



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

CALIENTE RESOURCE AREA

P.O. Box 237

Caliente, Nevada 89008

4700  
(NV-055.14)

(702) 726-3141

SEP 06 1989

Dear Reviewer,

Enclosed is the Caliente gathering plan environmental assessment for your comment and review. Please submit any comments you may have to me at the above address by October 1, 1989.

Sincerely,

Curtis G. Tucker  
Area Manager

Delamar HMA

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for the

FY89 CALIENTE RESOURCE AREA WILD HORSE

GATHERING PLAN

EA# NV-055-09-16

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jula Durfee  
Range Conservationist  
Wild Horse & Burro Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Bureau of Land Management  
Caliente Resource Area  
Caliente, Nevada

**DRAFT**

I. INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

A. Purpose and Need

The purpose of this Environmental Assessment (EA) is to assess the environmental consequences of the proposed action and alternatives in relation to the human environment.

Horses have established home ranges outside of existing Herd Management Areas (HMA). Thus they are competing with other ungulates for forage, water, space and cover.

*is there no competition in the herd area?*

The decision to remove animals from these areas is based on concerns of State Agencies, Coordinated Resource Management and Planning Committee Members, other public comments, Bureau planning documents, and wild horse activities plans.

*which State agencies?*

Justification for removal is based on the Final MFP Step III Decision approved by the State Director on November 12, 1981 and confirmed by the Director, BLM, on February 26, 1982, and 43 CFR 4710.4 "which states that wild horse management shall be undertaken with the objective of limiting the animals distribution to herd areas. . .", and is supported by Public Law 92-195, Wild Horse and Burro Act, and was affirmed by IBLA June 7, 1989.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

This section of the environmental assessment identified one alternative and the proposed action considered in meeting the Caliente Resource Area objective of maintaining wild horse use in designated HMA's.

*push back*

A. No Action Alternative

Management would remain the same. Wild horse populations would be allowed to increase outside of designated HMAs.

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*push back (4) 2*

B. Proposed Action/Mitigation

The proposed action is to remove approximately 40 wild horses from the Caliente Resource Area that exist outside of Herd Management Areas (HMAs). Subsequent removals of wild horses outside of HMAs will be accomplished to maintain these areas as horse free. For horse numbers based on observation and field reports see table 1 below.

1. Gather Area

a. Horses outside of HMA boundaries

Removal of excess horses from outside of designated Herd Management Areas would take place in the Delamar, Boulder Springs, and Crossroads, allotments located in the Caliente Resource Area (map attached).

*what horse free?  
ROD?*

Table 1

<u>Gather Area</u>	<u>** # Present</u>	<u>Removal Number</u>
Delamar/Boulder Springs Allotments	20	20
Crossroads Allotment	4	4

\*\* Numbers based on observations and field reports.

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## 2. REMOVAL PROCESS

The BLM would be responsible for the capture, care, and temporary holding of approximately 40 wild horses from the gather area, and their transportation to the adoption preparation facility through issuance of a gathering Contract.

Prior to any gathering operation the Bureau would provide for a pre-capture analysis to determine the condition of the animals, prevailing temperatures, animal distribution in relation to potential trap location, condition of the soils, conditions of the roads, drought conditions, etc. The information from the pre-capture analysis will develop conclusions as to whether the level of activity is likely to cause undue stress to animals and whether such stress would be acceptable to animals if a veterinarian expertise were present, or whether a delay in capture activity is warranted. If it is determined that the capture can proceed with a veterinarian present, the services of a veterinarian would be obtained prior to proceeding with the capture.

The Bureau of Land Management would provide a COR/PI(s) as needed for the capture operation from site selection, corral design, to capture and transportation of animals to the Palomino Valley Center.

The capture operation would utilize helicopter and/or water trapping capture methods.

The Bureau of Land Management would also provide supervision of the project helicopter during the gathering operation. This would be accomplished by use of an additional helicopter on site to monitor all aspects of the wild horse round-up. In the event an additional helicopter cannot be obtained, other methods would be used to observe the removal operation, including but not limited to, using observers on horseback, observing the helicopter from vehicles and placing stationary observers in strategic locations. The observers would have direct communication with the project helicopter for contract supervision. Observers would be monitoring the rate of movement of horses, distance to be traveled, type of terrain, fences, etc.

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All equipment used in the capture operation would be inspected by COR and determined adequate prior to issuing the Notice to Proceed to Contractor.

A Bidders Tour would be scheduled and conducted by the BLM to make the contractors more aware of the terrain, condition of animals, condition of roads, trap locations in relation to animal distribution, where fences are located as well as other dangerous barriers.

Veterinary services are available in Caliente, Nevada. The Bureau of Land Management's authorized representative or his/her designee would summon a veterinarian if, in his/her judgement, veterinary services are required to alleviate suffering of one or more horses, to ensure their well being, or to diagnose and/or treat disease, sickness or injury.

The services of the state brand inspector would be obtained and all inspections would comply with the procedures set forth in Instruction Memorandum NV-85-416, which outlines the procedure for processing private horses captured during removal operations.

This plan would remain in effect until all animals identified in the removal plan are removed from the gathering area and placed in adoption centers.

### 3. REMOVAL METHODS

All capture attempts shall be accomplished through the use of a helicopter and/or water trapping. Wing riders may be used if necessary. Rosing will not be allowed except to capture orphan foals and wet mares and this will be done only when necessary, with prior approval by more than one hour. Mare and foal would be captured together, if both cannot be captured then one or the other would be released to allow them to be reunited at no cost to the government.

The helicopter would be used in such a manner that bands or herds would remain together as much as possible and foals would not become separated from their mothers.

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The rate of movement and distance the animals travel would not exceed limitations set by the COR who would consider terrain, physical barriers, weather, condition of the animals and other factors.

It is estimated that 4 trap locations would be required to accomplish the work. General trap locations and holding facilities would be selected by the COR, specific trap sites (with in the general trap location area) would be selected by the contractor. All trap locations and holding facilities must be approved by the COR prior to construction. The contractor would be required to change or move trap locations as determined by the COR. All traps and holding facilities not located on public land would have prior written approval of the landowner.

All traps, wings and holding facilities would be constructed, maintained and operated to handle the animals in a safe and humane manner. Traps and holding facilities would be constructed of portable panels, the top of which would not be less than 72 inches high, and the bottom rail of which would not be more than 12 inches from ground level. All traps and holding facilities would be oval or round in design. All loading chute sides would be fully covered with plywood or like material. The loading chute would also be a minimum of 6 feet high. All runways would be a minimum of 20 feet long and a minimum of 6 feet high and would be covered with plywood or like material minimum 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level. Wings would not be constructed out of barbed wire or other materials injurious to animals. All crowding pens including the gates leading to the runways would be covered with a material which prevents the animals from seeing out (plywood, burlap, etc.) at a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level.

No fence modification would be made without authorization from the COR. The contractor would be responsible for restoration of any fence modification which he/she has made.

When excessive dust conditions occur within or adjacent to the trap or holding facility, the contractor would be required to wet down the ground at such location as directed by the COR.

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The contractor would be responsible for providing security to prevent loss, injury or death of captured animals until delivery to a final destination (adoption centers).

The COR would determine general roundup areas and number of animals within general contract areas as animal concentrations and weather conditions dictate. All traps would be located so as to provide for the most humane capture of the animals, with specific locations of traps approved by the COR prior to construction.

#### 4. HELICOPTER, PILOT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The contractor would operate in compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 91. Pilots provided by the contractor would comply with the Contractor Federal Aviation Certificates, applicable regulations of the State of Nevada and would follow what are recognized as safe flying practice.

When refueling, the helicopter would remain a distance of at least 1,000 feet or more from animals, vehicles (other than fuel truck), and personnel not involved in refueling.

The COR would have the means to communicate with the pilot and be able to direct the use of the gather helicopter at all times.

On site project inspectors who have clear lines of authority and responsibility as well as the ability to communicate (on site government radios) on a moment's notice with management, the COR, and the Contracting Officer, would be appointed to assure that any contractual problems which may affect the animals or their habitat can be resolved with minimal delay.

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5. DISPOSITION AND HUMANE TREATMENT OF HORSES

As soon as practical after entering the capture corral, each group of horses would be inspected and a written log kept identifying the condition of animals at the time of capture and specific location from which animals came from. Alternate pens, within the holding facility would be furnished by the contractor to separate mares with small foals, sick, and injured animals, and estray animals from the other horses. Alternate pens would also be used as required by the temperament, sex and condition of horses when in the holding facility so as to minimize, to the extent possible, injury due to fighting and trampling.

The COR would be responsible for determining the need and providing for the treatment of sick or injured animals. The contractor would restrain sick or injured animals so that they may be provided treatment by the COR. The COR would also determine if an injured animal must be destroyed and provide for destruction of the animal.

Animals would be transported to a final destination (adoption center) from temporary holding facilities within 24 hours after capture unless prior approval is granted by the COR for unusual circumstances. Animals would 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.

Animals held for 10 hours or more in the traps and/or holding facilities would be provided fresh clean water by the contractor, in an amount of a minimum of 10 gallons per animal per day. Animals held for 10 hours or more in the traps or holding facilities would 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.

6. DESTRUCTION OF ANIMALS

Wild horses which are seriously injured, obviously sick or lame, or very old, whose condition is such that it is obvious they will not recover would be humanely destroyed at the site by a Bureau of Land Management Authorized Officer only, or by a veterinarian if authorized by the Bureau's representative. BLM's Authorized Officers are those trained by a licensed veterinarian in the state for humane euthanasia of wild horses. No other individual would be allowed to destroy any captured horse unless the representative has specifically stated (and made reference to in writing) that he/she will be away from the job site for an extended period of time. During this time, the representative will appoint a qualified individual to take over his/her responsibilities.

*What is sense of having trained personnel when untrained personnel are going to be left at any time?*

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7. DISPOSAL OF ANIMALS WHICH ARE DESTROYED DURING THE REMOVAL OPERATION

The Contractor would dispose of carcasses as directed by the COR. Carcasses would be disposed of by burial, consumed by fire or left to the environment as outlined by Instruction Memorandum NV083-84.

Prior to disposal, data which includes the date of death, apparent reason for death, sex, color, age, and freeze mark number (if assigned), would be collected.

8. TRANSPORT OF CAPTURED ANIMALS

All motorized equipment employed in the transportation of captured animals would adhere to the provisions of 43 CFR Part 4700 and be subject to the following reservations and/or restrictions:

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.

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.

Only stocktrailers would be used for transporting animals from traps to temporary holding facilities. Only Bobtail trucks, stocktrailers, or single deck trucks would be used to haul animals from temporary holding facilities to the final destination (adoption center). Sides or stockracks of transporting vehicles would be a minimum height of 6 feet 6 inches from vehicle floor and have no openings from the floor to four feet above the floor wider than 2 and 1/2 inches. Single deck trucks with trailers 40 feet or longer would have two partition gates to separate animals. Trailers less than 40 feet would have at least one partition gate to separate the animals. The use of double deck trailers would not be allowed, unless converted to single deck.

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All vehicles used to transport animals to the final destination (adoption center) would be equipped with doors at the rear end of the vehicle. At least one of these rear doors would be capable of sliding either horizontally or vertically.

Floors of vehicles and loading chutes would be covered and maintained with a non-skid surface such as sand, mineral soil or wood shavings (no fecal material allowed), to prevent the animals from slipping.

The number of animals to be loaded and transported in any vehicle would be as directed by the COR and include limitation on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament and animal condition. The following minimum linear feet per animal would be allowed per standard 8-foot stock trailer or truck. Adult horses shall be allowed 1.4 linear feet and foals shall be allowed .7 linear feet.

The COR would 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 would provide for any brand and/or inspection services required for the captured animals.

If the COR determines that dust conditions are such that the animals could be endangered during transportation, the contractor would be instructed to adjust speed. The maximum distance over which animals may have to be transported on a dirt road is approximately 35 miles per load.

### III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The gather area varies from flat to precipitous terrain. Vegetation varies from Creosotebush to pinyon-juniper with major vegetation zones of blackbrush, sagebrush, mountain brush species, mojave desert shrub and joshua tree.

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The following environmental assessment mandatory elements would not be affected by the proposed action and alternative as previously described:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Air Quality  | 7. Wastes, Hazardous or Solid     |
| 2. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern            | 8. Water, Drinking/Ground/Quality |
| 3. Cultural, Historical and Paleontological Resources | 9. Wetlands                       |
| 4. Endangered or Threatened Species                   | 10. Wild and Scenic Rivers        |
| 5. Farm Lands   | 11. Wilderness                    |
| 6. Flood Plain  | 12. Colorado River Salinity       |

The Caliente Final Environmental Statement (INT-FES 79-44) discusses in greater detail the affected environment as it relates to wild horse management.

#### IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

- A. Livestock Grazing: Under the proposed action, in the short-term as well as the long-term, livestock would realize a beneficial impact as a result of reduced ungulate competition around waters and throughout the grazing allotments as a whole. In time this reduced competition would result in an increase in available forage. There may be short-term impacts as a result of the capture operation where water may not be as accessible to the livestock because of the capture crew's presence.

Under the no action alternative, horses would continue to consume forage within the grazing allotment outside the HMA. The horse use would jeopardize the full active preference by the operator. In 1986 the Boulder Spring allotment was considered for an upward adjustment. In 1989 the combined effects of drought and horse use resulted in over utilization of the northeast portion of the allotment during the period of non-use by cattle. In Key Area #2, used almost exclusively by wild horses, purple threeawn (*Aristida purpura*) showed 60% utilization and Mormon tea (*Ephedra nevadensis*) showed 48% utilization. Further north, 70% utilization was observed for big galleta (*Hilaria rigida*) and purple threeawn. Normally the permittee maintains water year-round in the allotment to support deer and quail. This year he has shut off the water in the allotment during the period of non-use by cattle, in an attempt to conserve forage. During the long term as the wild horse population increases, forage conditions would deteriorate and competition for available forage would increase.

- B. Wildlife: Impacts from the proposed action as well as the no action alternative are the same as impacts to livestock.
- C. Wild horses: The impacts from the proposed action would be that a portion and/or all wild horses would be removed from areas outside of designated HMAs. There would be unavoidable impacts in the form of injuries (less than 2% of animals removed) as well as a change in living habits for the animals captured.

The impacts from the no action alternative would be the same for wild horses as for livestock. In addition, because horses depend upon the range year-round their physical condition would in time be affected, as a result of conditions.

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- D. Minerals: No impacts from proposed action or alternative.
- E. Realty: No impacts from proposed action or alternative.
- F. Forestry: Under the proposed action reduced ungulate competition would benefit seedling establishment during the short and long-term.

In the long-term the impacts under the no action alternative would result in reduced grass, forbs and shrub species competition with Pinyon and Juniper for water and nutrients, increasing the composition of tree species.

- G. Recreation: There are no impacts under the no action alternative.
- H. Visual Resources: There are no impacts from the proposed action or no action alternative.

- I. Soils: Under the proposed action soils would be disturbed and compacted within the immediate capture locations. Soil would stabilize as the capture site revegetates over one to five years.

The impacts under the no action alternative would result in an increase of soil erosion as the wild horse population increases.

- J. Vegetation: Under the proposed action there would be a reduction in utilization yearlong, especially on preferred forage species such as perennial grasses. Reduced utilization would result in increased plant vigor and reproduction of preferred forage species.

Under the no action alternative, yearlong utilization of preferred forage species would increase, plant vigor and composition would decrease and less desirable plant species would increase.

- K. I&E Species: Each capture site would have a threatened and endangered species survey conducted before any field work.
- L. Cultural Resources: Each capture site would have a cultural resources survey conducted before any field work.

*Wild horses  
will not be  
available for  
drawing outside of  
the HMA.*

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V. STANDARD MITIGATION MEASURES AND STIPULATIONS

Each capture site would have a Cultural Resource Survey and a Threatened and Endangered Species Survey conducted prior to field work.

VI. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The FY89 Caliente Resource Area Wild Horse Gathering Plan and this EA will be available for review by all interested and affected parties for a period of 30 days. Comments will be reviewed for consideration into the Gathering Plan. These documents also will go through intensive internal BLM review (Nevada State Office, Las Vegas District Office, and Caliente Resource Area Office) with comments being incorporated into the plans as appropriate. BLM Specialists to be involved in the draft review are as follows:

Eddie Guerrero	Wildlife Biologist/Environmental Coordinator, Caliente Resource Area
Larry Lacey	Surface Protection Specialist, Caliente Resource Area
Cory Bodman	Soil Scientist, Caliente Resource Area
Larry Johnston	Forestry, Caliente Resource Area
Tim Murphy	Supervisory Range Conservationist, Caliente Resource Area
Terry Driver	Range Conservationist (WH & B Specialist), LVDO
Milton Frei	Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, Nevada State Office

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VIII. RECOMMENDATION

The implementation of the Caliente Resource Area Gathering Plan is recommended for approval with mitigation and concurrence by the above specialists.

INDEX TO MAPS

1. State Map of Nevada
2. Resource Area Map
3. Horse Gathering Areas
  - a. Boulder Springs & Delamar Grazing Allotment Gathering Area and Delmus HMA.
  - b. Crossroads Grazing Allotment Gathering Area

**DRAFT**

Office: Caliente Resource Area  
Project: CRA Wild Horse Gathering Plan  
EA#: NV-055-08-14  
(NV-05580.7)

DECISION RECORD/RATIONAL AND FONSI

The proposed action is to remove wild horses from horse free areas within the Caliente Resource Area. The wild horses exist outside the boundaries of established Herd Management Areas (HMAs). The proposed action would remove approximately 40 wild horses from the public land.

GATHER AREA

Removal of excess horses from outside of designated Herd Management Areas will take place in the Delamar, Boulder Springs, and Crossroads Grazing Allotments located in the Caliente Resource Area.

The Environmental Assessment addressed the no action alternative and the proposed action.

The proposed action, as described in the environmental assessment has been found to have no significant environmental impacts on the human environment when conducted with the mitigation provided. Implementation of the proposed action would remove horses that range outside HMA boundaries.

*Nothing has been said about relocating horses to the inside of the herd areas if the monitoring data is sufficient enough to show that the adjacent herd areas can support additional horses without threatening the thriving natural ecological balance.*

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The proposed action has been found to be in compliance with the Caliente Resource Area Land Use Plan Specifically decisions:: wild horses 1.1 and wild horses 1.2.

All actions are in compliance with P.L. 92-195 and the Bureau of Land Management Planning Process. No Environmental Impact Statement is required. The State Clearing House was contacted through the review and input process.

The no action alternative has not been selected for use. The areas described for wild horse removal within the proposed action have been designated as wild horse free. The no action alternative would result in the continued population growth of wild horses outside of designated HMA boundaries. The maintenance of wild horses outside of designated HMAs would be contrary to established resource planning and sound rangeland management practices.

I hereby select and approve the proposed action as stated in the environmental assessment (NV-055-08-14) with the identified mitigation and stipulations.

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Eddie Guerrero  
Environmental Coordinator

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Date

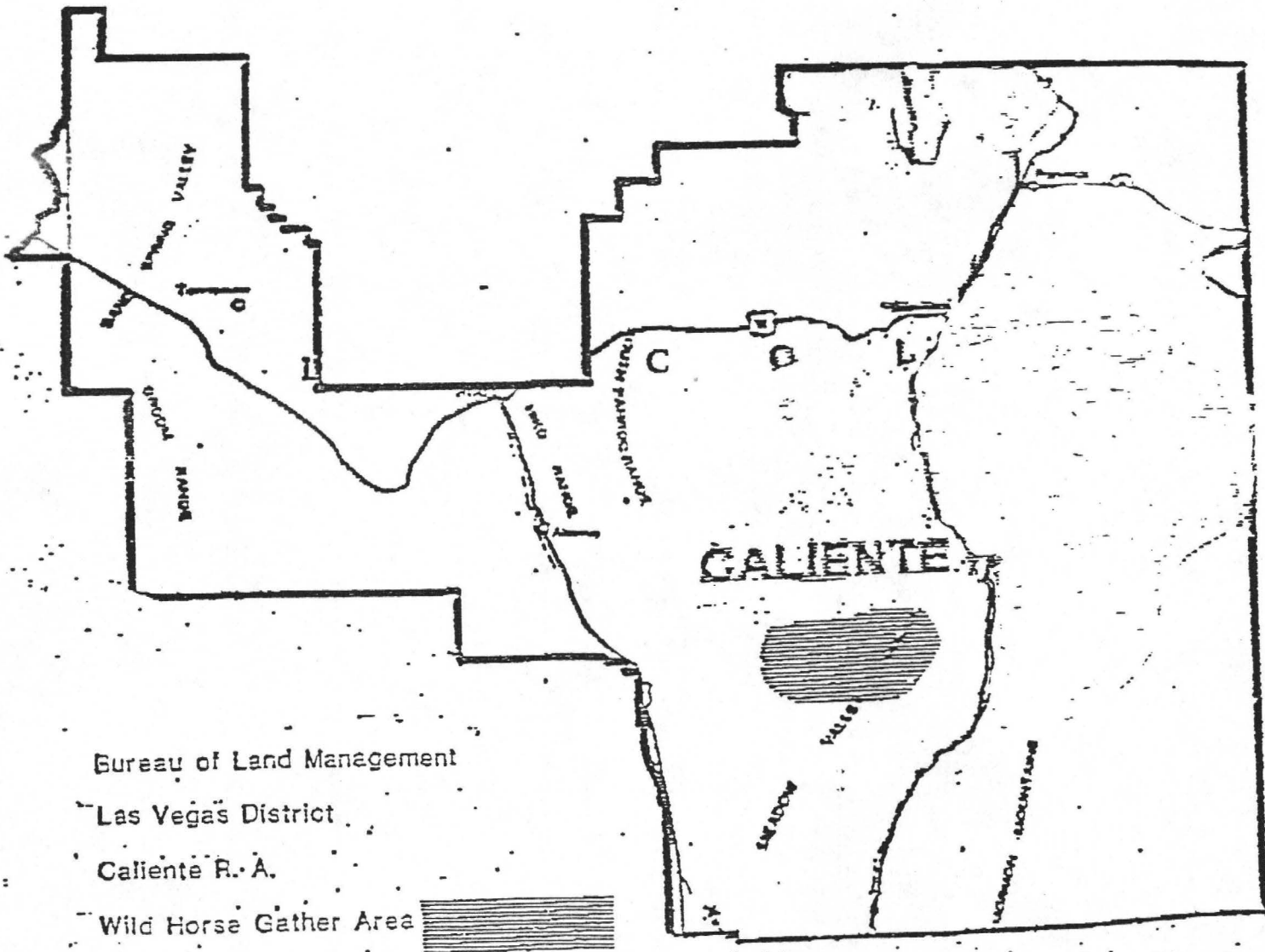
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Curtis G. Tucker  
Area Manager  
Caliente Resource Area

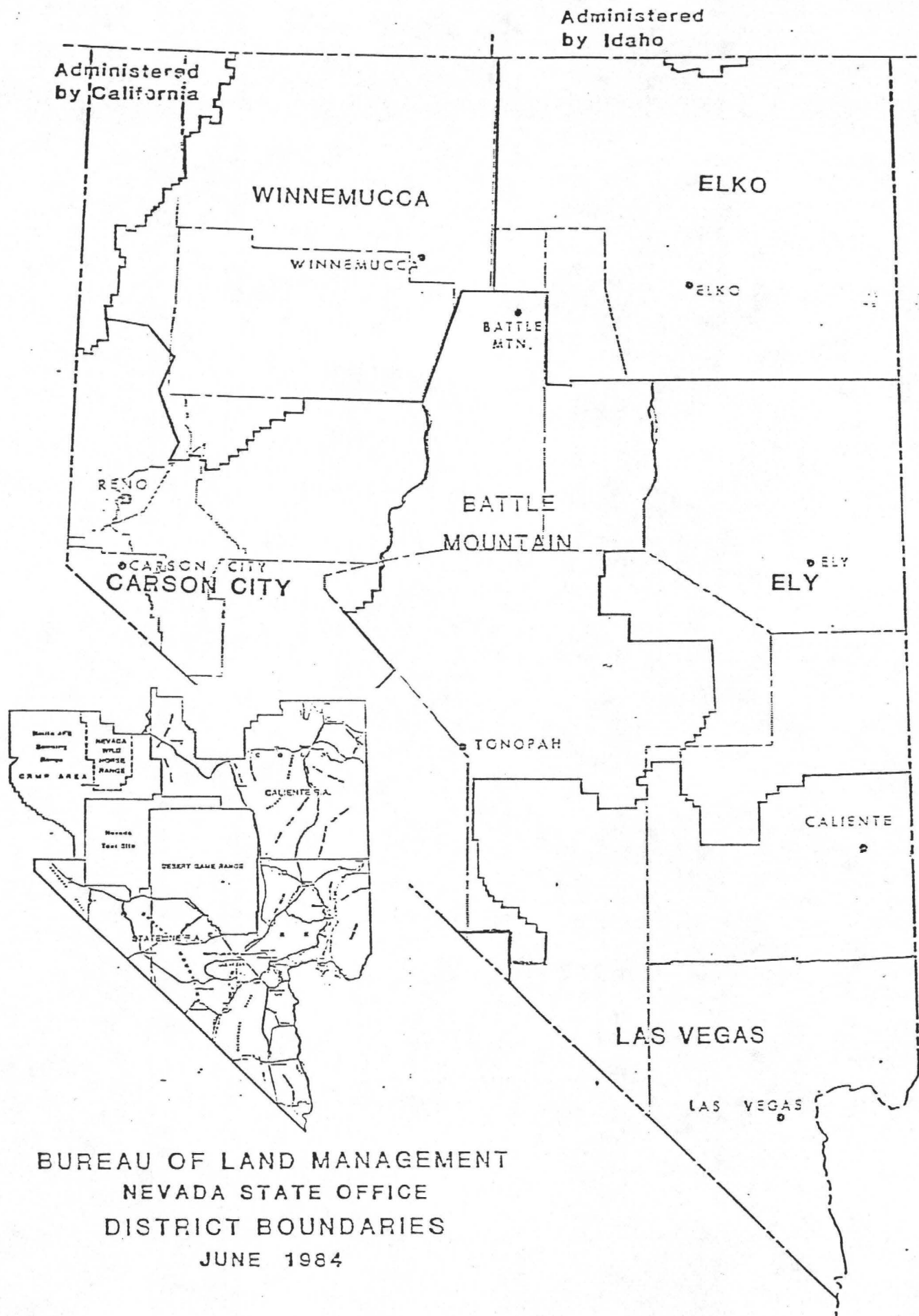
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Date

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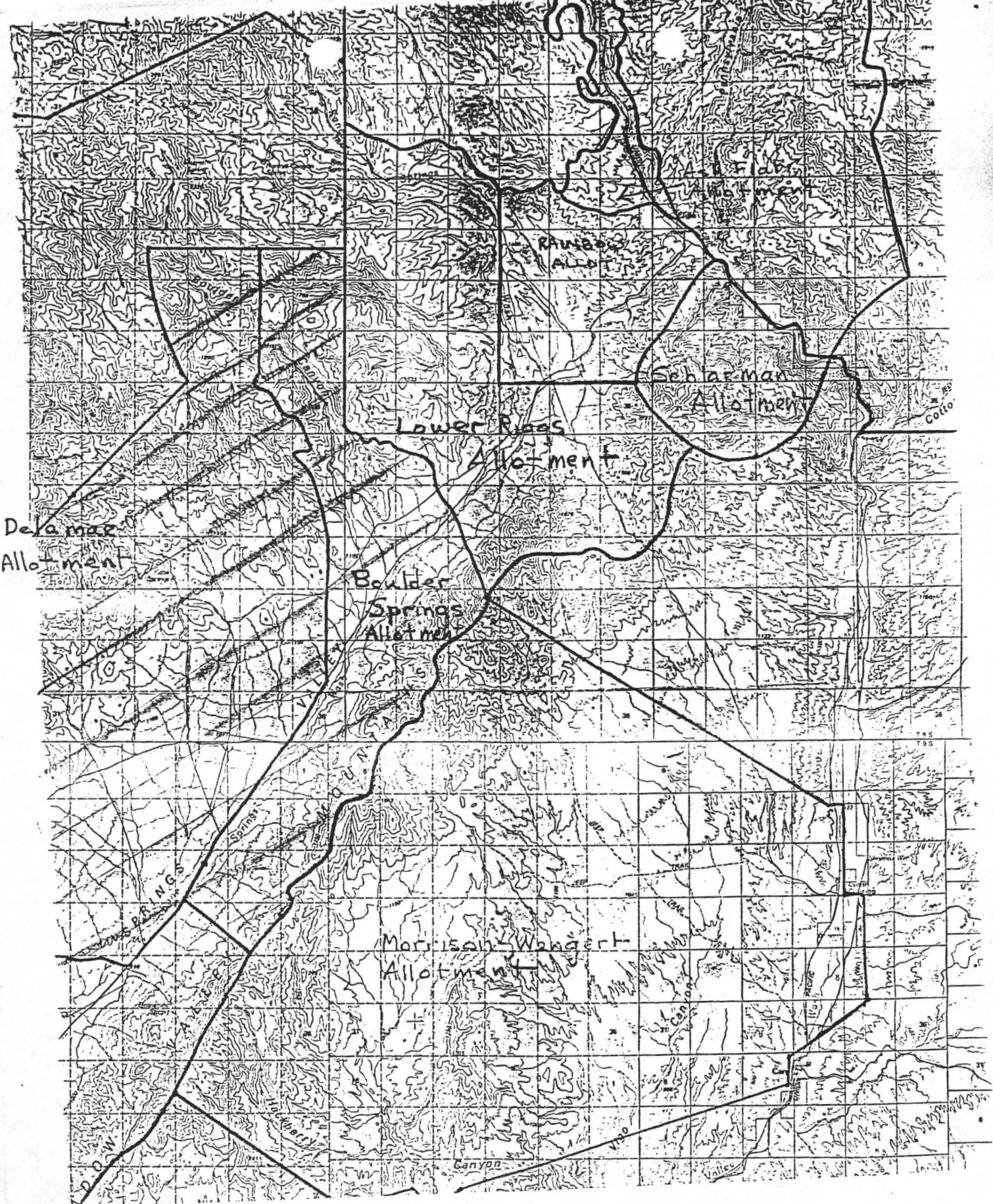
INDEX TO MAPS


1. State Map of Nevada
2. Resource Area Map
3. Outside HMA boundaries (horse free livestock grazing allotments)
  - a. Delamar HMA, Boulder Springs & Delamar Grazing Allotments
  - b. Crossroads Grazing Allotments

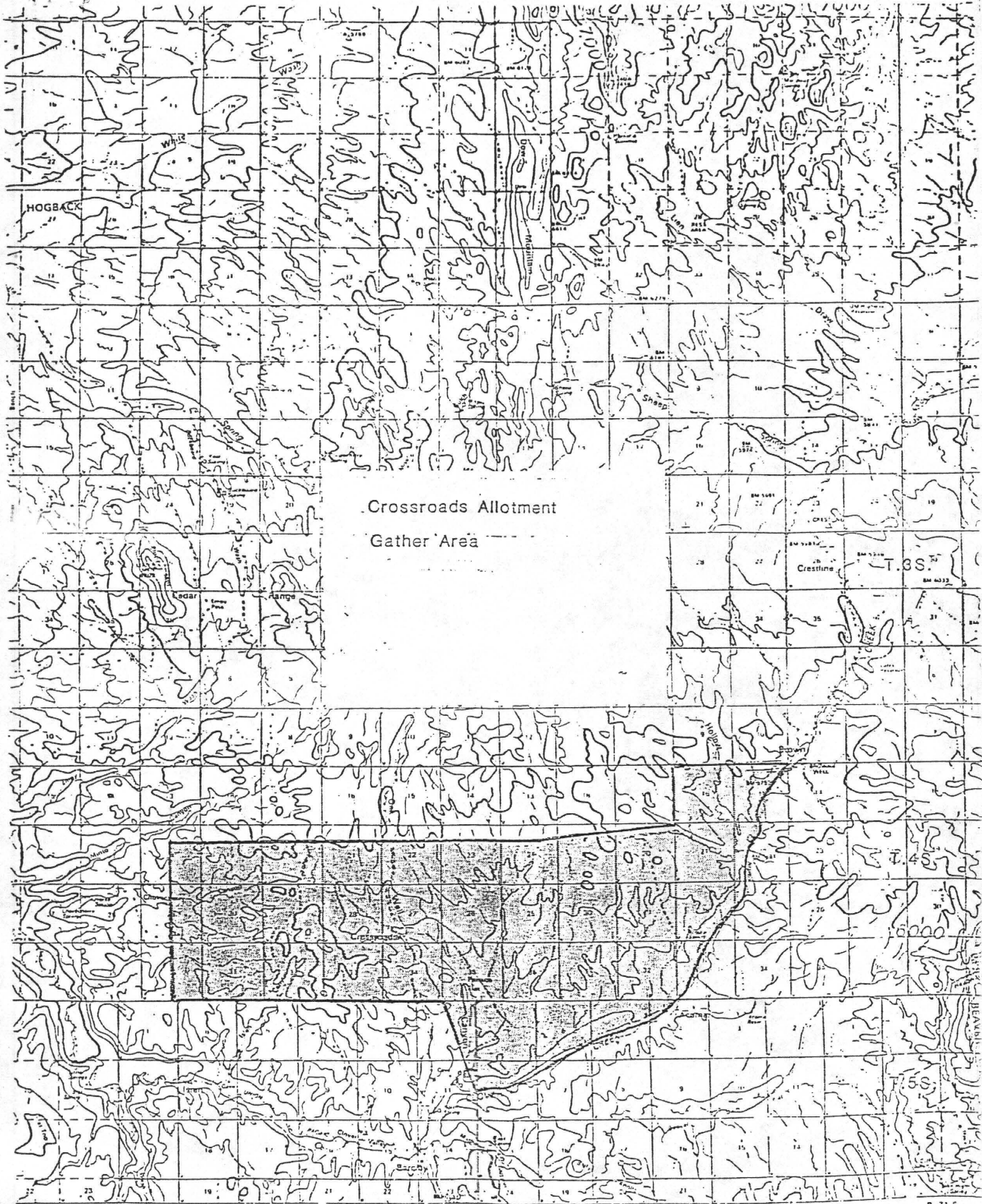




BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
 NEVADA STATE OFFICE  
 DISTRICT BOUNDARIES  
 JUNE 1984



 Gather Area



Crossroads Allotment  
Gather Area

HOGBACK

White

DOWN

Crestline

T.3S.

20°

R 59 E. SAINT GEORGE

10° R 70 E

R 71 E



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

CALIENTE RESOURCE AREA

P.O. Box 237

Caliente, Nevada 89008

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Delamar HMA 10/11/89

DRAFT

4700  
(NV-055.14)

(702) 726-3141

OCT 11 1989

Terri Jay  
Commission for the  
Preservation of Wild Horses  
Stewart Facility  
Capitol Complex  
Carson City, NV 89710

Dear Ms. Jay:

Thank you for your comments on the Caliente gathering plan EA. Your comments will be addressed in the final draft of the EA.

The horses in question have been seen by the wild horse and burro specialist, the range conservationist, and the permittee. The descriptions match. BLM has been planning to gather the horses since 1988.

Competition occurs between all ungulants. Competition between horses and other ungulants within herd management areas is mitigated through the planning process. Outside herd management areas the competition between horses and other ungulants places a greater burden on the vegetative resource. The bottom line is maintenance of the vegetative resource.

It has been my observation that horses are creatures of habit like many other living things. Unless there is a physical barrier or great enough distance horses want to return "home". In this case, neither the physical barriers or distance exist to prevent the horses from returning to areas they have established as home range.

I hope the above information is helpful.

Sincerely,

*Curtis G. Tucker*

Curtis G. Tucker  
Area Manager