

m 1/19/88

MONTGOMERY PASS WILDHORSE C.R.M.P. MEETING NOTES

JANUARY 19 - 20, 1988

The meeting began shortly after 8:00 A.M. on the 19th at the Forest Service office in Bishop to identify key issues, begin issue resolution and formulate management actions to implement preferred alternatives for the MPWHT Plan.

The following criteria were used to screen the preliminary list of key issues:

CRITICAL ISSUE CRITERIA:

- 1) Does the Steering Committee have the authority to resolve the issue?
- 2) Does present knowledge and/or technology allow for issue resolution?
- 3) Has the issue been resolved by existing law or regulation?
- 4) Can the issue be resolved in lower planning levels?
- 5) Is the issue located within the MPWHT boundaries?
- 6) Is the public intensely interested in the issue?
- 7) Does the issue significantly conflict between resources or activities?
- 8) Is there a significant conflict or adverse impact on the environment?

The issues important to the management of wild horses in the MPWHT were indentified and revised as follows:

ISSUES:

- #1) WHAT DESIRED WILD HORSE POPULATION IS THE EXISTING RANGE RESOURCE CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING?

Discussion/Comments: Identified as a key issue. What present population numbers are to be accepted; an earlier census or 1987 herd count? 1987 field counts have identified 185 horses, compared to an aerial survey of 104. Range condition needs further analysis before alternatives can be developed for establishing carrying capacity. Use "condition of the range" as a barometer for establishing horse numbers. Maintain status quo herd, with monitoring during the current study period of five years to determine trend. Use flexible monitoring as a guide to maintain appropriate horse numbers.

PROPOSAL FOR ISSUE #1: DEVELOP MONITORING PLAN WHICH ALLOWS FOR A FLEXIBLE POPULATION FOR 25% (PLUS OR MINUS) OF CURRENT HORSE LEVELS. AT THE END OF A FIVE YEAR PERIOD, AN INTENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING DATA WILL BE CONDUCTED. UNLESS SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS APPEAR DURING DATA COLLECTION, NO ACTION ON THE HORSE POPULATION WILL OCCUR WITHIN THIS PERIOD. IF SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS OCCUR ACTIONS WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE MPWHT STEERING COMMITTEE.

- #2) HOW DOES THE 1971 ESTIMATES OF HERD SIZE AND TERRITORY CONSTRAIN CURRENT MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS OF HERD SIZE AND TERRITORY?

Discussion/Comments: Not a key issue, but 1971 estimates should be referenced or tiered into current plan. Horse numbers established in the 1971 plan are not cast in concrete, but changing the designated territory boundary would be difficult and time consuming without sufficient justification.

Issue #2 was determined not to be a key issue for resolution.

#3) TO WHAT EXTENT ARE RECREATIONAL/EDUCATIONAL/RESEARCH ACTIVITIES COMPATIBLE WITH PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF WILD HORSES?

Discussion/Comments: Possible disruption of horses during foaling season between April 15 to June 15. Manage at existing recreational levels. Compatibility with present commercial outfitter guides is good. Off-road motorized vehicle use within the territory boundary has potential disruptive effects. Road use signs are not adequately posted or consistent between agencies. Vehicle damage to Pizona Meadow has been excessive during the spring.

PROPOSALS FOR ISSUE #3:

PRESENT COMMERCIAL RECREATION USE IS NOT TO BE INCREASED BETWEEN THE PERIOD OF APRIL 15 TO JUNE 15 WHILE HORSES ARE FOALING. THE U.S.F.S. HAS THE DISCRETION TO GRANT COMMERCIAL USE OUTSIDE OF THIS PERIOD. PROHIBIT UNAUTHORIZED MOTOR VEHICLE USE OFF ESTABLISHED ROADS. DUE TO THE DETERIORATIVE IMPACT OF VEHICLES ON MEADOWS AND RIPARIAN AREAS DURING WET PERIODS IN THE SPRING, AND DUE TO THE POTENTIAL DISRUPTION OF BREEDING AND FOALING OF MPWHT HORSES, IT IS RECOMMENDED TO CLOSE THE ROAD FROM LOWER PIZONA TO MCBRIDE SPRINGS BETWEEN THE PERIOD OF APRIL 15 TO JUNE 15. OPTIONS INCLUDE LOOKING AT RE-ROUTING OF THIS ROAD.

#4) HOW WILL EXISTING OR DEFERRED LIVESTOCK GRAZING BE AFFECTED?

Discussion/Comments: Develop a monitoring plan and use results to arrive at a decision. There may have to be adjustments in the wild horse population or a reduction in livestock use depending on monitoring results. The monitoring should be done throughout the year instead of seasonally or during draught conditions. McBride Allotment has had non-use for the past several years. Negotiate with permittee to relocate AUM's to an agreeable area. Need to define objectives, ie; reduce AUM's in allotments within the key summer range. Need to recognize the unique biological system within the MPWHT. Priority can be given to wild horses (on BLM land) over other uses when the area is designated as a wild horse territory.

PROPOSAL FOR ISSUE #4:

DUE TO THE UNIQUE BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS WHICH EXIST IN THE MPWHT, THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT THE MANAGEMENT PLANNING ELIMINATE SUMMER LIVESTOCK GRAZING WITHIN THE KEY SUMMER RANGE (MCBRIDE AND PIZONA ALLOTMENTS). OPTION 1 IS TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATION WITH THE PERMITTEE FOR MCBRIDE ALLOTMENT TO RELOCATE AUM'S TO AN AGREEABLE ALTERNATE POSITION. OPTION 2 IS INITIATE A MONITORING PLAN AND USE THE RESULTS TO ARRIVE AT A LATER DECISION ON ITS USE, WITH QUARTERLY ADJUSTMENTS.

#5) CONSIDERING THAT MOST AVAILABLE WATER IS LOCATED ON PRIVATE LAND, HOW CAN WATER BE SECURED FOR WILD HORSE USE?

Discussion/Comments: Can go into a cooperative agreement and negotiate monetarily or by other means. Sagehen Springs is privately owned. Other wildlife species would also benefit from water sources. Lands with water have been identified in the past as having a higher priority for acquisition.

PROPOSAL FOR ISSUE #5:

THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT THE GOVERNMENT ACQUIRE WATER SOURCES WITHIN THE MPWHT THROUGH NEGOTIATION WITH THE PRIVATE LAND OWNERS (VIA COOP AGREEMENTS) FOR WILDLIFE AND WILD HORSE USE. FIRST PRIORITY WOULD BE GIVEN TO ACQUISITION OF LANDS WITH WATER ON IT.

#6) WHAT ROLE DOES THE MOUNTAIN LION PLAY IN THE ECOLOGY OF THE MPWHT? IS THE PREDATOR-PREY RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANTLY REGULATING THE WILD HORSE POPULATION? IS THE NATURAL CONTROL CAPABLE OF FULLY REGULATING THE HORSE HERD?

Discussion/Comments: This is generally unknown until present study is completed. Predator-prey relationship also affects deer numbers. Lion hunting issue within MPWHT is currently on hold in Calif. Letter requesting no hunting until study is complete needs to be sent to Nev. F & G Commission also. Reply to F&G is currently in progress.

PROPOSAL FOR ISSUE #6: (A KEY ISSUE)

MAKE SAME STATEMENT TO NEVADA FISH & GAME TO STOP ISSUING PERMITS FOR MOUNTAIN LION HUNTING IN MPWHT UNTIL PRESENT BIOLOGICAL STUDY IS COMPLETED. THE EFFECT OF PREY SWITCHING NEEDS TO BE FURTHER ANALYZED PRIOR TO MANAGEMENT ACTIONS.

#7) WHAT EFFECT WOULD ANY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES HAVE ON THE CULTURAL, HISTORICAL RESOURCES OR ABORIGINAL USES OF THIS UNIQUE AREA?

Discussion/Comments: A key issue that will be addressed in the EA portion of the analysis. Mandated protection of cultural values.

#8) HOW WOULD WILDLIFE BE AFFECTED BY MANAGEMENT OF THE MPWHT?

Discussion/Comments: Consider wildlife water sources that would exclude horse use. Wildlife needs within the MPWHT should be included in the monitoring plan. The Wildlife Committee Report, dated 9/18/87, identifies wildlife issues and habitat improvement projects.

PROPOSAL FOR ISSUE #8: (A KEY ISSUE)

MAINTAIN OR ENHANCE WILDLIFE HABITAT. ALL WILDLIFE NEEDS ARE TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE MONITORING PLAN, ESPECIALLY MULE DEER, SAGE GROUSE, PRONGHORN AND MOUNTAIN LION. TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, PROVIDE WATER DEVELOPMENT FOR WILDLIFE EXCLUSIVE OF WILD HORSE USE.

#9) WHAT IS AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF COMPETITION BETWEEN WILD HORSES, LIVESTOCK AND WILD HORSES?

Discussion/Comments: Ties in with Issue #3, ongoing research. Determined not to be a key issue for resolution until further information is available from the studies.

#10) HOW WILL VEHICLE USE LIMITATION WITHIN THE MPWHT AFFECT MANAGEMENT OPTIONS?

Discussions/Comments: Should be combined with Issue #3 under recreational road use. Not a key issue, but should be addressed in the proposal for Issue #3.

#11) WHAT CONSTRAINTS WILL PENDING WILDERNESS DECISIONS HAVE ON MANAGEMENT?

Discussions/Comments: Determined not to be a key issue because the Nevada Wilderness Bill would have no effect on the MPWHT.

#12) WHAT TYPES OF HABITAT IMPROVEMENT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE AND WHAT AREAS OFFER POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT?

Discussion/Comments: Wildlife Committee Report, dated 9/18/87, identifies specific improvement projects, including water development and locations.

PROPOSALS FOR ISSUE #12: (Including priority and ownership)

ENCOURAGE ESTABLISHMENT OF WATER BETWEEN SUMMER AND WINTER RANGE FOR DELAY OF HORSE USE OF KEY SUMMER RANGE.

CONSTRUCT NEW WATER SITES (ESTABLISHMENT OF BENTONITE TANKS AT ADOBE HILLS) as First Priority. Two improvements currently exist. (Govt. owned.)

DIG OUT HUNTOON SPRINGS - Second Priority (Govt. owned)

CONSTRUCT FENCES AROUND MEADOWS THAT HAVE BEEN INTENSIVELY GRAZED - Third Priority (Govt. owned)

REACTIVATE WINDMILL AT GOVERNMENT WELLS - Fourth Priority (Govt. owned)

Lower Priority Improvements:

REACTIVATE WINDMILL AT MCBRIDE FLAT (Privately owned).

EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF WATER DEVELOPMENT AT SAGEHEN SPRINGS (Private owned).

IMPROVE HABITAT AT TRUMAN SPRINGS WITH PRESCRIBED BURN (Private owned).

SURVEY FOR NEW AND EXISTING WATER SOURCES (Govt. land).

DEVELOP/RECONDITION TWO EXISTING TANKS (IE: WITH BENTONITE) NEAR HUNTOON MOUNTAIN (Govt. owned).

EXCLOSE WATER SITES IN NORMAL USE AREAS (IE: CATCHMENTS) (Govt. land).

#13) HOW WILL THE WILD HORSE POPULATION BE CONTROLLED?

Discussion/Comments: A minor issue at present time, until more is known from the trend and monitoring studies. Consider most advanced technology for

gathering, fertility control, etc., at time of need. Use natural control measures when possible.

PROPOSAL FOR ISSUE #13:

CURRENT HERD CONDITIONS INDICATE A STABLE OR DECLINING TREND, THEREFORE OUTSIDE POPULATION CONTROL IS NOT DEEMED NECESSARY UNTIL FURTHER STUDY AND MONITORING IS KNOWN. THE MOST ADVANCED AND COST EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGY AT THE TIME OF THIS MONITORING WILL BE INCORPORATED, IF NEEDED. NATURAL CONTROL MEASURES WILL BE PREFERRED TO THE EXTENT COMPATIBLE WITH OTHER RESOURCES.

#14) WHAT VARIABLES OF THE WILD HORSE POPULATION ARE IMPORTANT IN MANAGEMENT OF THE MPWHT?

Discussion/Comments: Natural population management is preferred over manipulation methods. Retain present herd characteristics.

PROPOSAL FOR ISSUE #13:

NATURAL POPULATION MANAGEMENT IS PREFERRED OVER MANIPULATION OF THE HERD. IF INTRODUCTION IS NECESSARY, PRESENT HERD CHARACTERISTICS SHOULD BE PREFERRED SO AS NOT TO CHANGE THE POPULATION. IF POPULATION CONTROL IS DETERMINED TO BE NECESSARY, ALLOW CURRENT ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION AND RESEARCH DATA TO PREDICT AGE, SEX AND DISTRIBUTION CHARACTERISTICS THAT SHOULD BE FAVORED. ADDITIONAL POPULATION VARIABLES TO BE DETERMINED IN THE ANALYSIS INCLUDE AGE SPECIFIC PREGNANCY RATES, ADULT MORTALITY RATES AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF HERD.

#15) WHAT GUIDELINES (LAWS, REGULATIONS AND POLICIES) EXIST FOR MANAGING THE MPWHT?

Discussion/Comments: Not a major issue. Incorporate current management plans, such as the recent Fish & Game studies, for compatible use.

ACTION ITEMS TO SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Refer to the Proposed Management Objectives list for Habitat Objectives (A) and Wild Horse Objectives (B) used at the meeting to formulate specific action items. A copy is attached at the end of these notes for reference.

Action Item #1: DEVELOP IN SUBCOMMITTEE A TECHNICAL MONITORING PLAN.
Two monitoring committees were formed: Wild Horses and Range.

The Wild Horse Monitoring Committee includes John Turner (Educ./Research) as chairman, Walt Swetich (USFS) and Ted Schindler (permittee) as members. Tasks include agreeing to a horse censusing identification procedure.

The Range Monitoring Committee will include the following members: Tim Reuwsaat (BLM)/chairman, Mark Gish (BLM), Roger Porter (USFS), Tina Hargis (USFS, wildlife), Mike Lawrence (USFS, range) and Donna Pizona (permittee). Interaction between the two committees will be necessary. Roger Porter will serve as liaison.

March 1, 1988, was set as the due date for submitting monitoring plans to Roger Porter at the Mono Lake District Office.

An additional action item is to assemble the Steering Committee in the event significant changes occur to the habitat, or if the population goes + or - 25% of present numbers.

Action Item #2: COMPLETE RANGE ANALYSIS ON BALANCE OF TERRITORY. (Ongoing)

Action Item #3: ESTABLISH SUFFICIENT TREND, CONDITION AND TRANSECT STUDIES.

Action Item #4: DETERMINE STANDARDS OF UTILIZATION ON A QUARTERLY MONITORING BASIS. (Tim Reuwsaat will take lead)

Action Item #5: DETERMINE ACTIONS OF MOUNTAIN LION STUDY (AS IT APPLIES TO THE PREDATOR-PREY RELATIONSHIP). John Turner will take lead.

Action Item #6: CLARITY AND SIGNING OF ROADS WITHIN THE TERRITORY BOUNDARY NEEDS TO BE CONSISTENT BY ALL AGENCIES ON VEHICLE USE AND ROAD CLOSURES. Local USFS and BLM offices will coordinate signing policy.

Action Item #7: DEVELOP "CODE OF ETHICS" FOR RECREATIONAL USERS. Chairman will be Craig London.

Action Item #8: RECOMMEND CONSIDERATION OF SEASONAL (APRIL 15 TO JUNE 15) CLOSURE OF PIZONA ROAD OR RELOCATION/REROUTING FOR PROTECTION OF WET MEADOWS AND THE FOALING SEASON. This recommendation will be addressed in the alternatives section of the plan.

Action Item #9: ESTABLISH DIRECTION THAT WE DO NOT ALLOW COMMERCIAL OUTFITTER GUIDE USE BY MOTORIZED VEHICLE WITHIN THE MPWHT (Because of disruption to horse activity and use). OUTFITTERS SHOULD NOT EXCEED CURRENT 1000 SERVICE-USE DAYS WITHIN THE PERIOD OF APRIL 15 TO JUNE 15.

Action Item #10: CONTACT PERMITTEE (ORIN HARRIS) TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS FOR AGREEABLE ALTERNATE ALLOTMENT FOR MCBRIDE. APPLY MONITORING DATA TO IDENTIFY WHETHER THE CLOSURE OF MCBRIDE ALLOTMENT IS WARRANTED. ALSO, LOOK INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF MODIFYING THE ALLOTMENT BOUNDARY OR ADJUSTING THE AUM'S ONLY IN THE SUMMER RANGE. The Carson City BLM will contact the permittee.

Action Item #11: PURSUE CLOSING THE PIZONA ALLOTMENT. The USFS will investigate this action.

Action Item #12: MONITOR LIVESTOCK AND HORSE USE ON WINTER AND SUMMER RANGE. This item will be addressed by the Range Monitoring Committee in Action Item 1.

Action Item #13: DO NOT REDUCE AUM'S ON THE WINTER RANGE. NO ACTION IS TO BE TAKEN TO LOWER AUM'S DURING THE MONITORING PERIOD.

Action Item #14: ENTER INTO NEGOTIATION FOR LAND ACQUISITION/AGREEMENT WITH PRIVATE LANDOWNER (By agreement, purchase or exchange).

Action Item #15: MONITOR MOUNTAIN LION ACTIVITIES AND NUMBERS (HORSE AND DEER) UNTIL A DETERMINATION IS MADE ON THE LION STUDY. DO NOT APPROVE OUTFITTER GUIDE REQUESTS FOR HUNTING LIONS.

Action Item #16: SEND LETTER TO NEVADA FISH AND GAME TO NOT ALLOW LION HUNTING UNTIL STUDY IS COMPLETE. John Turner will prepare letter.

Action Item #17: INCORPORATE DEPT. OF FISH AND GAME CASA DIABLO AND MONO LAKE DEER HERD STUDIES INTO THE MPWHT PLAN.

Action Item #18: INCORPORATE NEW WILDLIFE STUDY DATA AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE, INCLUDING THE PRONGHORN ANTELOPE STUDY (BLM) AND THE INVENTORY FOR SAGE GROUSE (COOPERATIVE STUDY). ALSO, SEEK FUNDING FOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS STATED IN THESE STUDIES.

Action Item #19: INVENTORY AND DEVELOP AVAILABLE WATER IN THE MPWHT AREA, INCLUDING EXISTING AND NEW SOURCES (ADOBE HILLS). This is the first priority. The preferred areas are located in T2N, R30E, and are referenced in the Wild Horse Subcommittee Report Map.

Action Item #20: INVESTIGATE CLOSURE OF HORSE USE SITES.

Action Item #21: RECONDITION TWO TANKS NEAR HUNTOON MOUNTAIN.

Action Item #22: SEEK SOURCE OF AVAILABLE FUNDING FOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.

Action Item #23: USE EXISTING WATER RIGHTS SOURCE.

Action Item #24: APPLY COST EFFECTIVE AND DISTRIBUTION EFFECTIVE MEANS FOR ALL HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS.

Action Item #25: DEVELOP A MONITORING PLAN TO DETERMINE IF AND WHEN HORSE POPULATION CONTROL IS NECESSARY.

This item will be included in the Wild Horse Monitoring Plan.

Action Item #26: VARIABLES OF THE WILD HORSE POPULATION WILL BE DETERMINED THROUGH A MONITORING PLAN.

This item will also be included in the Wild Horse Monitoring Plan.

THE NEXT MPWHT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR (MONDAY) MAY 2, 1988, AT 0900 AM. THE MEETING LOCATION IN BISHOP WILL BE ANNOUNCED LATER.

The Steering Committee will comment on the draft plan at this meeting.

Thank You for your interest and participation in developing this plan!