11/8/90

G

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

CARSON CITY DISTRICT OFFICE

1535 Hot Springs Rd., Ste. 300
Carson City, NV 89706-0638

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:

4700
(NV-03480)
91300004

NOV 08 1990

Dear Interested Party:

We received twelve responses on the Draft Lahontan Allotment Removal Plan, Draft Dogskin Herd Management Area (HMA) Removal Plan and Draft Antelope Mountain Removal Plan. Many of these responses appear to reflect some misunderstanding about the proposed removal of wild horses around Granite Peak HMA. No wild horses will be removed from within the Granite Peak HMA. Only wild horses utilizing areas outside of the Granite Peak HMA will be removed. We have also decided to postpone the Dogskin HMA Removal. Therefore, only wild horses outside of the Granite Peak, Dogskin Mountain and Lahontan HMAs will be removed.

After careful consideration of the comments and a review of our land use planning objectives, our decision is to implement the proposed action.

Sincerely yours,

Norman L Murray acting

James W. Elliott
District Manager

2 Enclosures
1. Final Dogskin Mt./Granite Peak Wild Horse Removal Plan and EA. 15pp.
2. Final Lahontan Wild Horse Removal Plan and EA. 18pp.

LAHONTAN WILD HORSE REMOVAL PLAN

I. Purpose and Authority

The proposed action is to restore the range to a thriving natural ecological balance and prevent further deterioration of the range threatened by an over population of wild horses which have established home ranges outside of the Lahontan Herd Management Area (HMA). The proposed action will remove those wild horses with home ranges outside of the HMA. The Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195) Sec. 10. and 43 CFR 4710.4 provides the authority for the proposed action.

II. Area of Concern

The area of concern is the portion of the Lahontan Allotment which is outside of the Lahontan HMA. The location of the area is shown on the attached map 1.

III. Numbers of Wild Horses

Based on 3 census conducted during the past 2 years it has been determined that 160 wild horses occupy the area outside of the HMA.

IV. Methods for Removal and Safety

The methods employed during this capture operation will be herding horses with a helicopter to a trap built with portable panels. The Bureau of Land Management will contract with a private party for this operation. Two or more Bureau employees will be supervising the contractor at all times during the gathering operation. The following stipulations and procedures will be followed during the contract to ensure the welfare, safety and humane treatment of wild horses and that wild horses are removed from proper areas.

A. Roundup Procedures within Contract Area:

The Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) or Project Inspectors (PI) will determine specific roundup areas and numbers of animals within general contract areas as animal concentration, terrain, physical barriers and weather conditions dictate. Upon determination of the specific roundup areas, the COR/PI will select the general location of trap sites in which to herd the animals. Animal concentration, terrain, physical barriers and weather conditions will

all be considered when selecting trap sites. All wild horses will be removed from areas outside of the HMA. It is estimated that 160 wild horses will need to be removed.

B. Motorized Equipment

1. All motorized equipment employed in the transportation of captured animals shall be in compliance with appropriate State and Federal laws and regulations applicable to the humane transportation of animals.

2. Vehicles shall be in good repair, of adequate rated capacity, and operated so as to insure that captured animals are transported without undue risk of injury.

3. Only stock trailers shall be allowed for transporting animals from traps to temporary holding facilities. Only Bobtail trucks, stock trailers, or single deck trucks shall be used to transport animals from temporary holding facilities to final destination. Sides of stock racks of transporting vehicles shall be a minimum height of 6 feet 6 inches from vehicle floor. Single deck trucks with trailers 40 feet or longer shall have two partition gates to separate animals. Trailers less than 40 feet shall have at least one partition gate to separate the animals. Each partition shall be a minimum of six feet high and shall have a minimum 5 foot wide swinging gate. The use of double deck trailers is unacceptable and shall not be allowed.

4. All vehicles used to transport animals to final destination shall be equipped with at least one door at the rear end of the vehicle which is capable of sliding either horizontally or vertically.

5. Floors of vehicles and loading chute shall be covered and maintained with a non-skid surface such as sand, mineral soil or wood shavings, to prevent the animals from slipping. This will be confirmed by a BLM employee prior to loading (every load).

6. Animals to be loaded and transported in any vehicle shall be as directed by the COR/PI and may include limitations on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament and animal condition. A minimum of 1.4 linear foot per adult animal and .75 linear foot per foal shall be allowed per standard eight foot wide stock trailer/truck.

The BLM employee supervising the loading of the wild horses to be transported from the trap to the temporary holding corral will require separation of small foals and weak horses from the rest, if they could be injured during the trip. Distance and condition of the road and animals will be considered in making this determination. Horses shipped from the temporary holding corral to the BLM facility will normally be separated by studs, mares and foals (including small yearlings). However, if the numbers of these classes of animals are too few in one compartment and too many in another, animals may be

shifted between compartments to properly distribute the animals in the trailer. This may include placing a younger, lighter stud with the mares or a weak mare with the foals. Further separation may be required should condition of the animals warrant.

The BLM employee supervising the loading will exercise authority to off-load animals should there be too many horses on the trailer or truck.

7. The COR/PI shall consider the condition of the animals, weather conditions, type of vehicles, distance to be transported, and other factors when planning for the movement of captured animals. The COR/PI shall provide for any brand inspection or other inspection services required for the captured animals.

It is currently planned to ship all horses to the Palomino Valley facility. Communication lines have been established with the Palomino Valley personnel involved in off-loading the horses, to receive feedback on the condition of shipped horses. Should problems arise, shipping methods or separation of the horses will be changed in an attempt to alleviate the problems.

8. If the COR/PI determines that dust conditions are such that the animals could be endangered during transportation, the contractor will be instructed to adjust speed. The maximum distance over which animals may have to be transported on dirt road is approximately 10 miles.

Periodic checks by BLM employees will be made as the horses are transported along dirt roads. If speed restrictions are placed in effect, then BLM employees will, at times, follow or time trips to ensure compliance.

C. Trapping and Care

1. All capture attempts of wild horses shall be accomplished by the utilization of a helicopter. A minimum of one saddle horse shall be immediately available at the trap site to accomplish roping if necessary. Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one hour.

Since all wild horses are to be removed from the portion of the Lahontan Allotment which lies outside of the HMA, roping will be allowed if certain individual horses continue to elude helicopter herding operations.

2. The helicopter shall be used in such a manner that bands of horses will remain together. Foals shall not be left behind.

The Carson City District will use an observation helicopter as the primary means from which to supervise the use of the project helicopter. In the absence of an observation helicopter a saddle

horse may be used to place a BLM observer on a point overlooking the area of the helicopter herding operations.

3. The rate of movement and distance the animals travel shall not exceed limitations set by the COR/PI who will consider terrain, physical barriers, weather, condition of the animals and other factors.

BLM will not allow horses to be herded more than 10 miles nor faster than 20 miles per hour. The COR/PI may decrease the rate of travel or distance moved should the route to the trap site be steep or rocky enough to pose a danger or cause avoidable stress. Animal condition will also be considered in making distance and speed restrictions.

Temperature limitations are 10 degrees F. as a minimum and 95 degrees F. as a maximum. Special attention will be given to avoiding physical hazards such as fences. Map 1 shows locations of fences and any other potential hazards.

4. It is estimated that two trap locations will be required to accomplish the work. All trap locations and holding facilities must be approved by the COR/PI prior to construction. The contractor may also be required to change or move trap locations as determined by the COR/PI. All traps and holding facilities not located on public land must have prior written approval of the landowner.

If tentative trap sites (Map 1) are not located near enough to the concentrations of horses, then the trap site will not be approved. The COR/PI will move the general location of the trap closer to the horses. Trap sites will not be approved where barbed-wire fences are used as wings, wing extensions, or to turn the horses, during herding, toward the trap.

5. All traps, wings and holding facilities shall be constructed, maintained and operated to handle the animals in a safe and humane manner and be in accordance with the following:

a. Traps and holding facilities shall be constructed of portable panels, the top of which shall not be less than 72 inches high, the bottom rail of which shall not be more than 12 inches from the ground level. All traps and holding facilities shall be oval or round in design.

b. All loading chute sides shall be fully covered with plywood or like material. The loading chute shall also be a minimum of 6 feet high.

c. All runways shall be a minimum of 20 feet long and a minimum of 6 feet high and shall be covered with plywood or like material a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level.

d. Wings shall not be constructed out of barbed-wire or other materials injurious to animals and must be approved by the COR/PI.

e. All crowding pens including the gates leading to the runways shall be covered with material which prevents the animals from seeing out (plywood, burlap, etc.) and shall be covered a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level. Eight linear feet of this material shall be capable of being removed or let down to provide a viewing window.

f. All pens and runways used for the movement and handling of animals shall be connected with hinged self-locking gates.

6. No fence modification will be made without authorization from the COR/PI. The contractor shall be responsible for restoration of any fence modification which he has made.

If the route the contractor wishes to herd horses passes through a fence, the contractor will be required to roll up the fencing material and pull up the posts to provide at least one-eighth mile gap. The standing fence on each side of the gap will be well-flagged for a distance of 300 yards from the gap on each side.

7. When dust conditions occur within or adjacent to the trap or holding facility, the contractor shall be required to wet down the ground with water.

8. Alternate pens, within the holding facility shall be furnished by the contractor to separate mares with small foals, sick and injured animals, and estray animals from the other horses. Animals shall be sorted as to age, number, size, temperament, sex, and condition when in the holding facility so as to minimize injury due to fighting and trampling.

As a minimum, studs will be separated from the mares and foals when the animals are held overnight.

9. Animals shall be transported to final destination from temporary holding facilities within 24 hours after capture unless prior approval is granted by the COR/PI for unusual circumstances. Animals shall not be held in traps or temporary holding facilities on days when there is no work being conducted except as specified by the COR/PI. The contractor shall schedule shipments of animals to arrive at final destination between 6:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. No shipments shall be scheduled to arrive at final destination on Sunday.

10. The contractor shall provide animals held for 5 hours or more in the traps or holding facilities with a continuous supply of fresh clean water at a minimum of 10 gallons per animal per day. Animals held for 10 hours or more in the traps or holding facilities shall be

provided good quality hay at the rate of not less than two pounds of hay per 100 pounds of estimated body weight per day.

11. It is the responsibility of the contractor to provide security to prevent loss, injury or death of captured animals until delivery to final destination.

12. The contractor shall restrain sick or injured animals if treatment by the government is necessary. The COR/PI will determine if injured animals must be destroyed and provide for destruction of such animals. The contractor may be required to dispose of the carcasses as directed by the COR/PI.

13. When refueling, the helicopter shall remain a distance of at least 1,000 feet or more from animals, vehicles (other than fuel truck), and personnel not involved in refueling.

V. Disposition of Removed Animals

The wild horses and burros will be sent to Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Placement Center to be processed for adoption.

Impounded, privately-owned animals will be processed as outlined in the Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office Instruction Memoranda NV-84-116 and NV-85-416.

VI. Responsibility

The District Manager is responsible for maintaining and protecting the health and welfare of the wild horses. To ensure the contractor's compliance with the contract stipulations, the COR and PIs all from the Carson City District, will be on site. Also, the Lahontan Area Manager and the Carson City District Manager are very involved with guidance and input into this removal plan and with contract monitoring. The health and welfare of the animals is the overriding concern of the District Manager, Area Manager, COR and PIs.

The COR and/or PI will constantly, through observation, evaluate the contractor's ability to perform the required work in accordance with the contract stipulations. Compliance with the contract stipulations will be through issuance of written instructions to the contractor, stop work orders and default procedures should the contractor not perform work according to the stipulations.

Prior to issuance of the "Notice to Proceed" to the contractor, the COR and PIs will inspect the equipment to be used during the contract, to insure the equipment meets or exceeds the standards contained in the contract stipulations.Prior (less than 20 days) to the start of the contract and constantly during the course of the contract the COR and/or PIs will evaluate the conditions which may cause undue stress to the animals. The factors considered will include animal condition, prevailing temperatures, drought conditions, soil conditions, topography, animal distribution, distance animals travel to water, quantity of available water and condition of roads that animals are to be transported over. These factors will be evaluated to determine if

additional constraints other than those already discussed above, need be initiated in order to safely capture and transport the animals (i.e. veterinarian present, or delay of capture operations). This is of special concern during this year of possible drought which may intensify the impact of removal operations on the animals and the roads.

EA No. NV-030-90-051

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Lahontan Wild Horse Removal

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the proposal is to restore the range to a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship and prevent further deterioration of the vegetation community threatened by an overpopulation of wild horses outside of the Lahontan Herd Management Area (HMA). These horses which are outside of the HMA are causing overutilization (use pattern map) of the Lahontan Allotment and utilizing private property and other lands not administered by the BLM as part of their home ranges. This proposal is in conformance with the Lahontan Resource Management Plan (RMP). The proposed action involves removals in order to correct resource degradation identified from analysis of rangeland monitoring data from the Lahontan Allotment. By removing these wild horses, resource damage will be reduced.

Relationship to Other Environmental Documents

This EA is tiered to the Lahontan Resource Management Plan (RMP) which analyzed the general ecological impacts of managing rangelands in the Reno area under a program of monitoring and adjustment of wild horses and livestock. This EA is a project specific refinement of the RMP focused on the removal of excess wild horses in the Lahontan Allotment. The decisions regarding overall rangeland management analyzed in the Lahontan RMP will not be changed by the Lahontan Allotment Removal Plan. Both documents are available for public review at the Carson City District Office.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. The proposed action is to remove excess wild horses from the Lahontan Allotment with the use of a helicopter and other motorized equipment. The wild horses would be herded by a helicopter into traps constructed of portable steel panels. The Bureau of Land Management would contract with a private party for the removal operation. The contractor would be supervised at all times by at least two Bureau employees. A total of 160 excess wild horses are proposed for removal.

B. Alternative No. 1 is to conduct the removal by herding the wild horses from horseback. Riders would herd horses into traps built of portable steel panels.

C. Alternative No 2 is to conduct the removal by water trapping. However, because of the large shore line, water trapping would not be practical.

D. The no action alternative is to not conduct the wild horse removals.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Wild Horses

The Lahontan Allotment is located approximately 40 miles east of Carson City, Nevada. Lahontan Allotment lies within the Carson City District of the Bureau of Land Management.

The Allotment and HMA location is shown on the attached map as well as the capture area boundaries (Map 1).

At the present time, the wild horses have virtually unrestricted movement within the HMA and the majority of the allotment. A majority of the wild horses are using areas outside of the HMA, as all or part of their home range (See Utilization Map).

Most of the horses have home ranges which include private land or other lands not administered by the BLM. In this situation, these wild horses may intermingle with privately owned horses, thereby, making them difficult or impossible to identify.

We have also received a written complaint from a property owner stating that the wild horses are taking grass from private lands, fighting with private horses through fences and breaking private fences. The property owner is also very concerned that wild studs may steal private mares. When horses fight through a fence the potential for serious injury is great.

B. Livestock Use

Because of excessive use by wild horses the permittees have only used 75 AUMs per year for the last 2 years (written statements from the permittees).

C. Water and Riparian

There are no riparian areas located on land administered by the BLM, however, the wild horses are using riparian areas administered by the Nevada State Parks.

D. Cultural Resources

Cultural resources in the form of arrowheads and fragments may exist within the gather area.

E. Wildlife Use

Wintering bald eagles use the allotment along with many other raptors, deer and other non-game species.

F. Threatened and Endangered Species

Wintering bald eagles are a endangered species, there are no known threatened or endangered plant species.

G. Key Species

The key species (indian ricegrass, needlegrass & squirrel tail) are currently receiving use in excess of 55%.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/MITIGATION MEASURES

A. Proposed Action

Removing the wild horses from areas outside of the HMA will benefit mule deer and many other species of wildlife. Plant species (indian ricegrass, needlegrass & squirrel tail) will increase in quantity and vigor helping to meet the management objectives of the Land Use Plans (improve vegetative condition).

Riparian area condition on adjacent State Park administered land should improve after excess wild horses are removed. The area of concern is the cottonwood trees used as roosting sites by bald eagles and other bird species. Also these trees provide nesting, feeding and shelter sites for many species of birds.

Unavoidable impacts in the form of injuries to the horses may occur as a result of the removal process. Death loss is not expected to exceed 2% of the horses captured at the trap site. Potential injuries and fatalities can be limited through strict enforcement of contract specifications for safety and humane treatment of animals. BLM representatives would be monitoring the contractor's activities at all times during removal to ensure compliance with specifications and humane treatment of animals.

Some stress to the horses would be associated with the helicopter herding operations, however, after adoption, the horses would become accustomed to captivity and most would receive proper care.

Small localized areas within the vicinity of trap sites and holding facilities would receive trampling and the subsequent loss of vegetation. However, overall the vegetative resource would improve due to the reduction in grazing pressure. Forage availability should increase and utilization levels decrease.

No impacts would occur to cultural resources, as the trap sites would be cleared prior to construction.

Removal of wild horses will prevent further deterioration of the range due to the wild horse overpopulation. By removing the excess wild horses the remaining population (within the HMA) will allow for a thriving ecological balance between wild horses, wildlife, livestock and vegetation.

B. Water Trapping

General impacts from a reduction in wild horse numbers would be identical to those outlined for the proposed action. This method of capturing wild horses is probably the least stressful to the animals. However, once captured, the handling and transportation of the animals would be the same as the proposed action. As most injuries to wild horses occur during handling and transportation, the injury and fatality rate would remain approximately the same. Once prepared for adoption, the animals become accustomed to captivity and most would receive proper care.

Small localized areas within the vicinity of trap sites and holding facilities would receive trampling and subsequent loss of vegetation. Overall, the vegetation resource would improve due to the reduction in grazing pressure. Forage availability should increase and utilization levels decrease. This would occur in both the short and long term.

No impacts would occur to cultural resources, as the trap sites would be cleared prior to construction.

Due to the time necessary for construction of complex water traps and the prolonged period it would take for the animals to become accustomed to using the traps, it would take more manpower to implement this alternative. Therefore, it would be significantly more expensive than the proposed action. In addition, the length of the shoreline in the removal area would make the water trapping method of capture unfeasible, due to the amount of fencing material required.

C. Horseback Trapping

General impacts from a reduction in wild horse numbers would be identical to those outlined for the proposed action. Once captured, the handling and transportation of the animals would be the same as the proposed action. As most injuries to wild horses occur during handling and transportation, the injury and fatality rate would remain approximately the same. Once prepared for adoption, the animals become accustomed to captivity and most would receive proper care.

Some localized areas within the vicinity of trap sites and holding facilities would receive trampling and subsequent loss of vegetation. Overall, the vegetation resource would improve due to the reduction

in grazing pressure. Forage availability should increase and utilization levels decrease. This impact would have both short and long term effects.

No impacts would occur to cultural resources as the trap sites would be cleared prior to construction.

Bands of horses are not controlled effectively with horseback herding, therefore, many bands are spilled or individual horses separated from the band. This results in increased social structure disruption and/or orphaned foals, which requires attempts to capture these separated animals. The number of animals captured per day versus the proposed actions is significantly fewer, therefore, it is very time consuming resulting in very high capture costs.

This method of capture is very tiring for the saddle horses which results in injuries to both the saddle horses and personnel involved.

D. No Action

The no action alternative would result in no wild horses being removed. The animals would not undergo stress, injuries, nor fatalities related to capture, handling and transportation. However, in the long term, the population would increase to a point where excessive utilization would eliminate nearly all the forage plant species. The animals would suffer stress searching for food and may be subject to starvation. Attainment of Land-Use-Planning objectives would not be met.

The population would continue to expand both within and outside of the HMA, further impacting the vegetation and wildlife. This would lead to the loss of many species of wildlife through starvation or dispersal to areas outside of the HMA. The physical condition of the wild horses would continue to deteriorate.

Habitat improvement would not be realized with this alternative. The frequency of key species (indian ricegrass, needlegrass & squirrel tail) would decline further. The animals would continue to search for food and further degrade their habitat, thereby reducing the carrying capacity of the area which would cause adverse physiological stress.

Riparian areas would continue to be over utilized further deteriorating the wildlife habitat.

Further deterioration of the range would occur and the area will not be in a state of thriving natural ecological balance.

VIII. Signatures

Prepared by:

John Axtell — 21 Aug 90

John Axtell
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
Lahontan Resource Area

Date

Concurred by:

James M Gianola — 8-21-90

Jim Gianola
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
Carson City District

Date

David Loomis — 8-27-90

David Loomis
Environmental Coordinator
Carson City District

Date

Norman L Murray — 8-27-90

Norman L. Murray
Assistant District Manager, Resources

Date

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION OF RECORD
Lahontan Allotment Wild Horse Removal

Impacts associated with implementation of the proposed action are not of a significant nature, therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

This plan is in the public interest because the proposed action will restore the range to a thriving natural ecological balance and prevent further deterioration of the range threatened by an over population of wild horses in the Lahontan Allotment.

The proposed plan is in accordance with the Lahontan Resource Management Plan and is in the public interest.

Recommend Approval:

James M. Phillips — 9/12/90
Area Manager — Date
Lahontan Resource Area

Approved:

James W. Elliott — 9/12/90
District Manager — Date

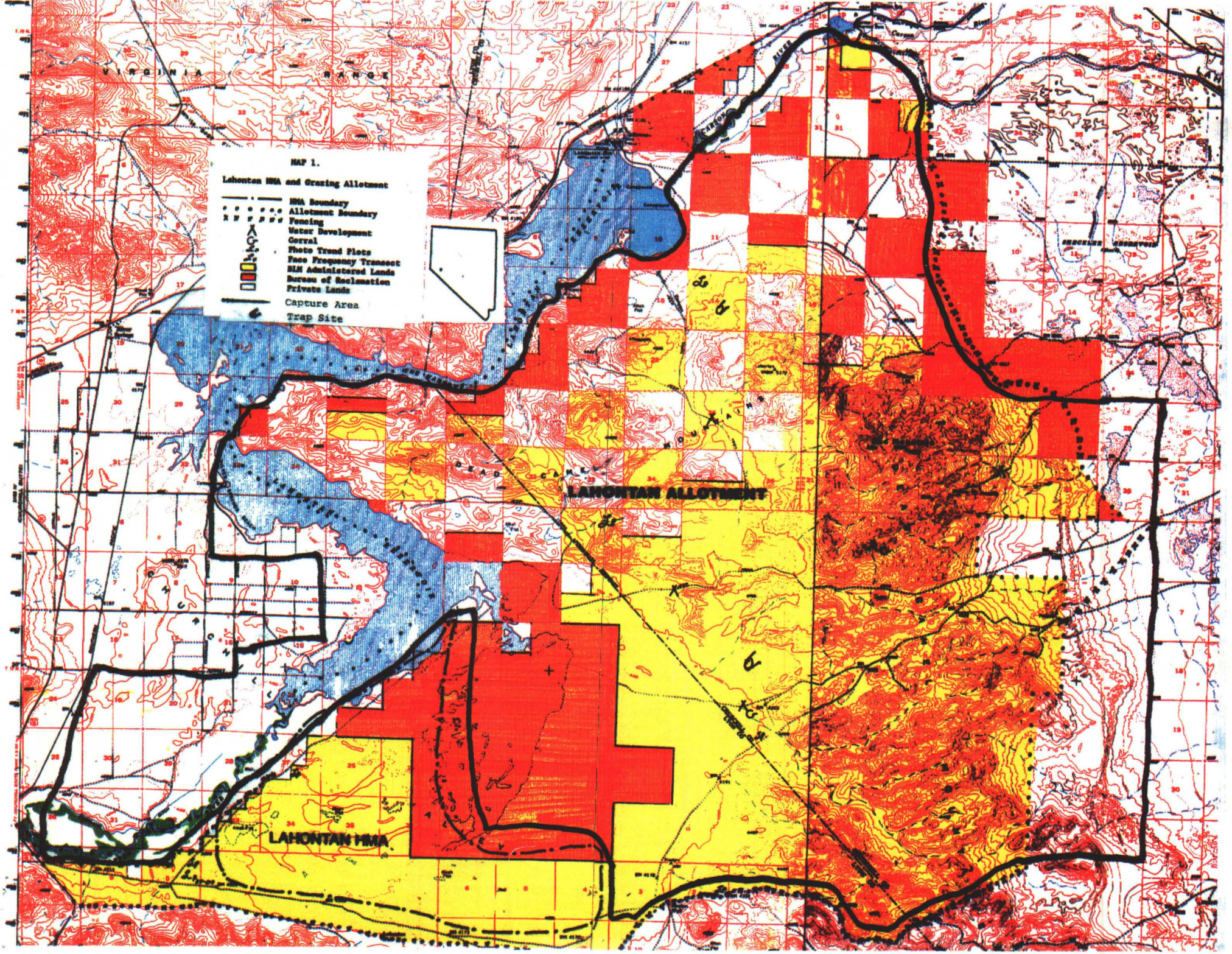
Concurred by:

Daniel C. B. Kotlar — OCT 2 199[illegible]
Associate State Director, Nevada — Date

V. Public Involvement

This environmental assessment and capture plan has been sent to the following persons, groups and government agencies for review and comment. This review and comment is considered as the consultation and coordination as required in the Lahontan Resource Management Plan.

American Bashkir Curley Register
American Horse Protection Association
American Humane Association
American Wild Mustang & Burro Foundation
Animal Protection Institute
Bureau of Reclamation
Casino West
Carson City District Grazing Advisory Board
Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
Compassion for Animals
Craig C. Downer
Craig London
Debra Allard
Fund for Animals
Harriman & Son
Humane Society of So. NV.
International Society for the Protection of Wild Horses and Burros
Kathy McCovey
Kent Bros.
Lahontan State Recreation Area
Life Foundation
Nan Sherwood
National Mustang Association
National Wild Horse Association
Nevada Cattlemen's Association
Nevada Department of Wildlife
Nevada Federation of Animal Protection Organization
Nevada Humane Society
Nevada Land Action Association
Nevada State Clearinghouse
Nevada State Division of Agriculture
Rebecca Kunow
Resource Concepts
Save the Mustangs
Sierra Club
The Nature Conservancy
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Humane Society
United States Wild Horse and Burro Foundation
Wild Horse Organized Assistance

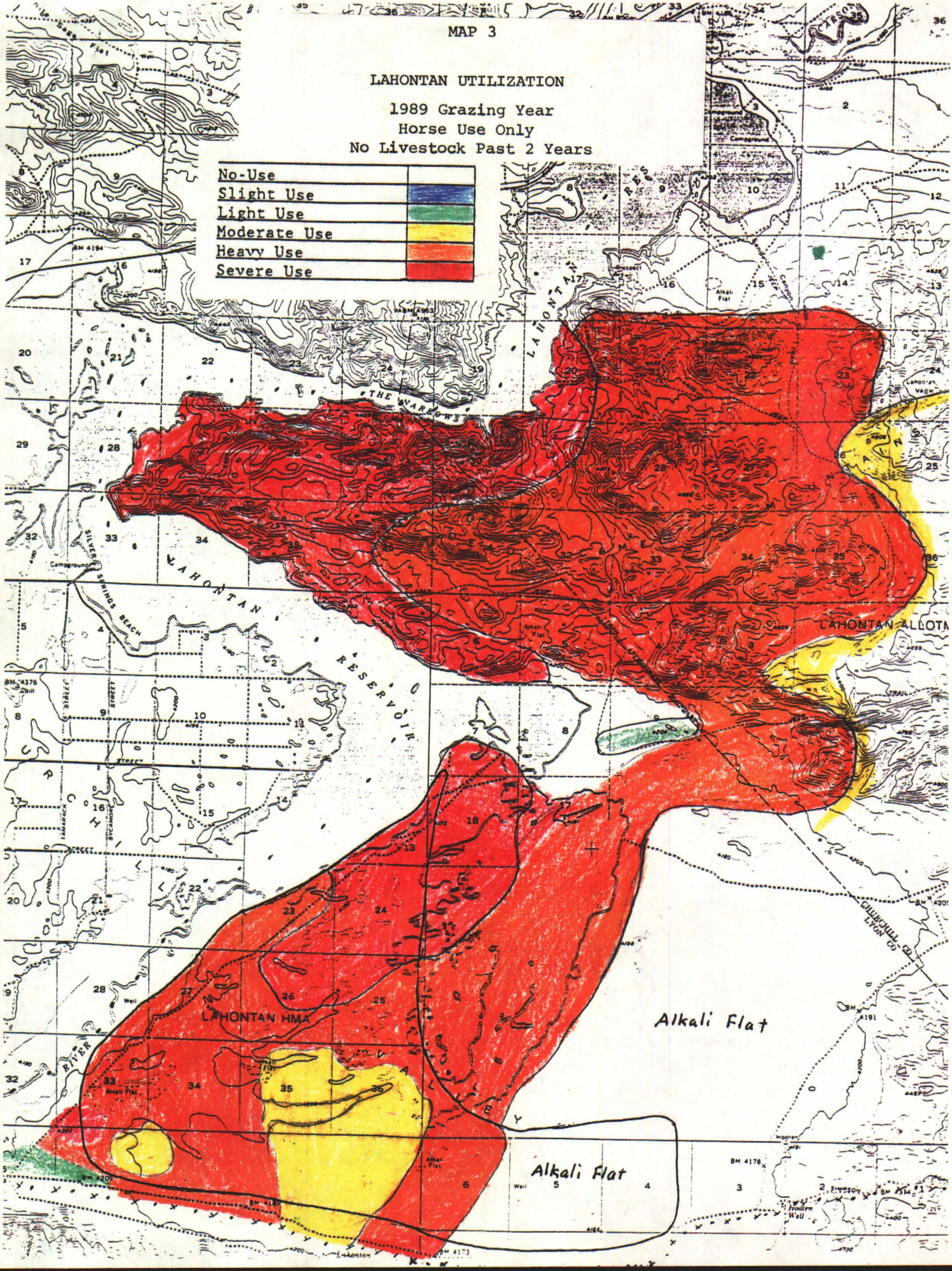

VIRGINIA
RANGE
MAP 1.
Lahontan HMA and Grazing Allotment
HMA Boundary
Allotment Boundary
Fencing
Water Development
Corral
Photo Trend Plots
Face Frequency Transect
BLM Administered Lands
Bureau of Reclamation
Private Lands
Capture Area
Trap Site
LAHONTAN ALLOTMENT
LAHONTAN HMA

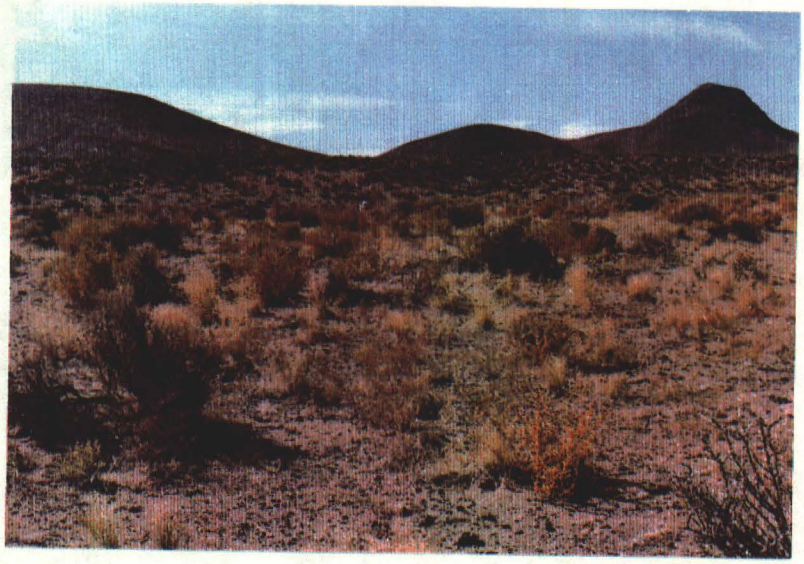
MAP 3

LAHONTAN UTILIZATION

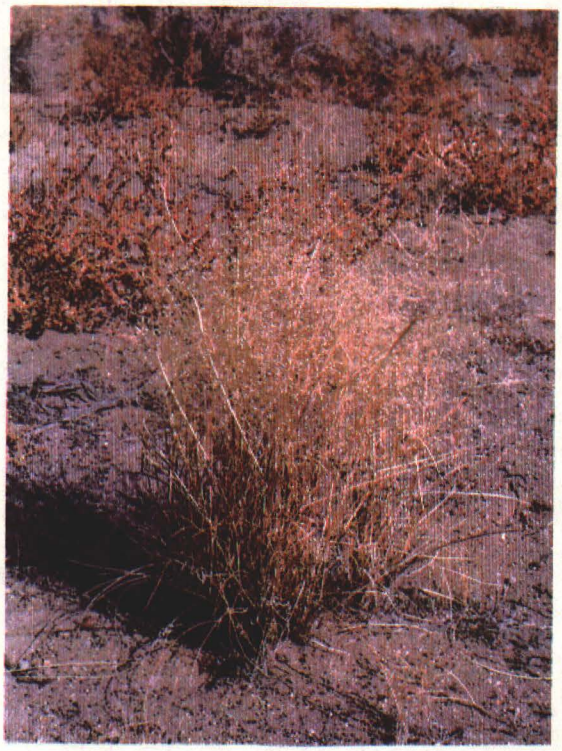
1989 Grazing Year
Horse Use Only
No Livestock Past 2 Years

No-Use	
Slight Use	
Light Use	
Moderate Use	
Heavy Use	
Severe Use	





1



2

3

4

All photos were taken on October, 11 & 12, 1989.
Photos 1 & 2 are typical examples of healthy Indian ricegrass plants taken several miles west of the HMA in an area seldom used by wild horses due to the distance from water.
Photos 3 & 4 are typical examples of Indian ricegrass within the HMA.