COMMENT PERIOD CLOSED August 31, 2026

Comments were encouraged in response to CBP's proposed plans for border infrastructure in BBT-5 (downstream of Big Bend National Park). HUGE THANKS to all who responded to our CALL to ACTION.

CALL TO ACTION

CBP is accepting comments on BBT-5, the Big Bend Vehicle Border Barrier System Construction project covering about 157 non-contiguous miles in Brewster, Terrell and Val Verde Counties. Comments are due August 31, 2026.

KBBW supports effective border security, but infrastructure should fit the Big Bend landscape. In much of Terrell County and the Lower Canyons, rugged terrain already prevents or severely restricts vehicle travel.

What We're Asking CBP to Do

- Demonstrate the need. Justify each barrier segment and use natural terrain where it already provides an effective vehicle barrier.
- Minimize new roads. Do not build roads into inaccessible country simply to install vehicle barriers.
- Use less-damaging technology. Consider cameras, sensors, infrared and thermal detection where terrain already provides security.
- Protect the Rio Grande and Lower Canyons. Avoid unnecessary impacts to the Wild and Scenic River corridor, drainage, wildlife, cultural resources and dark skies.
- Protect public river access. Identify any roads, trails, put-ins, take-outs or other public access that could be closed, gated, relocated or restricted, and maintain lawful public access.
- Show what is proposed. Provide detailed maps of barriers, roads and associated infrastructure and explain what decisions remain open to change.

Make Your Voice Heard

Email CBP by August 31: BigBendComments@cbp.dhs.gov

Subject: Big Bend Vehicle Border Barrier System Construction

Please BCC KBBW: info@keepbigbendwild.org

Choose one or two points above and tell CBP in your own words why the Big Bend matters to you.

Contact Congress, Too

Contact your U.S. Representative and both U.S. Senators. Ask them to urge CBP and DHS to justify barriers and roads, protect public river access, and use natural terrain and less-damaging technology where appropriate. Identify yourself as a constituent.

Please do both: Submit comments to CBP and contact your members of Congress.

Our Message Is Simple

Where the landscape already provides an effective vehicle barrier, use it.

Border security infrastructure should fit the Big Bend landscape - not require the Big Bend landscape to be altered to fit the infrastructure.

BBT-5 - Big Bend Vehicle Border Barrier System

Comment Points

Overall approach

- Support effective border security while protecting the Big Bend's natural and cultural resources.
- Design security infrastructure to fit the landscape and actual operational need.
- Evaluate BBT-5 segment by segment, rather than applying a uniform solution across roughly 157 miles.

Site-specific need for vehicle barriers

- Identify the location of each proposed BBT-5 vehicle-barrier segment.
- Provide the operational justification for each segment.
- Explain what additional security benefit a constructed barrier provides where cliffs, canyons, steep slopes or other terrain already prevent or severely restrict vehicle crossings.
- Incorporate natural terrain into the security system wherever it can accomplish the same objective.
- **Where the terrain already provides an effective vehicle barrier, use it.**

Roads and construction access

- Identify any new or improved roads and temporary construction access required for BBT-5.
- Disclose their location, mileage, approximate width and disturbance footprint.
- Evaluate impacts from grading, cuts and fills, slope stabilization and drainage structures, particularly in rugged Terrell County/Lower Canyons terrain.
- Recognize that road construction may create substantially greater impacts than the vehicle barrier itself.
- Avoid constructing roads into presently inaccessible terrain simply to install barriers intended to keep vehicles out of that same terrain.

Less-damaging alternatives

- Evaluate cameras, remote sensors, infrared/thermal detection and other surveillance technologies as alternatives to physical barriers.
- Use technology and natural terrain where they can accomplish the security objective with substantially less disturbance.
- Do not assume that the same security solution is appropriate throughout BBT-5.
- Construct physical barriers only where CBP can demonstrate an operational need for them.

Rio Grande and Lower Canyons

- Give particular attention to BBT-5 activities in Terrell County and the Lower Canyons.
- Provide detailed mapping showing proposed barriers in relation to the Rio Grande, Wild and Scenic River corridor, major tributary drainages and other sensitive resources.
- Identify associated infrastructure that may affect these areas.
- Evaluate impacts to the entire project footprint - not simply the barrier itself.
- Protect the remote, undeveloped and scenic character of the Lower Canyons and Rio Grande corridor.

Public access to the Rio Grande

- Identify all existing public river access points, roads, trails, put-in and take-out locations, and other recreational access within or adjacent to the BBT-5 project area.
- Disclose whether construction or operation of the proposed barrier system would close, restrict, relocate, gate or otherwise affect lawful public access to the Rio Grande.
- Maintain existing lawful public access to the Rio Grande. Particular attention should be given to recreational boating and emergency access associated with the Lower Canyons.

Drainage, erosion and flooding

- Identify significant arroyos, washes and canyon drainages crossed or affected by BBT-5.
- Evaluate how barriers, roads, grading and drainage structures could alter natural flows.
- Analyze potential runoff concentration, erosion, sedimentation and accumulation of flood debris.
- Design infrastructure to accommodate natural drainage and flash-flood conditions rather than creating long-term erosion or maintenance problems.

Wildlife and cultural resources

- Evaluate wildlife movement at proposed barrier locations.
- Provide appropriately designed wildlife passages wherever compatible with the vehicle-control purpose.
- Survey the entire disturbance footprint for archaeological and cultural resources.
- Include roads, temporary access, utility corridors, surveillance sites, staging areas and other construction areas in those surveys.
- Make avoidance of significant archaeological and cultural resources the preferred approach wherever practicable.

Permanent infrastructure and reclamation

- Clearly distinguish permanent operational infrastructure from temporary construction infrastructure.
- Remove and reclaim temporary roads and construction areas when they are no longer needed.
- Restore natural contours where practicable.
- Treat compacted soils and address erosion.
- Revegetate disturbed areas with locally appropriate native species.
- If permanent lighting is contemplated, evaluate infrared, thermal and other non-visible alternatives to protect Big Bend's dark skies.

Meaningful public participation

- Identify which BBT-5 decisions remain open to modification despite contracting having already occurred.
- Explain how comments received during this comment period can affect final alignments, designs and construction plans.
- Incorporate public input while alternatives remain available and before irreversible ground disturbance occurs.

Overall KBBW recommendation

- Evaluate BBT-5 on a site-specific, segment-by-segment basis.
- Limit barriers, roads and other permanent infrastructure to locations where CBP can demonstrate an actual operational need.
- Prefer existing terrain and less-damaging technology where they can accomplish the same security objective.
- Exercise particular restraint in the Lower Canyons and other exceptionally wild and remote areas.
- **Border security infrastructure should fit the Big Bend landscape rather than requiring the Big Bend landscape to be altered to fit the infrastructure.**