

G 5/23/80



# United States Department of the Interior

IN REPLY REFER TO  
4700  
(N-043)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Ely District Office  
Star Route 5, Box 1  
Ely, Nevada 89301

May 23, 1980

Wild Horse Organized Assistance  
P. O. Box 555  
Reno, Nevada 89505

Dear Ms. Lappin:

A public meeting will be held at the White Pine County Library, Ely, Nevada, at 7:30 p.m., PDT, June 4, 1980, to discuss the Buck-Bald wild horse gathering proposed for this summer. A draft environmental analysis and capture plan will be available for review. BLM personnel will be available to discuss the proposal and accept any comments you may have.

Earlier you received a draft copy of the environmental analysis and capture plan proposing the removal of 400 head of horses or 33 percent of the 1,200 head herd. We are concerned about the short-term alleviation on forage and water competition that this level of removal would provide.

We'd like to consider as an additional alternative in the environmental analysis, the removal of 800 head of horses over an 18 month period beginning in July of this year. This would leave a minimum of 400 head on the range and would provide a more substantial alleviation of the trespass branded horse situation, and further reduce water and forage competition, pending formal forage allocation decisions in 1984.

This proposed alternative will be discussed at the public meeting. If you have any comments on this alternative, please send them in writing before June 4, 1980. Questions may be directed to Rich Howard at (702)289-4865.

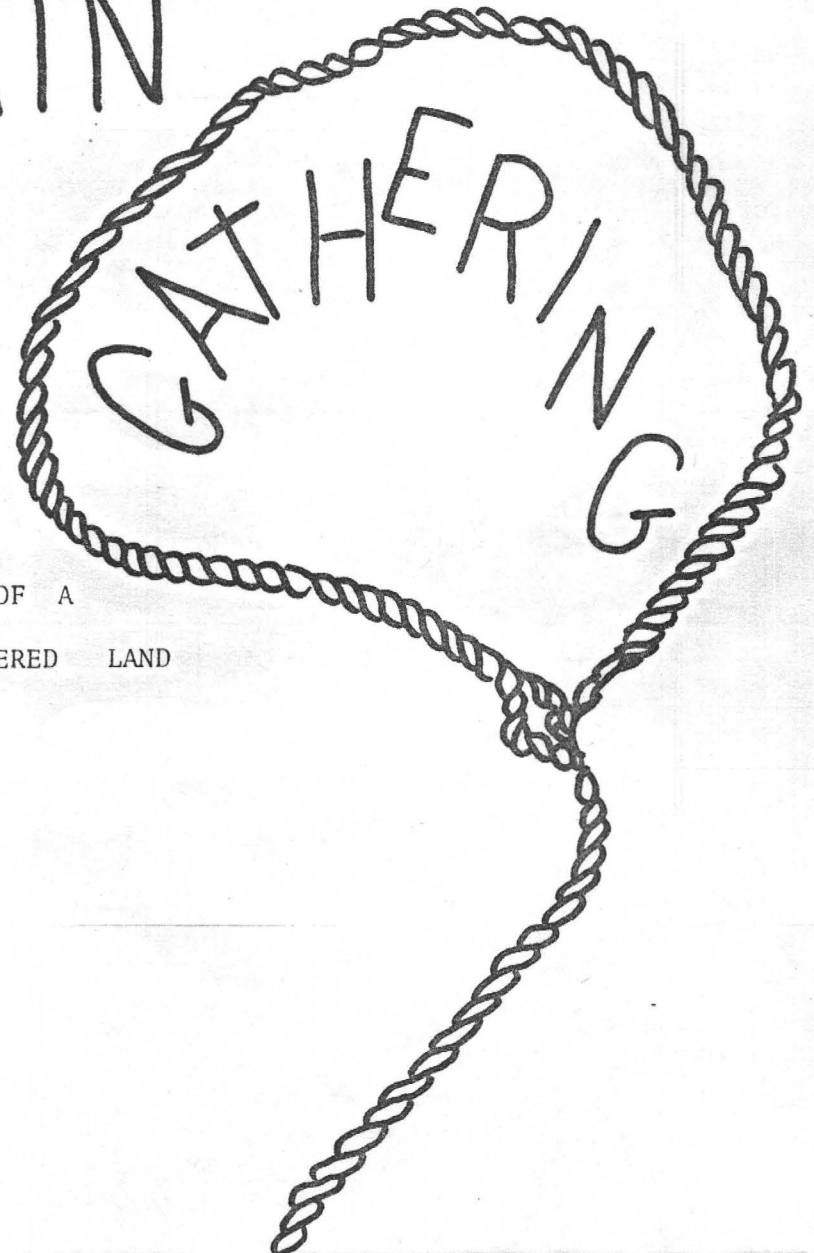
Sincerely,

George W. Cropper  
Acting District Manager



*Save Energy and You Serve America!*

# BUCK AND BALD MOUNTAIN WILD HORSE



A WORKBOOK DESIGNED TO AID IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A  
WILD HORSE GATHERING PLAN FOR B.L.M. ADMINISTERED LAND  
IN WHITE PINE COUNTY, NEVADA

ELY DISTRICT  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
SUMMER 1980

Dear workshop participant:

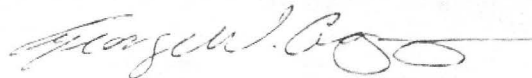
The purpose of this workbook is to provide you with information regarding the Buck and Bald Mountain wild horse gathering. This involvement session will:

- 1) present the situation as it now exists
- 2) present the proposed plan for the gathering
- 3) present the impacts and options affecting the gathering
- 4) solicit your comments and suggestions

Public involvement is an important aid in the formulation of any land use plan. The Ely District continually gathers information from concerned individuals and the general public in an effort to identify needs and goals for this project.

Please examine this workbook and fill in your comments. Ask questions about anything that seems unclear. We appreciate your help and interest in our planning.

Sincerely,



George W. Cropper

Acting District Manager

# GENERAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND

In a combined effort, the Bureau of Land Management's Egan Resource Area in the Ely District and the Wells Resource Area in the Elko District propose to gather and remove excess wild and/or branded horses from the Buck and Bald Mountain Area and the Maverick Spring Range.

There are presently 1200 to 1400 wild or trespass branded horses in the area although during the 1974 claiming period 940 claimed horses were removed. The present count indicates an increase of 500 to 600 since the 1978 count. Qualified BLM field personnel have attributed the deterioration of the general range condition of this area, in part, to the steadily increasing unmanaged horse population.

The active AUM preference for the subject area is 42,229. The total necessary AUMs for the estimated 1,400 horses in the area is 16,800. Permittees in the area have currently activated a total of 15,031 AUMs for livestock (cattle and sheep) use, leaving 27,198 AUMs in non use. Horses are using most of the AUMs left in non-use. In addition numerous game and nongame wildlife species utilize the area on a yearlong basis. An estimated 12,000 deer winter in the subject area with their population decreasing to about 1,100 in the summer. On a year-long basis, 700 deer are estimated to inhabit the Buck and Bald Mountains, and 400 are estimated for the Butte Mountains. There are an estimated 1,100 mule deer in the proposed gathering area on a yearlong basis.

Annual precipitation varies from 8 to 20 inches in the area, occurring primarily as a result of early spring rains and winter snows. Springs, reservoirs, wells, and intermittent streams provide an adequate water supply of generally fair to good quality. However, competition by horses, livestock, and wildlife for water use is a threat to future water quality maintenance. There is presently excessive trampling of undeveloped springs, seeps, and wet meadows.

Wild horses, as with other large mammals, are selective in their grazing pattern, tending to graze some plants heavily and others not at all. As numbers of horses increase, areas of overuse become larger, and desirable plants are replaced by undesirable and less palatable species. Evidence of this is the invasion of halogeton and little rabbitbrush into white sage flats in the gathering area. Deterioration of range condition lowers the carrying capacity for all animals, with competition for space, forage and water between livestock, wildlife and wild horses affecting survival and reproductive rates of each.

The subject area is rural in character. Topography consists of valley floors, alluvial fans, canyons, mountains, steep ridges and basins. The use of a contracted helicopter and horse wranglers would be necessary to drive and direct horses over this terrain in a careful and efficient manner to the temporary traps constructed with deflector wings. Transportation of the wild horses by truck to temporary holding facilities would precede their adoption from the distribution centers in the midwest. Branded trespass horses would be impounded pending payment of fees by owners. Branded horses not claimed would be treated under Nevada State estray laws.

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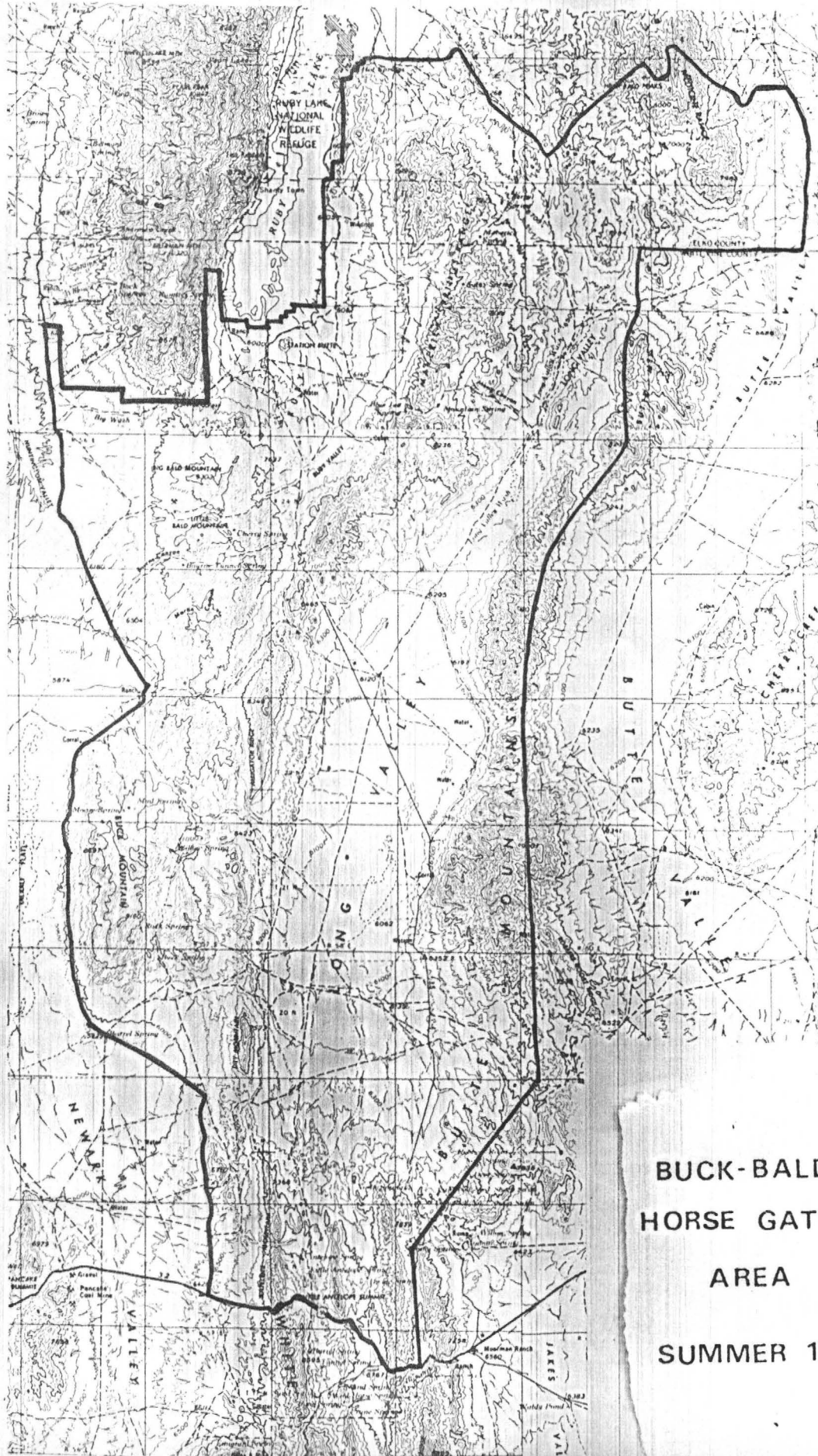
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BUCK-BALD  
HORSE GATHER  
AREA

SUMMER 1980

# PROPOSED ACTION

Four hundred to five hundred wild and/or trespass branded horses would be gathered from the Buck and Bald Mountain Area between July 15, 1980 and September 30, 1980. The gathering operations would be conducted on BLM administered land from the east boundary of the Ruby Lake National Refuge and extend east to the middle of Butte Valley in Elko County and extend four miles to ten miles from the Elko-White Pine County line south to U.S. Highway 50; the eastern boundary would be the crest of the Butte Mountains and extend west to the eastern side of Newark Valley.

A helicopter would be used to drive the horses no more than 10 miles to the gathering area where horse wranglers would aid in driving the animals into the temporary traps. Food and water would be provided for animals kept in excess of 12 hours. Branded and trespass horses and their current year's foal would be impounded and held until trespass and gathering fees and associated costs were paid to the Bureau. Branded horses not claimed would be treated under Nevada State estray laws. Wild horses would be shipped by truck to temporary holding facilities for adoption processing.

With the reduction of the horse population, sites exhibiting active soil erosion would be positively impacted as would water quality. Reduced competition between wildlife, livestock and horses for water, space and forage would result in a high positive impact. Improved survival and reproductive rates as well as decreased grazing pressure and positive vegetative succession would result.

An archaeologist would perform a cultural resource investigation on the proposed gathering site before trap construction was started. A veterinarian would be on call and a BLM Law Enforcement Agent would be in attendance.

The one-acre gathering area would be severely trampled with expected regeneration time being 2-3 years. Short-term increases in fugitive dust levels would result from the gathering operation. Visual resources would be only temporarily impaired by the portable trap.

This is considered to be an interim measure only to assist in control of habitat over-utilization. The mandated Grazing Environmental Impact Statements will not be fully implemented until after 1985.

# ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

## ALTERNATE PLAN #1

### REMOVAL OF 800 HORSES OVER AN 18 MONTH PERIOD FROM JULY 15, 1980 TO JANUARY 15, 1982

This alternative would constitute a 67% reduction of horses in the gather area and approximately 400 wild horses would be left at the completion of all gathering operations. The initial gathering operation would be conducted this summer, with the removal of an estimated 400 horses. Other gathering operations could be conducted as funds become available for this purpose. These operations would be subject to the stipulations and mitigating measures of the proposed action plus the following additional stipulations and mitigating measures:

- 1) Priority will be given to gathering in areas where trespass branded horses are concentrated.
- 2) No gathering operations would be conducted during the foaling and breeding seasons, from March 1, 1981, to July 15, 1981, or under any situation that would create undue stress on horses.
- 3) Wild horse groups and public will be notified before any gathering operations take place.
- 4) Priority will be given to avoid winter gathering in heavy deer concentration areas when deer use is high.

The major advantages to this alternative are:

- 1) Virtual elimination of trespass branded horses.
- 2) Allow planning for management of wild horses.
- 3) Competition for existing resources would be substantially alleviated.

The major disadvantages of this alternative are:

- 1) The magnitude of this proposal may offend people who want to see more wild horses in the area.
- 2) Horses may be subject to additional stress of more gathering operations.



# ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

## ALTERNATE PLAN #2

### REMOVAL OF TRESPASS BRANDED HORSES

There are an estimated 175 trespass branded horses in the proposed gathering area. Removal of these horses would provide temporary relief by leaving only wild horses in this area.

Major advantages of this alternative are:

- 1) Eliminate management problems concerning wild horses being mixed with trespass branded horses.
- 2) Allow planning for management of wild horses.

Major disadvantages to this alternative are:

- 1) It would require excessive handling of both wild and trespass horses, making injury to horses and people more common.
- 2) The cost factor would be higher per horse captured.
- 3) Over-utilization of range resources would still occur, resulting in further range deterioration.
- 4) Competition between horses and other animals would still be excessive in the area.

## ALTERNATE PLAN #3

### NO ACTION

No horse gathering would take place. Continued excessive deterioration of range conditions could be expected.

COMMENTS

6/13/80

June 13, 1980

Mr. Neil McKleery, District Manager  
Bureau of Land Management  
Post Office Box 831  
Ely, Nevada 89801

Dear Mr. McKleery:

It is our understanding the Alternative to the Buck-Bald Wild Horse Gathering Plan has been dropped; we would appreciate some confirmation of this in writing. It occurs to us that Ely District has a "trespass horse" problem; not a wild horse problem. I spent one full day and several of the evening hours in Long Valley and Newark Valley on the 5th of June. I have never seen such devastated area in my entire career. Although sage was waist high and almost entirely denuded of foliage; cattle continued to graze this area! If indeed the Fish and Game are upset, they have full right to be; but the District had better clarify from this point on the difference between wild horses and trespass horses and illegal use or we will be forced to examine this problem in the public eye.

Before any gathering proposal is again put before us we insist on the following:

- 1) the complete removal of trespass horses (Cook's)
- 2) administrative action on the illegal use of public lands (Cook)
- 3) the repair of fence in Newark Valley (to prevent drift from Hooper)
- 4) administrative action on trespass use in Newark Valley (Hooper)
- 5) the complete removal of all barriers or old structures around public waters
- 6) that all horses under the age of (Cook's trespass or horse claim) be used as evidence for violation of EL 92-195.

It is in the District's best interest as well as the wild horses that no attempt be made in the future to use the wild horse as scapegoats for illegal use or mismanagement by the agency. We request, if necessary under the Freedom of Information Act, the decision of the Administrative Law Judge in the appeal of Cook's permit. We will send full remittance for same upon receipt.

Most sincerely,

cc: Board of Trustees  
Congressional delegation  
BLM-State Office

Dawn Y. Lappin (Mrs.)-Director



## United States Department of the Interior

4742

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Ely District Office  
Star Route 5, Box 1  
Ely, Nevada 89301

June 24, 1980

Mrs. Lappin  
Wild Horse Organized Assistance  
P.O. Box 555  
Reno, Nv. 89505

Dear Mrs. Lappin,

Thank-you for taking time to comment on the proposed Buck-Bald Horse Gather Environmental Assessment and Capture Plan, and attending the public meeting.

Based on the publics and your comments we have reached a decision to proceed with the proposed action which is to remove between 400 to 500 horses.

The roundup is scheduled to start after August 17, 1980. If you want to watch the gathering process please contact this office so we can provide you with the necessary information to reach the roundup sites.

In response to your questions to Rich Howard, wild horse specialist, we have given Art Cook, 45 days to remove all his water traps from public lands. After this time period we will remove any traps located on public lands that Mr. Cook has not removed. At the present time all traps are open and horses can enter and leave without being trapped. Also we have increased our surveillance work in the Buck-Bald area in order to keep any illegal horse gathering activity from taking place.

Sincerely,

Neil B. McCleery  
District Manager



Save Energy and You Serve America!