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FORT BENNING, GA – Fort Benning’s Garrison Commander, COL Tom Macdonald, recently released a map identifying areas of land being considered for potential acquisition to expand the amount of land suitable for training on the post.

Last month, the Maneuver Center commander, MG Michael Ferriter, announced that the installation had launched a study into the possibility of acquiring 82,800 acres in one of, or a combination of, five counties near the post’s southern, southeastern and southwestern boundaries: Russell County in Alabama and Marion, Chattahoochee, Webster and Stewart in Georgia.

Though the need for additional training land at various installations was identified more than 10 years ago, the Army finally gave the go-ahead for Fort Benning to move forward in January of this year. Since that time, Fort Benning officials have been making an initial assessment of the surrounding lands and compiling a list of specific requirements that would determine the suitability or unsuitability of land for the training two maneuver battalions simultaneously. Officials hope to find large timberland holdings with willing sellers and agreeable topographical characteristics.

“There are so many variables we have to consider, not the least of which is our relationship with our neighbors. We will keep them informed every step of the way,” said Macdonald. “That’s why we’ve developed a new map, to let them see that we’ve narrowed our focus to these specific areas.”

Macdonald said the final decision, if approved, may include sections from more than one area or only a part of one of the larger areas, such as the area being studied in Russell County. As garrison commander, the military equivalent of a city manager, Macdonald will oversee the lengthy and tedious acquisition process, which will include a thorough evaluation of the impact the expansion and subsequent training would have on local economies and the environment.

Post officials will host a number of public information meetings, June 14-18. The meetings, which will run from 4 p.m. - 8 p.m., will be conducted like an open house. Guests can drop in any time during the meeting, meet with representatives one-on-one, ask questions and register comments for the record.

Locations of the meetings are as follows:

Monday, June 14 - National Infantry Museum

Tuesday, June 15 - Russell County High School, Seale, Ala.

Thursday, June 17 – Josh Gibson Center, Buena Vista, Ga.

Friday, June 18 – Richland Hotel, Richland, Ga.

For more information about the Training Land Expansion Project, call 706-545-8830 or e-mail questions and comments to land.benning@us.army.mil.

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