

m 3/27/97



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Ely District Office
HC 33 Box 33500
Ely, Nevada 89301-9408



IN REPLY REFER TO:

4400/4700 (NV-04200)

MAR 27 1997

Certified Mail No. P 313 269 712
Return Receipt Requested

Catherine Barcomb
Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
1105 Terminal Way Suite 209
Reno, Nevada 89509

Dear Ms. Barcomb:

The intent of this letter is to update interested publics and the Diamond Mountain working group of the past accomplishments, current time frames, and goals of the Diamond Mountain Core team and Monitoring Plan committee.

INTRODUCTION:

The Battle Mountain, Elko and Ely Districts are jointly conducting an evaluation of the Diamond Mountain Complex to evaluate the nature of grazing that has occurred on the project area and to measure the effectiveness in meeting Land Use Plan (LUP) objectives for the three districts. Included will be recommendations to make specific changes in current management where these LUP objectives are not being met. Once the draft evaluation is completed, the wild horses will be gathered down to an initial management level and livestock use agreements will be implemented. The Diamond Mountain Complex encompasses three wild horse herd management areas (HMAs) established by the respective land use plans and in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (PL92-195). The three HMAs are the Diamond HMA in the Battle Mountain District, the Diamond Hills North HMA in the Elko District and the Diamond Hills South HMA in the Ely District. The three HMAs encompass all or part of nine grazing allotments. The wild horses pass with relative ease within and across the three HMAs. A Final Multiple Use Decision for the Railroad Pass Allotment was issued by the Ely District in November of 1995. This decision established an appropriate management level for the Diamond Hills South HMA and set the terms and conditions for permitted use.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On August 27 and 28, 1996, a field tour of the Diamond Mountain Complex was conducted in preparation for the planned allotment evaluations and decisions. The goal of the tour was to identify vegetative, livestock and wild horse issues. Sixteen invitation letters were sent to

affected parties and interested publics encouraging their participation in the tour. At the completion of the tour, the group consensus was to complete an interim plan for the evaluation of rangeland health in order to establish an initial management level for wild horses and livestock. The participants recommended that in order to get started on the project a comprehensive census of the three HMAs should be conducted and additional monitoring data should be collected within the project area. As a result of the aforementioned field tour, a working group was established to complete the evaluation and monitoring plan for the Diamond Complex. This working group included the Eureka, White Pine and Elko County Commissions, Eureka Department of Natural Resources, Nevada Division of Wildlife, the livestock permittees, wild horse interest groups, public land interest groups, general interested publics, and the Elko, Battle Mountain and Ely BLM Districts.

On October 2nd through the 4th, 1996, a census of the entire Diamond Mountain Complex was conducted. This census flight occurred through a cooperative effort by Eureka County and the various BLM district wild horse specialists. This census identified over 1250 wild horses within the Diamond Mountain Complex.

The first meeting of the Diamond Mountain Working Group was held on October 10, 1996. The objective of the meeting was to look at existing monitoring data including the census data from the October 2 - 4 flight, set an initial management level for wild horses within the three HMAs and develop agreements with the various livestock permittees. This interim management plan would be implemented until the Diamond Mountain Complex evaluation was completed and future multiple use decisions were issued.

The second meeting of the Diamond Mountain Working group was held on November 19, 1996. The objective of this meeting was to finalize initial wild horse and livestock stocking levels for the HMAs, based on the evaluation of wild horse census and livestock monitoring data. The second objective was to establish some time frames for the implementation of the interim management plan and the completion of the evaluation and subsequent decisions. A Monitoring Plan Committee was also formed to make recommendations on what type of monitoring data to collect for the Diamond Mountain Complex.

A Monitoring Plan Committee meeting was held in Eureka on December 4, 1996. The objective of the meeting was to identify what monitoring was needed to implement an interim management plan, to measure the effectiveness of the wild horse gather, and to identify what long term monitoring studies should be initiated to evaluate the need for future management adjustments.

On December 10, 1996, a draft gather plan was prepared for the removal of wild horses in excess of the identified initial level. Based on concerns with the adequacy of the gather plan, the gather was not conducted.

On January 9, 1997, a core team from the participants of the working group was formed to pull together the best available monitoring data and to prepare a new document that evaluates all existing data, identifies an initial wild horse level for the three HMAs, identifies interim livestock management agreements, and incorporates a wild horse gather plan that covers the three HMAs.

The draft Diamond Mountain Complex evaluation (DMCE) will analyze existing monitoring data to determine the initial management levels for the three Herd Management Areas and short term changes needed in livestock management. The DMCE will be used as supporting rationale for the wild horse gather plan and livestock use agreements. The initial stocking level for wild horses and livestock, including any agreed upon management practices, should improve rangeland health. Additional monitoring data will be collected as identified in the monitoring plan and will be incorporated into the final evaluation. A final evaluation and management action selection report will be completed addressing each allotment. As multiple use decisions are developed they will set the appropriate management levels for the three wild horse herd management areas and set the terms and conditions for each grazing permit by allotment.

CURRENT SCHEDULE FOR THE CORE TEAM:

Information needed for the Diamond Mountain Complex evaluation is currently being gathered by the three districts and forwarded to the Ely District. The Core Team Members are as follows:

Team Leader Alfred (Bill) Coulloudon, Rangeland Management Specialist; Matt Spaulding, Rick Oyler, Wendy Fuell, Brett Covlin, Chuck Peterson, John Balliette, and Doug Furtado. Wildlife Biologists; Duane Crimmins and Mike Perkins. Wild Horse and Burro Specialists; Bob Brown, Kathy McKinstry and John Winnipenninx.

April 10, 1997, has been selected as a tentative date for a meeting in Ely, Nevada at 8:00 AM. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss Sections I through III and Sections IV and V. Identification of data needs and a monitoring schedule will be discussed at that time.

April 30, 1997, has been selected as a tentative date for a meeting in Eureka, Nevada at 9:00 AM to discuss technical recommendations (Section VI) for the Diamond Mountain Complex Evaluation. This will include the Draft Livestock Agreements, Railroad Pass Final Multiple Use Decision, and management actions addressed through the transfer process.

On May 15, 1997, the Draft Diamond Mountain Complex Evaluation, the Gather Plan and the Livestock Agreement Documents will be sent to the working group and other interested public for review and 30 day comment period.

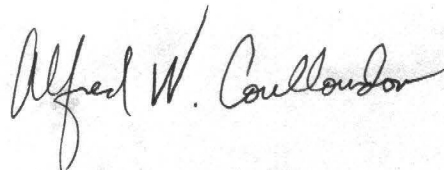
June 15, 1997, has been selected as tentative date for the Core Team to meet with the working group to go over any comments or questions in Eureka, Nevada at 9:00 AM.

On June 30, 1997, public comments will have been addressed and incorporated into the Draft Diamond Mountain Evaluation, the Gather Plan and the Livestock Agreement Documents.

August 1, 1997, is the tentative date for the wild horse gather to begin on the three herd management areas.

If you have any questions or comments please provide them in writing to Bill Coulloudon, BLM, Ely District Office, HC33 Box 33500, Ely, Nevada 89301-9408.

Sincerely,



Alfred W. Coulloudon
Project Team Leader

cc: Pete Paris Jr.; Paris Livestock Company
Pete Goicochea
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Cathy Barcomb; Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
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John Balliette
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