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# United States Department of the Interior

IN REPLY REFER TO

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(N-036)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
District Office  
801 N. Plaza Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

June 2, 1976

Wild Horse Organized Assistance  
P.O. Box 555  
Reno, Nevada 89504

Attention: Velma B. Johnston

Dear Mrs. Johnston:

Thank you for your letter of May 20, 1976. We have carefully considered your comments concerning the horses using the Mahogany Flat, Dogskin Mountain, Fort Sage Mountain and Granite Peak areas.

As stated by Mr. Murray at our April 26, 1976 meeting we do not feel that these small herds are of major consequence to the entire management program and we can agree to leave them in their present range rather than be gathered at this time. We do feel however, that these herds should be monitored in order to determine if and when population control may be necessary. Maintaining the small herds outside of the management area will add to the cost of necessary studies and surveillance in the Pyramid Unit but can be worked into the annual work program.

The Mahogany Flat and Dogskin Mountain herds are small and their habitat is extremely rough country. No major conflicts with wildlife have been identified.

Recent information we have received indicates that the Granite Peak herd, may in fact be private animals that were turned into the area by a Mr. Puett who is supposedly in Alaska. We are checking this information to determine whether or not it is accurate.

The herd on Fort Sage Mountain ranges back and forth between this district and the Susanville District. Susanville has not yet completed its planning for the area but their preliminary evaluation



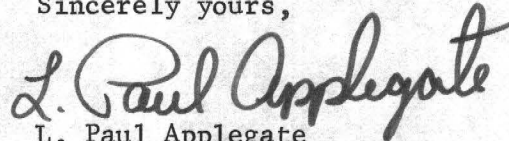
is that the Fort Sage herd would not be a high priority area for population control.

The Granite Peak herd and the Fort Sage Mountain herd are within the boundary of identified critical winter range for the Lassen-Washoe interstate deer herd which has declined in number from approximately 22,000 deer to somewhat less than 7,000 deer. As you pointed out deer herds throughout the west have been declining in numbers even in areas where horse populations do not exist. We have not attempted to place the blame for the decline in the Lassen-Washoe deer herd on competition with wild horses. The cause may be a combination of several reasons some of which are unknown or only estimates at this time. Our professional biologists do not agree with your feeling that horses and deer ".! do not compete for forage .!". but we do not have documented studies in this area to demonstrate what degree of competition may exist. We are initiating an intensive study program within the deer herd area to give us more information for the grazing Environmental Impact Statement due in 1980. Hopefully we will then have more quantitative data to support whatever decisions we will have to make to adequately protect and manage the area.

The general statement of page 14 of the Environmental Analysis record that water is "limited throughout the planning unit" describes the general condition in our desert type environment. The statement is that our proposed management facilities will not affect the availability of the limited water. We feel confident that there is adequate water for management of the unit we have proposed or we certainly would not have suggested this area. We agree that the present water supply should be protected and enhanced when possible.

We look forward to cooperating with you in the future and we appreciate the time you have taken to review and comment on the Pyramid Unit proposals.

Sincerely yours,



L. Paul Applegate  
District Manager

cc:  
NSO