



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area
P.O. Box 1420
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

12/26/91
BATTLE MOUNTAIN DIST. SOUTH SHOSHONE LMA
TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:

4700
(NV-064.11)

December 26, 1991

Catherine Barcomb, Executive Director
Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
Stewart Facility
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710

Dear Ms. Barcomb,

Enclosed is a memorandum updating the wild horse seasonal distribution survey being conducted within the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area. The majority of the study is funded by a grant of \$8,496 from the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses, with the balance supplied by the Battle Mountain District Wild Horse Program. The Resource Area Wild Horse Specialist, Valerie Dobrich, will complete the final flight of the first year of this study in January, 1992. At that time, wild horse data will have been collected in the spring, summer and winter of 1991/1992 within each of the twelve Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area Wild Horse Herd Management Areas.

Currently, seasonal wild horse band locations, available water sources, and areas of livestock and wild horse grazing overlap data is stored on hard disk with Western Air Research and will be down-loaded into the Aspen Wild Horse Program and the GIS data base mapping system early in FY 92.

Western Air Research is currently going through an internal crisis due to the recent loss of one of their three pilots, Ray Austin, during a wildlife study in Yellowstone Park. The Western Air Research staff is, understandably, focusing attention on the recovery of the missing plane and pilot with other work priorities temporarily delayed. The Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area has received assurance that Western Air Research will compile the data in a manner compatible with the Aspen and GIS programs as soon as they overcome their immediate concerns. At that time, all wild horse information incorporated into the programs will be available for review and reference by the Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses. We regret the delay.

Please call Valerie Dobrich at the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area if you have any questions or comments regarding the enclosed memorandum. We thank you for making it financially possible for our Resource Area to conduct this important wild horse study. We hope to work with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Wayne King
acting

Wayne King
Area Manager

cc:Memorandum, Shoshone-Eureka Wild Horse Distribution Study

MEMORANDUM

4710
(NV-064.11)

TO: Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
FROM: Valerie Dobrich, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist,
Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area, Battle Mountain District
DATE: December 26, 1991
SUBJECT: Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area Wild Horse Seasonal
Distribution Study

The Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area is in the midst of a wild horse seasonal distribution study. The aerial survey documents the spring, summer and winter locations of individual bands of wild horses within each of the twelve Herd Management Areas (HMAs) managed by the Resource Area. Information pertinent to the welfare of the wild horses and their habitat is also being recorded.

Valerie Dobrich, the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area Wild Horse Specialist, is conducting each of the distribution flights. Ms. Dobrich has contracted Western Air Research, an organization specializing in natural resource studies, for the entirety of the 1991/1992 wild horse distribution project. Western Air Research aircraft are equipped with on-board computers which are linked to their flight tracking equipment. This allows information to be cross-referenced with legal location and entered into the computer as observations occur. The data is stored on soft disk in a format compatible with the BLM Aspen and GIS data bases.

The final product will consist of a series of Herd Management Area maps which portray the seasonal distribution of wild horses within their HMA, water sources depended upon by the animals on a seasonal, or year around basis, and locations of notable wild horse and livestock grazing overlaps.

By coordinating with the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area Wild Horse Specialist, the Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses will be able to access this information directly from the GIS data base.

The spring distribution flight was funded by the Battle Mountain District Wild Horse Program and took place between March 29 and April 4, 1991. The summer study, from September 4 to September 8, 1991, was made possible from a grant by the Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses and was scheduled to coincide with a BLM mineral compliance flight as a cost savings measure to benefit both programs. Billing for 5 days of flight time, and 6 days of per diem for one pilot was split with the Minerals Program.

The portion of costs incurred during the summer study which were charged to the Wild Horse Program and funded by the grant from the Commission equates to the following:*

Cost/hour of the Maule M5 aircraft:	\$ 170.00
Per diem/day/individual	\$ 71.00
Distribution study flight hours:	
22.14 hrs @ \$170.00/hr	\$3,764.00
Ferry time from Battle Mountain, Nevada to Driggs, Idaho :	
02.50 hrs @ \$170.00/hr	\$ 425.00
Per diem for 1 person :	
2 days @ \$71.00/day	\$ 142.00
Total cost charged to the grant supplied by the Commission:	\$4,331.00

*All costs are rounded to the nearest dollar.

A winter flight is scheduled between January 13 and 17, 1992, with the majority of the funding provided, again, by the grant from the Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses.

Survey data so far suggests that water, rather than forage, is the factor which governs, and limits, wild horse distribution in the warm, dry months. Forage may be the limiting factor during the winter when cold temperatures and snow cover increase competition for the available resources.

The winter distribution survey will complete the first year of a proposed long term seasonal distribution study for wild horses within the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area. In order to record wild horse migration and distribution variances, and to increase data accuracy, a second year of aerial monitoring is needed within each of the Herd Management Areas.

An example of the need for the kind of wild horse information made possible by the Commission grant was seen during the spring distribution study. The April flight recorded that wild horse numbers in Cedar Pasture of the South Shoshone HMA had increased noticeably from counts conducted in 1990 and that the animals were dependant upon a single water source, Burro Spring. This observation was recorded during the flight as a reminder for the wild horse specialist to survey Burro Spring water availability and Cedar Pasture wild horse numbers closely during the upcoming August census flight.

In August, Burro Spring trough was nearly dry, and 50 wild horses were taking turns pawing mud out of a small hole at the foot of the trough. Two dead wild horses were lying next to the spring. The situation was acted upon immediately, with 35 adults and 8 foals herded into a part of the South Shoshone HMA with dependable water. Seven adult wild horses were left within Cedar Pasture, as established in the Shoshone-Eureka Rangeland Program Summary. Post relocation field checks showed that the decrease in demand had allowed the Burro Spring trough to fill, thereby assuring the remaining wild horses a dependable water source.

It is the goal of the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area to maintain and encourage the wild and free-roaming nature of the wild horses on our public lands, while assuring their positive interrelationship with the other natural resources. Seasonal distribution data is recognized by the BLM to be a valuable tool in the management of wild horses in their habitat. The data complements and coincides with vegetative use pattern mapping, providing information regarding the kinds of animals utilizing the range resources in any given location. Wild horse band locations and movement patterns, analyzed in conjunction with other wild horse monitoring data, can be incorporated into allotment evaluation recommendations, wild horse herd management decisions and Herd Management Area Plans.

The Shoshone-Eureka Wild Horse Specialist, Valerie Dobrich, plans to present a proposal to the Commission in the first quarter of FY 1992 requesting funding to continue the wild horse seasonal distribution studies into FY 1992/1993. The second year of seasonal data is needed to record any variances in wild horse herd habits from information collected during this first year of the study.