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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT No. NV-040-6-5  
Buck and Bald - Maverick/Medicine  
Wild Horse Gather

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The Egan Resource Area, Ely District, and the Wells Resource Area, Elko District, are proposing to remove excess wild horses from two wild horse herds (Buck and Bald, and Maverick-Medicine) located in the northwest portion of White Pine County, Nevada and the south central portion of Elko County, Nevada (see attached maps).

Introduction

The 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act (Public Law 92-195) directed the Bureau of Land Management to protect and manage wild horses in established ranges as components of public lands in a manner that is designed to achieve and maintain a "thriving natural ecological balance."

In 1978 Congress passed the Public Range Lands Improvement Act (PRIA) (Public Law 95-514), amending the 1971 Act. PRIA requires BLM to maintain a current inventory of wild horses on given areas of the public lands so that determinations can be made as to whether overpopulation exists and whether action should be taken to remove excess animals. PRIA defines "excess" horses as those that have been removed or "must be removed from an area in order to preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship in that area."

In planning for management of the wild horses, including determination of desirable numbers, BLM is directed by Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-579) to utilize a multiple-use planning system to determine appropriate actions needed to achieve proper population levels. Such planning actions which significantly affect the human environment are required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 to have the environmental consequences analyzed and documented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Egan Resource Area completed a Management Situation Analysis in August 1982. This document provided the information base for preparation of alternatives in the EIS portion of the proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Egan Draft RMP was issued in October 1983, along with an EIS which analyzed the proposed action of the RMP. A Proposed RMP and Final EIS were issued in September 1984. The Proposed Egan RMP and Final EIS are currently under protest.

A Record of Decision which will summarize the major management decisions adopted will be issued when the protests are resolved. A Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) will be issued following the Record of Decision. This RPS will summarize the range program decision to be adopted. The Egan Resource Area proposes to initiate a Coordinated Management Plan on the Buck and Bald area in 1986 also.

The Wells Resource Area completed a Management Situation Analysis in May 1982. This document provided the information base for preparation of alternatives in the EIS portion of the proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Wells Draft RMP was issued in May 1983, along with an EIS which analyzed the proposed action of the RMP. A Proposed RMP and Final EIS were issued in November 1983. A Record of Decision which summarizes the major management decisions adopted was issued on July 16, 1985. A Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) is expected to be issued in December 1986. This RPS will summarize the range program decision to be adopted.

The Wells RMP is designed to provide a framework for future management of the public lands and resources consistent with existing legislation, regulations, and policy. Implementation of this management plan requires the development of activity plans to identify site-specific management actions. In the case of wild horses, a Wild Horse Herd Management Area Plan would be developed for each herd area to determine appropriate actions needed to achieve the populations established in the management plans. The Wells RMP has determined horse population levels in the Elko District be managed at 80-100 percent of the 1981 census levels. This is 195 to 244 horses for the Maverick-Medicine herd.

The Proposed Egan RMP/Final EIS has been protested and until those protests are resolved, no management actions can occur to implement the RMP-EIS recommendations.

Two of the protestors of the Egan RMP-EIS, Dawn Lappin of Wild Horse Organized Assistance (WHOA) and Dan Russell of Russell Ranches, recognize that the winterfat (white sage) in Long Valley is critical winter range for both livestock and wild horses in the area. In the past five years the winterfat dominant vegetative communities of Long Valley have been receiving more and more pressure from grazing animals. Excessive use during the winter followed by extended spring-early summer use has been gradually reducing the winterfat density and allowing an increase in "increaser type" grasses. Long Valley's usability as a valuable winter forage resource has been steadily declining and will continue without a reduction in



grazing pressure. Both protestors also recognize that recent drought conditions may be affecting this important plant species. They have agreed that some actions must be taken immediately to benefit the winterfat flats in Long Valley. Both Dawn Lappin of WHOA and Dan Russell of Russell Ranches support this gathering of wild horses and Dan Russell has further agreed to reduce livestock use by 7,000 AUM's annually. Both measures are aimed at benefiting winterfat in Long Valley. The Buck and Bald gather is considered to be an emergency temporary management action based on the Lappin, Russell, BLM agreement (see Appendix 1). This agreement allows the herd to be gathered down to 700 horses, allowed to grow to 900 head and gathered to 700 again. No further adjustments will be made until sufficient monitoring data is available supporting the need to adjust.

The combined Buck/Bald, Maverick-Medicine herd use areas had an inventoried population of 1,301 head in 1980. Buck and Bald was counted in February 1980 and 1,086 horses were seen. The adjacent Maverick-Medicine herd had a population of 215 horses based on a March 1980 inventory. Based on that information, the Ely and Elko Districts, Bureau of Land Management conducted a round-up during the same year. A total of 489 wild and trespass horses were removed which left a population of approximately 800.

In March 1981, the Elko District conducted an aerial census of the present Maverick-Medicine herd and counted 244 horses. There were 163 horses counted in the Medicine Range, 38 in the Maverick Springs Range, and 43 others in the Butte Valley-West Buttes area.

The Ely District conducted an aerial census in May 1981 and counted 687 horses in the Buck and Bald herd use area. There were also 123 horses seen in the Maverick Springs Range south of the Elko County line. The total 1981 inventory for both herd use areas was 1,054 horses. However, this was probably an incomplete count because the majority of the animals were in the mountains which made observations more difficult due to the cover and rough terrain.

The Ely District conducted a helicopter census in September 1982 of the Buck and Bald herd use area and a portion of the Maverick-Medicine use area. A total of 1,246 horses were counted with approximately 50 percent in the Warm Springs grazing allotment. There were 1,185 horses counted in the Buck and Bald herd area and 61 counted on the Maverick-Medicine area. Weather conditions were ideal on the 23rd of September but snow and rain reduced visibility on the afternoon of the 24th and the helicopter was grounded due to weather on the 25th. Thus Huntington Valley and the Medicine Range were not inventoried. But in the 1982 count, a larger number of horses were in the valleys which made observations considerably easier.

The Elko District censused the Maverick-Medicine herd again in April 1983. Only 158 horses were counted. The poor results of the census can be attributed to bad weather and the use of a fixed wing Piper Cub instead of a helicopter. Elko censused Maverick-Medicine again in August 1984 using a Jet Ranger helicopter. This census resulted in 198 horses being counted.

A 1985 census was conducted as a combined effort by both Districts in September. There were 910 horses counted on the Buck and Bald herd use area and 291 counted on the Maverick-Medicine area for a total of 1,201 horses counted. It is felt that a number of horses were missed on this helicopter census, since the count is below those censused in 1982 for both herds. Warm weather, drought conditions, the dense pinyon-juniper cover, and dried up water sources most likely contributed to the incomplete count. A followup census in December 1985 resulted in 1,089 horses counted in the Buck and Bald herd and 224 horses in the Maverick-Medicine herd. The census is felt to be complete on Buck and Bald, but the Maverick-Medicine count is a little low due to rough terrain, dense pinyon-juniper cover, and limited hours and funds for a more thorough census.

The different location of the horses and time of year of the various counts probably accounts for the difference in inventory results. Even though the inventory results are not exact there is no doubt that the horse population has increased and that there are as many wild horses at the present time as there were before the 1980 gathering.

Fund restrictions and wide-spread controversy regarding wild horse roundups have generally complicated this aspect of wild horse habitat management. The proposed project area has regularly been focused on by Nevada State agencies and area news media who echo the Bureau of Land Management's concern that vegetation and short supplies of surface water (needed by horses, wildlife, and livestock) are being stressed beyond acceptable management limits.

Current inventory data shows that wild horse numbers have again reached a level very near that which existed prior to the removal of horses in 1980. The range condition and ecological balance of the area are once again being threatened. The winterfat flats in Long Valley (Warm Springs Allotment) and the bordering Buck Mountain and Bald Mountain areas appear to be feeling the greatest effects of heavy grazing pressure by large ungulates. Utilization studies conducted in Long Valley on winterfat and on Buck Mountain and Bald Mountain on bitterbrush are showing consistently heavy utilization (see Appendix 2).

Although there are 12 range trend studies established on 22 identified range key areas on the Warm Springs Allotment, there is no trend data available. The trend plots have not been reread yet. The proposed action is considered long term management consistent with the Wells RMP. It is also consistent with the temporary management emergency proposal outlined in the BLM, Lappin, and Russell Agreement for the Buck and Bald herd use area. The proposal is consistent with the Draft Elko and White Pine County Plans for Public Lands developed in compliance with Nevada Senate Bill 40 in 1985.

### Proposed Action

Approximately 485 excess wild horses are proposed to be removed from the Buck and Bald, and Maverick-Medicine Wild Horse Herd Areas (see attached maps). The proposed gathering operation would remove the following numbers of horses in each herd area:

<u>Herd Area</u>	<u>Nos. to be Managed/<sup>1</sup></u>	<u>1985 Censused Population/<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Nos. to be Gathered/<sup>3</sup></u>
Buck and Bald (Ely District)	700 to 900	1,089	389
Maverick- Medicine (Elko District)	195 to 244	291	96
Total	<u>895 to 1,144</u>	<u>1,380</u>	<u>485</u>

/1 Those numbers to be managed in the Buck and Bald (Ely) herd area are consistent with the Ely District BLM/Lappin/Russell emergency temporary management agreement for the Buck and Bald herd. Those numbers to be managed in the Maverick-Medicine herd area are 80-100 percent of the 1981 population as per the Wells RMP.

/2 Both herd areas were inventoried in 1985. The December 1985 census has been used to establish Buck and Bald gather numbers. The September 1985 census was used to establish Maverick-Medicine gather numbers.

/3 Based on the most current and accurate data available (1985 census information), 485 excess horses will be removed to meet the proposed minimum management levels.

The horses will be gathered using a helicopter and portable wing traps. The proposed gather is expected to occur between February 1, 1986, and February 28, 1986, and last approximately three weeks. However, if the contract is not completed before the foaling season, a stop work order will be issued. The gather will commence after July 1, 1986, in order to complete the contract during FY 86 if necessary. No gathering will take place during the foaling season, which is from March 1 to July 1.

Several temporary traps with deflector wings encompassing less than one acre each would be constructed on public lands in each herd area. Temporary trap and corral sites would be selected by the contractor and approved by BLM. Each facility would be constructed from portable pipe panels. These traps would be moved from place to place during the gathering operation and completely removed from the area after the contract is completed. A contracted helicopter and experienced wranglers would be used to drive and direct horses to each trap site in an efficient and careful manner. Hazards such as cliffs, fences, and old mine shafts would be scouted in advance and avoided. Existing roads and trails would be used whenever possible. Horses would be truck hauled to temporary holding facilities in Palomino Valley, Nevada, for processing, then shipped to distribution centers for adoption. Horses that might be held at the trap site in excess of 10 hours would have food and water provided.

Branded trespass horses or other claimed horses and their current year's foal would be impounded and held until trespass fees, gathering fees, and other associated costs as determined by the Egan or Wells Area Manager are paid to the Bureau, and then these animals would be turned over to the owner. Branded horses not claimed would be treated under the Nevada State estray laws.

These standard operating procedures are also part of the proposed action:

- (1) Horse handling will be kept to a minimum. Capture and transporting operations can be traumatic to the animals. Minimizing the handling would increase the safety of the animals, as well as the handlers.
- (2) No gathering will be allowed during the foaling season, between March 1 and July 1, because of the potential stress to pregnant and lactating mares and the possibility of induced abortions. Gathering may be resumed after the foaling period and after foals are grown enough to withstand the stress of gathering operations, only to complete the FY 86 contract if necessary.



- (3) Horses will not be run more than 10 miles during gathering operations and gathering will be done in the early morning and early evening to avoid overheating horses during the hot weather.
- (4) A veterinarian will be on call during gathering operations.
- (5) Helicopters will be used with caution. A qualified district BLM representative (COR or PI) will be present during gathering attempts to ensure strict compliance with the above mileage limitations and CFR 4700 regulations. He/she will make a careful determination of a boundary line to serve as an outer limit within which attempts will be made to herd horses to a given trap. Topography, distance, weather, and current conditions of the horses will be considered in setting the mileage limits so as to avoid undue stress on the horses while they are being herded.
- (6) Captured horses that are obviously lame, deformed, or sick will be humanely disposed of at the trap site.
- (7) Every effort will be made to keep mares and their young foals together. Mares with foals (on the ground) will be separated from stallions and barren mares before shipping to central BLM facilities at Palomino Valley (Reno, Nevada).
- (8) Horses will not be held at the trap site or holding corrals for more than 10 hours without food or water.
- (9) A BLM law enforcement agent will be present during the gathering operation to provide protection for personnel working on the roundup, as well as the gathered horses.
- (10) All corral panels will be from 72" to 84" high in order to prevent horses from jumping out of traps.

#### Alternatives

Different methods of capturing wild horses are discussed in the capture plan and will not be discussed in the alternative section of this environmental assessment. Current economic and political constraints limit "technically feasible and reasonably available" alternatives which could be expected to attain the objectives of the proposed action.

The Proposed Wells RMP and Final EIS is designed to be a comprehensive, long range plan which sets the framework and guidelines for future site specific activity plans. This document has established the population level identified in the proposed action as an objective for future management. The Ely District BLM/Lappin/Russell temporary management emergency agreement also concurs with the proposed Buck and Bald management level from which to begin monitoring.

Alternative I - Remove more horses than the proposed action

Under this alternative, wild horse numbers would be reduced to less than the level established in the Wells RMP and Final EIS, and the Ely District BLM/Lappin/Russell emergency temporary management agreement. This alternative was identified in the Draft Wells RMP/EIS as the "Resource Production Alternative" and proposed a 50 percent reduction of the 1981 population level. The analysis of the environmental consequences for this alternative can be found in the Draft Wells RMP/EIS. Since this alternative is not consistent with the Wells RMP, or the Ely District/Lappin/Russell emergency temporary management agreement it will not be considered further.

Alternative II - Remove fewer horses than the proposed action

Under this alternative, current wild horse numbers would be reduced only slightly, resulting in a population level greater than that established in the Wells RMP and Final EIS, and the Ely District/Lappin/Russell emergency temporary management agreement. This alternative was identified in the Draft Wells RMP/EIS as the "Resource Protection Alternative" and proposed a 100 percent increase in the 1981 population level. An analysis of the environmental consequences for this alternative can be found in the Draft Wells RMP/EIS. Herd reductions of less than the proposed action would not significantly reduce habitat competition. This alternative will not be considered further since it is not consistent with the Wells RMP or the Ely District/Lappin/Russell emergency temporary management agreement.

Alternative II - No Action

Under the No Action alternative no gathering operations would be conducted in the Herd Use Areas.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The subject area is rural in character. Topography consists of valley floors, alluvial fans, canyons, mountains, steep ridges, and basins. Annual average precipitation varies from 20 inches in higher elevations to 8 inches or less at the lower elevations. The bulk of the precipitation occurs through early spring rains and winter snows. Temperatures range from summer maximums in excess of 90 degrees F. to winter lows falling well below zero.

The climate of the gather area is arid to semiarid. There is a high order of variability in time and space. In general the valleys and playas are arid with substantially less than 10 inches annual precipitation. The 16 years of record at Fish Creek Ranch between 1945 and 1960 averaged less than 8 inches per annum. BLM rain gauges in Long Valley and Newark Valley ranged from 4.98 to 6.65 inches in the 1984 water year. The highlands are semiarid. The 1984 water year values ranged from 10.88 inches on the south at Little Antelope Summit to 17.78 inches on the north recorded at Ruby Lake weather station.

The general absence of springs recorded on the water survey is as expected in this arid and semiarid area. Wells are the principal water sources in the arid valleys.

The numerous springs on the north and west faces of Buck Mountain are exceptional in this arid environment. The 14.80 inches annual precipitation calculation from the Nevada ungauged equation seems reasonable for the area yet does not explain the phenomena. The springs appear to be surface expressions of water concentration along the faults denoted in the Riepe Spring and Ely Limestone which form Buck Mountain (Nevada Bureau of Mine and Geology Bulletin 85).

Springs, reservoirs, wells, and intermittent streams provide a water supply of generally fair to good quality. Competition by large animals (wildlife, horses, livestock) for use of the water is a threat to future maintenance of water quality as evidenced by excessive trampling of undeveloped springs, seeps, and wet meadows.

Air quality is good, although short-term increases in fugitive dust levels occur as the result of climatic variations and vehicular traffic.

Soils within the gather area vary with the extremes of landscape, topography, and geology. They range from generally low producing Entisols and Aridisols on valley floors and alluvial fans to moderate and high producing Mollisols and Aridisols in mountainous areas. (Third Order Soil Survey information can be referenced for detailed soil and ecological site data.)

Soil textures are generally loams, clay loams, and silt loams, most of which are capable of supporting desirable species of vegetation. The following table depicts soil characteristics:

<u>Distribution</u>	<u>Principal Soil Orders</u>	<u>Soil Productivity</u>	<u>Erosion Susceptibility</u>
Mountains	Mollisols	Moderate-High	Moderate
Benches and Alluvial Fans	Aridisols	Moderate	Moderate
Valley Floors	Aridisols and Entisols	Low	Slight

Major plant associations may be generally characterized as big sagebrush-grass, mid-sagebrush-grass, pinyon pine-juniper, winterfat-saltbush flats.

The dominant shrub in the big sagebrush-grass community is big sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata). Other shrubs of this type occurring are greasewood, (Sarcobatus vermiculatus); gray rabbitbrush, (Chrysothamnus nauseosus); at higher elevations Utah serviceberry, (Amelanchier utahensis), and bitterbrush (Purshia tridentata). Common forbs include buckwheat, (Eriogonum spp.), princess plume, (Stanleya pinnata); mustards, (Brassica spp.), and lupine, (Lupinus spp.). Common grasses include Great Basin wildrye, (Elymus cinereus); western wheatgrass, (Agropyron smithii); Sandberg bluegrass, (Poa secunda); bluebunch wheatgrass, (Agropyron spicatum); Indian ricegrass, (Oryzopsis hymenoides); Squirreltail, (Sitanion hystrix); and where perennial grasses have been overutilized or removed by fires, cheatgrass, (Bromus tectorum) has become the dominant understory.

The dominant shrubs in the mid-sagebrush-grass are low sagebrush, (Artemisia arbuscula) and black sagebrush, (Artemisia arbuscula nova). Black sagebrush occurs more frequently than low sagebrush in this area. Other common shrubs occurring in this type are little rabbitbrush, (Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus); shadscale, (Atriplex confertifolia); winterfat, (Ceratoides lanata); and Mormon tea (Ephedra viridis). Common forbs in this type are mustards, (Brassica spp.); buckwheats, (Eriogonum spp.); locoweeds, (Oxytropis spp. and Astragalus spp.); pepperweeds, (Lepidium spp.) and penstemon, (Penstemon spp.). Common grasses include western wheatgrass, (Agropyron smithii); Sandberg bluegrass, (Poa secunda); Indian ricegrass, (Oryzopsis hymenoides), and squirreltail, (Sitanion hystrix).



Pinyon pine-juniper type occurs on valley benches and extends into the higher elevations. The pinyon pine, (Pinus monophylla) and Utah juniper, (Juniperus osteosperma), are the dominant overstory. Understory plants include segments from the big-sagebrush-grass and mid-sagebrush-grass communities. Other shrubs occurring in the pinyon pine-juniper type already listed are curlleaf mountain mahogany, (Cercocarpus ledifolius); green Mormon tea, (Ephedra viridis), and snowberry (Symphoricarpos spp.). At higher elevations and where water is at or near the ground surface there are scattered patches of aspen, (Populus tremuloides) in the area.

The fourth major plant association is the winterfat-saltbush flats. This plant association occurs on the valley bottoms and lower valley benches. The dominant shrubs in this type are shadscale, (Atriplex confertifolia), and winterfat, (Ceratoides lanata). Other common shrubs in this type are spiny hopsage, (Grayia spinosa); greasewood, (Sarcobatus vermiculatus); budsage, (Artemisia spinescens); kochia (Kochia spp.); little rabbitbrush, (Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus); and big sagebrush, (Artemisia tridentata). The most common forbs are buckwheats, (Eriogonum spp.), and mustards, (Brassica spp.). The most common grasses are Indian ricegrass, (Oryzopsis hymenoides); squirreltail, (Sitanion hystrix), and sand dropseed, (Sporobolus spp.).

Invasions of halogeton, (Halogeton glomeratus); Russian thistle, (Salsola kali), and cheatgrass, (Bromus tectorum) are common where areas have been disturbed by man and/or overgrazed by horses or livestock. Little rabbitbrush has replaced the dominant desirable shrubs in this type where overgrazing has occurred.

There are no threatened, endangered, or candidate plant species known to occur within the area of the proposed gather.

The vegetation in the area has been receiving heavy to severe use as a result of the number of horses, livestock and deer. The ongoing utilization and trend studies in the area show that the vegetative resource is being damaged due to overuse and the forage is not adequate for the large number of animals. This is particularly noticeable on the winterfat flats in Long Valley.

The herd area supports a variety of wildlife. This region provides wintering habitat for the Ruby mule deer herd, the largest herd within the confines of the state. Spring 1985 surveys by Nevada Department of Wildlife estimate this herd population at 18,400 deer. An estimated 40-50 percent of these deer move into the herd area during a normal winter. Sage

grouse are common in the herd area. Approximately 18 leks or strutting grounds are known in the gather area, with Butte and Newark Valleys being the most important areas. Waterfowl are found in wetlands in Butte and Newark Valleys and at the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge which borders the gathering area to the northwest. Riparian areas are scattered through the area. Perennial streams at Deadman and Old Deadman Creeks do not support fish. Exclosure fences were constructed in Orchard Canyon to protect important wet meadow habitats. Amphibians, reptiles, mammals, rodents and passerine bird species common to the Great Basin can be found in the area.

Federally endangered Bald Eagles winter in the area between November and April annually. A night roost site for Bald Eagles occurs on the northeast border of the Buck and Bald herd area. Endangered peregrine falcons may occur in the area. But there have been no recent sightings. Six peregrine falcons have been introduced into the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge adjacent to the Maverick-Medicine gather area. Other species under consideration for threatened or endangered status and listed as candidate, "category 2" species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are: Ferruginous Hawk (30+ nesting sites in the area); Newark Valley Tui Chub (2 springs on the west boundary); and Relict Dace (springs on the northeast boundary).

Wild horses have started to enlarge their use area. Since 1982 the horses have migrated from their summer range, Buck/Bald Mountains, to their winter range, Newark/Long Valleys, in August, which is two to three months earlier than normal. This may indicate that the forage was depleted at the higher elevations.

Horses prefer grasses and grass-like species but they will utilize shrubs and forbs when necessary. In the Buck/Bald-Long Valley area heavy use by all grazing animals has reduced desirable grasses to the point that only shrubs and less desirable or available grasses remain. Pressure is extremely heavy on Long Valley's winterfat flats.

It appears from observations and studies that the horses and cattle compete for winterfat and the available grasses. A similar competition exists between deer and cattle for winter browse species (bitterbrush and snowberry). This competition among the large ungulates is depleting the valuable winterfat and bitterbrush as a forage resource in the area.

The two gather areas encompass all or portions of 22 grazing allotments, and one sheep trail. Seventeen allottees graze cattle and/or sheep on these allotments. Two of the allottees

also have a permit to graze horses. Six of the allotments are grazed throughout the entire year, and seven more are grazed during the winter. The other allotments are grazed during the spring, summer or fall. The following table shows the livestock use in the area of the proposed action:

Livestock Use in the Buck and Bald Gather Area and the Maverick and Medicine Gather Area

Allotment	Allottee	AUM's Active Preference	Class of Livestock	Season of Use
<u>Buck and Bald Gather Area</u>				
Fort Ruby	Alfred Anderson	90	Cattle	03/01 - 02/28
Ruby Valley	Art Cook	599	Cattle	11/01 - 03/31
	Ruby Valley Ranch, LTD	51	Cattle	11/01 - 04/03
Horse Haven	Art Cook	18	Cattle	05/01 - 07/31
	Ruby Valley Ranch, LTD	1,038	Cattle	05/01 - 09/30
Maverick Spring	Art Cook	1,500	Cattle	03/01 - 02/28
Dry Mountain	Dan Russell	966	Cattle	11/01 - 04/05
Sabala Spring	Dan Russell	2,466	Cattle	11/01 - 04/15
North Pancake	Paris Livestock	648	Sheep	04/09 - 04/15 and 11/18 - 12/17
Mitchell Creek* (White Pine Seeding)	Peter and Julian Goicoechea	285	Cattle	04/15 - 10/15
Cold Creek*	Dan Russell	9,129	Cattle Horses	04/15 - 12/30 06/01 - 10/30
	Paris Livestock	242	Sheep	04/20 - 05/25 and 11/09 - 11/16
Warm Spring*	Dan Russell	23,995	Cattle	03/01 - 02/28
Newark*	United Dressed Beef, Inc.	12,404	Cattle	03/01 - 02/28
			Sheep	03/28 - 04/15 and 10/15 - 12/30

Allotment	Allottee	AUM's Active Preference	Class of Livestock	Season of Use
<u>Buck and Bald Gather Area</u>				
Warm Springs Trail*	Dan Russell	1,866	Sheep	03/16 - 03/21 and 11/16 - 11/21
	Paris Livestock	615	Sheep	04/15 - 04/20 and 11/15 - 11/20
	United Dressed Beef, Inc.	151	Sheep	03/27 & 12/31
Moorman Ranch*	Robert Dickenson	10,099	Cattle	03/01 - 02/28
Thirty Mile Spring*	Gracian Uhalde	8,405	Cattle	05/01 - 11/30
			Sheep	05/01 - 11/30
North Butte*	Warren Robison	698	Cattle	10/20 - 04/15
Medicine Butte*	Bert Paris and Sons	17,835	Cattle	04/16 - 12/31
			Sheep	04/16 - 11/15
			Horses	03/01 - 02/28

Allotment	Allottee	AUM's Active Preference	Class of Livestock	Season of Use
<u>Maverick and Medicine Gather Area</u>				
Ruby #9	Ruby Valley Ranch, LTD	834	Cattle	03/01 - 04/30 and 11/01 - 12/31
Maverick	Ruby Valley Ranch, LTD	1,864	Cattle	05/01 - 08/15 and 11/01 - 12/31
Bald Mountain	Te-Moak Livestock Association	736	Cattle	06/01 - 09/15
	Lear Ranches	437	Cattle	06/01 - 09/15
Odgers	Te-Moak Livestock Association	1,596	Cattle	04/16 - 10/15
North Butte Valley*	William and Elizabeth Dickenson	1,645	Cattle	05/01 - 11/30



Allotment	Allottee	AUM's Active Preference	Class of Livestock	Season of Use
<u>Maverick and Medicine Gather Area</u>				
Spruce*	Loyd Sorensen	14,976	Cattle Sheep	11/20 - 05/31 11/20 - 04/30
	Kenneth Jones	13,437	Cattle	11/20 - 05/31
	Von and Marian Sorensen	7,154	Cattle	03/01 - 02/28
West Cherry Creek*	Bert Paris and Sons	2,661	Cattle Sheep	05/01 - 10/31 05/01 - 10/20

\* The gather areas encompass only a portion of these allotments.

This area has traditionally been grazed by domestic livestock since the existing ranches were established in the late 1800's. Historically, both cattle and sheep have grazed the area, but primary use was by large nomadic bands of sheep.

With the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the number of livestock was greatly reduced, and only the established ranches were allowed to graze livestock. During the 1950's most of the livestock operators converted from sheep to cattle due to economic conditions which have prevailed to the present time.

Trespass by livestock and branded horses has been a problem but the majority of the livestock operators are cooperative and are working to solve problems in the area.

During the past several years fourteen springs in the Buck and Bald area have been improved, redeveloped and maintained providing additional water for livestock, wildlife and wild horses.

Warm Springs Ranch, whose grazing allotment is being severely impacted has acquired additional grazing privileges outside the herd use area and is willing to reduce some of the grazing pressure voluntarily if horse use is also reduced. Cattle will also be removed from the white sage (winterfat) flats in Long Valley during the critical growing season, providing increased winter forage.

The area within the proposed Buck and Bald horse gather is also an area of high interest for minerals, both hard rock and leasable. There are presently 3 major mining operations within the area. They are all disseminated gold open pit mines. The oldest and largest of these operations is Amselco's Alligator Ridge Mine. The second largest mining operation is Placer U.S.'s, disseminated gold mining operations on the west flank of Bald Mountain. The third and smallest operation is New Dynasty's mining operation on Little Bald Mountain. There are also extensive prospecting operations throughout most of the area of the proposed horse gather.

The area is also currently undergoing extensive seismic exploration for oil and gas.

All of these mineral activities have impacted and will continue to impact not only the wildlife, but the wild horses as well. Habitat has been and will be taken out of production, thus forcing all large herbivores to compete for a decreasing forage base.

The loss of habitat isn't the only impact caused by these intensive mineral activities. Such things as disruption of migration routes, disruption of major trail systems to water and actual physical harassment are occurring and are expected to increase as the search for precious metals, oil and gas intensifies.

The area of the gather is sparsely settled. It is rural in character and the primary source of income is from ranching and mining operations. There are no towns within the gather area. Some ranchers have strong historical and family ties to the area. The current mining activities are fairly recent development and have provided jobs and economic stimulation to Elko and White Pine Counties. Other uses are primarily for recreational purposes.

Contrasting and varied topography make the gathering area visually pleasing to many people. Major population centers are far removed, the nearest community being Ely, Nevada, which is located 30 miles to the southeast, or Eureka, Nevada, approximately 30 miles to the west.

Wild free-roaming horses were declared to be "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West" by Public Law 92-195, the Wild Horse and Burro Act. As such, they have educational, scientific, and cultural values to the people of the region and nation. Local attitudes are varied regarding the presence of wild horses, both generally and in the subject

area. The greatest potential interest in preserving and viewing wild horses arises from large urban areas both on a state and national basis. It is believed that some recreation use of horses, either by viewing or photography, is made by visitors in the area. Long Valley presents one of the best wild horse viewing opportunities within the Ely District.

Other recreation values are numerous within the proposed gather areas. Deer and upland game hunting occur throughout the proposed gather areas. Hunting seasons for deer normally occur from early October through mid-November. Upland game seasons extend from September through late January. Trapping activities are moderate in these areas with peak trapping activity from October through mid-February.

There are no wilderness study areas located within the gather areas.

The gather area encompasses numerous significant cultural resource areas including the 35,000+ acre Sunshine Locality National Register District (Federal Register, March 7, 1978). Cultural occupation of the gather area ranges from the Paleoindian Period (12,000 B.P.) to the Historic Mining Period (to 1920 A.D.).

Typical prehistoric sites are open lithic tool and debitage scatters, though more unusual sites such as rock shelters with preserved perishable artifacts, rock art sites, and hunting blinds or traps composed of piled rock or vegetation also occur.

The historic Bald Mountain Mining District falls within the gather area and numerous sites associated with the mining of silver, copper, and even placer gold (rare for eastern Nevada) have been recorded. These sites consist of tailings piles, ore processing dumps, household debris, machinery, millsites, and other structures.

A more detailed description of the affected environment can be found in the Wells RMP/EIS and Draft Egan RMP/EIS.

### III. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF PROPOSED ACTION - REMOVE 485 WILD HORSES

The spring rich areas are attractive in an arid environment. The primary site of impact from changes in number of wildlife and wild horses is the spring rich area in Buck Mountain and to a lesser degree are the contact spring area in Little Bald Mountain and the Hot Spring area on the northwest corner of the Maverick Range. Reduced competition between livestock, wildlife, and wild horses for limited water supplies would be a high positive impact.

The horse gathering operation and handling of horses would be conducted at least 1/4 mile away from water; therefore, no direct impact on water quality would result. Reduced wild horse numbers would lessen grazing and trampling at waterholes and riparian areas, contributing to a more favorable habitat and associated water quality for all animals.

Negligible impacts to air quality would occur during gathering operations and handling of horses, resulting from helicopter and vehicle exhaust emissions. Short-term increases in transient dust levels caused by operation of ground vehicles and running horses would occur.

Sites which presently exhibit active soil erosion would be positively impacted as would the water quality of sources presently exhibiting severe trampling and resultant contamination through sediment increase and/or fecal deposits in water.

Vegetative cover has a direct influence on the availability and erosion potential of soil. The proposed reduction in horse numbers and resulting reduction in vegetative utilization (especially in heavy use areas) would have both short and long term beneficial impacts to the soil resource. These beneficial responses - less soil compaction and improved vegetative cover - would be most significant in heavy horse use areas.

There would be a short term negative impact to the vegetation at the trap sites and holding corrals, which would be less than one acre each. The vegetation would be severely trampled by all the horses that would be concentrated at those locations. This would be a minor impact, though, because the areas impacted would be small in relation to the gather areas. Vegetative regeneration would be expected within two to three years depending on climatic conditions.

The proposed action would have a very positive long-term impact on the vegetation in the area. The ecological condition of the different plant communities would improve after the gather. The more desirable grasses and shrubs would not be utilized as heavily. Production of these species would increase, as would their percentage of composition within the community.

The invasion of undesirable grasses and forbs would not be as great under the proposed action. Decreased grazing pressure would slow downward trends in overall range condition.

There should be no impact to threatened or endangered plant species from the proposed action.



A negligible impact to wildlife during the gathering is expected. Some wildlife could be temporarily frightened or displaced by the increased activity in the area. Any reduction in wild horse numbers should reduce competition for forage and result in a beneficial impact for the mule deer herd. Reduced competition for the short supply of mountain brush by all ungulates should help the deer through hard winters and reduce winter losses.

Reduced use and trampling at riparian areas should benefit a large number of wildlife species.

Some displacement of bald eagles could occur in mid-winter, as well as displacement of peregrine falcons during mid-May through August. But no adverse impacts are expected. Ferruginous hawks do not winter in the area. No impacts are expected to occur to T & E or potential T & E species. Because activities would be conducted away from water, no adverse impacts would be anticipated on Newark Valley Tui Chub or Relict Dace as a result of the gathering operation.

A negative impact on wild horses would be expected during gathering and handling. This would result from traumatic effects of capturing, trapping, loading, and hauling the animals. Enough horses would remain to maintain a viable herd and provide for interaction between bands. Reduced competition between wildlife, livestock, and horses for limited water, forage and space would result in higher survival and reproduction rates for each.

There would be a slight negative impact to livestock grazing as a result of the proposed action. Livestock would be disturbed by all the activities associated with the gather. This would be a short term impact, and would occur only on the 13 allotments that are being grazed at the time of the gather. There would be no impact to the other allotments.

The proposed action would have a long term positive impact on livestock grazing on all the allotments. Competition for forage would be reduced after the gather.

Dan Russell, allottee on the Warm Springs Allotment, has agreed to license no more than 17,054 AUM's if the gather takes place. This is the three-year average licensed use for the 1982-84 grazing seasons, and is almost 7,000 AUM's below his active preference. This would reduce competition for forage even more. The intensity of livestock grazing is expected to remain at approximately the present level on the remaining allotments. The objective of the Wells RMP is to provide for livestock grazing consistent with other resource uses resulting in an

increase in livestock use of 1.7 percent over the entire resource area. The Egan Resource Area proposes to develop a Coordinated Management Plan on the Buck and Bald area to be initiated in fiscal year 1986. Both resource areas would make adjustments in livestock use after sufficient monitoring data is available.

A beneficial impact would be expected if the horse gather is allowed to proceed, as this would relieve some of the displaced grazing pressure created as a result of mining and allow a more expeditious recovery once land treatment is completed.

Positive management, and maintenance of wild horse numbers at a viable herd level could bring vicarious pleasure to wild horse advocates. The removal of excess wild horses from the gather area would please local sportsmen and livestock operators. Proceeding with the gather would help public relations for the Ely and Elko Districts, BLM.

A contractor would be paid to conduct the gather, but it would provide negligible economic stimulation to the local area. Lifestyles, and quality of life of residents would not be impacted. If reduction of horses in this key deer winter range results in higher mule deer populations leading to more deer tags for deer management area 10, the Ely and Elko vicinity would be economically benefited from the increased tourism.

Since there are no wilderness study areas within the gather areas there would be no conflicts with wilderness.

Removal of wild horses in Long Valley, could affect viewing opportunities. The gather would concentrate in the Long Valley area, but the number of horses removed would probably not substantially impact viewing opportunities. Other recreational opportunities would not be affected because of the short term nature of the gather.

Because all necessary facilities would be temporary, the gathering operation would not affect the visual quality of the subject area.

Considerable negative impacts could occur to cultural resources which may coincide with the one acre trap sites. The expected impacts could include the destruction of or mixing of artifacts at or near the ground surface and the reduction or elimination of fragile intrasite artifact relationships. Similar impacts are anticipated at camp sites, holding corrals, and staging areas.

Much biological information can be obtained from the gathered animals (e.g. sex and age ratios, parasites, diseases, etc.). All of this information would be useful in management of the horses in the future.

There would be no impacts from the proposed action to areas of critical environmental concern, wild and scenic rivers, flood plains and wetlands, prime or unique farmlands, or paleontological resources.

This alternative is consistent with the Wells RMP and with the Ely District BLM/Lappin/Russell emergency temporary management agreement.

#### Mitigating Measures for the Proposed Action

- (1) Gathering efforts during the months of November through March should avoid roost areas and other areas commonly used by bald eagles to minimize possible dispersion and/or collisions. Special attention should also be made to avoid the peregrine falcon area around Ruby Lake during mid-May through August.
- (2) When possible, gathering should be done to avoid high concentrations of mule deer to avoid stressing animals during severe weather periods.
- (3) Trap sites will not be placed within 1/4 mile of water sources, such as streams, springs, reservoirs, or troughs, or other riparian areas to avoid trampling of these important wildlife habitats. Traps will not be placed within one mile of major waterfowl areas (i.e., Ruby Lake).
- (4) No off-road vehicle operation, trap construction, camping, staging, or holding activities will occur in the Sunshine Locality National Register District or any other known archaeological (including historic) site locales.
- (5) A cultural resources investigation by an archaeologist or district archaeological technician will be conducted prior to any trap construction. If cultural values are discovered, an alternate trapsite will be selected. A cultural resource report will be completed after the survey.
- (6) If any threatened, endangered, or candidate plant species are found to exist in the vicinity of trap or holding corral locations, the trap or corral will be moved to a new location.

- (7) Temporary traps and corrals will be removed within 30 days following the gathering operation.

#### Unavoidable Adverse Impacts from the Proposed Action

Short term increases in transient dust levels caused by operation of ground vehicles and running horses could occur if conditions are dry (lack of snow).

The vegetation and soil at trap sites and holding corrals would be severely trampled by the large horse concentration there. The impact would be minor though due to the small area (less than 1 acre) involved at each site. Also, the reduced competition for water and vegetation after the gather should result in improved plant vigor, condition, and reproductive potential over the entire herd area.

Although the standard operating procedures would lessen stress to horses during capture and handling, a negative impact can still be expected during the gather. This would result from traumatic effects of capturing, trapping, loading, and hauling the animals. Livestock may also be disturbed to a lesser degree by the gather activities. Injuries and/or deaths to some wild horses may also occur.

#### Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

None.

#### IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Uncontrolled horse populations combined with wildlife and livestock use would continue to have a negative impact on soils susceptible to erosion.

Vegetative cover would continue to decline in heavy use areas.

Gullies and soil compaction would increase, causing not only loss of soil but increased water sedimentation and decreased water flow in unprotected springs.

Competition for water would continue to increase, resulting in continued overgrazing and trampling of the existing waterholes and riparian areas. The impact would be the most negative during the dry years (most years in this arid environment).

Under the no action alternative, the ecological condition of the different plant communities would continue to decline. This would be a very negative impact. The more palatable plant species would continue to be overutilized. Less desirable



grasses and forbs would increase. Continued heavy grazing of preferred forage plants would cause continued loss of plant vigor and reproductive capacity, and an increase in undesirable forage species. Vegetative succession would regress to a lower seral stage with undesirable forage species making up a greater portion of the total vegetative cover. This would ultimately result in lower productivity and population decline for all animals.

The no action alternative would have a long term negative impact on livestock grazing on all allotments. Competition for forage would remain high. If no gather takes place, Dan Russell would be allowed to license up to his active preference of 23,995 AUM's on the Warm Springs Allotment.

Without the gathering, competition between mule deer and other ungulates would continue to increase with a long term negative impact on deer population numbers especially during severe winters.

Without the gather any chance of dislocation and/or collision with bald eagles and/or peregrine falcons would be eliminated.

Uncontrolled horse numbers would increase to the point that most available forage would be used, to the increasing detriment of livestock, wildlife, and horses themselves. Some animals may die of thirst due to limited water supplies. Horses concentrate in preferred forage areas yearlong and tend to overuse them, moving only when climatic conditions or an absolute lack of forage force them to move to other areas. Available remaining forage would be adversely affected until a reasonable relationship between numbers of horses, wildlife and livestock is attained. The herds would expand into areas not currently occupied by wild horses.

There would be greater opportunity to view horses, particularly in Long Valley, through steadily increasing populations. However, increased mortality of wild horses would offend many people's values. In addition, the poor quality of horses resulting from poor nutrition would detract from the viewers pleasure in being able to see large horse herds.

Should there be no horse gather there would be no effects on the mining activity. There would however be detrimental effects to grazing. At the present time it is proposed to establish a team to study the various opportunities available for land treatment to offset the cumulative loss of grazing within the Buck and Bald area. The no action alternative would maintain a much higher grazing pressure on the area and would require a much longer time for the area to recover from the grazing losses experienced as a result of mining.

The primary socio-economic impact at the local level would be poor public relations with ranchers and sportsmen. Wild horse advocates may be pleased with a higher number of wild horses within these wild horse herds. Lifestyles and quality of life of residents would not be impacted.

The no action alternative would not impact cultural resources, threatened and endangered plants, wilderness values, areas of critical environmental concern, wild and scenic rivers, flood plains and wetlands, prime or unique farmlands, or paleontological resources.

This alternative would not be consistent with the Wells RMP or with the Ely District BLM/Lappin/Russell emergency temporary management agreement.

#### Mitigating Measures for the No Action Alternative

None.

#### Unavoidable Adverse Impacts for the No Action Alternative

Refer to the Environmental Consequences of No Action Alternative.

#### Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

Continued overgrazing of forage resources would result in wind and water erosion of unprotected soils, and the eventual loss of the forage base itself. This in turn would result in a higher mortality of all grazing animals (horses, livestock and wild-life) due to starvation and loss of waters.

#### V. INTENSITY OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Local newspapers in both Ely and Elko have long been critical of the Bureau of Land Management wild horse management program. A series of articles and one editorial in the Ely Daily Times in October of 1978 focused on horse management problems in another area. A recent article in September 1984 expressed concern over the increasing horse population in Nevada. Letters are received periodically at the local Bureau of Land Management level that are highly critical of Bureau of Land Management horse roundups and the general treatment given wild horses. These letters highlight the sympathy and intense feeling one segment of the public has for wild horses.

Nationally, the issue of wild horses on western public rangelands has been an intense controversy spanning many years and beginning prior to the passage of the Wild Horse and Burro Act

in 1971. Wild horse preservationists are generally concerned with maintaining adequate habitat on public lands for optimum population levels of wild horses.

Ranchers who graze livestock on public lands view wild horses as competitive with livestock for forage and water and thus a threat to their interests. However, some ranchers and others support a maintenance of reasonable numbers of wild horses.

Sportsmen and other wildlife interests also see horses as a competitive threat to wildlife populations and site competition for food, water, cover, and space as being detrimental.

Nevada, the state with the highest wild horse population, was also home state of the wild horse protection movement fostered by the late Velma Johnston ("Wild Horse Annie"). In Nevada, ranching is a mainstay business in rural counties. The levels of public interest in wild horses are high in Nevada, both from the protection and removal viewpoints. The Bureau of Land Management in Nevada has been and is involved in wild horse related court litigation. Litigations have been brought mainly by protectionist groups seeking to stop what they view as unwarranted horse gathering. However, recent litigations have been brought by private landowners, many of whom have requested removal of wild horses from their lands.

Since public interest is high and the wild horse program is of a controversial nature, public notification of the project was given and public comments were solicited (see Record of Persons, Groups and Agencies Contacted) in a draft capture plan and environmental assessment on November 15, 1985.

Comments were received from one Federal agency, five State agencies, and three special interest groups. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, Nevada Department of Agriculture, Nevada Division of State Parks, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Nevada Division of State Lands, and the Bristlecone Bowmen all agreed that the proposed gather would be beneficial to the environment. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also expressed concern with sheep grazing preference overlapping the critical deer winter habitat in the gather area. They feel that sheep use should be eliminated from the area completely, or at least during the critical growing season. And, if monitoring studies indicate that grazing pressure is still too high, then livestock AUM's and horse numbers should be further reduced to ensure the proper balance of vegetation critical for deer.

Livestock adjustments (including reductions or elimination of sheep grazing) will not occur as a result of this action, except for the temporary 7,000 AUM annual reduction by Dan Russell on the Warm Springs Allotment. Both the Wells RMP/EIS and the Egan RMP/EIS (which is still under protest) state that adjustments in livestock use (increases or decreases) would only occur after sufficient monitoring data is available. Likewise, further adjustments in wild horse numbers will only occur after sufficient monitoring data is available. This is also in accordance with the Wells and Egan RMP's/EIS's, as well as the Ely District BLM/Lappin/Russell temporary management agreement.

The Nevada Division of Historic Preservation/Archaeology expressed concurrence with the mitigating measure requiring a cultural resources investigation be performed for each proposed trap site. The Nevada Department of Wildlife recommended that trapping operations avoid deer winter concentration areas as mitigated in this environmental assessment.

Wild Horse Organized Assistance (WHOA) and the Sierra Club both expressed concern that the Buck and Bald gather will begin implementation of the Egan RMP/EIS which is still under protest.

The Egan RMP/EIS cannot and will not be implemented until the protests are resolved and a record of decision is issued. Buck and Bald is not being gathered in relation to the long term planning identified in the Egan RMP and the gather will in no way affect the protests of the RMP. The proposed action to reduce wild horse numbers in the Buck and Bald herd is only a temporary action designed to respond to an emergency situation. The winterfat flats in Long Valley, an important wintering area for wild horses, domestic livestock, and wildlife, are deteriorating due to continued overutilization. The Ely District BLM, Mr. Dan Russell and WHOA have entered into an emergency temporary management agreement (Appendix 1) to alleviate this situation and this agreement is the basis for the Buck and Bald gather.

## VI. RECORD OF PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONTACTED

### Participating Staff

Robert E. Brown	- Wild Horses and Burros, Ely District BLM
Bruce Portwood	- Wild Horses and Burros, Elko District BLM
Paul Podborny	- Vegetation/Livestock Grazing, Ely District BLM
Ray Lister	- Livestock Grazing, Elko District BLM
Mark Barber	- Wildlife/Threatened and Endangered Animals, Ely District BLM



Kathy Lindsey - Threatened and Endangered Plants, Ely District BLM  
 Jake Rajala - Socio-Economics/Environmental Coordination, Ely District BLM  
 Desi Zamudio - Air and Water Resources, Ely District BLM  
 Cris Ann Bybee - Soils, Ely District BLM  
 Shaaron Netherton - Recreation/Wilderness/Visual Resources Management, Ely District BLM  
 Sarah Johnston - Cultural Resources, Ely District BLM  
 Bill Robison - Minerals, Ely District BLM  
 Nancy Phelps - Environmental Coordination, Elko District BLM

Review

American Bashkir Curly Register  
 c/o Mrs. Sunny Martin  
 P.O. Box 453  
 Ely, Nevada 89301

American Horse Protection Association  
 1904-A "T" Street, NW  
 P.O. Box 53399  
 Washington, DC 20009

American Humane Association  
 9725 E. Hampden  
 Denver, Colorado 80231

Animal Protection Institute  
 P.O. Box 22505  
 Sacramento, California 95822

Funds for Animals  
 140 West 57th St.  
 New York, New York 10019

Humane Society of Southern Nevada  
 P.O. Box 85118  
 Las Vegas, Nevada 89185-0118

International Society for the Protection  
 of Wild Horses and Burros  
 11790 Deodar Way  
 Reno, Nevada 89506

Mr. Donald Molde  
 755 Forest St.  
 Reno, Nevada 89509

National Mustang Association, Inc.  
c/o Mrs. June Sewing  
1st and Main Street  
Newcastle, Utah 84756

National Wild Horse Association  
c/o Mr. Lloyd Smith  
7715 Robindale Circle  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89123

Nevada State Department of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 11, 100  
Reno, Nevada 89510

Deborah Allard  
R.F.D. #2, Box 2646  
Brunswick, Maine 04011

Nevada Humane Society  
c/o Mr. Mark McGuire  
P.O. Box KIND  
Sparks, Nevada 89431

Save the Mustangs  
669 Somerset Avenue  
Rockwood, Pennsylvania 15557

Mr. John Walker  
Clearinghouse Coordinator  
Office of Community Services  
Capitol Complex  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Attn: Mr. Bob Hallock  
4600 Kietzke  
Building C  
Reno, Nevada 89502

U.S. Humane Society  
2100 L. St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20037

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

The Center for Wild Horse and  
Burro Research  
2715 W. 86th Avenue #21  
Westminster, Colorado 80030

Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Region II  
1375 Mountain City Highway  
Elko, Nevada 89801

Sierra Club  
c/o Rose Strickland  
Public Lands Committee of the  
Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club  
1685 Kings Row  
Reno, Nevada 89503

Dan Russell  
P.O. Box 343  
Eureka, Nevada 89316

Mr. John Polish, Chairman  
Ely District Advisory Council  
675 Murry  
Ely, Nevada 89301

Mr. Van C. Gardner, Chairman  
Ely District Grazing Advisory Board  
Lund, Nevada 89317

White Pine County Advisory Board  
to Manage Wildlife  
c/o Dr. Bruce Wilkin  
Box 286  
East Ely, Nevada 89315

Mr. Fred Pullman, Chairman  
Elko District Advisory Council  
Lamoille, Nevada 89828

Mr. Harvey Barnes, Chairman  
Elko District Grazing Advisory Board  
Barnes Ranches  
Jiggs, Nevada 89827

Elko County Advisory Board  
to Manage Wildlife  
c/o Mr. Wes Bowlen  
P.O. Box 276  
Wells, Nevada 89835

Letters of Information

American Mustang and Burro Registry  
P.O. Box 216  
Liberty Hill, Texas 78642

Tina Nappe  
3340 Berthond  
Reno, Nevada 89503

Nevada Cattlemen's Association  
419 Railroad Street  
Elko, Nevada 89801

Nevada Department of Wildlife  
c/o Mr. Dale Elliott  
P.O. Box 178  
Eureka, Nevada 89316

Nevada Farm Bureau Federation  
1300 Marietta Way  
Sparks, Nevada 89431

Nevada Outdoor Recreation Association  
P.O. Box 1245  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Nevada Wildlife Federation  
Dr. John A. Leitch, President  
2976 Sorrell Street  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89102

Sierra Club, Great Basin Group  
P.O. Box 8096  
University Station  
Reno, Nevada 89507

White Pine County Commissioners  
White Pine County Court House  
Court House Plaza  
Ely, Nevada 89301

White Pine Sportsmen  
P.O. Box 1187  
Ely, Nevada 89301



Wild Horse and Burro Committee for  
National Academy of Science  
Chairman Fred Wagner  
College of Natural Resources  
Utah State University  
Logan, Utah 84322

Alfred Anderson  
Ft. Ruby Ranch  
Ruby Valley, Nevada 89833

Art Cook  
Ruby Valley, Nevada 89833

Ruby Valley Ranch, LTD  
Ruby Valley, Nevada 89833

Paris Livestock  
Jiggs Waysack  
Elko, Nevada 80801

Peter and Julian Goicoechea  
P.O. Box 97  
Eureka, Nevada 89316

United Dressed Beef, Inc.  
P.O. Box 253  
Eureka, Nevada 89316

Robert Dickenson  
c/o Moorman Ranch  
Star Route 7  
Ely, Nevada 89301

Gracian Uhalde  
P.O. Box 88  
Ely, Nevada 89301

Warren Robison  
P.O. Box 494  
Ruth, Nevada 89319

Bert Paris and Sons  
Star Route 1, Box 26  
Ely, Nevada 89301

Te-Moak Livestock Association  
Lee, Nevada 89829

Lear Ranches  
Currie Route, Box 30  
Ely, Nevada 89301

William and Elizabeth Dickinson  
Star Route 1, Box 29-A  
Ely, Nevada 89315

Loyd Sorensen  
591 13th Street  
Elko, Nevada 89801

Kenneth Jones  
Lamoille, Nevada 89828

Von and Marian Sorensen  
Clover Valley  
Wells, Nevada 89835

Bristlecone Bowman  
c/o Mr. Fred Smith  
McGill, Nevada 89318

Elko County Commissioners  
Elko, Nevada 89801

VII. SUGGESTED MONITORING

The COR/PI will monitor the gather operation to ensure that all conditions and stipulations in this EA are complied with. The project area will be cleaned up (trash and debris) prior to release of the contractor. The temporary traps and corrals will be removed by the contractor within 30 days following the gathering operation.

The Ely and Elko District Wild Horse Specialists will conduct an aerial census, using a helicopter, covering both the Buck/Bald and Maverick-Medicine herd areas every two years following this gather. When the census numbers exceed the established upper limits of the herd (900 for Buck and Bald; 244 for Maverick-Medicine), a followup gather will be proposed to again reduce the herds to their lower limits (700 for Buck and Bald; 195 for Maverick-Medicine).

Utilization studies will be conducted annually by the range conservationists in charge of individual allotments, with help from the wild horse specialists and wildlife biologists as needed. If funding and manpower permits, utilization will be completed prior to livestock entering the allotment and again as they leave on an annual basis.


Frequency trend plots will be read by the range conservationists in charge of individual allotments every three to five years to determine changes in range condition.


Actual use information will be supplied to the BLM by the livestock operators on an annual basis.

The above monitoring studies will be conducted in areas where they are presently established, and as they are established in the future through the Ely and Elko District Monitoring Plans.

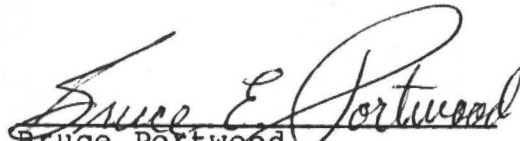
VIII. SIGNATURES

Prepared by:


  
Robert E. Brown  
Ely District  
Wild Horse Specialist

  
Date

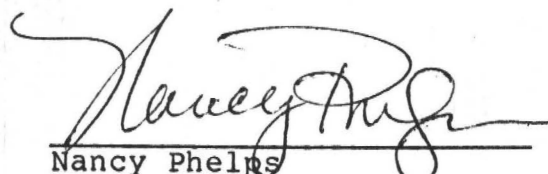
Reviewed by:

  
Bruce Portwood  
Elko District  
Wild Horse Specialist

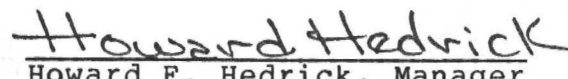
1/22/86  
Date

  
Jake A. Rajala  
Ely District  
Environmental Coordinator


January 17, 1986  
Date

  
Nancy Phelps  
Elko District  
Environmental Coordinator

1/22/86  
Date

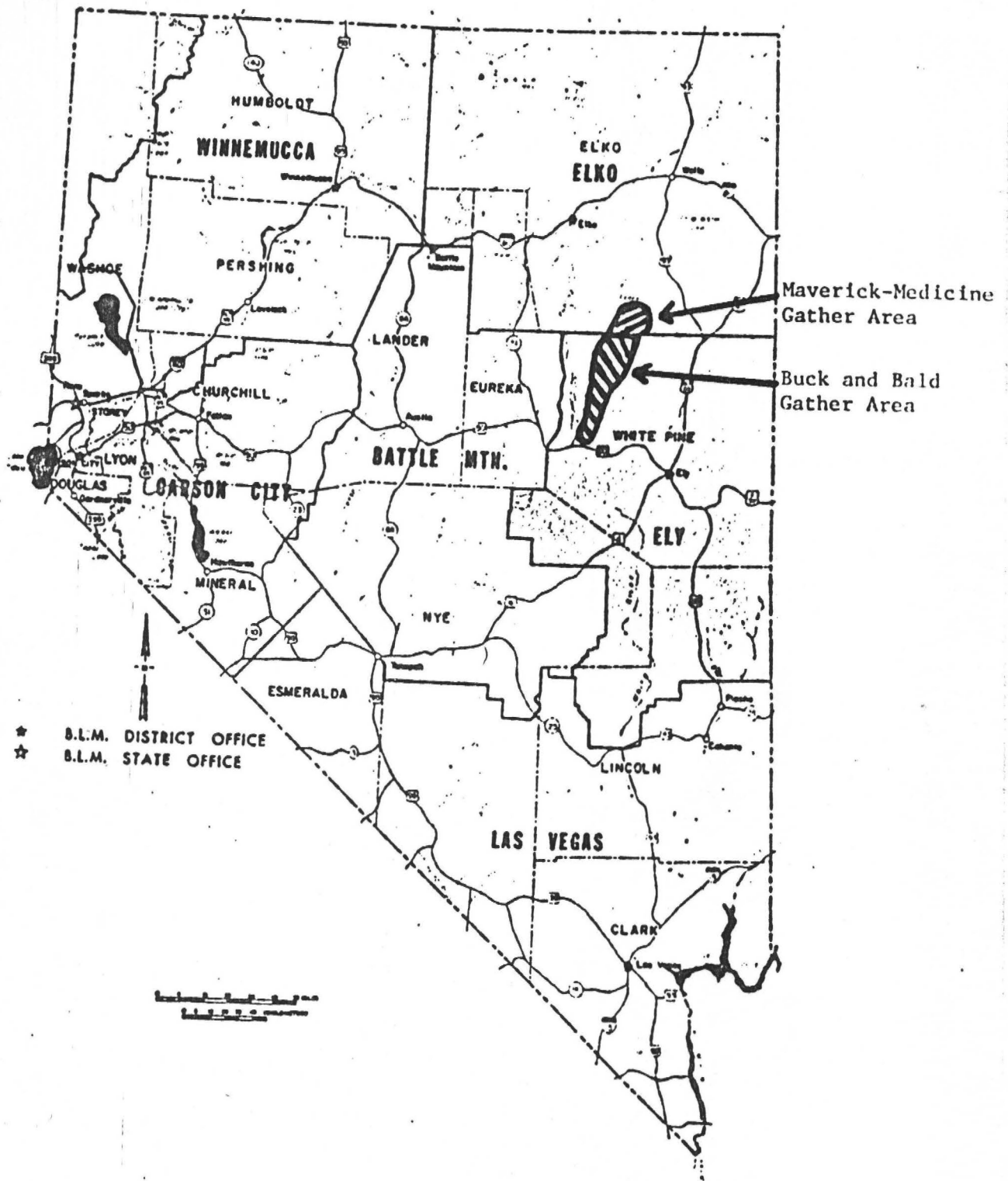
  
Howard F. Hedrick, Manager  
Egan Resource Area

01-17-86  
Date

  
John A. Phillips, Manager  
Wells Resource Area

1-22-86  
Date

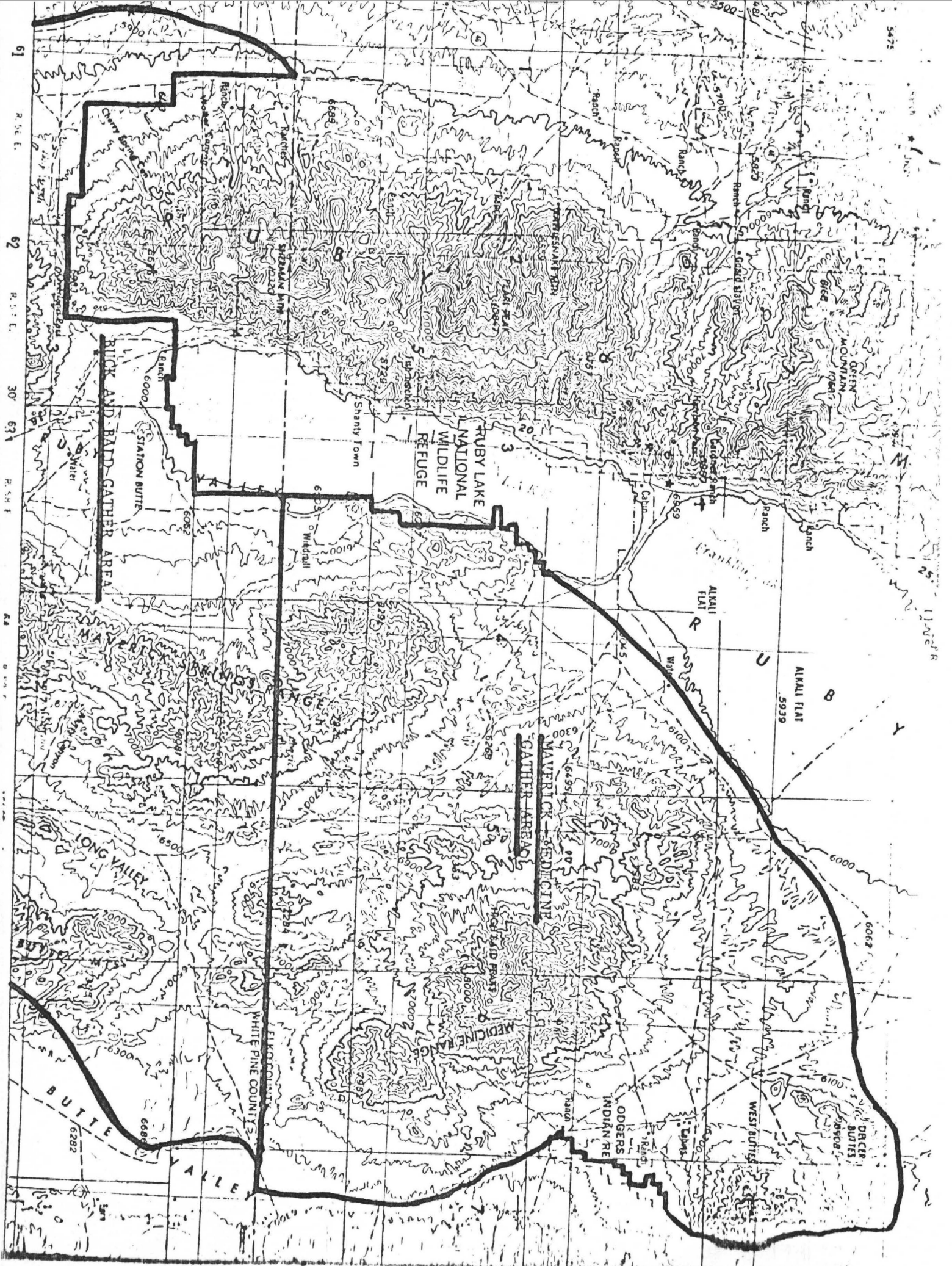




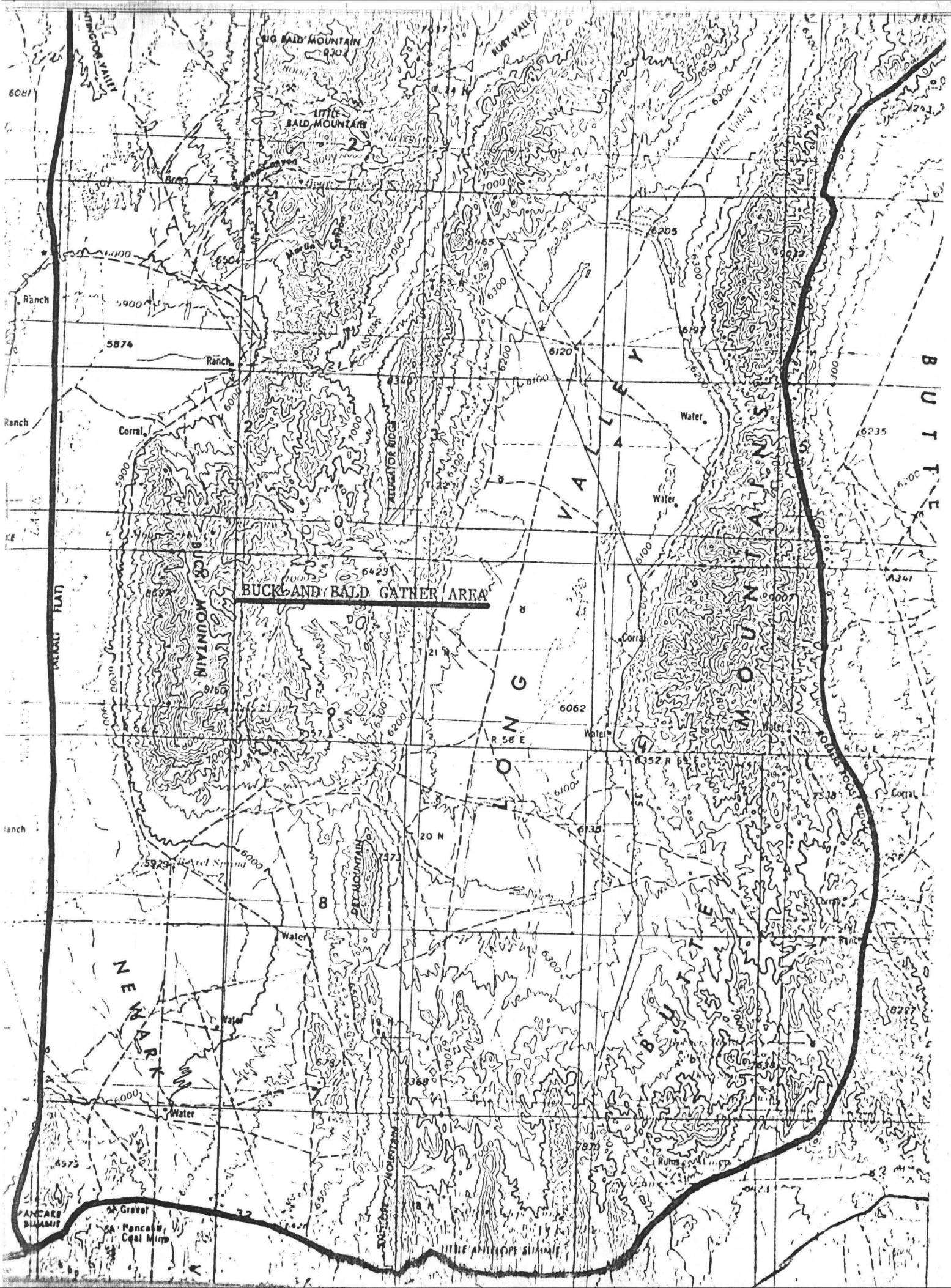
# NEVADA DISTRICTS

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

61 R. 5 E. 62 R. 6 E. 30 63 64







APPENDIX 1

The parties in this agreement recognize that the white sage (Ceratoides lanata) in Long Valley is critical winter range for both livestock and wild horses in the area. They also recognize that the recent drought conditions and grazing during the growing season may be affecting this important plant species.

All parties agree that some actions taken immediately will benefit the white sage flats in Long Valley. These actions will be only temporary in nature and will in no way substitute for a coordinated management plan which is scheduled to be written at a later date. It is further noted that this agreement or any actions taken based on this agreement will in no way jeopardize or compromise any complaint or protest either party has filed on the Final Egan Resource Management Plan.

No more than 17,054 AUMs will be licensed in the Warm Springs Allotment by Russell Ranches. This is the three-year average licensed use for the 1982-84 grazing seasons. The current preference is 23,995 AUMs. Season of use for cattle on Long Valley remains 10/15 to 04/15.

Both Dawn Lappin, Director of Wild Horse Organized Assistance and Dan Russell of Russell Ranches will support BLM gathering wild horses during the winter of 1985-86 in the Buck and Bald herd management area, leaving approximately 700 animals. This and subsequent gatherings will focus on wild horses in Long Valley. Every two years following the first gathering, BLM will inventory this area and if wild horses number more than 900, BLM will conduct a gathering that same winter, bringing the herd down to 700 wild horses.

Water developments as necessary, in Long Valley will be fenced by April 15, 1986, to aid in the management of critical winter range. The gates to these waters will be closed April 15 and reopened October 15 each year. If the Egan Area Manager, BLM, determines that severe water shortages occur, all parties will be notified in writing and use of these waters could continue throughout the summer. BLM will be responsible for all environmental assessments and clearances and Russell Ranches will be responsible for building and maintaining the fences and ensuring that gates are opened and closed in a timely manner.

This is only a temporary agreement and in no way implies a concurrence regarding present range condition or stocking levels. BLM will continue existing rangeland monitoring studies and establish new studies as needed. Data gathered in the next three to five years from monitoring studies will be used to determine if adjustments in livestock or wild horse numbers were necessary.

If any party does not fulfill their portion of this agreement, the remaining parties may choose to declare this agreement null and void and may do so by informing everyone involved of their intentions.

*Dan Russell*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dan Russell  
Russell Ranches

*Sept 11, 1985*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Dawn Lappin*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dawn Lappin, Director  
Wild Horse Organized Assistance

*Sept. 10, 1985*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Howard Hedrick*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Howard Hedrick  
Egan Area Manager, BLM

*Sept. 11, 1985*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



APPENDIX 2  
Warm Spring Allotment Utilization Summary

<u>Area</u>	<u>Key Species</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Percent Utilization</u> <sup>1/</sup>
Long Valley	Winterfat	1981	50 to 73%
		1982	53%
		1984	62%
Buck Mountain	Bitterbrush	1982	55 to 60% <sup>2/</sup>
		1983	67 to 85% <sup>3/</sup>
Bald Mountain	Bitterbrush	1982	45% <sup>4/</sup>
		1983	66% <sup>4/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Proper use on winterfat (winter use) is 45 to 50 percent maximum; proper use on bitterbrush (summer use) is 45 to 50 percent maximum.

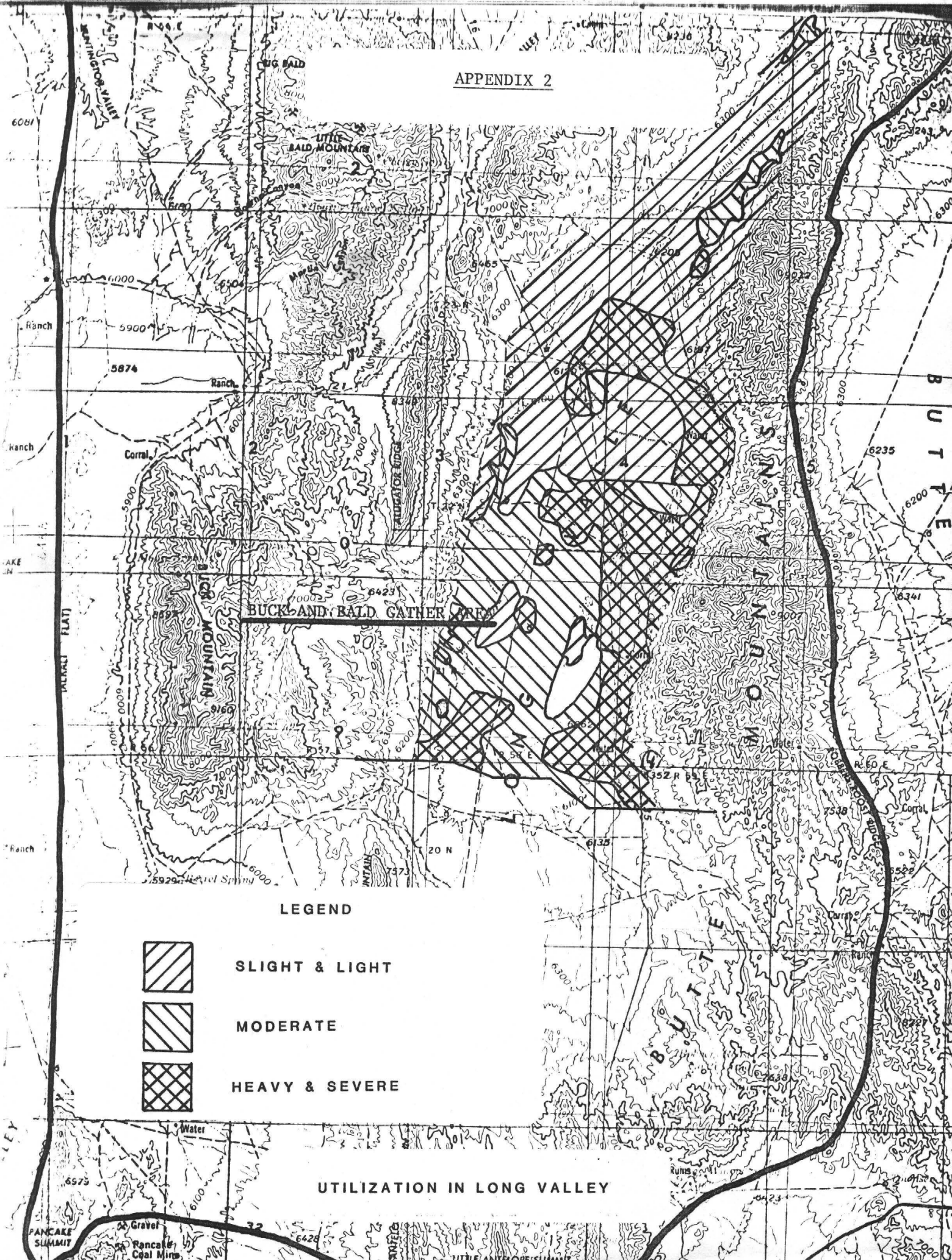
<sup>2/</sup> Prior to deer winter use.

<sup>3/</sup> Entire year by all species of grazing animal.

<sup>4/</sup> After cattle use.

The following map (Utilization in Long Valley) depicts utilization during the winter of 1984-85 on the Warm Springs Allotment in Long Valley. Average utilization on all species is shown. Thirty percent of the area mapped is in the heavy to severe class, 28 percent is moderate and 42 percent is in the slight to light utilization class.

APPENDIX 2



BUCK AND BALD GATHER TREE

LEGEND



SLIGHT & LIGHT



MODERATE



HEAVY & SEVERE

UTILIZATION IN LONG VALLEY

1/17/86

DR/FONSI  
for  
Buck and Bald/Maverick-Medicine Wild Horse Gather  
EA No. NV-040-6-5

Decision: We have reviewed the proposal and concur with our staff's assessment. We approve of the proposed action to remove approximately 485 wild horses from the combined Buck and Bald/Maverick-Medicine herd areas with the mitigation as proposed. The removal of wild horses will leave a minimum population of 195 animals in the Maverick-Medicine herd and 700 animals in the Buck and Bald herd. The non-selected alternatives consist of removal of more horses than the proposed action, removal of fewer horses than the proposed action, and no action.

Rationale: The proposed action should be undertaken to effectively manage the two wild horse herds in the area, and the stipulations will ensure humane treatment of the captured horses. This is in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (P.L. 92-195), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (P.L. 94-579), Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations Subpart 4740, and Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 83-289.

Significant direct and indirect environmental benefits are anticipated for wildlife, livestock, and wild horses with the adoption of the proposed action. The plan will result in improvement of the rangeland resource on approximately 777,090 acres through decreased overutilization of the forage resource.

FONSI: We have determined that there will be no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment resulting from the implementation of the proposed action. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for this action.

Wayne M. Lowman  
Wayne M. Lowman, Acting  
Ely District Manager

1/17/86  
Date

Rodney Harris  
Rodney Harris  
Elko District Manager

1/23/86  
Date