓	X

✓ = Yes, X = No

**Appendix A:**  
**Example Documents**



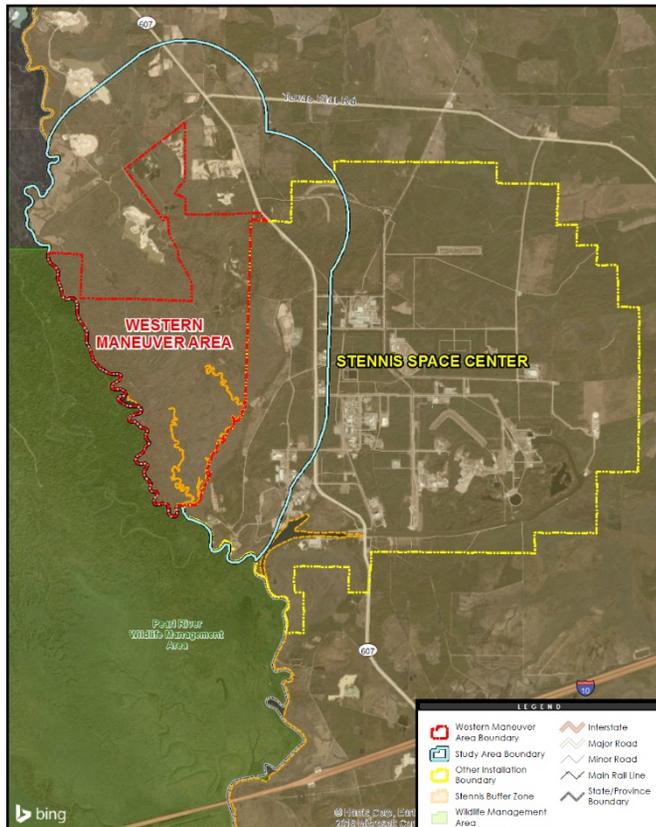
# Military Training Along the River

The Pearl River forms the western boundary of the Navy's Western Maneuver Area. The Western Maneuver Area is a 3,200-acre facility located within the Stennis Acoustic Buffer Zone of Hancock County.

The Western Maneuver Area was acquired by the Navy in 2004 to establish the Naval Riverine and Jungle Training Complex. It is located between the Pearl River State Wildlife Management Areas in Louisiana and the western boundary of the Stennis Space Center.



*Training taking place along the Pearl River*



The amount of land, native vegetation and varied terrain of the lower Pearl River Basin provides a realistic environment for combination river-to-jungle training exercises, maneuver and convoy operations, hard target sites, and direct access to the Gulf of Mexico. Mike's River and McCarty Bayou within the Western Maneuver Area and a portion of the East Pearl River abutting the Western Maneuver Area are used for riverine training, including live-fire from river-to-land for Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen. The Western Maneuver Area supports numerous other types of training such as insertion and extraction, small unit tactics, convoy training and other types of field training. Additional training opportunities also include coastal training activities from the Gulf of Mexico. Units sometimes use the Pearl River to transit to and from the Western Maneuver Area to the Gulf.



## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

The military has posted signs notifying the public of training areas. Also, boats are stationed outside of areas where live firing is taking place. To keep everyone safe, be on the lookout for the signs and boats!



*Training taking place along the Pearl River*



For more information, Contact  
the Naval Construction  
Battalion Center at 555-555-  
5555.

# Military Training Along the River

The Pearl River forms the western boundary of the Navy's Western Maneuver Area. The Western Maneuver Area is a 3,200-acre facility located within the Stennis Acoustic Buffer Zone of Hancock County.

The Western Maneuver Area was acquired by the Navy in 2004 to establish the Naval Riverine and Jungle Training Complex. It is located between the Pearl River State Wildlife Management Areas in Louisiana and the western boundary of the Stennis Space Center.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

The military has posted signs notifying the public of training areas. Also, boats are stationed outside of areas where live firing is taking place. To keep everyone safe, be on the lookout for the signs and boats!

The amount of land, native vegetation and varied terrain of the lower Pearl River Basin provides a realistic environment for combination river-to-jungle training exercises, maneuver and convoy operations, hard target sites, and direct access to the Gulf of Mexico. Mike's River and McCarty Bayou within the Western Maneuver Area and a portion of the East Pearl River abutting the Western Maneuver Area are used for riverine training, including live-fire from river-to-land for Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen. The Western Maneuver Area supports numerous other types of training such as insertion and extraction, small unit tactics, convoy training and other types of field training. Additional training opportunities also include coastal training activities from the Gulf of Mexico. Units sometimes use the Pearl River to transit to and from the Western Maneuver Area to the Gulf.

