



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Winnemucca Field Office  
5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard  
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445  
702-623-1500

In Reply Refer To:  
(NV-22.10)  
4100

April 30, 1998

*received  
may 4, 1998*

Dear Interested Public:

I am sending you a preliminary copy of the Blue Wing/Majuba Fence Environmental Assessment. This project was identified in the 1994 Blue Wing/Seven Troughs Allotment Evaluation. No comments were received on either the draft or final allotment evaluation about the fence. The fence was staked in 1997.

Before we continue with the project, such as doing the cultural clearances, I wanted input from the interested publics as to the proposed fence route; especially through the Kamma Mountains Herd Management Area.

Please submit you comments by May 18, 1998, to Rich Adams. If needed, Rich could arrange for a field tour to discuss any issue(s) raised in the review of the preliminary environmental assessment.

If you have any questions, please contact Rich at (702) 623-1500.

Sincerely yours,

*for Duane E. Wilson*  
Colin P. Christensen  
Assistant District Manager, Winnemucca

CC:

C-Punch Ranch, Inc.  
Pershing Cty Sportsmen's  
NV Land & Resource Co, LLC  
Honorable Harry Reid, Attn: Wendell Newman  
Division of Wildlife  
N. Riedy, The Wilderness Society  
Ms. Betsy Macfarlan, NV Cattlemen's Association  
Wes Cook  
Joe Dahl  
Ms. Johanna H. Wald, NRDC  
Chuck Dodd, OCTA

Buster Dufurrena  
Tim Delong  
Ms. Cathy Barcomb, CPWH  
Mayor Hugh Montrose  
Resource Concepts, Inc.  
Desert Bighorn Council  
Ms. Paula Jewell, Human Society of U.S  
Bob Irvin  
Keith Guenther  
Marion A. McClellan, Pershing Cty Concerned Citizens

John Espil  
Myron J. Goldsworthy  
Mrs. Dawn Lappin, WHOA  
Pershing County Commissioners  
Bob Schweigert, Intr Range Consultants  
Ms. Stephanie D. Licht, NV Woolgrowers  
Ms. Karen Sussman, ISPMB  
Mel Cheney, SCS  
Ms. Rose Strickland, Sierra Club-Toiyabe

## Environmental Assessment Blue Wing/Majuba Boundary Fence

### I. Introduction

#### Background

The 1994 Blue Wing/Seven Troughs Allotment evaluation and subsequent Final Multiple Use Decision (FMUD) implemented a north/south grazing strategy for C-Punch. The decision required C-Punch to graze livestock in the northeast portion of the allotment, an area in that in the past hasn't had substantial livestock numbers. Once C-Punch places large number of cattle in this area, cattle could drift over Imlay and Antelope Summits and through Poker Brown Gap toward Rye Patch Reservoir. This would create a management problem for BLM, C-Punch and Delong in the Majuba Allotment.

The Land Use Plan (LUP) identified the Antelope Range Herd Area (HA) as an area that would not be managed for wild horses. This was due to the checkerboard land pattern and requests from the land owners to remove wild horses from their private lands. Since then the District has completed six gathers to remove wild horses. Due to a lack of topographic barriers, horses from the Kamma Mountains and Seven Troughs Herd Management Areas (HMAs) return to the Antelope Range HA.

The 1994 Blue Wing/Seven Troughs Allotment Evaluation recognized these problems and recommended a north/south fence be constructed (page 62 of the Final Evaluation). The 1986 Blue Wing/Seven Troughs Herd Management Plan identified constructing a fence along the allotment boundaries to keep wild horses in the HMAs (page 17).

#### Purpose and Need

Construct a boundary fence between the Blue Wing/Seven Troughs and Majuba Allotments. This fence serves two purposes: 1.) Livestock management and 2.) Maintain wild horses within the Kamma Mountains and Seven Troughs HMAs and out of the Antelope Range HA. The proposed fence changes the historic allotment boundaries and a Rangeline Agreement or decision would have to be approved.

Building the fence would be in conformance with the Sonoma-Gerlach Land Use Plan.

## II. Proposed Action and Alternatives

Construct about 32 miles of fence (see attached map). There would be no blading along the fence route. The fence would be three wires, with the bottom wire smooth. The wire spacing would be 18" for the bottom wire, 26" for the middle wire, and 38" for the top wire. The wire spacing is a modification of BLM's specification based on comments received in the planning stages. Line posts would be 16.5' ( a rod) apart. Gates would be installed on every minor road/trail, every mile if there are no roads/trails, adjacent to cattle guards, and more frequent in areas where domestic sheep graze. All gates would have either wire or mechanical gate closers installed. Off-set gates would be constructed in the Kamma Mountain HMA. This would expedite moving horses that stray onto the checkerboard lands, back to the HMA. Fabric strips would be installed 50 feet either side of the gates. The horses should see the fence easier with the fabric attached. This material should last for several years. The line posts would be green except from Rosebud Canyon to the Jungo road where these posts would be red with white tops. This would make it easier for the horses to see. Cattle guards would be installed on the county roads (4), the road to Judges Spring and the access roads to Placerities. A cattle guard would not be put on the portion of the fence which crosses the Applegate-Lassen Trail (California Trail on the map). All the cattle guards would be of sufficient size and load bearing strength based on expected traffic. The cattle guards would have rebar welded between each rail to prevent horses from stepping between the rails and becoming caught.

Steel pipe would be used to construct corners, stretch panels and gates. In the vicinity of Rocky Canyon rock cribs could be used for corners. The gate on the Applegate-Lassen Trail would be built using wooden posts.

The fence would be constructed in two phases, phase one starts at the south end, in Sage Valley, to Rosebud Canyon. The second phase goes from Rosebud to the railroad tracks near Mandalay Spring. Most of the fence could be accessed from roads or two-track.

BLM would continue to manage wild horses on the west side of the fence, but east of the fence BLM would manage for zero wild horses. The appropriate management level (AML) for both HMAs would not be adjusted because of the fence.

The proposed fence would require adjustments in the historical allotment boundary lines (see allotment boundary map). C-Punch would run their livestock on the west side of the fence. Tim Delong's operation would be entirely on the east side of the fence, in the Majuba Allotment. Buster Dufurrena's and John Espil's sheep operations would continue to graze in their historic use areas, both sides of the fence.

Any adjustments to the permitted use or AML would be based on utilization and trend data. At this time no adjustments are expected.

The BLM and permittees are cooperating in the construction of the proposed fence. The costs would be split about 50-50. C-Punch would maintain the fence starting at the southern end north to the road going into the Judges. Tim DeLong's portion begins there and continue to the road to Wildrose Spring in the Kamma Mountains. Buster Dufurrena would maintain the fence from there to the railroad tracks.

### Alternatives

**Alternative 1: From Mauds Well, follow the HMA boundary north-** The location of the southern portion of the fence would remain the same to Mauds Well, where the fence would intersect the HMA boundary. At Mauds Well, the fence would follow the Kamma Mountains HMA boundary north to the railroad tracks. Fence construction techniques, specifications and materials would be the same. This route would require at least four more gates and go through more rugged terrain.

Tim DeLong would graze livestock on both sides of the fence. Both sheep operators would still use both sides of the fence.

**Alternative 2: No Action** - the fence would not be built.

Other Alternatives:

The following alternatives were considered but were dropped because they would not meet resource needs. There will be no further analysis.

**Alternative 3:** Construct a fence the adjudicated allotment boundary line.

**Alternative 4:** Construct a fence along the top of the Kamma Mountains to the boundary fence of HyCroft Mine.

### **III. Affected Environment**

See Attachment 1 for a list of vegetative species found along the proposed fence line. The south end of the fence would cross a salt desert shrub community. From Rocky Canyon to the Jungo Road, the vegetation community is sagebrush/grassland. From Jungo Road to the railroad tracks the vegetation community is greasewood/desert shrub. There are no noxious weeds along the proposed route. The soils range from a sandy loam at the south end grading into

droughty loams and silty loams at the higher elevations to a sodic terrace near the railroad tracks.

The predominate wildlife species are song birds, jack rabbits and reptiles. Pronghorn are the dominate big game species found along the proposed fence. The closest known sage grouse lek is located about one mile from the proposed route.

The proposed fence location is within a Class IV Visual Resource Management Area. The proposed fence crosses the Applegate-Lassen Trail at T30N, R30E, Section 18. The trail is on the National Register of Historic Places. The trail at this location is a Class II segment as defined by the Oregon-California Trails Association Handbook. The definition of Class II is:

"The trail retains elements of its original condition but shows use by motor vehicles, typically as a two-track road overlaying the original wagon trail. There is little or no evidence of having been altered permanently by modern road improvements, such as widening, blading, grading, crowning, or gravelling..."

The handbook calls for preserving Class II segments "from any further man-made alterations and intrusions, including road improvements..."

The proposed fence would cross portions of the Kamma Mountains and the Seven Troughs HMAs. The FMUD established the following AML ranges:

Kamma Mountains

48 to 64 wild horses

Seven Troughs

93 to 124 wild horses  
28 to 37 burros

The attached map shows wild horse locations documented on census flights. The distribution flights were not used. The census flights tend to have more accurate wild horses numbers than the distribution flights. A helicopter is used for censusing while an airplane is used for determining distribution. The distribution flights had the same patterns as the census flights. Only the Kamma Mountains HMA data was put on the map since this would be the most controversial area.

The table shows wild horse numbers east (checkerboard lands) and west of the proposed fence by HMA:

Year	Kamma Mountains		Seven Troughs	
	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>
1983	5	26	--	--
1984	15	99	319	322
1987	6	13	78	650
1989	0	11	23	161
1992	4	12	32	397
1994	22*	27	13	317
1995	23	25	Not Counted	292
1997	0	100	**	

\* Relocated 37 wild horses from the Humboldt HA and 6 from the Trinity HA in 1993 into the Kamma Mountains HMA.

\*\* HMA not censused in 1997. Scheduled to be censused summer of 1998.

Approximately 11,000 acres of the Kamma Mountains HMA would be east of the proposed fence. Approximately 30,000 acres of the Seven Troughs HMA would be east of the fence. Since this township is checkerboard, about half (15,000) of those acres are public lands. There are no waters located between the road and Kamma Mountains HMA boundary. The only waters are located east, outside, of the HMA boundary; Mitchum Spring and Mauds Well. These water rights are owned by Tim Delong and the spring is located on private land.

There are two operating mines in the Kamma Mountains HMA, HyCroft and Rosebud. HyCroft is an open pit mine with leach pads and other associated facilities. Rosebud is an underground mine. None of the ore is processed on site but is hauled to the Twin Creek Mine near Golconda NV. The haul road passes through the HMA and is just east of the proposed fence line. The Environmental Assessment for the ore hauling identified a potential conflict of wild horses being struck by the ore trucks. Wild horse mitigation identified in the EA required a slower speed limit and warning signs to be posted. Based on current projections, ore should be hauled for about six more years, until 2004. Hauling may continue longer, pending on-going exploration and ore body delineations which may extend the life of the mine. To date, there are no accounts of a wild horse/haul truck collision or near miss.

No on the ground field investigation has been conducted for sensitive/protected plants and animal species. However, according to the Nevada Threatened and Endangered Plant Map Book, as updated, no sensitive plants have been observed in the project area. There could be a potential impact to the Western Burrowing

Owl, a Nevada BLM sensitive species. The owl is a small underground nesting bird of prey which lives in colonies inside abandoned rodent and small mammal dens. The openings appear as obvious holes in the ground marked by whitewash excrement from the colony. None were observed during the staking of the fence.

Other Nevada BLM sensitive species that may occur in the proposed project area are the golden eagle, ferruginous hawk, and western sage grouse.

The following critical elements of the human environment are not present and/or not affected by the proposed action or alternatives: air quality, areas of critical environmental concerns, prime or unique farm lands, flood plains, Native American Religious concerns, paleontology, threatened or endangered species, wastes - hazardous or solids, water quality, wetlands/riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, and noxious weeds.

#### **IV. Environmental Consequences**

##### Proposed Action

Construction would cause some short-term impacts to the vegetation from crushing, trampling, and breaking. The vegetation should recover within 2-3 years after construction. The soils along the fence would withstand the impacts of driving and any animals that might walk along the fence without causing any accelerated wind or water erosion. There shouldn't be much driving along the fence line during construction and for maintenance since there are multiple roads.

There should be no impacts to wildlife and domestic sheep movements since the bottom wire would be smooth and 18" off the ground. Both animals should easily pass through the fence while keeping cattle and wild horses in the appropriate use areas. There would be some inconvenience for the sheep herders getting through the fence if a gate was not near by.

Based on input from the Oregon-California Trails Association a simple barbed wire fence would not have a significant impact on the trail nor on the visual integrity of the trail at that location. The District Archaeologist concurred with their interpretation.

For the short term (3-5 years) there could be problems of wild horses running into the fence until they are conditioned to the fence. Based on the census flights the majority of horses were found west of the fence. It would appear the area between the fence and HMA boundary does not provide substantial habitat for the horses. There are no water sources for wild horses and C-Punch livestock in this area. The 22 and 23 horses located east of the proposed fence line, 1994 and 1995

respectively, were probably horses relocated from the Humboldt and Trinity HAs trying to establish a new home range. They do not reflect the normal pattern of horses native to the area. It is documented that horses move freely between the HMA and the Antelope Range HA. Once the horses are accustomed to the fence, BLM would not have to gather horses in the Antelope Range HA.

The portion of the Seven Troughs HMA that is east of the fence is checkerboard. The wild horses on this portion of the HMA tend to interact more with the horses in the Antelope Range HA than with the horses in the western portion of the HMA. Again, the majority of the horse were found west of the fence when the HMA was censused. It would appear the area between the fence and the eastern HMA boundary does not provide substantial habitat for the horses.

The fence should eliminate any chances of wild horses being struck by a haul truck. Livestock generally use the area east of the road.

The impacts to Western Burrowing Owls should have a low probability of occurring due to the scattered distribution of the species and the likelihood that vehicles would not knowingly drive into the den openings since they are obvious. If the fence was constructed during the spring, there could be disturbance and/or displacement of the birds. This could possibly lead to the abandonment of the young if the fence was too close to the burrows

Visual resources were considered in the analysis of the project and were determined not to be impacted by the proposed action. Though the area is rated Class IV, the fence was staked using topographic features to screen the fence from the major roads. Therefore, a VRM worksheet was not completed.

### Alternatives

**Alternative 1: From Mauds Well, follow the HMA boundary** - The fence would have the same impacts as the proposed action. The impacts to the livestock operations and wild horses would differ.

The area between the road and proposed fence could not readily be used by livestock since there is no water. The livestock would be fighting the fence to get to the water, causing increased maintenance. Mr. Delong was approached about putting an extension on his pipeline to put water in the HMA. Mr. Delong did not want to pursue this project.

Wild horses would utilize the entire Kamma Mountains HMA, but would still not be able to make substantial use of the land between the road and proposed fence since water is lacking. There would be increased fence maintenance with wild horses attempting to get to the water. In addition, wild horses would be at greater



risk of being hit by the haul trucks.

Alternative 2, No Action - The fence would not be constructed. C-Punch would be required to place large numbers of cattle in this area. Placing that number of cattle in this portion of the allotment would increase the chances that cattle would drift over Imlay and Antelope Summits and through Poker Brown Gap toward Rye Patch Reservoir. This would be a management problem for BLM, C-Punch and other operators. With C-Punch riding more there could still be a problem of livestock drifting out of the allotment.

Wild horses would continue using the Antelope Range HA. BLM would continue with periodic wild horses removals. The monies used for these removals could be used elsewhere addressing pressing resource issues.

### **Cumulative Impact Analysis**

All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. It has been determined that cumulative impacts would be negligible as a result of the proposed action or alternatives.

### **V. Specialists Coordination/Concurrence/Comments**

The following individuals were consulted and have provided comments during the planning stages of the project:

Charles H. Dodd	Oregon-California Trails Association
Dawn Lappin	WHOA
Cathy Barcomb	CPWH
John Espil	Permmittee
Larry Irvin (C-Punch)	Permmittee
Tim Delong	Permmittee
Buster Dufurrena	Permmittee

Attachment #1

Grasses:

Indian Ricegrass  
Bottlebrush Squirretail  
Sandberg bluegrass  
Thurber's needlegrass  
Cheatgrass  
basin wildrye

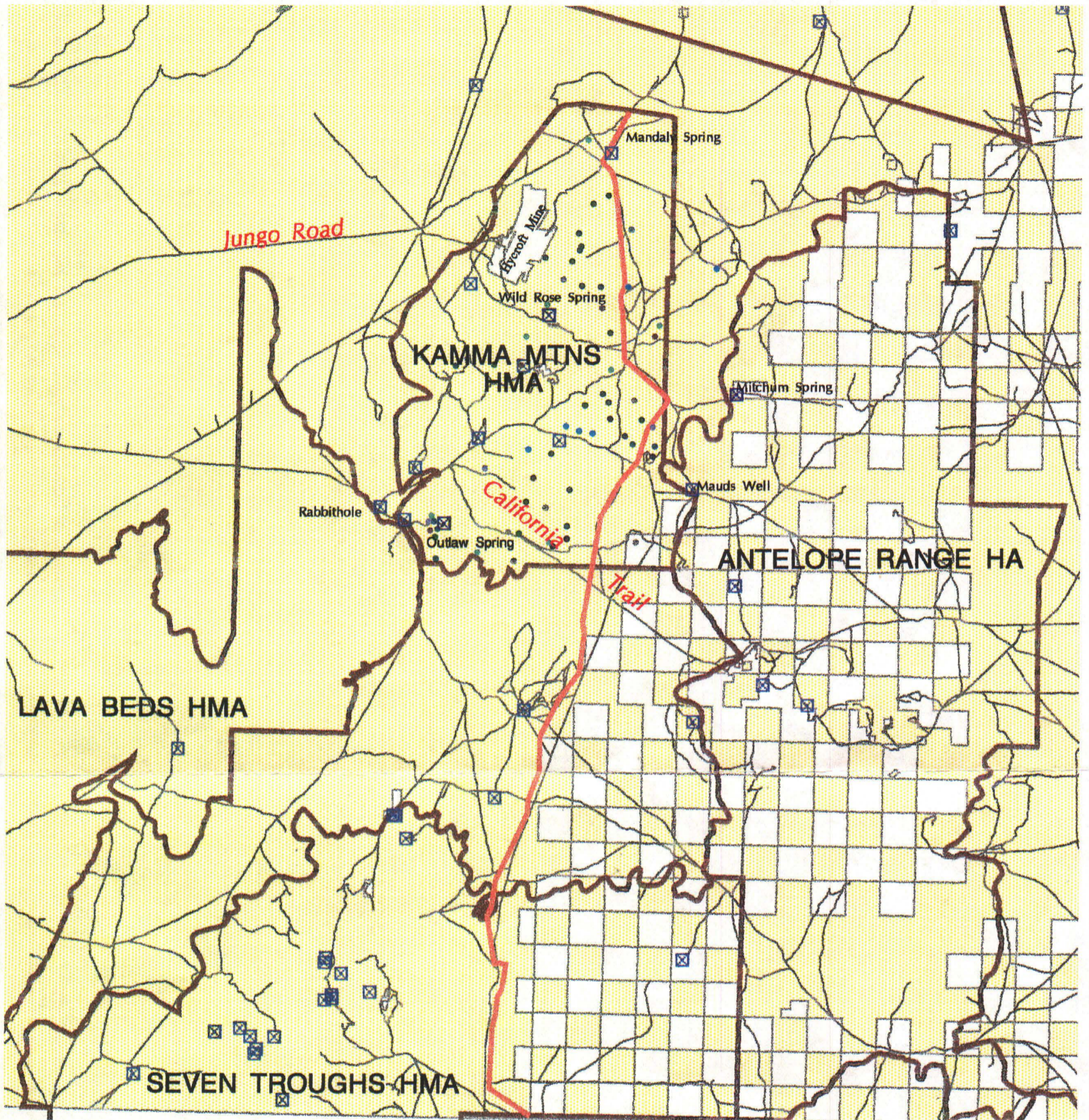
Forbs:

globemallow  
lupine  
Indian Paintbrush  
phlox  
tansy tumbledustard  
fiddleneck  
halogeton  
biscuitroot  
pepperweed  
milkvetch

Shrubs:

horsebrush  
spiny hopsage  
greem mormon tea  
shadscale  
winter fat (white sage)  
eriogonum  
Bailey greasewood  
bud sage  
Wyoming big sagebrush  
rabbitbrush

# Blue Wing/Majuba Fence



Map Date: 2/27/98  
Created by: Rich Adams

Map Projection: UTM, Zone 11, Datum NAD27  
ArcView Project: /gis6/rich/bwfence/Blue\_Wing\_Majuba\_Fence

United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Winnemucca District Office  
5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd.  
Winnemucca, NV 89445

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.

## WILD HORSE LOCATIONS

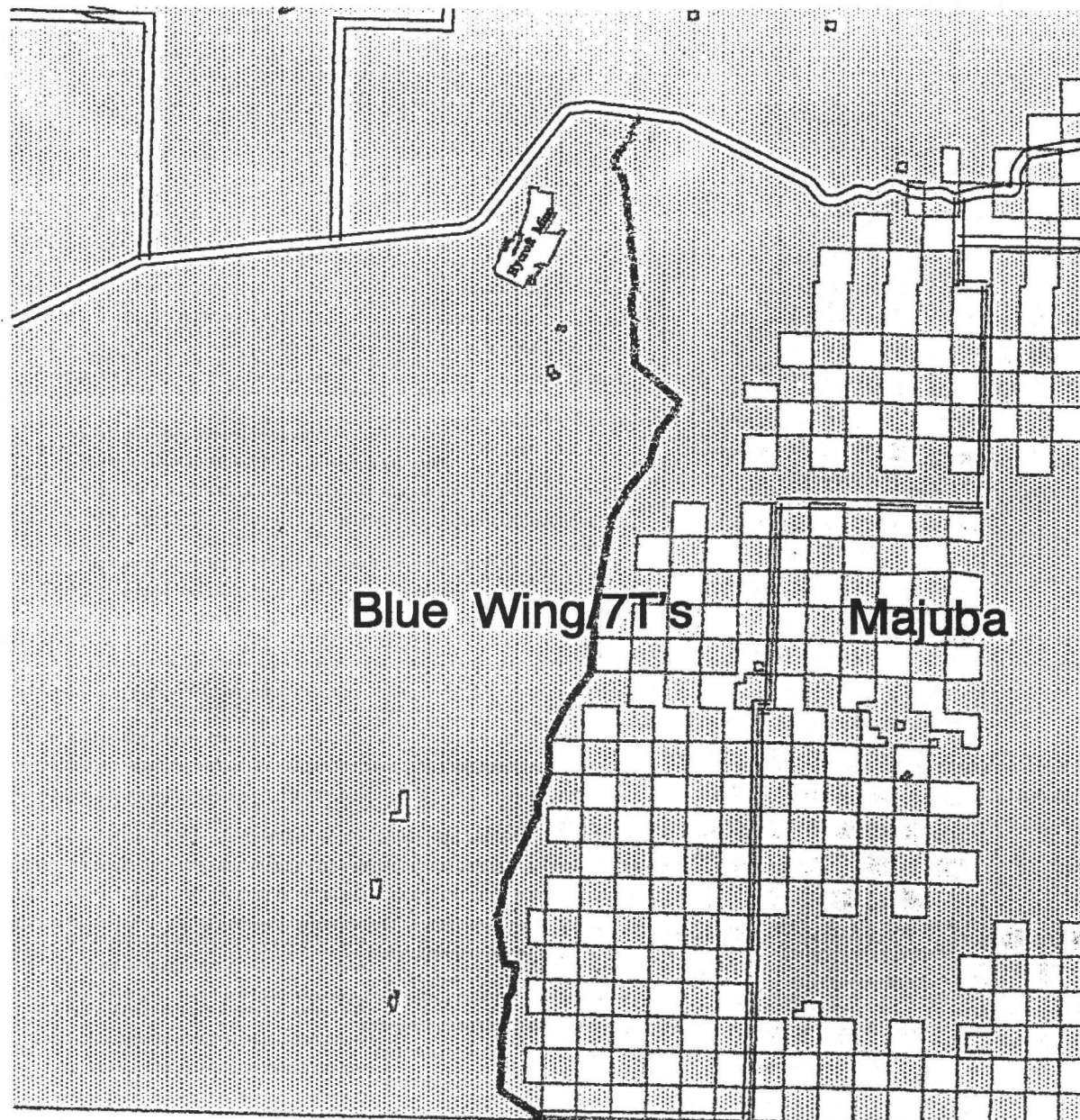
- 1983
- 1984
- 1987
- 1988
- 1989
- 1992
- 1994
- 1995
- 1997

- ☒ SPRINGS/WELLS
- ▬ BLUE WING/MAJUBA FENCE
- ▬ ROADS

▭ WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT AREAS/HERD AREAS

- ### LAND STATUS
- ▭ BLM
  - ▭ PRIVATE LAND

# Blue Wing/Majuba Fence



2 0 2 4 Miles

 ALLOTMENT BOUNDARIES

 BLUE WING/MAJUBA FENCE

LAND STATUS

 BLM

 PRIVATE LAND

Map Date: 2/27/98  
Created by: Rich Adams

Map Projection: UTM, Zone 11, Datum NAD27  
ArcView Project: /gis/rich/bwfence/Blue\_Wing\_Majuba\_Fence

United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Winnemucca District Office  
3100 E. Winnemucca Blvd.  
Winnemucca, NV 89443

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Digital data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.



June 17, 1998

Colin Christensen, ADM  
BLM-Winnemucca District Office  
5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard  
Winnemucca, NV 89445

Dear Pete,

I realize our response is quite late but would like to submit them for the record.

We continue to be concerned with management actions implemented under the 1994 FMUD. Several errors affect carrying capacity and forage allocation became apparent after the first gather. This additional information needed to be indicated in the actual observed use.

A recent memorandum suggested that livestock management met objectives and there was no need for additional adjustments. While we recognize the need to meet AML, we remain confused over ongoing issues regarding the AML. We can support the fences to better delineate and manage HMA's. This fence has been a long term project to support better livestock management.

Recent memorandums have suggested that livestock management does not need major adjustments. According to the FMUD, if livestock problems persist that a winter cattle alternative will be implemented.

We would appreciate this alternative be considered in this EA. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

CATHERINE BARCOMB  
Administrator