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IN REPLY REFER TO
4740
(N-053)

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

P.O. Box 5400
Las Vegas, Nevada 89102

(702) 385-6403

FEB 13 1980

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

Gentlemen:

Please review the enclosed draft copies of the Environmental Assessment and, Wild Horse and Burro Gathering Plan for the Caliente-Virgin Valley Resource Area.

If you wish to comment on this proposed action please submit your comments in writing to the District Manager, Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 5400, Las Vegas, Nevada 89102, by March 10, 1980. Comments which are directly related to the document and cite page numbers and paragraphs will be most helpful.

Public meetings will be held prior to the use of helicopters in Caliente, and Las Vegas, Nevada.

Sincerely yours,

J. E. Schalmus, actg.

John S. Boyles
District Manager

Enclosures (2)

CONSERVE AMERICA'S ENERGY

Save Energy and You Serve America!

DRAFT

WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT

4740

CALIENTE-VIRGIN VALLEY RESOURCE AREA

WILD HORSE AND BURRO GATHERING PLAN

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Las Vegas District

I. Introduction

This removal plan is designed to reduce the wild horse and burro numbers in the Caliente Planning Unit to a population level of between 340 and 390 animals. This will require a reduction of between 1,010 and 1,060 animals. The Caliente Management Framework Plan (MFP) Step 2 recommended a wild horse and burro management level of between 450 and 500 animals and removal number of between 900 and 950 animals. The difference between the population level and removal number proposed by this plan and those recommeded by the Caliente MFP-2 is due to economical considerations. Yearly trapping is not economically feasible, therefore it was necessary to adjust the wild horse and burro population level and removal number to correspond with trapping intervals of approximately five years. As a result, wild horses and burros will be trapped below the recommended management level of between 450 and 500 animals to a 1980 population level of between 340 and 390 animals. The population will then be allowed to rise above the recommended management level to between 550 and 600 animals before the next suggested trapping to occur in approximatley five years. The corresponding adjusted removal number would be between 1,010 and 1,060 animals (Table 2). The management level and removal number recommended in the Caliente MFP-2 will be used as an average.

The most recent inventory of the wild horse and burro populations, within the Caliente Planning Unit, was accomplished in 1977. This inventory established a population size of 1,011 wild horses, 30 wild burros, and 11 wild mules. The Caliente MFP-2 stated that the horse and burro populations increase at an annual rate of 10 percent. Therefore, the populations at the proposed 1980 trapping are expected to be 1,346 wild horses, 40 wild burros and 15 wild mules (Table 1).

4730.1 (a) CURRENT INVENT.

The Caliente MFP-2 recommended establishment of five Herd Management Areas (HMA) within which the horse numbers will be maintained at a relatively constant level. (See Wild Horse Management Areas Map.) The Caliente MFP-2 also identified a Wild Horse and Burro Removal Area, from which all wild horses and burros are proposed for removal.

Prior to passage of the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burros Act of 1971 (PL 92-195), wild horses and burros were considered property of the State of Nevada. They could be captured under State or local law. Federal agencies were not responsible for the management of these animals.

The Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (PL 92-195) gives the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture jurisdiction over wild horses and burros on land under their respective jurisdiction. The Secretaries are to "protect wild horses and burros from capture, branding, harrassment or death. The animals are to be considered in the area where presently found as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands.

Section 14 of Public Law 95-514, the "Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978", states that the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture shall "determine appropriate management levels of wild free-roaming horses and burros on areas of public land; and determine whether appropriate management levels should be achieved by the removal or destruction of excess animals, or other options (such as sterilization, or natural controls on populations levels)".

II. General Description of Wild Horse and Burro Range

Wild horses and burros currently are located generally in the eastern half of the Caliente Planning Unit (Wild Horse and Burro Map). Their range incorporates approximately 1,396,000 acres or 39 percent of the Caliente Planning Unit and has a wide variance of climate, topography, vegetation etc.

The range of wild horses and burros extends from elevations of 2,000 feet in the Tule Desert to 9,395 feet at Highland Peak and incorporates six major vegetative communities. For a more detailed description of the wild horse and burro range refer to the Caliente FES, 1979, pages 2-1 to 2-53.

III. Actual Capture Methods

There will be two methods used in capturing the wild horses and burros; capture by water traps and/or with the aid of a helicopter. Water traps will be used where possible. However, conditions existing in certain areas will dictate that the removal be undertaken with the use of a helicopter.

Water traps will be installed at watering areas that are frequented by horses or burros. The traps will be installed a few days prior to the actual capturing date to allow the horses and burros time to become familiar with the structures. The animals will be allowed to move in and out of the traps freely until the designated trapping date. At that time, the horses or burros will be secured in the trap by the use of a manual or automatic trap door. Whether the manual door or automatic door is used will be determined by the particular conditions existing at the time of trapping.

The helicopter will be used in areas where water traps are not feasible. The horses and burros will be directed towards temporary capture corrals with the helicopter. Wings (from 1/8 to 1/4 miles) will be constructed leading into the corral. When the horses are within approximately 1/4 to 1/2 mile from the trap, riders on horseback will assist in guiding the animals into the trap.

The outer end of each trap wing will be from 72 inches to 84 inches high, and constructed from portable panels. The remainder of the wing will be constructed of white rope stretched on 6 1/2 foot steel fence posts. The spacing of the fence posts will be from 50 feet to 100 feet, depending on the terrain.

The location of the traps, whether they are water traps or for use with the helicopter, will be determined just prior to the capture operations, depending on the particular conditions that exist at that time. Due to the large area involved, in the capturing operations, it is not feasible to determine individual trap sites until just prior to the trapping.

A portable loading chute will be used at each trap site for loading captured horses on to stock trucks. The stock trucks will then transport the horses or burros to Palomino Valley corrals near Reno, Nevada or to temporary holding corrals.

Those horses that are determined to be privately owned by the Bureau of Land Management will be processed in accordance with the then current cooperative aggreement, between the Bureau of Land Management and the Nevada State Department of Agriculture, and Bureau of Land Management regulations.

Captured horses or burros which are sick, or lame will be humanely destroyed, but only on the order of a licensed veterinarian (pursuant to Subpart 4740.3-1, Code of Federal Regulations, 1979), or except on order of the authorized officer (pursuant to Subpart 4740.3(a)(1), Code of Federal Regulations, 1979).

In order to comply with Section 404 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, public meetings will be held, at lease two weeks prior to the gathering operations, to insure full public participation.

IV. Signatures

Prepared by:

_____ _____

Date Stan Van Velsor, Range Conservationist

Recommended for Approval by:

_____ _____

Date William Combs, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist

Date

Frank Bingham, Chief, Division of Resource Management

Date

Darwin Anderson, Area Manager

Approved by:

Date

John Boyles, District Manager

V. Appendices

A. Maps
   1. Wild Horse and Burro Areas
   2. Wild Horse Management Areas

B. Tables

   1. Actual Counts and Population Estimates
   2. Wild Horse Population Management Levels and Removal Numbers

Stipulations

1. Cultural clearance will be done on all trap sites prior to their installation. In the event that cultural values are found to be present then the trap site will be moved or the site will be cleared of all cultural values by qualified personnel.

2. A boundary line will be established as an outer limit within which attempts will be made to herd horses to a given trap. Topography, distance, and current physical condition of the horses and burros are factors that will be considered when setting the limits. This procedure will assure that undue stress on the animals will not occur while they are being herded.

3 All corral panels will be from 72 inches to 84 inches high to prevent the horses from jumping out of the traps or becoming hung up on the corral sides.

4. There will be no unnecessary abuse or inhumane treatment of the animals, during any phase of the gathering operations.

5. The helicopter use plan will incorporate the precautions specified in Subpart 4740.2(a), Code of Federal Regulations, 1979. The helicopter will carry a Bureau employee when necessary Care will be taken to keep the horses and burros from becoming unnecessarily stressed. All attempts will be made to move and keep bands together.

6. All vehicles used for transporting wild horses and burros from the capture area to the holding facilities will be subject to the humane procedures specified in Subpart 4740.2(b) and (c), Code of Federal Regulations, 1979.

7. There are veterinarians available in Ely, and Las Vegas, Nevada that are willing to provide treatment as necessary during the gathering operation. The veterinarian will be helicoptered into the site when an animal needs treatment.

8. Only experienced horseback riders will be used in the gathering operations.

TABLE 1

ACTUAL COUNTS AND POPULATION ESTIMATES OF WILD HORSES, BURROS, AND MULES FOR EACH INVENTORY DATE (1973, 1974, 1975, 1977), PLUS POPULATION NUMBERS FOR UNINVENTORIED YEARS (1978, 1979, 1980) DETERMINED AT AN ANNUAL INCREASE RATE OF 10 PERCENT

Year of Inventory	Wild Horse & Burro Area 1						Wild Horse Area 2		Wild Horse Area 3		Totals	
	Horses		Burros		Mules		Horses		Horses		Horses	
	AC[a]	PE[b]	AC	PE	AC	PE	AC	PE	AC	PE	AC	PE
1973	503	671	1	2	3	4	19	25	6	8	528	704
1974	509	679	-	-	5	61	20	27	2	3	531	709
1975	299	399	-	-	-	-	-	-	38	51	337	450
1977	702	936	15	30	8	11	24	32	32	43	758	1,011
1978*	c/	1,030	c/	33	c/	12	c/	35	c/	47	-	1,112
1979*	c/	1,133	c/	36	c/	13	c/	39	c/	52	-	1,224
1980*	c/	1,246	c/	40	c/	15	c/	43	c/	57	-	1,346

a/ Actual Count = AC
b/ Population Estimate, PE=AC/.75
c/ No Inventory Made

est. Shown to be 50% higher than AC.

* Population numbers were determined by an annual increase rate of 10 percent.
** There was no inventory taken in 1976.
*** The burros and mules were not included in the totals.

Source: Information for the years 1973-1977 was taken from Table 2-17, p. 2-43, Caliente Final Environmental Statement, 1979.

TABLE 2

WILD HORSE POPULATION MANAGEMENT LEVELS AND REMOVAL NUMBERS

Herd Management Areas	1980 Population Estimate	Recommended Management Levels	Population Levels After 1980 Trapping[a]	Projected Population Levels 1985 Trapping[a]	Scheduled Removal Numbers for 1980-81
	Cattle Cap 671	1,423 season-long yr.			
Little Mountain (HMA #1)	158	109	82	132	76
Highland Peak (HMA #2)	43	40	30	48	13
Miller Flat (HMA #3)	144	100	75	121	69
Clover Creek (HMA #4)	48	38	29	47	19
Delamar Mountains (HMA #5)	298	170	128	206	170
Removal Area*	655	0	0	0	655*
Totals	1,346	457	344	554	1,002*

* The Removal Area contains 40 burros and 15 mules that will be removed.
a/ Extrapolated from Recommended Management Levels by using 10 percent as an annual rate of population increase.

Source: Caliente URA 3 and 4, .44-115 to .44-122; Caliente MFP, WH/B, WH/B 1.1.

DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for

WILD HORSE AND BURRO GATHERING PLAN

FROM

CALIENTE-VIRGIN VALLEY RESOURCE AREA

NV-050-13

Bureau of Land Management
Las Vegas District, Nevada

I. Introduction

The Caliente Planning Unit supported a 1977 estimated population of 1,011 wild horses, 30 wild burros, and 11 wild mules. It was established in the Caliente Management Framework Plan (MFP) Step 2 that the wild horse and burro populations increase at an annual rate of 10 percent, therefore the estimated population for 1980 (Table 1) will be 1,346 wild horses, 40 burros and 15 mules. These animals are generally located in two Wild Horse Areas and one Wild Horse and Burro Area (see Wild Horse and Burro Map). These areas are contained primarily in the eastern part of the Caliente Planning Unit. The major concentration of wild horses and wild burros within these three areas are in the pinyon-juniper areas of the Meadow Valley Wash watershed (see Wild Horse and Burro Map). The higher elevations appear to receive the heavier horse use during the summer months, while the lower valleys receive heavier use during the winter months.

Prior to passage of the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (PL 92-195), wild horses and burros were considered property of the State of Nevada. They could be captured under state or local law. Federal agencies were not responsible for the management of these animals.

The Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (PL 92-195) gives the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture jurisdiction over wild horses and burros on land under their respective jurisdiction. The Secretaries are to "protect wild horses and burros from capture, branding, harassment or death. The animals are to be considered in the area where presently found, as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands."

Section 14 of Public Law 95-514, the "Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978", states that the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture shall "determine appropriate management levels of wild free-roaming horses and burros on areas of public lands; and determine whether appropriate management levels should be achieved by the removal or destruction of excess animals, or other options (such as sterilization, or natural controls on population levels)."

II. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

A. Proposed Action

The proposed action consists of reducing the wild horse and burro populations in the Caliente Planning Unit to a management level of between 450 and 500 animals. This was established in Step 2 of the Caliente Management Framework Plan (MFP) and will require a reduction of between 900 and 950 animals. However, yearly trapping is not economically feasible, therefore it is

necessary to adjust the wild horse and burro population level and removal numbers to correspond with trapping intervals of approximately five years. As a result, the wild horses and burros will be trapped below the recommended management level of between 450 and 500 animals to a 1980 population level of between 340 and 390 animals. The population will then be allowed to rise above the recommended management level to between 550 and 600 animals before the next suggested trapping to occur in approximately five years. The corresponding adjusted removal numbers will be between 1,010 and 1,060 animals (Table 2). An animal population increase rate of 10 percent (as stated in MFP-2) was used to determine the range of population level above and below the recommended management level over a five year period. The management level and removal number recommended in the Caliente MFP-2 will be used as an average.

The Caliente MFP Step 2 recommended establishment of five Herd Management Areas (HMA) where the wild horse and burro populations will be managed at recommended management levels of between 450 and 500 animals. The MFP-2 also recommended designation of the remaining wild horse and burro habitat as Wild Horse and Burro Removal Areas (see Wild Horse Management Areas Map). All of the wild horses and burros existing in the Wild Horse and Burro Removal Area are scheduled for removal over a two year period, but there will be only a partial removal of the wild horses and burros existing in the Herd Management Areas (Table 2). The number of animals removed depends on three factors.

inventory

1. The 1980 estimated herd population size
2. The herd management level recommended by the Caliente MFP-2
3. The population growth resulting from the five year trapping interval

The capture of these animals will be accomplished by the use of temporary traps. The particular conditions within the specific areas being trapped will dictate the most efficient methods used, whether the trapping will be accomplished by the use of helicopters or water traps. The Bureau of Land Management's Division of Wild Horse and Burro Operations will be responsible for the actual capture and they will use Bureau approved techniques. Trapped horses and burros will be moved to temporary holding facilities. At this time they will be inspected to determine if any horses and burros are privately owned. The horses and burros that were privately owned will be processed in accordance with the then current cooperative agreement, between the Bureau of Land Management and the Nevada State Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Land Management regulations. The wild horses and burros will be transported to temporary holding facilities or to the Bureau of

Land Management facilities at Palomino Valley north of Reno, Nevada. From here, they will be put up for adoption via cooperative maintenance agreements with private entities.

Captured horses or burros which are sick or lame will be humanely destroyed, but only on the order of a licensed veterinarian (pursuant to Subpart 4740.3-1, Code of Federal Regulations, 1979), or except on order of the authorized officer (pursuant to Subpart 4740.3(a)(1), Code of Federal Regulations, 1979).

The gathering process may be extended over a two year period. There will be no helicopter trapping undertaken from March 1 through June 1 due to wild horse and burro foaling, although water trapping operations can continue during this period. In the event a nursing foal or wet mare become trapped they will be released. The remainder of the year will be available for helicopter and water trapping depending on the existing weather conditions.

A cultural resources clearance will be completed on all trap sites prior to construction of the trap. If cultural values are found on the trap site, then a new trap site will be selected or the trap site will be cleared of all cultural values by qualified personnel.

The helicopter use plan will incorporate the precautions specified in Subpart 4740.2(a), Code of Federal Regulations, 1979. The helicopter will carry a Bureau employee when necessary. Care will be taken to keep the horses and burros from becoming unnecessarily stressed. All attempts will be made to move and keep bands together.

A Bureau employee will make a careful determination of a boundary line to serve as an outer limit within which attempts will be made to herd horses and burros to a given trap. Topography, distance and current condition of the horses and burros are factors that will be considered in setting the limits to avoid undue stress on the animals during the herding process.

Every effort will be made to locate a trap near existing horse trails so that once the animals are started towards the capture area they will be able to pick a natural route and proceed at their own pace.

The trap site will be rehabilitated wherever possible under the supervision of the Las Vegas Bureau of Land Management District soil-water-vegetation specialists.

All vehicles used for transporting wild horses and burros from the capture area to holding facilities will be subject to the humane procedures specified in Subpart 4740.2(b) and (c), Code of Federal Regulations, 1979.

Veterinarians contacted in Ely and Las Vegas have agreed to see wild horse as needed in the event an animal require treatment. The veterinarians are within 150 miles of the actual round-up operation and in our emergency, the veterinarian will be helicoptered in to provide the required treatment.

Allowances will be made for high summer temperature so that horses and burros will not be put under heat stress.

To prevent the horses from jumping out of the trap the corral panels will be from 72" to 84" high.

There will be no inhumane treatment of the horses or burros allowed, during any phase of the horse and burro gathering operation.

In order to comply with Section 404 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, public hearings will be held, at least two weeks prior to the gathering operations, to insure full public participation.

B. Alternatives to the Proposed Action

1. Introduction

The Caliente FES addressed several possible alternatives, including minimum constraints on wild horses and burros; restricted periods-of-use by livestock; and elimination of livestock, wild horse and burro grazing. The alternatives outlined in the Caliente FES were discussed in detail. In an effort to avoid repetition, these alternatives will not be reiterated in this document but can be found in the accompanying Caliente FES. The no action alternative will be the only alternative discussed here.

a) No Action

This would allow the horse and burro populations to fluctuate at a natural rate dependent upon reproduction potential, starvation, natural mortality rates, disease and predation.

III. Planning

A. The removal of between 1,010 and 1,060 wild horses and burros is in conformance with the recommendations in the Caliente MFP-2 subsequent to the necessary adjustments made resulting from five year trapping invervals.

B. There are no conflicts with county planning or other agency planning.

IV. Description of Existing Environment

The wild horse and burro range, within the Caliente Planning Unit, has a wide variance of climate, topography, vegetation, animals, etc. Their range extends from 2,000 feet in the Tule Desert to 9,395 feet at Highland Peak and incorporates six major vegetative communities. For a more detailed description of the wild horse and burro environment refer to the Caliente FES, 1979, pages 2-1 to 2-53.

V. Analysis of Proposed Action and Alternatives

A. Proposed Action

1. Environmental Impacts

a) Anticipated Impacts

(1) Air Quality

Air quality would be slightly affected on a temporary basis. There would be periods of time when the gathering would cause dust to be locally heavy, however, these time periods will be short and the areas involved widely scattered.

(2) Soil

The density of the vegetation (one-half meter in height or less) should increase. Since any increase in low-growing vegetation reduces raindrop impact and runoff, erosion would be reduced (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-2). Soil compaction would be increased at the trap sites.

(3) Animals

The reduction of grazing by wild horses and burros in desert tortoise areas would have a positive effect on the desert tortoise population

(Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-19). Bighorn sheep and mule deer, existing in wild horse and burro areas, would benefit due to reduced competition for available forage (FES, 1979, p. 3-15 to 3-18). Wildlife that inhabit areas of riparian vegetation (Gambel's quail, mourning dove, nongame birds, cottontail rabbits, etc.) would also benefit from a reduction in grazing pressure (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-20 and 3-21).

(4) Water

Water quality data is insufficient at the present time within the Caliente Planning Unit for a quantification of water quality impacts (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-7). However, it is suggested that the proposed action would not have a noticeable effect on the concentration of dissolved solids. Stream bank vegetation would be increased where grazing pressure is reduced which in turn would reduce suspended sediment concentrations caused by stream bank sloughing (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-7).

(5) Vegetation

The removal of wild horses and burros would reduce the grazing pressure on the forage resource. The forage plants would then respond with an increase in vigor, better production, thickening of the cover and other related benefits. Riparian vegetation would improve in areas where the wild horses and burros are removed (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-10).

Trampling of vegetation around trap sites would result due to heavy concentration of animals.

(6) Human Values

Cultural resources are finite, fragile and non-renewable. Grazing animals could trample artifacts that remain on the soil surface at a cultural site. Removal of some of the wild horses and burros could reduce the possibility of this trampling occurring (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-23).

The proposed action will not affect the wilderness character that may exist within those

inventory units that the capture plan covers.

Reduction in wild horse and burro numbers would decrease the likelihood of people seeing the animals.

b) Possible Mitigating or Enhancing Measures

Mitigating measures have been dealt with as "standard operating proceedures" in the Description of Proposed Action section.

c) Residual Impacts

There will be a certain amount of dust created during the gathering operations. This will only be temporary and will settle when the activity ceases.

Soil compaction would increase on trap sites as a result of large numbers of animals concentrating there.

Stream bank vegetation would be increased where grazing pressure by wild horses and burros is reduced. This would reduce suspended sediment concentrations caused by stream bank sloughing (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-7).

Riparian vegetation would improve in areas where the wild horses and burros are removed (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-10). The forage plants would increase in vigor, production would improve and there would be a thickening in cover.

Trampling of cultural resources could be reduced following the removal of wild horses and burros (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 3-23).

2. Relationship Between Short-Term Use and Long-Term Productivity

Soil surfaces would benefit with respect to short-term use by stabilization through reduced erosion and reduced sediment yield and by lessening the associated loss of organic matter and plant nutrients (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 6-1).

Vegetation density would increase, range conditions would increase as would production for the short-term and long-term (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 6-1).

Aquatic habitat would improve in the short-term and would continue to benefit over the long-term (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 6-2).

Wildlife dependent on riparian vegetation would increase due to greater ecotone and plant diversity. This would be realized in the short-term and long-term.

3. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments

There would be no permanent loss of any resources as a result of the wild horse and burro gathering activities.

There would be a loss, to the area, of the wild horses and burros that are being removed but they would be relocated. There would be a permanent loss of the injured animals that must be destroyed. This number would be minimal.

B. Alternative 1 - No Action

1. Environmental Impacts

a) Anticipated Impacts of No Action

(1) Air Quality

There may be a long-term increase of dust as the soil-binding perennial grasses are overgrazed and killed.

(2) Soils

Erosion can be expected to continue at the present rate (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 8-9).

(3) Water

With the destruction of riparian vegetation by overgrazing, stream flow would be expected to increase by unquantifiable amounts. Reduced evapotransporation rates would allow more water to move through the soil and into stream channels (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 8-10).

Suspended sediment concentrations caused by stream bank sloughing would continue due to stream bank deterioration by over grazing (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 8-10).

(4) Vegetation

An alternative of no action would result in the densities of forage plants being reduced and several vegetative types would become unsuitable for grazing (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 8-11). The forage would decrease in vigor, condition and seed production.

(5) Animals

Competition to mule deer, bighorn sheep, and desert tortoise would continue to increase. Riparian areas important to wildlife species would continue to degrade. (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 8-12 to 8-14).

(6) Human Values

Under the no action alternative, any cultural resources that are being trampled would continue to be destroyed (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 8-15).

Some of the local ranchers may view this alternative negatively because the wild horse and burro population would continue to increase with a resulting increase in competition with livestock. (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 8-17.) Wild horse and burro public interest groups would also be dissatisfied because the wild horses and burros would suffer decreased forage availability. (Caliente FES, 1979, p. 8-15).

b) Possible Mitigating or Enhancing Measures

No mitigating measures can be made if the no action alternative is pursued.

c) Residual Impacts

The residual impacts will be the same as the present impacts.

2. Relationship Between Short-term Use and Long-term Productivity

Environmental degradation would continue at it's present rate over the short-term and would result in a very large decrease in productivity over the long-term.

3. Irretrievable or Irreversible Commitments

There would be a continued degradation of the range conditions. Soil losses would continue at present rates. Forage production and condition would continue to decline, with accompanying loss of wildlife habitat. If there were no check on the present downward trend of the environment it could in time result in irretrievable loss of the above mentioned environmental components.

VI. Persons, Groups and Government Agencies Consulted

American Horse Protection Association
American Humane Association
Animal Protection Institute
U.S. Humane Society
International Society for the Protection of Wild Horses & Burros
Fund for Animals
National Mustang Association
National Wild Horse Association
Wild Horse Organized Assistance
Wild Horse and Burro Committee for National Academy of Science
Lincoln County Commission
Nevada Department of Wildlife
Lincoln County Conservation District
Lincoln County Game Management
NORA
Nevada Cattlemen's Association
County Extention Agent
Nevada Public Land Users Association
Society of Range Management
So. Nevada Environmental Forum

VII. Intensity of Public Interest

Due to the nature of the proposed gathering, the public, locally as well as nationally, should show a high level of interest. Wild horse interest groups will undoubtedly closely scrutinize the gathering process. Many of these horse protection groups have been very influential in shaping BLM policies concerning wild horse management.

VIII. Summary

The proposed action is to reduce the wild horse and burro populations in the Caliente Planning Unit to a 1980 population level of between 340 and 390 animals. This will require a total removal of between 1,010 and 1,060 animals. There will be a complete removal of wild horses and burros from the Removal Area and only a

partial removal from the five Herd Management Areas.

The capture will be accomplished by the use of temporary traps. These traps will be installed at watering places where feasible. Where water traps are impractical, helicopter herding will be initiated. Temporary traps will be installed at strategic points to insure the most efficient use of the helicopter.

The local ranchers are in favor of the wild horse and burro gathering program because it will reduce competition between livestock and the wild horses and burros. There are national interest groups that are not expected to be completely in favor of the gathering program.

There will be beneficial effects on the vegetation realized with the reduction in wild horse and burro numbers in the Caliente Planning Unit. The grazing pressure would be reduced and the forage resource would improve.

During the gathering operations, the horses will be treated as humanely as possible. There will be no inhumane treatment allowed.

Cultural resources clearance will be completed on all trap sites prior to their construction.

The no action alternative would result in a continued increase of the wild horse and burro population. The environment would continue to degrade and retrogressive succession would proceed unchecked.

IX. Signatures

Prepared by:

_____ _____

Date Stan Van Velsor, Range Conservationist

Recommended for Approval by:

_____ _____

Date Cheryl Hoke, Environmental Coordinator

_____ _____

Date Frank Bingham, Chief, Division of Resource Management

Date

Darwin Anderson, Area Manager

Approved by:

Date

John Boyles, District Manager

X. References

Bureau of Land Management. Caliente Final Environmental Statement, Proposed Domestic Livestock Grazing Management Program. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Las Vegas District, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1979.

XI. Appendices

A. Maps

1. Wild Horse and Burro Areas
2. Wild Horse Management Areas

B. Tables

1. Actual Counts and Population Estimates
2. Wild Horse Population Management Levels and Removal Numbers

TABLE 1

ACTUAL COUNTS AND POPULATION ESTIMATES OF WILD HORSES, BURROS, AND MULES FOR EACH INVENTORY DATE (1973, 1974, 1975, 1977), PLUS POPULATION NUMBERS FOR UNINVENTORIED YEARS (1978, 1979, 1980) DETERMINED AT AN ANNUAL INCREASE RATE OF 10 PERCENT

Year of Inventory	Wild Horse & Burro Area 1						Wild Horse Area 2		Wild Horse Area 3		Totals	
	Horses		Burros		Mules		Horses		Horses		Horses	
	AC[a]	PE[b]	AC	PE	AC	PE	AC	PE	AC	PE	AC	PE
1973	503	671	1	2	3	4	19	25	6	8	528	704
1974	509	679	-	-	5	61	20	27	2	3	531	709
1975	299	399	-	-	-	-	-	-	38	51	337	450
1977	702	936	15	30	8	11	24	32	32	43	758	1,011
1978*	c/	1,030	c/	33	c/	12	c/	35	c/	47	-	1,112
1979*	c/	1,133	c/	36	c/	13	c/	39	c/	52	-	1,224
1980*	c/	1,246	c/	40	c/	15	c/	43	c/	57	-	1,346

a/ Actual Count = AC
b/ Population Estimate, PE=AC/.75
c/ No Inventory Made

* Population numbers were determined by an annual increase rate of 10 percent.
** There was no inventory taken in 1976.
*** The burros and mules were not included in the totals.

Source: Information for the years 1973-1977 was taken from Table 2-17, p. 2-43, Caliente Final Environmental Statement, 1979.

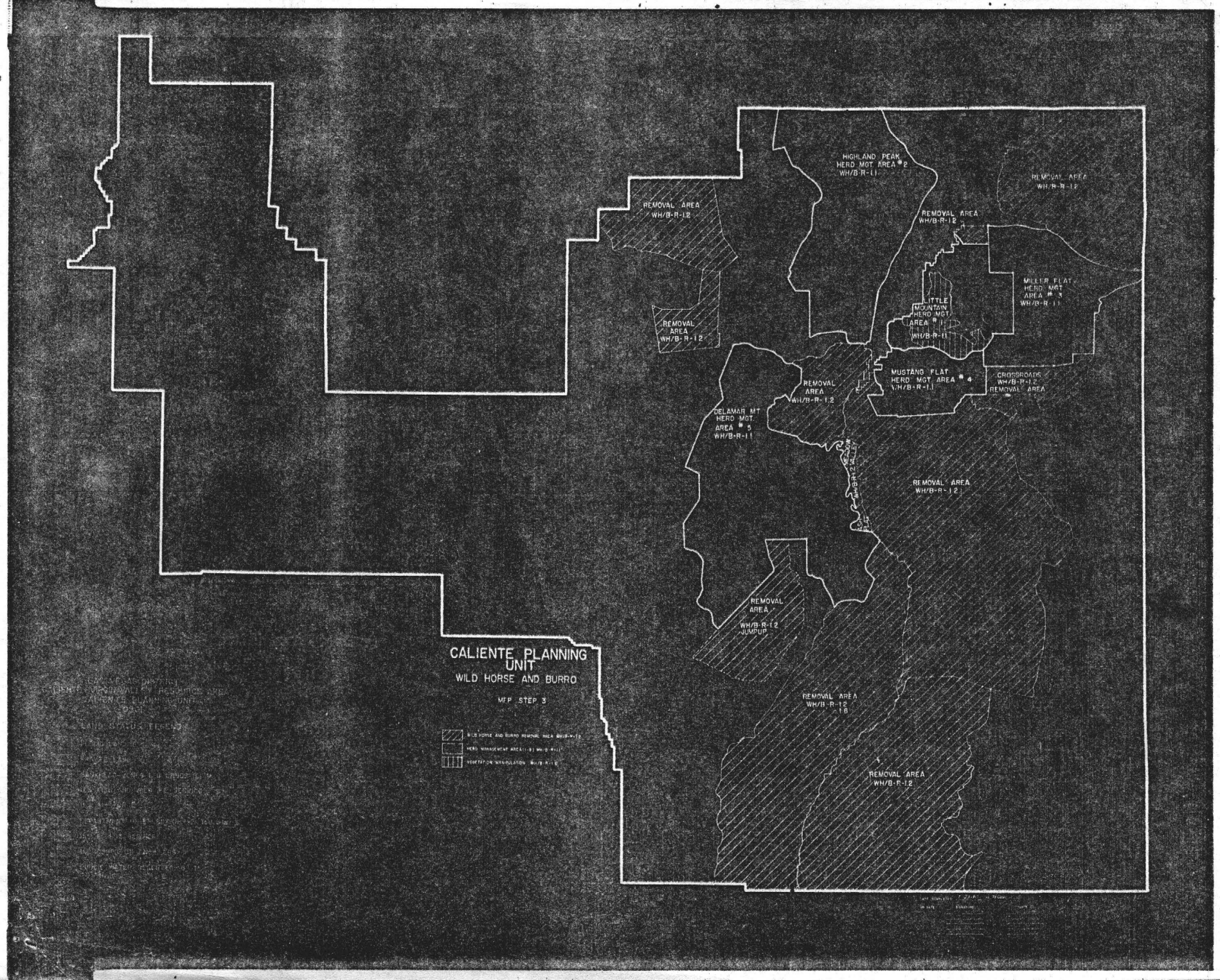
TABLE 2

WILD HORSE POPULATION MANAGEMENT LEVELS AND REMOVAL NUMBERS

Herd Management Areas	1980 Population Estimate	Recommended Management Levels	Population Levels After 1980 Trapping[a/]	Projected Population Levels 1985 Trapping[a/]	Scheduled Removal Numbers for 1980-81
Little Mountain (HMA #1)	158	109	82	132	76
Highland Peak (HMA #2)	43	40	30	48	13
Miller Flat (HMA #3)	144	100	75	121	69
Clover Creek (HMA #4)	48	38	29	47	19
Delamar Mountains (HMA #5)	298	170	128	206	170
Removal Area*	655	0	0	0	655*
Totals	1,346	457	344	554	1,002*

* The Removal Area contains 40 burros and 15 mules that will be removed.
a/ Extrapolated from Recommended Management Levels by using 10 percent as an annual rate of population increase.

Source: Caliente URA 3 and 4, .44-115 to .44-122; Caliente MFP, WH/B, WH/B 1.1.


HIGHLAND PEAK HERD MGT AREA # 2 WH/B-R-11
REMOVAL AREA WH/B-R-12
REMOVAL AREA WH/B-R-12
REMOVAL AREA WH/B-R-12
REMOVAL AREA WH/B-R-12
MILLER FLAT HERD MGT AREA # 3 WH/B-R-11
LITTLE MOUNTAIN HERD MGT AREA # 1 WH/B-R-11
MUSTANG FLAT HERD MGT AREA # 4 WH/B-R-11
CROSSROADS WH/B-R-12 REMOVAL AREA
REMOVAL AREA WH/B-R-12
DELAMAR MT HERD MGT AREA # 5 WH/B-R-11
REMOVAL AREA WH/B-R-12
REMOVAL AREA WH/B-R-12 JUMPUP
REMOVAL AREA WH/B-R-12
REMOVAL AREA WH/B-R-12
CALIENTE PLANNING UNIT
WILD HORSE AND BURRO
MFP STEP 3