SECTION 5.0
RELATED PROJECTS AND POTENTIAL EFFECTS

5.0 RELATED PROJECTS AND POTENTIAL EFFECTS

This section of the ESP addresses the potential cumulative impacts associated with the implementation of the Project and other projects/programs that are planned for the region.

USBP has been conducting law enforcement actions along the border since its inception in 1924, and has continually transformed its methods as new missions, IA modes of operation, agent needs, and National enforcement strategies have evolved. Development and maintenance of training ranges, station and sector facilities, detention facilities, and roads and fences have affected thousands of acres, with synergistic and cumulative impacts to soil, wildlife habitats, water quality, and noise. Beneficial effects have resulted from the construction and use of these roads and fences, including, but not limited to: increased employment and income for border regions and surrounding communities; protection and enhancement of sensitive resources north of the border; reduction in crime within urban areas near the border; increased land value in areas where border security has increased; and increased knowledge of the biological communities and pre-history of the region through numerous biological and cultural resources surveys and studies.

With continued funding and implementation of CBP's environmental conservation measures, including use of biological and archaeological monitors, and restoration activities, adverse impacts of future and ongoing projects will be prevented or minimized. However, recent, ongoing, and reasonably foreseeable proposed projects will result in cumulative impacts. General descriptions of these types of activities are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Cumulative Fencing along Southwest Border. There are currently 62 miles of landing mat pedestrian fence at various locations along the U.S./Mexico International border (Congressional Research Service [CRS] 2006); approximately 30 miles of single, double, and triple pedestrian fence in San Diego, California and Yuma, Arizona; 70 miles of new primary pedestrian fence at various locations along the U.S./Mexico border; vehicle fence along much of the Deming Station's AO, vehicle fence in Arizona along the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument; and pedestrian fences at POE facilities throughout the southern border. In addition, 225 miles of fence are currently being planned and built for Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

Past Actions. Past actions are those within the cumulative effects analysis areas that have occurred prior to the development of this ESP. The effects of these past actions are generally described throughout Section 3 of this ESP. For example, extensive cattle grazing and farming use in the area has contributed to the existing environmental conditions of the area.

Present Actions. Present actions include current or funded construction projects; CBP or other agency actions in close proximity to the planned vehicle fence locations; and current resource management programs and land use activities within the cumulative effects analysis areas. Ongoing actions considered in the cumulative effects analysis include the following:

Construction of Primary Fence. The FY 2007 DHS Appropriations Act provided $1.2 billion for the installation of fencing, infrastructure, and technology along the border (CRS 2006). By the December 31, 2008 CBP will have constructed up to 225 miles of primary fence and up to 300 miles of vehicle fence in all southwest border sectors except Laredo.

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions. Reasonably foreseeable future actions consist of activities that have been approved and can be evaluated with respect to their effects. The following activities are reasonably foreseeable future actions:

CBP's Secure Border Initiative (SBI*net*) The Secure Border Initiative (SBI) is a comprehensive multi-year plan established by the DHS to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration. SBI*net* is responsible for the development, installation and integration of technology solutions, and SBI TI develops and installs physical components designed to secure the border consisting of the following major components: pedestrian fence, vehicle fence, roads, lights and vegetation control. SBI*net* will improve deterrence, detection, and apprehension of illegal aliens into the U.S. When fully implemented, SBI*net* and SBI TI will improve ability of CBP personnel to rapidly and effectively respond to illegal cross border activity and help DHS and CBP to manage, control, and secure the Nation's borders.

SBI*net* program is currently in the very early planning stages of identifying potential locations for surveillance and communication towers within New Mexico. These towers typically require a 100-foot x 100-foot area and are usually located near an established, but sometimes unimproved road. The towers are generally less than 200 feet tall and can be powered by batteries, solar panels, wind turbines, natural gas generators, or from existing electrical grids. The towers would be used as a force multiplier to assist USBP in the detection of illegal cross-border activity. Currently, there are 35 radar/camera towers and 20 communication tower sites being investigated within 25 miles of the U.S./Mexico border in New Mexico. For a Project of this size, it would be expected that no more than 50 acres, including construction/improvement of access roads would be impacted. Typical of all CBP Projects, sites are surveyed for the presence of sensitive resources and, where practicable, such resources are avoided.

CBP also intends to construct approximately 48 miles of vehicle fence and associated construction roads along the U.S./Mexico border from Border Monuments 62 to 40 in southeast New Mexico. The construction of these TI components would encompass the entire 60 foot Roosevelt Reservation and account for 349 acres of disturbance. In order to construct the TI along the border, access roads would also have to be improved. Approximately 84 miles of access roads would be improved. These roads currently

range from two-track trails to 28-foot wide all-weather roads. Therefore, the amount of work to be completed to improve these roads is not known at this time but will be established via engineering and analyzed in an appropriate environmental document.

A list of other recently completed or reasonable foreseeable CBP Projects within the region surrounding the Lordsburg Station's AO is presented in Table 5-1. In addition, CBP might be required to implement other activities and operations that are currently not foreseen or mentioned in this document. These actions could be in response to National emergencies or security events like the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, or to changes in the mode of operations of the potential IAs.

Table 5-1. Recently Completed or Reasonably Foreseeable CBP Projects in and near the Lordsburg Station's AO

Project	Approximate Distance from Project Corridor (miles)	Approximate Acres Permanently Impacted
New construction of the Lordsburg Station, Hidalgo County, New Mexico	71	25
USBP, Forward Operating Base, Luna County, New Mexico	75	10
USBP, Temporary Camp Detail, Coronado National Forest	40	1
TI within the Deming Station's AO (construction roads, access roads, vehicle fence, primary fences, and lighting)	30	382
VF 300 HV-4 Project	1	42
	Total	**460 acres**

Plans by other agencies that would also affect the region's natural and human environment, including various road improvements by the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) and/or Hidalgo County. The majority of these projects would be expected to occur along existing corridors and/or within previously disturbed sites. The magnitude of the impacts would depend upon the length and width of the road right of way (ROW) and the extant conditions within and adjacent to the ROW.

Due to the remote nature of Hidalgo County and unpopulated areas of southern New Mexico, there are very few ongoing or future Projects other than those conducted by CBP, BLM, NMDOT, and private ranching activities.

In addition, projects are currently being planned by other Federal entities which could affect areas in use by USBP. CBP/USBP maintain close coordination with these agencies so that CBP/USBP activities do not conflict with other agencies' policies or management plans to the extent practicable. CBP typically coordinates with applicable state and Federal agencies prior to performing any construction activities so that USBP operations do not substantially impact the mission of other agencies. The following paragraphs list projects that other Federal and state agencies are conducting or have completed within the region.

Many habitat improvement projects are slated over the next 5 years for bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) and other species in the Bootheel area of New Mexico; these are cooperatively planned by New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), the Sikes Act Habitat Stamp Program, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Environmental Quality Incentive Program, and BLM challenge cost share program (Lister 2006). BLM has communicated with USBP on the location of water development Projects in the Hatchets and Peloncillo mountains. The U.S. Geological Survey, BLM, and NMDGF are conducting nectar feeding bat surveys in the Hatchets, Animas, and Peloncillo mountains (Lister 2006). Additional BLM Las Cruces District Office projects were described and listed in the 2006 PEA and are incorporated herein by reference. In summary, BLM proposes the following:

- grazing permit issuances, transfers, and renewals;
- free use mineral material permits;
- transportation and utility ROW easements;
- oil and gas ROW easements;
- mineral exploration permits;
- resource management plans;
- scenic trails; and
- competitive land sales.

A summary of the anticipated cumulative impacts of the Project (i.e., construction of 36 miles of vehicle fence and associated roads in Hidalgo County) in conjunction with other projects in the area are presented in the following sections. Discussions are presented for each of the resources described previously.

5.1 AIR QUALITY

The emissions generated during and after the construction of the vehicle fence will be short-term and minor. Although maintenance of the fence and construction road will result in cumulative impacts on the region's airshed, these impacts will be considered negligible, even when combined with the other proposed developments in the border region. BMPs designed to reduce fugitive dust have been and will continue to be standard operating procedure for CBP construction projects. Deterrence of and improved response time to cross border violators due to the construction of the fence and road has reduced the need for off-road enforcement actions by USBP agents.

5.2 LAND USE AND AESTHETICS

The Project described herein will occur within the Roosevelt Reservation, which was set aside specifically for border control actions. This action, therefore, is consistent with the authorized land use and, when considered with other potential alterations of land use, will have negligible cumulative impacts. Recent activities that have most affected land use near the TI are the farming and grazing operations on BLM and private lands.

The construction of TI from Border Monuments 69 to 40 will contribute to a degradation of visual resources; however, these areas currently have an existing border road and cattle fence located within or nearby most of the Project corridor. Additionally, areas north and west of the border within the construction corridors will be expected to experience beneficial, indirect cumulative impacts through the reduction of trash, soil erosion, and creation of roads by illegal vehicle traffic. Therefore, moderate cumulative impacts to visual resources are expected from implementing the Project, when considered with existing and proposed developments in the surrounding areas.

5.3 SOILS

The Project and other USBP actions will not reduce prime farmland soils or agricultural production. Pre- and post-construction SWPPP measures for this and other Planned and Proposed Actions will be implemented to control erosion. The loss of biological production from 846 acres of regionally abundant soils as a result of the Project, when combined with past and proposed projects in the region, will result in moderate cumulative impacts to soils, primarily through the loss of biological production.

5.4 WATER RESOURCES

As a result of the Project when combined with other USBP Projects, increased temporary erosion during construction will occur; however, increased sediment and turbidity will have minimal cumulative impacts on water quality. Pre- and post-construction SWPPP measures for this and other Planned and Proposed Actions will be implemented to control erosion. Limited and short-term withdrawal from the regional groundwater basins will not affect long-term water supplies or groundwater quality. The volume of water withdrawn will not affect the public drinking water supplies, but could indirectly contribute to aquifer contamination from surface runoff. The indirect effects of altered surface drainage and potential consequent erosion will have minimal beneficial and adverse cumulative impacts to surface water quality.

5.5 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Equipment used during the improvement of roads will cause the degradation or loss of up to 846 acres of natural vegetation (CBP 2006). The TI currently planned as well as future TI will permanently impact up to 846 acres of vegetation communities consisting of Chihuahuan desertscrub, desert grasslands and prairies, and woodland communities. These impacts are considered moderate to major cumulative impacts; however, BMPs will be developed, which include the restoration of temporarily impacted areas to offset these potential impacts. Additionally, the reduction of illegal traffic north of the planned and proposed TI will have beneficial cumulative impacts on vegetation communities in the region.

The planned and proposed TI will have negligible cumulative impacts on fish or other aquatic species because the construction activities will not take place in flowing or standing water. Construction in or near drainage crossings will use BMPs and follow

the SWPPP to reduce potential impacts downstream. Adverse cumulative impacts will occur to wildlife species through the permanent reduction of 846 acres of habitat. However, due to the presence of similar habitat adjacent to the study corridor (over 1.5 million acres), these impacts are considered minor to moderate (PEA 2006). Additionally, because vehicle fence is planned for 96 percent of the ROI rather than primary pedestrian fence, negligible cumulative impacts will occur regarding opportunities for transboundary migration.

CBP has maintained close coordination with USFWS and NMDGF regarding impacts to special status species, and USFWS has provided valuable guidance to CBP regarding these species. Through the use of BMPs developed in coordination with USFWS, the potential impacts as a result of the Project, as well as other past, present, and future actions, no major cumulative impacts on protected species will occur.

5.6 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resource surveys were completed and sites will be avoided or mitigated as appropriate in coordination with the land manager. Beneficial cumulative effects will occur from the protection afforded to previously discovered and any undiscovered cultural resources within the border lands in the vicinity of the planned and proposed TI components.

5.7 SOCIOECONOMICS

The planned and proposed TI in the ROI will have negligible cumulative impacts on the local employment or income, will not induce a permanent in-migration of people nor will there be additional permanent employees. Therefore, there will be no cumulative increase in demand for housing. However, TI will benefit socioeconomics of the ROI by reducing the costs associated with illegal activity through the USBP's increased deterrence and apprehension capabilities.

5.8 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Only minor increases in the use of hazardous substances (e.g., POL) will occur as a result of the construction and maintenance of the vehicle fence. No health or safety risks will be created by the Project. When combined with other ongoing and proposed Projects in the region, the Project will have a negligible cumulative impact.