

7/1/80

IN REPLY REFER TO
4740/1790(N-016)



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ELKO DISTRICT OFFICE
P.O. Box 831
Elko, Nevada 89801

JUL 1 1980

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

Dear Ms. Lappin:

Enclosed is a copy of a draft environmental assessment analyzing a proposed reduction of wild free-roaming horses in the Elko and Winnemucca districts.

Please review the draft assessment and submit any comments, suggestions, and concerns to this office by August 1, 1980.

Sincerely yours,

RODNEY HARRIS
District Manager

Enclosure

Pic. inside

6/3/80

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD

FOR

Owyhee Desert - Snowstorm Mountains
Wild Horse Gopher

EAR NO. NV-010-0-19

Lead Responsibility Bruce Portwood ^{BP}
Bob Bolton ^{RB}

Area Manager Rough
Draft Review [Signature]

Environmental Coordinator
Rough Draft Review MZM 6/3/80

Resource Specialist Review or input

Resource	Name	Comments (✓)	Initial	Date
Lands				
Minerals				
Wildlife	<u>Kurt Ballantyne</u>	<u>none what a copy</u>	<u>KB</u>	<u>6/16/80</u>
Range	<u>Dick Stark</u>	<u>in</u>		
Watershed	<u>Dawn Siebert</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>DS</u>	<u>6/12/80</u>
Forestry				
Fire				
Recreation	<u>Kevin Carson</u>		<u>KC</u>	<u>6/6/80</u>
Cultural Values	<u>Kayla Armentrout</u>		<u>KA</u>	<u>6/3/80</u>
Other	<u>Debbie Beck</u>	<u>intert (unintentional)</u>	<u>DB</u>	<u>6/16/80</u>

Environmental Coordinator
Review of Comments MZM 6/24/80

Signatures

[Signature] 8/13/80
Area Manager Date
Progress Reported _____
Date

Monte McClelland 8/13/80
Environmental Coordinator Date

[Signature] 8/14/80
Responsible Official Date

DECISION RECORD RATIONALE

EA No. NV-010-0-19

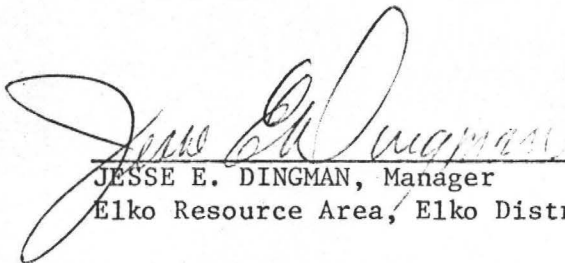
DECISION

Based on the Environmental Assessment, beneficial impacts to the environment would occur through implementation of the proposed action (removal of 1,183 wild horses). Therefore, the "no action" alternative is rejected and the proposed action is adopted as mitigated.

RATIONALE

Environmental benefits are anticipated from both habitat and direct wildlife, livestock and horse population standpoints. The "no action" alternative would allow continued and accelerating habitat deterioration proportional to increased reproductive stages and numbers of wild horses.

The proposed action does not constitute a major Federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

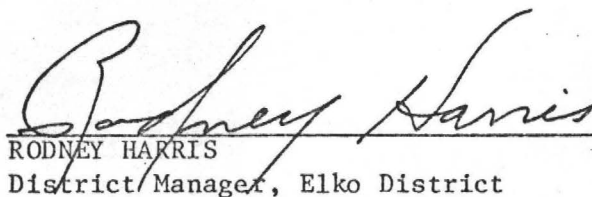


JESSE E. DINGMAN, Manager
Elko Resource Area, Elko District

5/13/80
Date

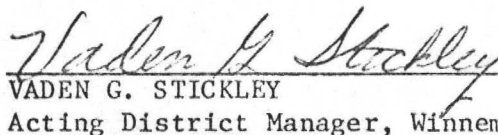
WILLIAM J. HARKENRIDER, JR., Manager
Paradise-Denio Resource Area,
Winnemucca District

Date



RODNEY HARRIS
District Manager, Elko District

8/14/80
Date



VADEN G. STICKLEY
Acting District Manager, Winnemucca District

8/29/80
Date

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. NV-010-0-19

Owyhee Desert - Snowstorm Mountains Horse Gather

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The Elko Resource Area, Elko District, and the Paradise-Denio Resource Area, Winnemucca District, Bureau of Land Management, propose to remove 1,183 wild horses, which is a part of a total population of approximately 2,040 horses (not including 1980 foal crop), beginning about October 15, 1980.

A. Background

The subject area involves lands administered by both districts (see Map No. 1). The area has historically provided important wildlife habitat and been subjected to heavy livestock and wild horse use. Observations over recent years by qualified Bureau of Land Management field personnel have resulted in growing concerns surrounding recurring water shortages and general range deterioration. One of the significant contributing factors is believed to be the result of steadily increasing (15-20% per year) and unmanaged wild horse populations which reside in the subject area on a yearlong basis.

The Bureau of Land Management is directed to protect, manage, and control wild free-roaming horses and burros as authorized by P.L. 92-195 Section 3, P.L. 94-579 Section 404 and P.L. 95-514 Section 14. This management includes maintaining an ecological balance on the public lands.

Over the past years, drought and the increase in wild horse and other grazing animals have depleted the range condition and adversely affected the ecological balance of the area.

A wild horse inventory was conducted in the Owyhee, Little Humboldt, and Rock Creek Allotments (administered by Elko District) on January 31 and February 1, 1980. A total of 503 wild horses was counted as follows:

<u>ALLOTMENT</u>	<u>ADULT HORSES</u>	<u>FOALS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	
Owyhee	178	55	233	100
Little Humboldt	153	37	190	100
Rock Creek	72	8	<u>80</u>	25
		GRAND TOTAL	503	

A wild horse inventory was conducted in the Fairbanks Field, Twin Valley Spring Field, Lake Creek Field and Bullhead Allotment (administered by Winnemucca District) on February 25 and 26, 1980. A total of 1,537 wild horses was counted as follows:

<u>FIELD OR ALLOTMENT</u>	<u>ADULT HORSES</u>	<u>FOALS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Fairbanks	179	49	228
Twin Valley Spring	276	53	329
Lake Creek	237	61	298
Bullhead	566	116	682
			125
			50
			1,537
	GRAND TOTAL		1,537

On December 1, 1978, the Elko District received a claim of ownership of 20 horses on public lands in the Owyhee Allotment from Roaring Springs Associates. No branded horses were found at the attempted gather. Elko and Winnemucca Districts have received five requests from ranchers on the concerned area to remove wild horses which are straying onto private lands and causing range deterioration (see Appendix A).

The Winnemucca District conducted a wild horse gather in 1977 and removed 1,100 wild horses from Lake Creek, Twin Valley Spring and Fairbanks Fields.

B. Proposed Action

The proposed gathering operation would be conducted within the described allotments (see Map No. 2) to remove the following number of horses per allotment/field:

<u>ALLOTMENT/ FIELD</u>	<u>HORSES PRESENT</u>	<u>HORSES TO BE REMOVED</u>	<u>HORSES TO REMAIN</u>
Owyhee	233	133	100
Little Humboldt	190	100	90
Rock Creek	80	50	30
Bullhead	682	400	282
Lake Creek	298	200	98
Twin Valley Spring	329	200	129
Fairbanks	228	100	128
TOTALS	2,040 *	1,183	857

* This figure does not include the 1980 foal crop.



Heavy utilization of forage by wild horses in the
Little Owyhee and Bullhead Allotments



Temporary traps with deflector wings encompassing less than one acre each would be constructed where needed in each allotment/field. The use of a contracted helicopter and horse riders would be necessary to drive and direct horses in an efficient and careful manner. Hazards such as cliffs and fences would be scouted in advance and existing roads and trails would be used. Horses would be truck-hauled to temporary holding facilities in Palomino Valley, Nevada, or an alternate location, then shipped to distribution centers in the Midwest for adoption. Horses that might be held at the trap site in excess of 24 hours would have food and water provided. Horses gathered which are branded or privately owned could be redeemed by their owners after payment of the gathering costs and trespass charges. Private horses not redeemed will be treated under Nevada estray laws.

A total of 20 to 30 selected horses will be collared with identifiable neck bands and released for study purposes. Selection will be made by appropriate district personnel.

The proposed action is considered an interim measure to assist in the control of habitat overuse pending completion of court mandated Environmental Impact Statements and formal vegetation allocations which will not be fully implemented until after 1981 for the Paradise-Denio Resource Area and 1986 for the Elko Resource Area.

C. Alternatives

Current economic and political constraints limit other technically feasible and reasonably available alternatives which could be expected to attain the objectives of the proposed action. Herd reductions of less than the proposed action would not significantly reduce habitat competition and would reduce economic efficiency.

Alternative: No Action.

Under this alternative, no wild horses would be gathered.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

A. Non-living Components

Topography of the subject area consists of flat desert in the northern part and mountains, canyons, alluvial fans, basins and valley floors in the southern part. Annual precipitation varies from 20 inches in the Snowstorm Mountains to 8 inches on the Owyhee Desert. Precipitation occurrences are highest from November through January, occurring mostly as snow. Average temperatures range from 95° F. in summer to -10° F. in winter.

Prevailing winds are usually westerly and are common from April through October.

Air quality is good and does not appear to exceed the State of Nevada Ambient Air Quality Standards. Inversions may occur in some areas but are generally of short duration. There is no knowledge of air pollution occurring due to these inversions.

Soils are predominantly Aridisols and Mollisols and are shallow to moderately deep. The following table depicts soil characteristics.

<u>GENERAL DISTRIBUTION</u>	<u>PRODUCTIVITY</u>	<u>EROSION SUSCEPTIBILITY</u>	<u>TEXTURES</u>
Alluvial plains, bottoms	moderate-high	moderate	mod. fine-medium
Benches, fans, terraces	moderate	moderate	fine-mod. fine
Mountain uplands	moderate-high	slight	fine-mod. fine

The majority of the streams flow intermittently and contribute most runoff during the spring. Reservoirs, springs and wells provide additional water. The water source on the Owyhee Desert is minimal after reservoirs dry up about June and competition by ungulates increases, causing excessive trampling around remaining waters.

B. Living Components

1. Aquatic Plants

True aquatic plant communities are limited to one perennial stream, springs and a few reservoirs. Plants identified as true aquatics include cattail (Typha spp.), sedges (Carex spp.), rushes (Juncus spp.) and bulrush (Scirpus spp.).

2. Terrestrial Plants

Major plant associations are characterized as big sagebrush-grass, low sagebrush-grass, shadscale and riparian.

The big sagebrush-grass and low sagebrush-grass types are dominated by big sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata) and low sagebrush (A. arbuscula), respectively. Other shrubs include currant (Ribes spp.), rabbitbrush (Chrysothamnus spp.), snowberry (Symphoricarpos spp.), and antelope bitterbrush (Purshia tridentata). Major grass species include bluebunch wheatgrass (Agropyron spicatum), Indian ricegrass (Oryzopsis hymenoides), Idaho fescue (Festuca idahoensis), Sandberg bluegrass (Poa secunda), and bottlebrush squirreltail (Sitanion hystrix). Forbs include arrowleaf balsamroot (Balsamorhiza sagittata), lupine (Lupinus spp.), phlox (Phlox spp.) and aster (Aster spp.).

The shadscale type is found in the northern portion of the Owyhee Desert. Major plant species include shadscale (Atriplex confertifolia), bud sagebrush (Artemisia spinescens) and big sagebrush. Smaller amounts of winter-fat (Eurotia lanata) grow in this type. Major grass species include squirreltail, Sandberg bluegrass, and cheatgrass (Bromus tectorum).

The only major riparian areas are along the South and North Forks of the Little Humboldt River and along the Little Owyhee River. The major tree species is willow (Salix spp.). Major shrub species include big sagebrush, currant, Wood's rose (Rosa woodsii) and rabbitbrush. Various rushes, sedges and grasses comprise stringer meadows along portions of the streams. Forbs are typical of those found in wet meadows and include dandelion (Taraxicum officinale), yarrow (Achillea lanulosa) and iris (Iris spp.).

There are no known listed or proposed threatened and endangered plants in the gathering area.

3. Aquatic Animals

Aquatic mammals which inhabit the area along the North and South Forks of the Little Humboldt River include the beaver (Castor canadensis) and raccoon (Procyon lotor). Several species of water-associated birds have been observed utilizing streams, springs and reservoirs. Several species of amphibians and fish are also found in this area. The Lahonton cutthroat trout (Salmo clarki hershawi) is currently on the Federal threatened species list. The red-banded trout (Salmo spp.) is considered a species of special concern by officials of the Nevada Department of Wildlife. Both species inhabit the gathering area as shown in Map 4. No data is available on kinds or amounts of aquatic invertebrates or zooplankton.

4. Terrestrial Animals

The more common species of mammals include mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus), pronghorn (Antilocapra americana), coyote (Canis latrans), bobcat (Lynx rufus), badger (Taxidea taxus), black-tailed jackrabbit (Lepus californicus), Belding's ground squirrel (Spermophilus beldingi), antelope ground squirrel (Ammospermophilus leucurus), desert woodrat (Neotoma lepida), Ord kangaroo rat (Dipodomys ordii), domestic cattle (Bos taurus) and wild horses (Equus caballus).

The more common species of birds include sagegrouse (Centrocercus urophasianus), chukar (Alectoris chukar), golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos), and red-tailed hawk (Buteo jamaicensis). A variety of passerine and non-passerine birds and reptiles occur in the subject area.

Horses have occurred in this area for many years. They are all descendents of ranch horses that were released in the area and have continued to propagate and increase. Aerial census efforts conducted during January and February, 1980 indicate approximately 2,040 horses presently reside in the subject area on a yearlong basis.

Horses prefer grasses and grasslike species but they also will utilize shrubs and forbs when necessary. Heavy use by horses and cattle in the subject area has reduced desirable grasses to the point that only shrubs and unavailable grasses remain.

Mule deer and pronghorn are important species in the subject area. Reasonable numbers are estimated at 1,318 pronghorn within the proposed gather area. Reasonable numbers and AUM (Animal Unit Month) demand for pronghorn by season of use is shown in Appendix B. Pronghorn food consumption is influenced by seasonal preference, availability and quality of forage. Shrubs, such as sagebrush, provide crucial food and cover requirements for pronghorn winter survival. Forbs and grasses are more important as food items in spring and summer, but shrubs remain valuable for kidding habitat.

Reasonable numbers for mule deer are estimated at 1,571 in the proposed gather area. Reasonable numbers and AUM demand for mule deer by season of use are shown in Appendix B. Mule deer concentrations are greatest in the southern part (Little Humboldt and Rock Creek Allotments) of the subject area. Antelope bitterbrush, snowberry, currant and big sagebrush provide key forage to deer. The use of grass and forbs increases in spring and summer months. A critical element is the quantity and quality of browse available during winter months.

Livestock (cattle and sheep) use portions of five allotments within the gathering area primarily during spring, summer and fall months. Available use by allotment/field is as follows:

<u>ALLOTMENT</u>	<u>FIELD</u>	<u>AUM's ACTIVE PREFERENCE</u>	<u>PERCENT FED. RANGE</u>	<u>PERMITTEE</u>
Bullhead		12,050	100	Nevada Vaca, Inc.
Little Owyhee	Fairbanks	3,714	100	Nevada First Corp.
Little Owyhee	Antelope	41,168	100	Nevada Vaca, Inc.
	Capital			
	Calico			
	Rock Springs			
	Lake Creek			
	Twin Valley			
	Spring			
Owyhee		30,225	98	Roaring Springs Associates
Little Humboldt		7,656	97	Hammond Ranches, Inc.
Rock Creek		48,700	78	Ellison Ranching Co.

Several of the allotment operators have applied for only a portion of their grazing preference within the subject allotments. The following table depicts the non-use (AUMs not scheduled for grazing use) percentages for 1979 and 1980 grazing seasons for three of the concerned allotments.

<u>ALLOTMENT</u>	<u>PERCENT NON-USE</u>	
	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Owyhee	24	37
Bullhead	41	35
Little Owyhee		
(excluding Fairbanks Field)	76	66
Fairbanks Field	57	100

There are no known listed or proposed threatened and endangered terrestrial animals or birds in the gathering area.

C. Ecological Interrelationships

Ecological interrelationships are complex and diverse. For purposes of this analysis, discussion has been limited to major relationships involving environmental elements affected by wild horses. Wild horses are selective in their grazing patterns, in that they tend to graze some plants heavily and others not at all. As numbers of horses increase, these areas of overuse become larger and desirable plants are replaced by undesirable and less palatable species. This in turn lowers the carrying capacity for all herbivores including horses.

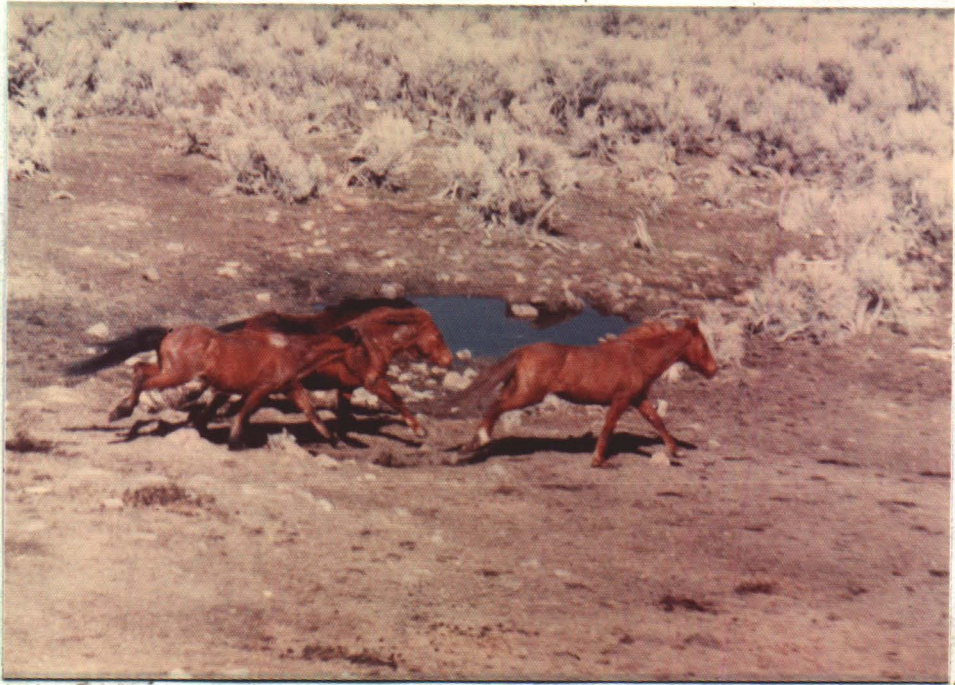
Vegetative condition is generally poor in the subject area. Desirable grasses such as Indian ricegrass and bluebunch wheatgrass, and Idaho fescue at higher elevations, have decreased in response to heavy grazing to the extent that remaining plants have low vigor or are protected by shrubs. Browse species, such as winterfat, have been severely grazed and vigor is poor due to continued overuse. Undesirable and unpalatable species such as halogeton and little rabbitbrush are increasing.

Establishment of new plants on the vesicular soils of much of the Owyhee Desert is very difficult. Most of the area being considered in the gathering plan is in a low to middle seral stage of succession. In a high seral condition there would be much less sagebrush and more perennial bunchgrasses. Natural succession toward climax (or near climax) proceeds slowly as native grasses and forbs regain vigor and begin to produce viable seed. Seedling survival is dependent on adequate soil moisture and temperature in the spring. Only a limited amount of surface ground can be recolonized if sagebrush has significantly increased.

Where livestock and wild horses have access to streams, damage to the riparian areas has occurred from excessive grazing along stringer meadows and trampling and trailing along the streams.

Riparian areas will respond positively and more rapidly if the disturbing factors are removed. Willows will increase along streambanks when terminal leaders are not removed, due mainly to the increase of suckling sprouting. When streams have extensive downcuts, the lowered water table will not allow the meadow vegetation to reestablish itself, and big sagebrush and rubber rabbitbrush (C. nauseosus) will invade and effectively take over the site. In order to rehabilitate such a site, it is necessary to raise the water table to a point where the brush species can not survive due to constant root inundation. This would require the use of artificial structures.

Wild horses, livestock, pronghorn and deer are the largest forage consumers in the subject area. Smaller consumers include jackrabbits, cottontails (Sylvilagus nuttalli) and small rodents. These herbivorous species provide food for the various carnivores. The largest carnivore, the coyote, can usually kill very young pronghorn or deer fawns. Smaller forage consumers are preyed upon by coyotes, badgers, bobcats, eagles, hawks and other predators. Both herbivore and carnivore carcasses serve as food for the various scavengers, both vertebrate and invertebrate.



Deterioration of meadow sites surrounding
water sources in the Bullhead Allotment



Competition for space, forage and water between livestock, wildlife and wild horses affects their survival and reproductive rates. Pronghorn are particularly susceptible to these ecological limits as they do not compete well for limited water supplies.

D. Human Values

Contrasting and varied topography makes the gathering area visually pleasing to many people. The Owyhee Desert is a relatively flat, sagebrush type which stretches from the Snowstorm Mountains to Idaho. The Snowstorm Mountains, south of the Owyhee Desert, rise gently as a continuation of the same geologic formation as the Desert.

The Desert is cut by canyons which serve as drainages for the North and South Forks of the Little Humboldt River and Little Owyhee River. Desert Ranch (Chimney Creek) Reservoir is the only significant body of water by size. Many large dry meadows or lakebeds, including Button Lake, Corral Lake, Shallow Lake and Silver Lake, present a diversity from the monotypic sagebrush type on the Desert. Aspen thickets exist at the higher elevations on the Snowstorm Mountains.

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 little recreational use of horses, either by viewing or photography, is made by visitors in the area.

Archaeological data for the Owyhee Desert and Snowstorm Mountains is scarce. A major test excavation was completed in 1979 near Twin Valley Spring (T.45N., R.43E., Sec.28, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$). The tests were required because of the identification of a possible Pleistocene mountain sheep from the site. Two minor rockblinds (CrNV-02-728 through 732) were discovered on the bluffs directly above Twin Valley Spring.

Investigation of the proposed Lake Creek Fence found only a few significant flakes or parts of projectiles. An old rock house exists on the banks of Willow Creek near Three Corners (the common point on the borders of Oregon, Idaho and Nevada). The Shoshone and Paiute tribes are believed to be the principal native tribes which used this area in ancient times. Most major archaeological sites in the Owyhee Desert are located adjacent to water and indicate a long history of occupation of the area.

Lands included within the subject area are in various stages of Wilderness Inventory. The proposed action would have no significant impact on wilderness characteristics (see Appendix C).

III. ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action

Remove 1,183 Wild Horses.

1. Environmental Impacts

a. Anticipated Impacts

(1) Non-living Components

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.

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 will be conducted at least $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away from water; therefore, no 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 for all animals.

(2) Living Components

An area less than one acre in size at each trap location would be severely trampled during gathering operations. Vegetative regeneration would be expected within 2-3 years depending on climatic conditions.

It is expected that the intensity of livestock grazing will remain the same or decrease in most allotments/fields.

The decreased horse population would have a high positive impact on terrestrial plants over a period of time. Decreased grazing pressure would slow downward trends in overall range condition.

Because activities would be conducted away from water, no adverse impacts would be anticipated on Lahonton cutthroat and red-banded trout as a result of the gather operation.

A high 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. There would be a high positive impact on remaining horses, livestock and wildlife because of reduced competition for available forage. A negligible impact to wildlife is expected during the gathering process. Wildlife could be temporarily frightened or displaced by the increased activity in the area.

(3) Ecological Interrelationships

A decrease in the horse population would result in a high positive impact on vegetative species composition. Palatable plant species would remain established and regain their vigor from reduced competition for forage. Unpalatable invader species would not become dominant.

(4) Human Values

Range users and the livestock industry would benefit from the removal of horses. Big game and upland game hunting may also benefit.

Removal of wild horses would reduce viewing opportunity and affect those who value horses. In addition, the removal may reduce observation of poor quality and starved horses.

Much biological information can be obtained from the gathered animals (e.g. sex and age ratios, parasites, diseases, etc.). All of this information, as well as data obtained from proposed color coded collaring, will be useful in management of the horses in the future.

Visual quality would not be significantly affected (see III.A.1,a.(1) and Appendix C).

b. Mitigating Measures

- (1) Horse handling will be kept to a minimum.
- (2) No gathering will be allowed after March 1, 1981, because of potential stress to pregnant and lactating mares and possibility of induced abortions. Gathering may be resumed when foals can withstand the stress of gathering operations.
- (3) A veterinarian will be on call during the gathering operation.
- (4) A qualified Bureau employee 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 condition 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.
- (5) Helicopters will be used with caution. A qualified district BLM representative will be present during gathering attempts to ensure strict compliance with the above mileage limitations and CFR 4700 regulations.
- (6) Captured horses that are obviously lame, deformed or sick will be humanely disposed of at the trap site.
- (7) A cultural resources investigation by an archaeologist or district archaeological technician will be conducted prior to any trap construction. If a significant find is discovered, an alternative trap site will be selected.
- (8) All corral panels will be from 72" to 84" high in order to prevent horses from jumping out of traps.
- (9) Disturbed ground around each trap site will be rehabilitated in a manner that is determined feasible by the Area Manager.
- (10) Trap sites will not be placed in areas of any known listed or proposed threatened or endangered plant species.



Excessive trailing by wild horses causes range depletion in the Little Owyhee Allotment



- (11) Trap sites will not be placed in known sage-grouse brooding areas or in pronghorn kidding areas (see Map No. 3).
- (12) Trap sites will not be placed within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of water sources, such as streams, springs, reservoirs or troughs.
- (13) Trap sites and routes of travel to trap sites will comply with wilderness stipulations found in the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines (see Appendix C).

c. Residual Impacts

Reduced competition for water and vegetation should result in improved plant vigor, condition, and reproductive potential. A sufficient horse population would remain to maintain a viable horse herd.

2. Relationship Between Short-term Use and Long-term Productivity

The proposed action would cause minimal soil and vegetation disturbance, and may cause injuries and/or deaths of some wild horses. Long-term productivity of the vegetative resources should improve by reducing the number of wild horses in conjunction with voluntary livestock grazing reductions. Reduced grazing pressure will progressively enhance both vegetative condition and wildlife populations until the wild horse population again reaches its current level (this is calculated to be 6-7 years, assuming horses increase at a rate of 15% per year).

3. Irreversible or Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources

None.

B. Alternative

No Action.

1. Environmental Impacts

a. Anticipated Impacts

(1) Non-living Components

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

(2) Living Components

A high negative impact on vegetation and animals is anticipated under this alternative. Uncontrolled horse numbers would increase to the point that most available forage would be utilized, to the increasing detriment of livestock, wildlife and horses themselves. Some animals may die of thirst due to limited water supplies.

(3) Ecological Interrelationships

A high negative impact on vegetative species composition would be anticipated from this alternative. Uncontrolled horse numbers combined with livestock and wildlife use would have a continuing adverse effect on desirable vegetative species. Continued heavy grazing of preferred forage plants would cause continued loss of plant vigor and reproductive capacity, and an increase in undesirable forage species. This would eventually result in lower productivity and population declines for most animals.

(4) Human Values

There would be greater opportunity to view horses 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.

b. Recommended Mitigating Measures

None.

c. Residual Impacts

Wild horse populations would continue to increase resulting in further deterioration of vegetation and reduced carrying capacities

2. Relationship Between Short-term Use and Long-term Productivity

Continued overuse would result in the eventual loss of soil and desirable plants through erosion and a general reduction of habitat productivity on a long-term basis.

3. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

Continued overgrazing of forage resources would result in wind and water erosion of unprotected soils.

IV. PERSONS, GROUPS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES CONSULTED

Nevada State Grazing Board #1 - Elko, Nevada
International Society for the Protection of Wild Horses and Burros,
Reno, Nevada
Wild Horse Organized Assistance, Reno, Nevada

V. INTENSITY OF PUBLIC INTEREST

To be completed after public review.

VI. PARTICIPATING STAFF

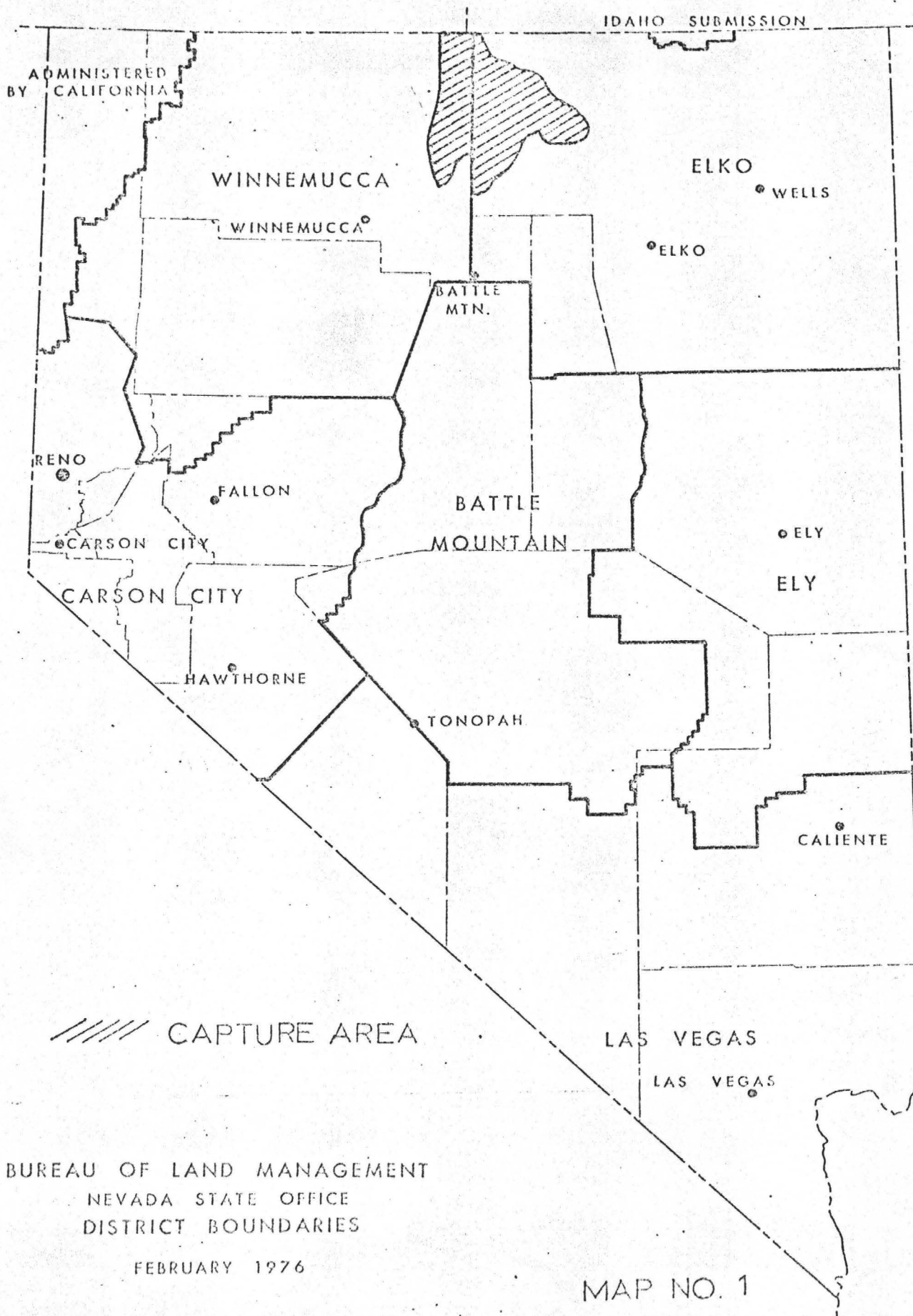
Prepared by:	Robert Bolton,	Range Conservationist, Elko District
Technical Information:	Don Amentrout,	Wildlife Biologist, Elko District, BLM
	Lynda Amentrout,	Archaeologist, Elko District, BLM
	Rodger Bryan,	Natural Resource Specialist Winnemucca District, BLM
	Jon Collins,	Range Conservationist Winnemucca District, BLM
	Gene Drais,	Outdoor Recreation Planner, Elko District, BLM
	Carl Keller,	Wildlife Biologist Winnemucca District, BLM
	Bruce Portwood,	Wild Horse and Burro Specialist Elko District, BLM

VII. SUMMARY

The Elko District and Winnemucca District, Bureau of Land Management, propose to remove 1,183 wild horses from the Owyhee Desert-Snowstom Mountains area beginning about October 15, 1980.

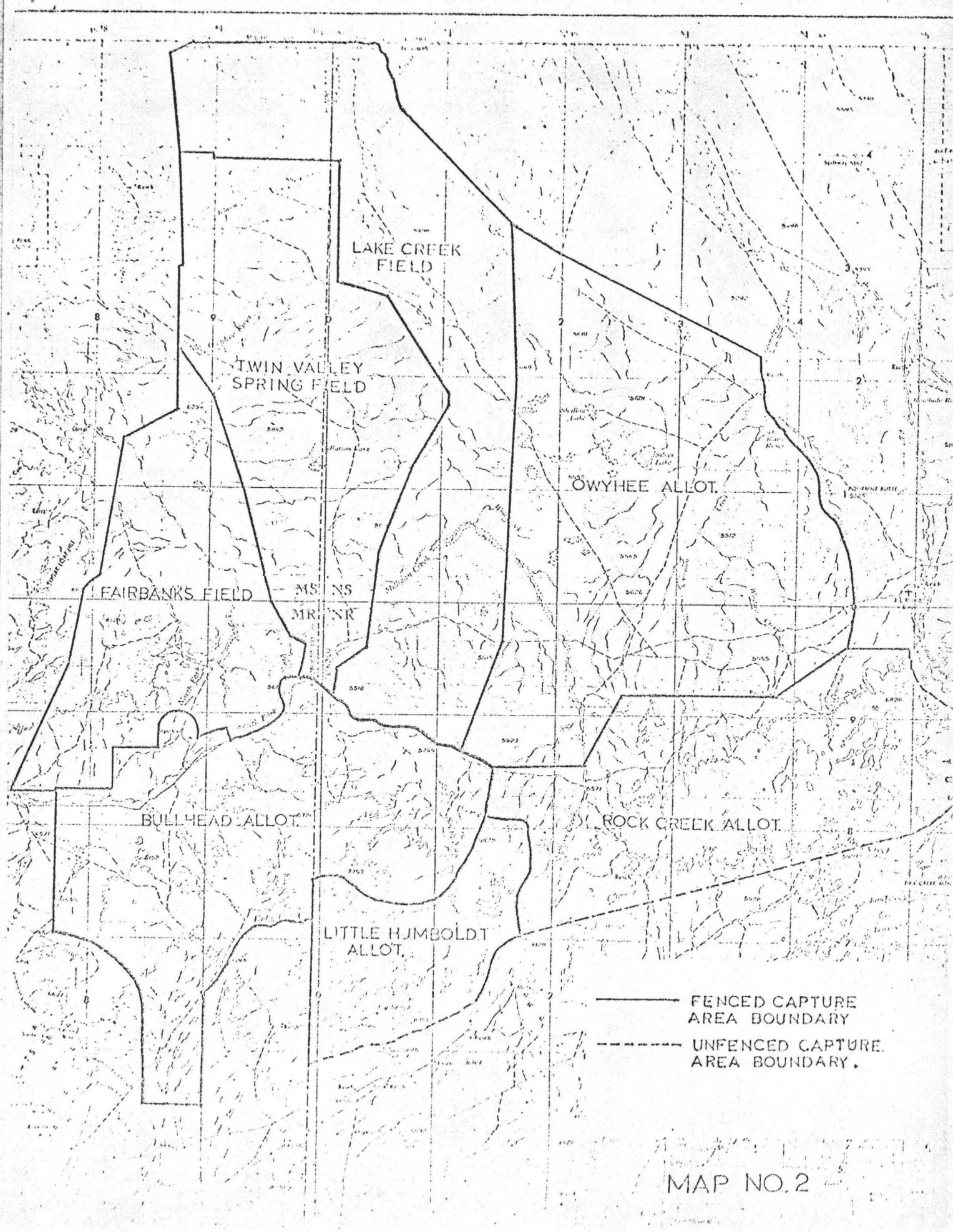
Environmental benefits are anticipated to be significant from both habitat and direct wildlife, livestock and horse population standpoints through implementation of the proposed action. The "no action" alternative would allow continued and accelerating habitat deterioration proportional to increased numbers of wild horses.

The proposed action does not constitute a major Federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
NEVADA STATE OFFICE
DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
FEBRUARY 1976

MAP NO. 1



LAKE CREEK FIELD

TWIN VALLEY SPRING FIELD

FAIRBANKS FIELD

BULLHEAD ALLOT.

LITTLE HUMBOLDT ALLOT.

OUYHEE ALLOT.

ROCK CREEK ALLOT.

— FENCED CAPTURE AREA BOUNDARY
- - - UNFENCED CAPTURE AREA BOUNDARY.

MAP NO. 2



LAKE CREEK FIELD

TWIN VALLEY SPRING FIELD

FAIRBANKS FIELD

BULLHEAD ALLOT.

LITTLE HUMBOLDT ALLOT.

OWYHEE ALLOT.

ROCK CREEK ALLOT.

PRONGHORN KIDDING AREA

SAGE GROUSE BROODING AREA

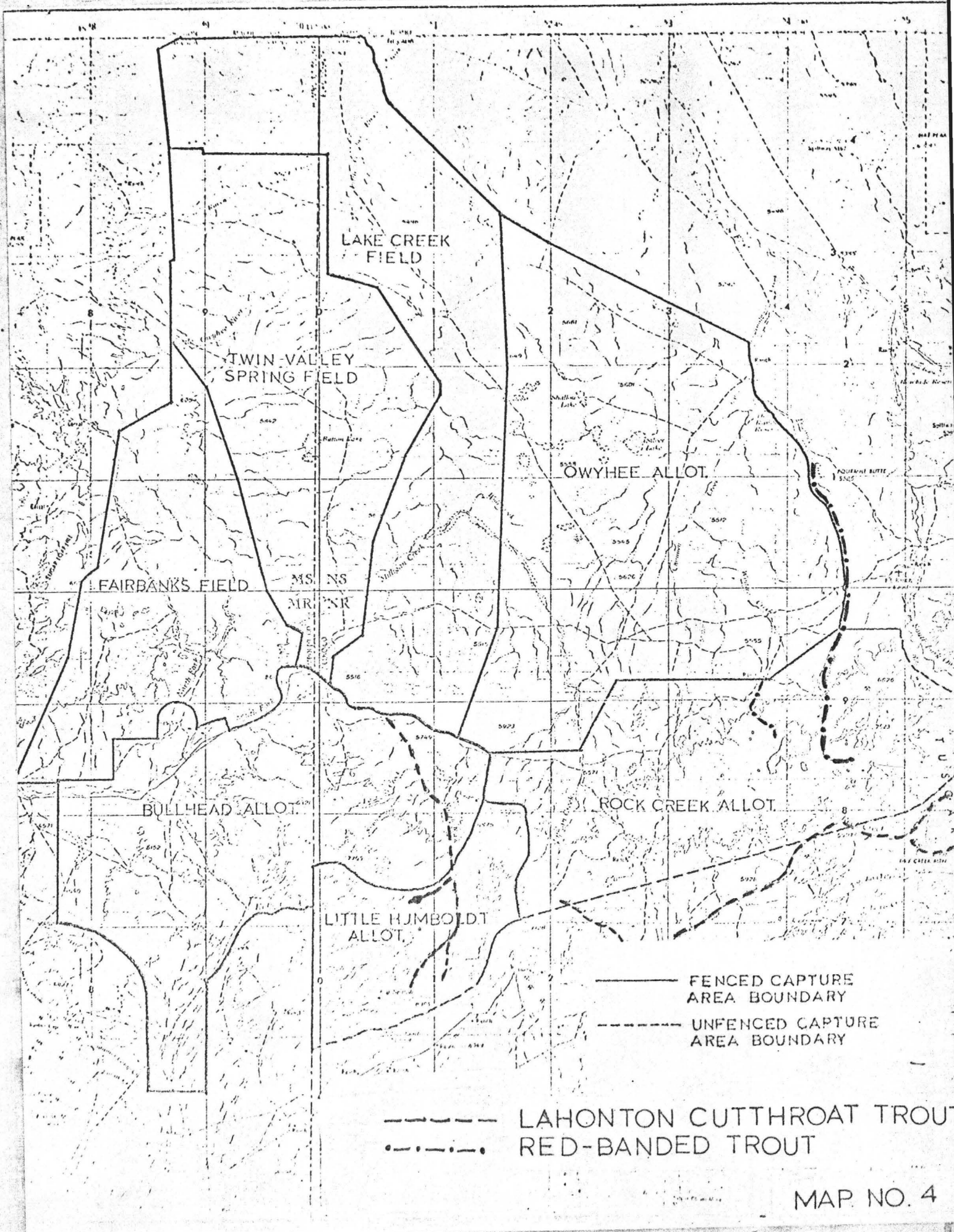
MAP NO. 3

MS. NS
MR. NR

TUSOCK

OFF CREEK MIN

Map 3



APPENDIX A

Nevada First Corporation

Farming

Ranching

Land Development

620 Melarkey Street, P.O. Box N / Winnemucca, Nevada 89445 / (702) 623-2586

3 FEB 12 AM 10 37

BLM DISTRICT
BUREAU OF LAND
MANAGEMENT

February 11, 1980

Mr. Rod Harris
Elko District Manager
Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 831
Elko, Nv. 89801

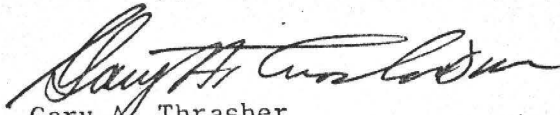
Dear Mr. Harris:

It has been brought to my attention that a substantial number of "wild and free roaming" horses under your jurisdiction are repeatedly straying from public lands onto Nevada First Corporation privately owned land, more specifically in the Little Owyhee, Bull-head Allotment.

It is my understanding that Section 1334 of Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act provides that if wild free-roaming horses stray from public lands onto private lands, the owner may inform the nearest BLM office which shall arrange to have the horses removed and, that it does not matter if or if not the private land is fenced.

I'm looking forward to your co-operation in this matter.

Sincerely,



Gary A. Thrasher
Executive Vice-President
Nevada First Corporation

ELKO DISTRICT OFFICE

DISTRICT OFFICE

DISTRICT MANAGER

PLANNING

RES. MGT.

OPERATIONS

ADMIN.

ELKO R.A. ✓ *Rob*

WELLS R.A.

FILE CODE

A

RECEIVED, ELKO DISTRICT
BUREAU OF LAND
MANAGEMENT

Golconda, Nevada 89414

1980 APR 15 AM 10 06

April 14, 1980

U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management/District Director
Elko Grazing District
Elko, Nevada 89801

Dear Sir:

Re: Little Humboldt Unit

The undersigned is licensed for livestock in the Little Humboldt Unit of the Elko Grazing District. There are large numbers of wild horses in the Unit, which animals are destroying forage that is required for livestock.

Request is hereby made that appropriate action be taken by you to capture and remove these wild horses from the Little Humboldt Unit.

Yours very truly,

HAMMOND RANCH, INC.

By Cedric S. Hammond
Cedric Hammond, Authorized
Officer

RECEIVED
MANAGEMENT
ELLISON RANCHING COMPANY OFFICE
DISTRICT MANAGER
Ranches Located in Elko, Humboldt and Lander Counties, NEVADA
AFFAIRS

SPANISH RANCH -- TUSCARORA, NEVADA

1980 MAY 12 AM 7.24

May 9, 1980

Bureau of Land Management
Elko District Office
P.O. Box 831
Elko, Nevada 89801

RES. MGT.
OPERATIONS
ADMIN.
ELKO R. A. *WJW* *RGB*
INVENT.
READER FILE
FILE CODE

Gentlemen:

We are writing in regards to the Wild Horses on the public range and also on private ground which is intermingled with the public lands in the Rock Creek, Blue Humboldt, Owyhee Desert and Little owyhee.

We believe that these Wild Horses if not taken off the ranges and the way they increase in population that they will be very detrimental to the range and water supply if not controlled.

These horses cause considerable damage to the grass and vegetation so that there will be none left for the livestock or wildlife. The horses cause considerable damage to the water supply by tramping etc. at the watering sources. Most of the watering is done on streams and creeks that are on private ground. These horses are not only damaging public range but also the private lands which are not fenced in that are in the allotments. These horses are on the range for a full twelve months, where permittees livestock are on for only approximately eight months of the year.

As a private land owner it is not our intention to eliminate the wild horses, but to control them where we can live with them in our allotment.

Yours truly
Ellison Ranching Co.
By *William H. Evans*
Secretary

Nevada First Corporation

Farming

Ranching

Land Development

620 Melarkey Street, P.O. Box N / Winnemucca, Nevada 89445 / (702) 623-2586

February 11, 1980

Mr. Chet Conard
Winnemucca District Manager
Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
705 East 4th Street
Winnemucca, Nv. 89445

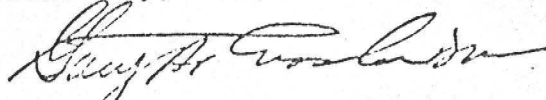
Dear Mr. Conard:

It has been brought to my attention that a substantial number of "wild and free roaming" horses under your jurisdiction are repeatedly straying from public lands onto Nevada First Corporation privately owned land, more specifically in the Little Owyhee, Bull-head Allotment.

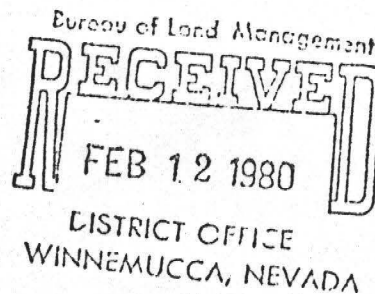
It is my understanding that Section 1334 of Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act provides that if wild free-roaming horses stray from public lands onto private lands, the owner may inform the nearest BLM office which shall arrange to have the horses removed and, that it does not matter if or if not the private land is fenced.

I'm looking forward to your co-operation in this matter.

Sincerely,



Gary R. Thrasher
Executive Vice-President
Nevada First Corporation



A

APPENDIX B

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Reasonable No's</u>	<u>AUM Demand</u>
Owyhee		
AY	268	643
Little Humboldt		
DS	466	932
DY	12	16
Bullhead		
DS	70	140
DY	623	889
Rock Creek		
DW	150	150
DY	250	300
Little Owyhee		
AW	476	570
AS	311	373
AY	263	523
 TOTALS		
AW	476	570
AS	311	373
AY	531	1,166
DW	150	150
DS	536	1,072
DY	885	1,205
 Total Antelope	1,318	2,109
Total Deer	1,571	2,427

Legend: AW - Antelope Winter Use
 AS - Antelope Summer Use
 AY - Antelope Yearlong Use
 DW - Deer Winter Use
 DS - Deer Summer Use
 DY - Deer Yearlong Use

APPENDIX C

memorandum

ELKO DISTRICT OFFICE
P.O. BOX 831
Elko, Nevada 89801

DATE: May 15, 1980

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: Gene L. Drais, ORP

SUBJECT: Wilderness and VRM Stipulations and
Requirements for Horse Gather

TO: Bob Bolton, Range Conservationist

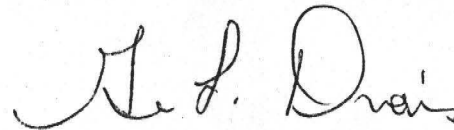
The proposed horse gather covers land contained within Intensive Inventory Units NV-010-102, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 132, 133, and 134 in the Elko District. All of these are recommended for wilderness clearance except for a portion of unit 132. The State Director's final decision is expected to be issued on these September 30, 1980 and become final October 30, 1980.

The following statements taken from pages 23 and 24 of the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines should be included as part of the stipulations for the gather.

"Motorized access on existing access routes may be permitted. Cross-country motorized access may be authorized along routes specified by the BLM if it satisfies the nonimpairment criteria, including reclamation requirements; no grading or blading will be permitted. Temporary roads may be built if the BLM has determined that they satisfy the nonimpairment criteria."

"Temporary facilities for management of wild horses and burros (horse traps, etc.) may be installed if they satisfy the nonimpairment criteria."

So as to minimize visual impact, the wings and the horse corral etc., should be dismantled after the operation. Dust will raise temporarily but is of no significant consequence.



Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan