

m 8/19/77

August 17, 1977 August 19, 1977.

Winnemucca Field Trip:

Took ASI out of Reno. I was to have met with TIME Magazine in Winnemucca but the pilot failed to inform me of the stops and Winnemucca was passed. They flew me on to Elko, where I spent the majority of the day waiting for the return trip to Winnemucca. Got to Winnemucca late that night and found that TIME had left. The helicopter was broke down and only a very small fixed-wing was available. I took the flight with BLM personnel the next a.m. We flew the Owyhee, the Lava beds, and Gerlach areas. Large numbers of bands were spotted in Owyhee, many of the bands containing as many as 50. The color conformity was noted. Bands of greys and sorrels in one band; while another would have no greys present at all. The horses were slow moving, but spooked easily. Sparcity of plants was obvious. I saw two watering sites, both which had been sighted from the air. One was being used as a water trap for the Bureau. We flew that whole day and upon returning I met with the Wild Horse Specialist in Winnemucca where we talked over the gathering process and the condition of the animals.

The next day we resumed our field trip by truck into the Owyhee Desert. First visited the holding facilities, where animals would be contained until they could be trucked to Palomino Holding facilities. The construction was of new, heavy lumber with a loading chute made out of dirt. The next trip was to the trapping area using the water hold. Evidence was clear that it had been bulldozed out by the Bureau. The trap had harge wings that protruded approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile from the water hole. Two large cliffs on each side of the canyon brought the horses in slowly. There is no escape method once the horse is coming down the canyon. Just to the outside of that trap was evidence of horses pawing the ground to obtain water. The trap site had high tree-brush types within, so that wind and shade were available to the horses along with water. The trap is checked daily as it has an automatic gate.

We went from that trap out to a dry lake bed, that with the exception of the last two years has had water in it. Therefore what little forage was available was in this area. Saw two groups of antelope at the edge of the dry lake bed. Horses could see us coming and did not move until we were within a  $\frac{1}{2}$  of mile. Again we witnessed large bands that would mix with others making a long trail of horses with approximately 100 horses within. We walked for about two or three miles looking at forage and bedding down areas. Surprisingly, while they are thin and look somewhat depressed from lack of water, they will move at great speeds to put distance between the intruder. Very few colts were observed, yet grown horses had young (perhaps long yearling) at their sides. It was said that the foaling season was running a little later than the norm. (This I confirmed this past winter, as many colts were brought in).

Went back to the area office and looked at detailed information and spoke to Mr. Conard about the possibility of the Owyhee being a wild horse refuge. He believed at that time the possibility was there as the impact from livestock was minimal. It is remote and lack of harassment is obviously a factor.