



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
CARSON CITY DISTRICT OFFICE
1535 Hot Springs Rd., Ste. 300
Carson City, Nevada 89701

1/5/89
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

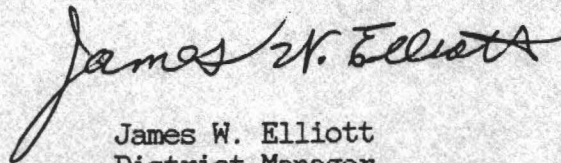
4700
(NV-03480)

JAN 05 1989

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed are the final removal plans and environmental assessments for the gathering of wild horses in the Augusta Mountain, Lahontan, Horse Mountain, Granite Peak and Dogskin Mountain Herd Management Areas. Several changes were made to these plans due to comments received from review of the draft documents. The major change was to divide the capture plan into three final documents to eliminate confusion with several herd areas covered by one plan. After careful consideration of the comments and a review of our land use planning objectives, our decision is to implement the proposed action contained in the final documents.

Sincerely yours,


James W. Elliott
District Manager

3 Enclosures:

1. Augusta Mountains Removal Plan (19 p.)
2. Lahontan/Horse Mountains Removal Plan (17 p.)
3. Dogskin Mountain/Granite Peak Removal Plan (18 p.)

LAHONTAN/HORSE MOUNTAIN WILD HORSE REMOVAL PLAN

I. Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to discuss the implementation of the proposed action in the accompanying environmental assessment. The proposed action is to remove excess numbers of wild horses with the use of a helicopter, to bring the population of wild horses in the Lahontan and Horse Mountain Herd Management Areas (HMAs) down to the appropriate management level identified in the Lahontan Resource Management Plan.

II. Areas of Concern

The areas of concern are the Lahontan and Horse Mountain Herd Management Areas. The locations of these areas are shown on the attached map 1.

III. Numbers of Wild Horses

The most recent census conducted in the Lahontan HMA in September 1988, resulted in 172 animals being counted. The Lahontan Resource management Plan Record of Decision set the appropriate management level at 42 head. This results in an excess population of 130 head. Many of the animals in this population are pinto horses, therefore all animals are to be removed and 42 of the horses selected to be released back into the HMA preserving the pinto characteristic. The release will occur within the HMA and the animals will be directed towards water (Lahontan Reservoir) and checked within 72 hours after release.

Horse Mountain was censused in September of 1988 resulting in an actual count of 134 head. The Lahontan Resource Management Plan (RMP) set the appropriate management level at 63, therefore 71 excess animals need to be removed to achieve the appropriate management level.

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 proper areas are captured and to ensure the welfare, safety and humane treatment of the wild horses.

A. Roundup Procedures within Contract Area:

The Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) 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 will select the general location of trap sites in which to herd the animals, also dependent on animal concentration, terrain, physical barriers and weather conditions.

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 or injury.

3. Only stocktrailers shall be allowed for transporting animals from traps to temporary holding facilities. Only Bobtail trucks, stocktrailers, or single deck trucks shall be used to haul animals from temporary holding facilities to final destination. Sides or stockracks 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 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 stocktrailer/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/or weak horses from the rest should he/she feel that they may be injured during the trip. He/she will consider the distance and condition of the road and animals 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 his authority to off-load animals should he feel there are too many horses on the trailer.

7. The COR shall consider the condition of the animals, weather conditions, type of vehicles, distance to be transported, or other factors when planning for the movement of captured animals. The COR shall provide for any brand and/or 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 how the horses arrived. Should problems arise, shipping methods and/or separation of the horses will be changed in an attempt to alleviate the problems.

8. If the COR 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 40 miles per load.

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 and/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.

Roping will be allowed only to capture an orphaned foal or a suspected wet mare, however, in the Lahontan HMA all animals which elude capture through normal helicopter herding may be roped in order to accomplish the objective of preserving the pinto characteristic.

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

The Carson City District will use an observation helicopter as the primary means in which to supervise the use of the project helicopter. In the absence of an observation helicopter, the project helicopter or saddle horses may be used to place a BLM observer on a point overlooking the area of the helicopter herding the wild horses.

3. The rate of movement and distance the animals travel shall not exceed limitations set by the COR 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 may determine the distance and rate needs to be reduced if the route to the trap site is so steep and/or rocky that wild horses are being stressed or risk injury or the condition of the horses require shorter distance and slower rates.

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 2 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 prior to construction. The contractor may also be required to change or move trap locations as determined by the COR. All traps and holding facilities not located on public land must have prior written approval of the landowner.

If tentative trap sites (see Map 2) are not located near enough to the concentrations of horses, then the trap site will not be approved. The COR 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.

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. 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 of 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 mare 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, to the extent possible, 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 for unusual circumstances. Animals shall not be held in traps and/or temporary holding facilities on days when there is no work being conducted except as specified by the COR. 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 10 hours or more in the traps and/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 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.

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.

VII. Responsibility

The Contracting Officer's Representative and Project Inspectors, all from the Carson City District, have the responsibility to ensure the contractor's compliance with the contract stipulations. However, 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 by the District Manager, Area Manager, COR and PIs.

The COR and/or Project Inspector (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 road conditions 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, a veterinarian should be present, or if the capture operations should be delayed. 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.

VIII. Signatures

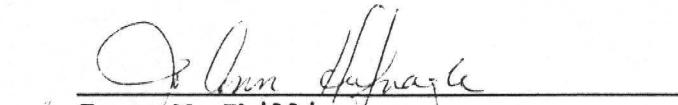
Prepared by:

Timothy B. Reuwsaat
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
Carson City District


Concurred by:


Norman L. Murray
Assistant District Manager, Resources

12-21-88
Date

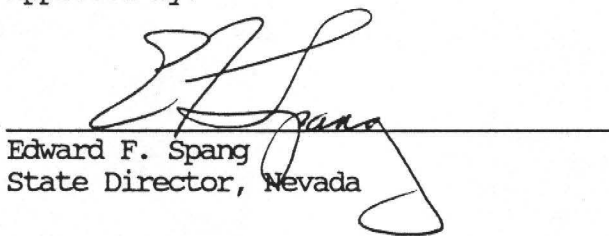

James M. Phillips
Area Manager *Acting*
Lahontan Resource Area

12/21/88
Date


James W. Elliott
District Manager *Acting*

12-21-88
Date

Approved by:


Edward F. Spang
State Director, Nevada

1/3/89
Date

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Lahontan/Horse Mountain Wild Horse Removal

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the proposal is to maintain or improve rangeland conditions through removal of excess wild horses in the Lahontan and Horse Mountain Herd Management Areas (HMAs). This proposal is in conformance with the Lahontan Resource Management Plan (RMP). The proposed action is to remove excess wild horses down to the identified Appropriate Management Levels for the Lahontan and Horse Mountain HMAs.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

- A. The proposed action is to remove excess wild horses in the above mentioned Herd Management Areas through 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. The numbers of horses proposed for removal are:

Lahontan - All 172 animals are to be removed. Many of the animals in this population are pinto horses, therefore 42 of the horses will be selected from the 172 and released back into the HMA preserving the pinto characteristic. The release will occur within the HMA and the animals will be directed towards water (Lahontan Reservoir) and checked within 72 hours after release.

Horse Mountain - Seventy one excess wild horses will be removed from the HMA.

- B. Alternative No. 1 is to conduct the removal operations through the use of water traps. Traps consisting of portable panels would be constructed around water sources and the horses caught when coming into water.

- C. Alternative No. 2 is to conduct the removal by herding the wild horses from horseback. Riders would herd horses into traps built on portable steel panels.
- D. The no action alternative is to not conduct the wild horse removals.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Wild Horses

The Lahontan Herd Management Area is located approximately 20 miles west of Fallon, Nevada. The most recent census conducted in the Lahontan HMA in September 1988, resulted in 172 animals being counted. The Lahontan Resource Management Plan set the appropriate management level at 42 head. This results in an excess population of 130 head. Many of the animals in this population are pinto horses.

Horse Mountain HMA is located approximately 25 miles south of Fallon, Nevada. Horse Mountain was censused in September of 1988 resulting in an actual count of 134 head. The Lahontan Resource Management Plan (RMP) set the appropriate management level at 63, therefore 71 excess animals need to be removed to achieve the appropriate management level.

The HMA locations are shown on the attached map as well as the capture area boundaries.

B. Vegetation

Vegetation types vary by elevation and topography from pinyon-juniper at the higher elevations to sagebrush, shadscale and greasewood at the lower elevations in the HMAs. Vegetation is currently being adversely affected by wild horse use over appropriate management levels as analyzed within the Lahontan RMP.

C. Water

Horse Mountain and Lahontan HMAs do not contain any known springs, however the Horse Mountain herd utilizes an irrigation ditch for water and the Lahontan herd relies on the Lahontan Reservoir.

D. Wilderness

There are no Wilderness Study Areas within the Lahontan/Horse Mountain HMAs.

E. Cultural Resources

Cultural resources exist within the gather areas. Temporary trap sites or water barriers could impact these. As a standard operating procedure, all sites will receive a cultural clearance prior to construction.

F. Threatened and Endangered Species

There are no known threatened and endangered species within the Lahontan/Horse Mountain HMAs.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/MITIGATION MEASURES

A. Proposed Action

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 mitigated 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 and feed.

The pinto characteristic will be enhanced in the Lahontan herd by removal of all animals and release of selected animals with the pinto coloration.

Small localized areas within the vicinity of trap sites and holding facilities would receive trampling and the subsequent loss of vegetation. Overall, the vegetative 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. A more detailed analysis for the Augusta Mountain HMA is contained in appendix A.

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

B. Water Trapping

This method of capturing wild horses is 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 and feed.

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, would be significantly more expensive than the proposed action. In addition, the number of springs in the removal areas would make the water trapping method of capture unfeasible, due to the amount of fencing material required.

C. Horseback Trapping

Using riders on horseback to herd horses to traps, results in less stress to the animals during capture than the proposed action. 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 and feed.

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 action is significantly fewer, therefore, 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.

V. Public Involvement

This Environmental Assessment was distributed to interested parties for comments as outlined in Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office Instruction Memorandum No. NV-85-345, Change 2.

Eight comments were received; three from State and Federal agencies, two from animal interest groups and three from interested persons. Comments ranged from support for the proposed removal to disagreement for the proposed removal.

VI. Signatures

Prepared by:

Timothy B. Reuwsaat
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
Carson City District

Reviewed by:

Dave Loomis
Dave Loomis
Environmental Coordinator

12-21-88
Date

J. Ann Phillips
James M. Phillips
Area Manager *Acting*
Lahontan Resource Area

12/21/88
Date

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

Decision

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

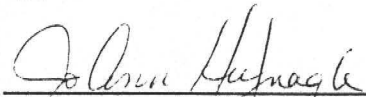
The proposed action of removing approximately 130 excess wild horses from the Lahontan HMA and 71 excess wild horses from Horse Mountain HMA and surrounding areas to bring the population in balance with forage availability in the Lahontan/Horse Mountain Herd Management Area shall be adopted.


Rationale

Based on the environmental assessment, a net beneficial impact would result from implementing the proposed action. With reduction of wild horses, their habitat and the vegetation resource will benefit over the long term.

Public interest was light based on the small number of responses to the draft removal plan. Three responses were from State and Federal Agencies. Two comments were from Animal interest groups and three were from interested persons. Comments were mixed, ranging from support to disagreement with the proposed removal.

Approved:

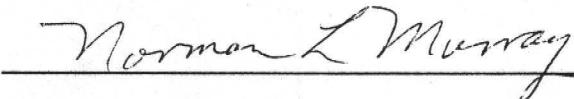


 James M. Phillips
Area Manager *Acting*
Lahontan Resource Area

12/21/88

Date

Concurred:

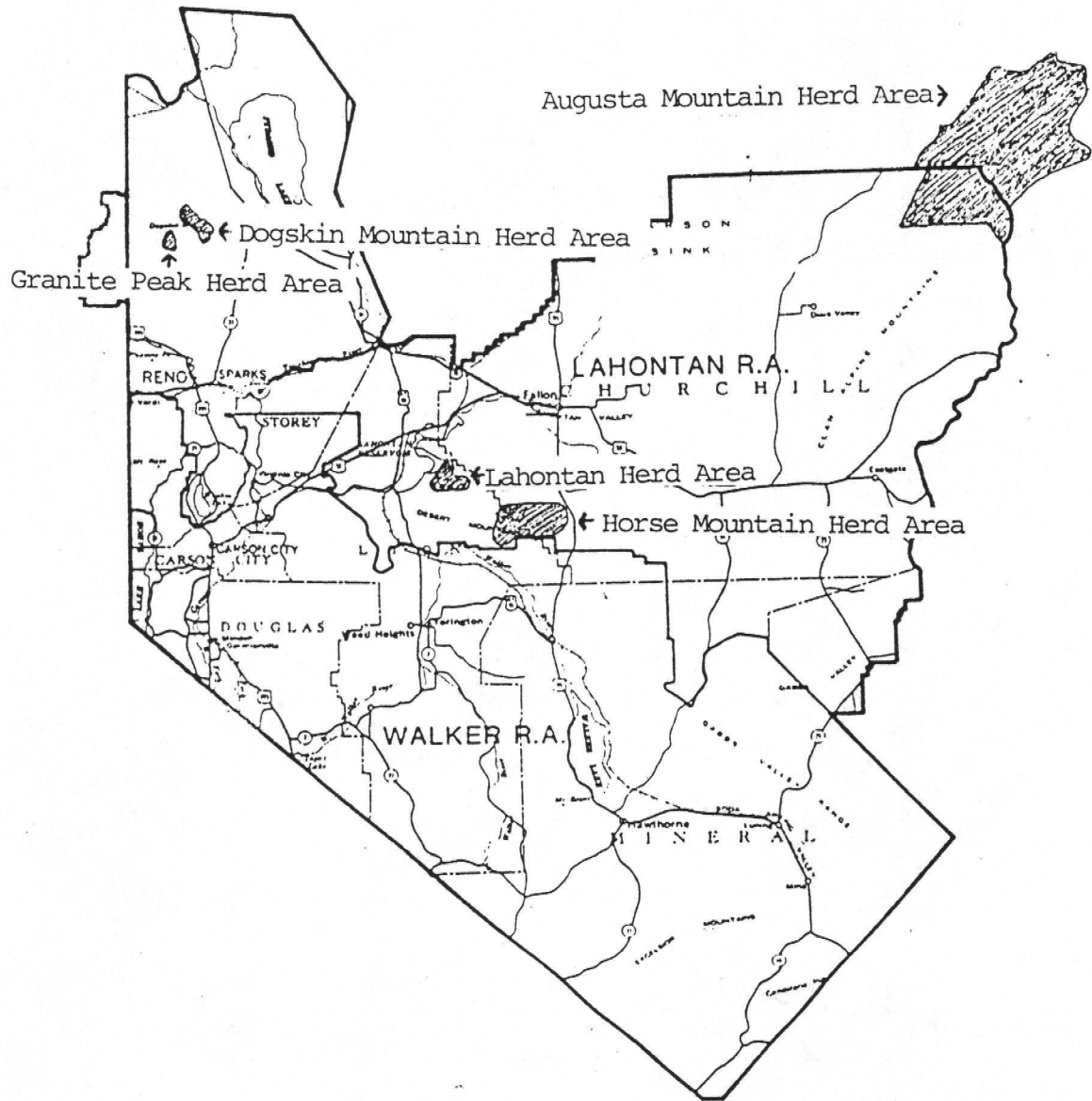


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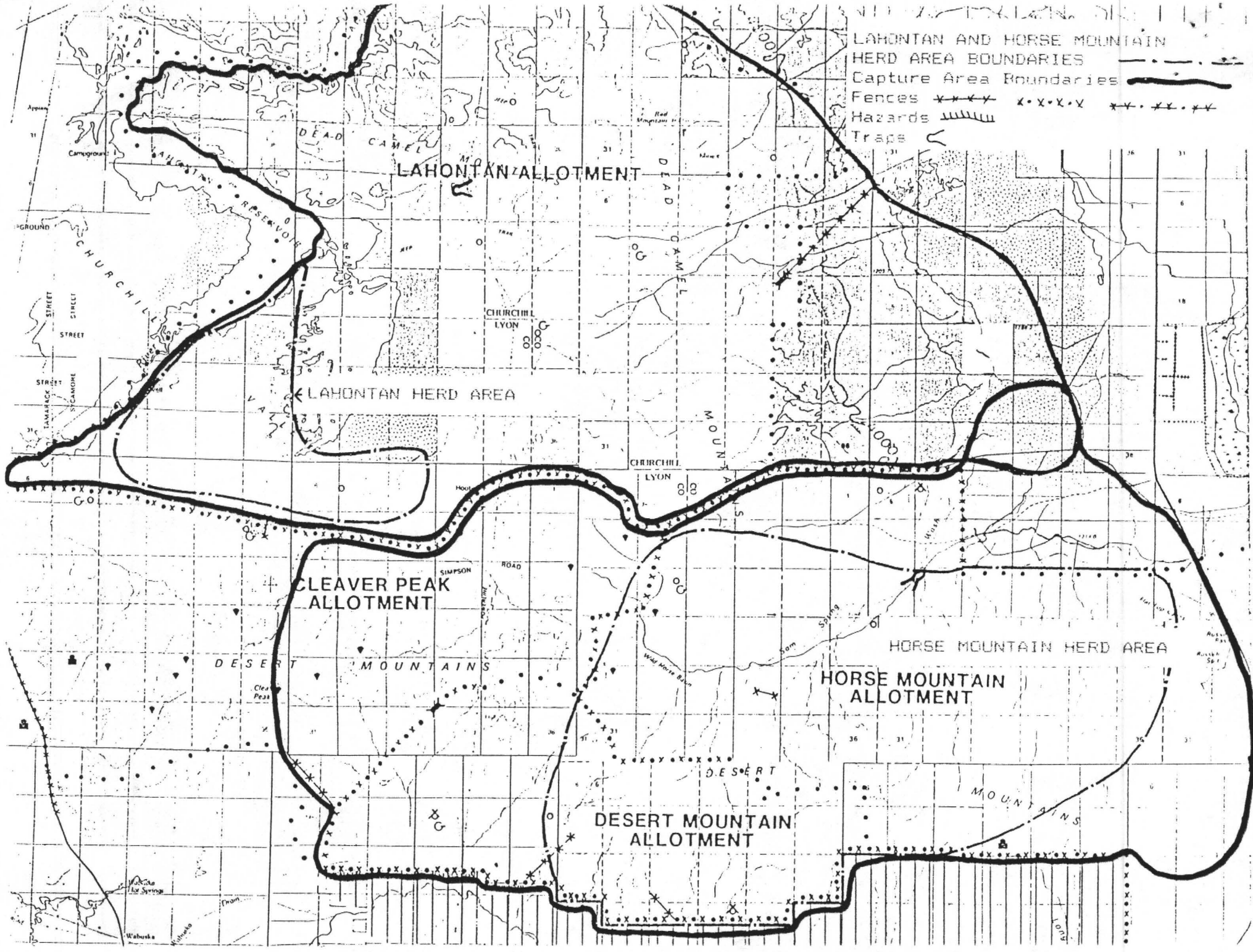
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CARSON CITY DISTRICT, NEVADA



AREA REFERENCE MAP

LAHONTAN AND HORSE MOUNTAIN
 HERD AREA BOUNDARIES
 Capture Area Boundaries
 Fences x-x-x-x x-x-x-x x-x-x-x
 Hazards ///////////////
 Traps



1/5/91

January 5, 1991

Dear Kathy,

Here are some pictures that show how bad the burros were on the snows at Lahontan. These are older snows that were released back, so they will just get worse.

I'd like to see the area sprayed or burned or something so the burros are removed. But then to help the snows that are already full of burros the snows would all have to be recaptured & the burros removed from their manes & tails.

Also enclosed are some comments I worked up after Beville - just kind of our point of view of the gather. I'm working on one for the gathers we did for Larson City & a little more complicated - but if I ever get it finished I will send you a copy.

See you at Nellis - Dave plans to just have a capture trap on the base & everything else outside - so no one will need clearance to see the snows.

Take care,

Sue

P.S. Notice the little shaggy

10/21
colt in the one picture. His
mom claimed him right a-
way but didn't have much
milk & from the way he looked
probably hadn't had much
for quite awhile. John Astell
let us pull him out &
we took him I think to
Dawn. Hopefully we can continue
to do this with any colts
on older mares ~~that look~~
colts that look like they
could have trouble surviving
on colts on mares with
very little milk.

Kathy -

I found some better
pictures of the knowes
with burrows,

Sue

TALK TO DISTRICT

















