

3/26/85

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

EA FACE SHEET

OFFICE: Winnemucca District Office FY & REPORT # FY 85
Buffalo Hills, Granite Range, and
 ACTION: Calico Mountain HUA WH Gathering plan NO. OF PAGES _____
 (Project Name, Case Type, etc.)

LOCATION: Buffalo Hills Planning Unit SERIAL NO. N- V-020-5-15

TEAM SIGNATURES:	TITLE	RESOURCE VALUES ASSIGNED	HOURS
<i>Gick White</i>	District WH&B Specialist	Wild Horses/Burros-Author	12
<i>Katherine Peduto</i>	Area Archaeologist	Cultural Resources	1
<i>Robert Burson</i>	Range Conservationist	Sensitive Plants	1
<i>Lynn A. Clement</i>	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness/VRM	1
<i>Kenneth G. DeWester</i>	Area Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife	1

ENVIRONMENTAL
COORDINATOR: *Gerald L. Mond* 25 March 85
 (Signature) (Date)

COMPLIANCE
OFFICER: _____
 (Title or Name)

DISTRICT/AREA MANAGER *Gerald Brandsted*
 (Signature)

March 26, 85
 (Date)

Environmental Assessment (EA) For Implementation of the
Buffalo Hills, Granite Range, and Calico Mountain
Wild Horse Removal
NV-020-15

I. Description of the Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

A. Purpose and Need

The purpose of this Environmental Assessment (EA) is to determine the environmental impacts of removing approximately 1,049 wild horses from three Herd Use Areas (HUAs).

If implemented, the proposed removal would achieve approved Land Use Plan objectives and Coordinated Resource Management and Planning (CRMP) recommendations by reducing horse numbers down to Appropriate Management Levels (AML).

The Sonoma-Gerlach Management Framework Plan (MFP) Step III (Land Use Plan) was approved on July 9, 1982.

B. Background Data

1. Location and Description of Area-Reference to Land Use and CRMP Plan

The three HUAs to be considered for the proposed wild horse removals are the Buffalo Hills, Granite Range, and Calico Mountain. This EA does not consider the entire Calico Mountain HUA--it only pertains to that portion of the HUA which is located in the Calico and Buffalo Hills Allotments (refer to maps).

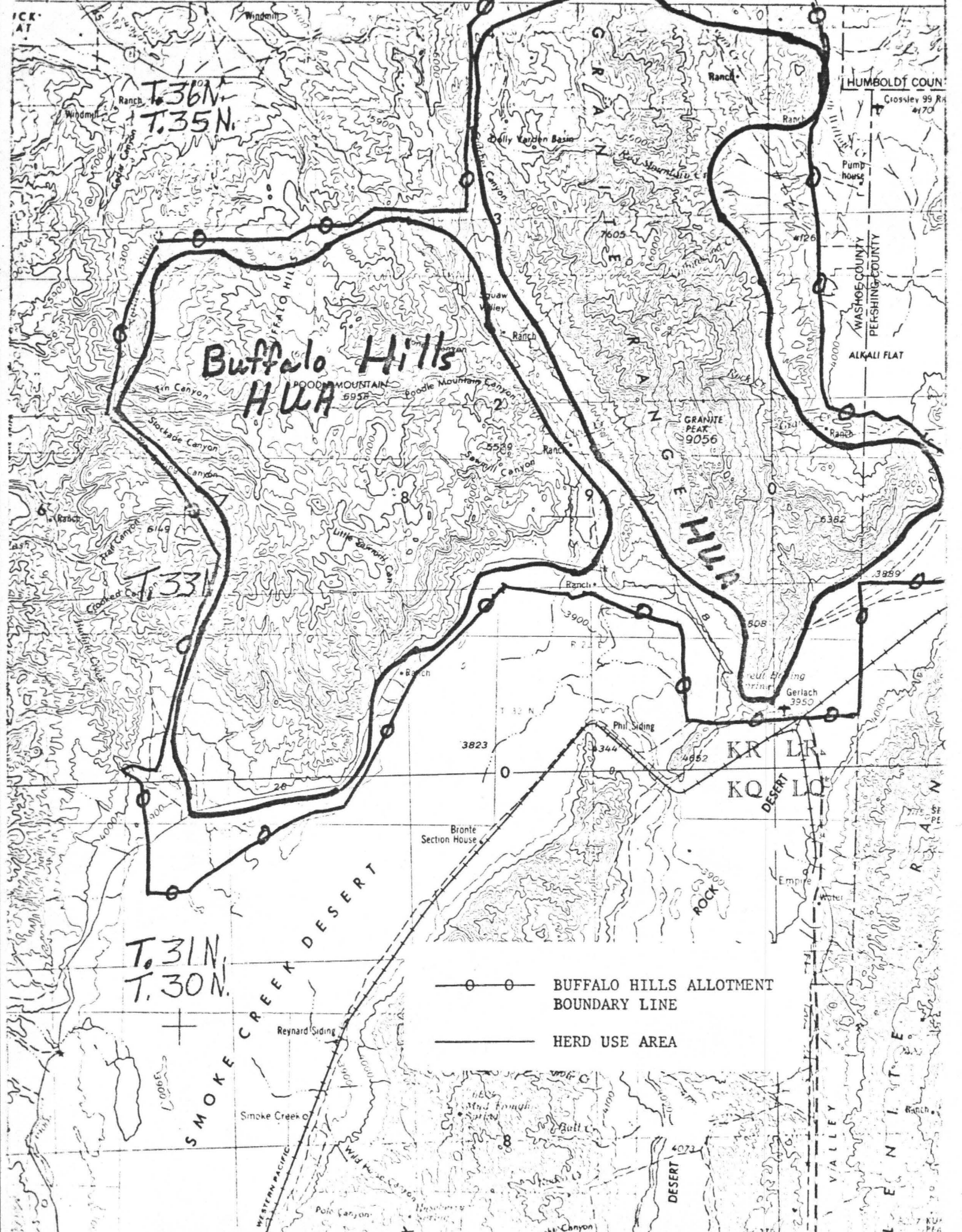
The area to be considered for the proposed wild horse removal consists of all or part of the following allotments and associated HUAs:

<u>Allotment Name</u>	<u>Herd Use Area Name</u>
Calico	Calico Mountain
Buffalo Hills	Buffalo Hills, Calico Mountain, and Granite Range

The above allotments are located in the Buffalo Hills Planning Unit of the Sonoma-Gerlach Resource Area.

The Calico Mountain HUA is located in the center of the Buffalo Hills Planning Unit, bordered on the south by the Granite Range HUA and the Susanville District boundary fence on the west, on the north by the Warm Springs Canyon HUA, and on the east and south by the Black Rock Desert. The elevation in the HUA ranges from 8,491 feet at Donnelly Peak to 4,000 feet.

The Buffalo Hills are located in the southwest portion of the Buffalo Hills Planning Unit, bordered on the west by Buffalo Creek and the Susanville District boundary, on the north by Highway 81, on the east by the Granite Range, and on the south by



T. 36 N.
T. 35 N.

T. 33 N.

T. 31 N.
T. 30 N.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY

WASHO COUNTY
PERSHING COUNTY

ALKALI FLAT

GRANITE PEAK
9056

Buffalo Hills
HWA

—○—○— BUFFALO HILLS ALLOTMENT
BOUNDARY LINE

— HERD USE AREA

Smoke Creek

Reynard Siding

Bronte Section House

Phil Siding

KR LR
KQ LC

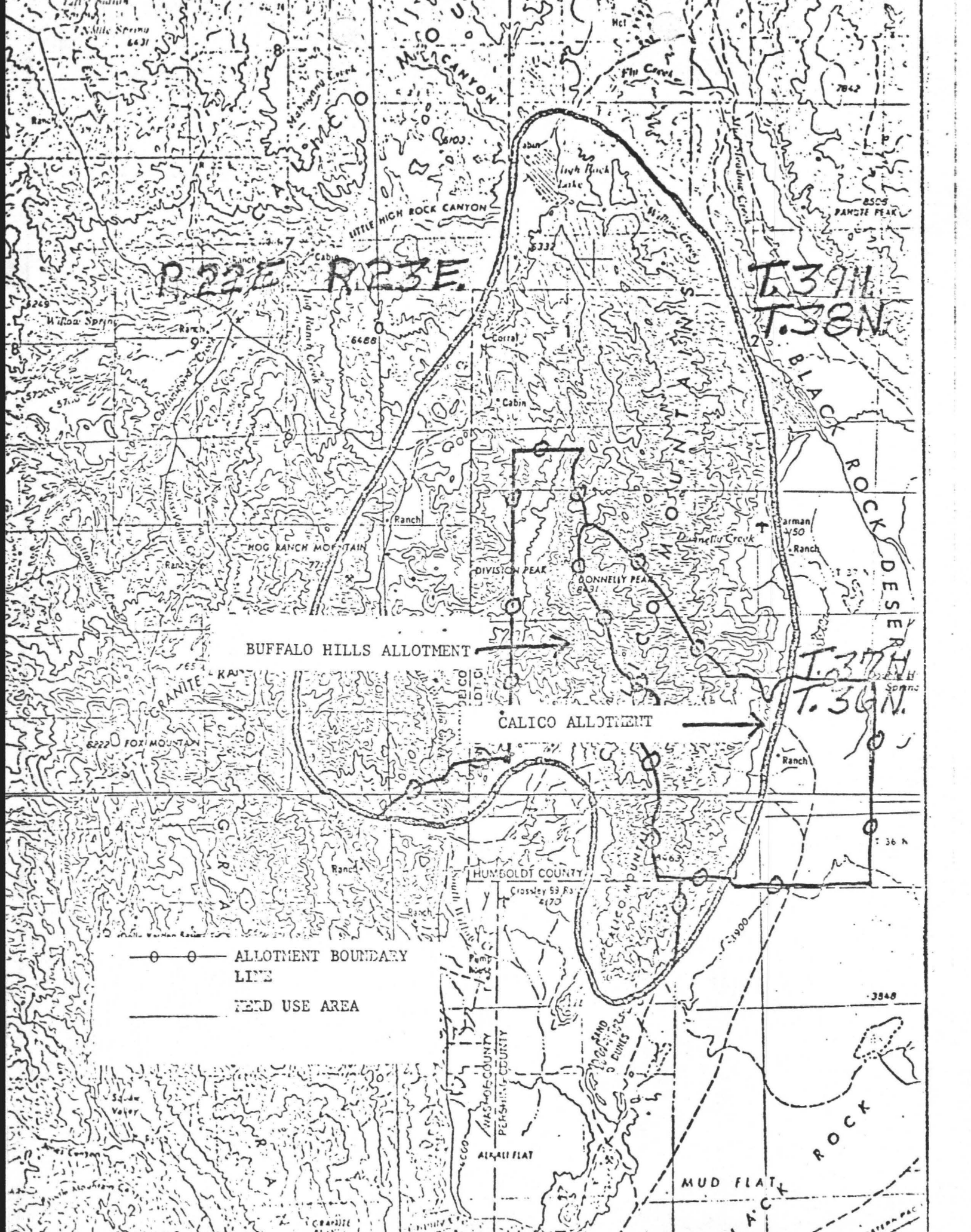
Empire

VALLEY

LENNETTE

WESTERN PACIFIC

DESERT



P. 22E R. 23E

T. 39N
T. 38N

BUFFALO HILLS ALLOTMENT

CALICO ALLOTMENT

T. 37N
T. 36N

○ — ○ ALLOTMENT BOUNDARY LINE
—— FIELD USE AREA

MUD CANYON

LITTLE HIGH ROCK CANYON

BLACK ROCK DESERT

HUMBOLDT COUNTY

PERSHING COUNTY

NEVADA COUNTY

MUD FLAT

BLACK ROCK

ROCK

WESTERN PAC

Little Sulphur Springs 6431

7842

8509 PANGATE PEAK

6688

5332

HOG RANCH MOUNTAIN 777

DONNELLY PEAK 6491

6222 FOX MOUNTAIN

736 N

3548

Crossley 53 R. 4173

4000

ALKALI FLAT

CRANITE PEAK

R19E

R21E

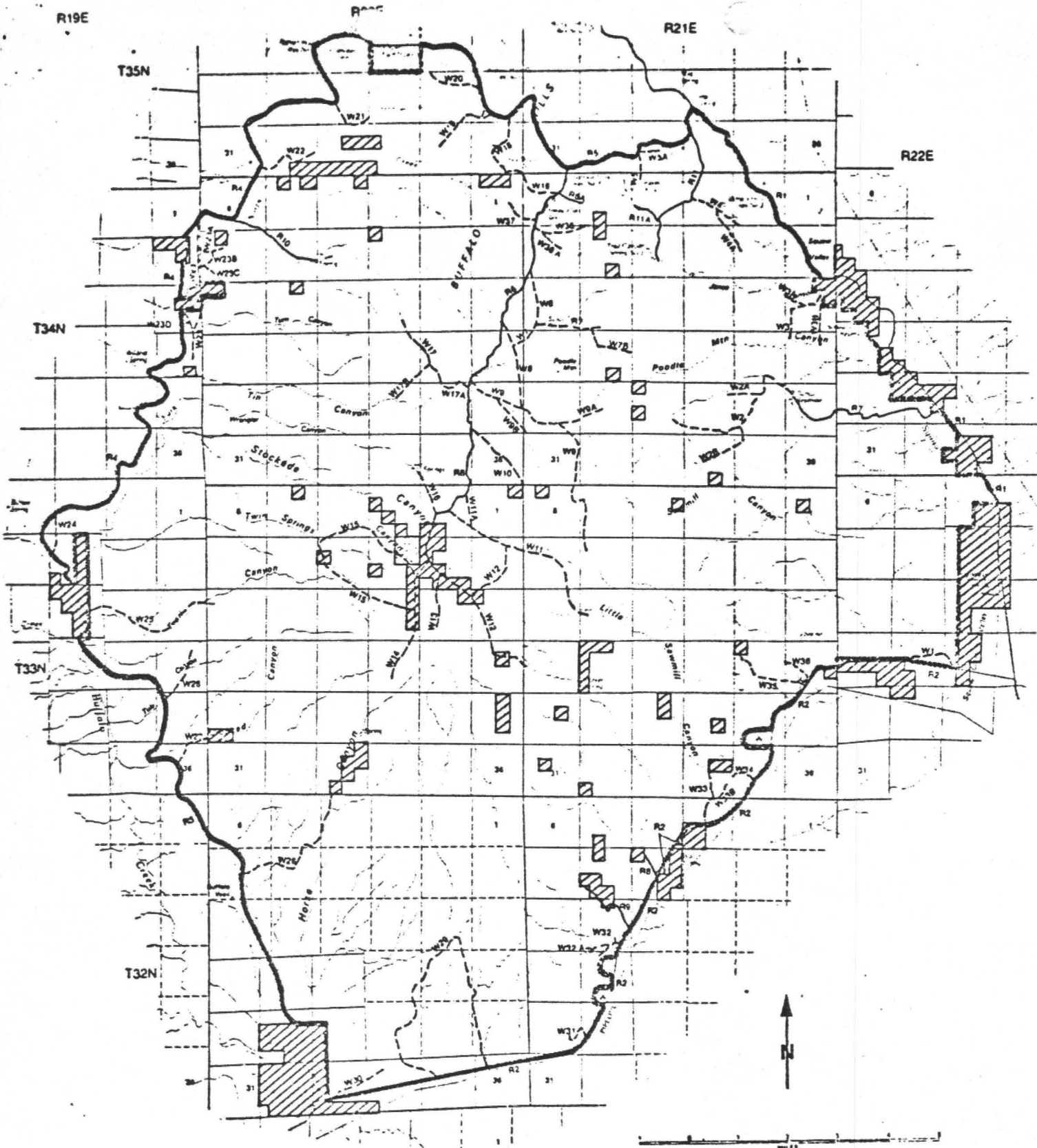
T35N







R22E

T34N

T33N

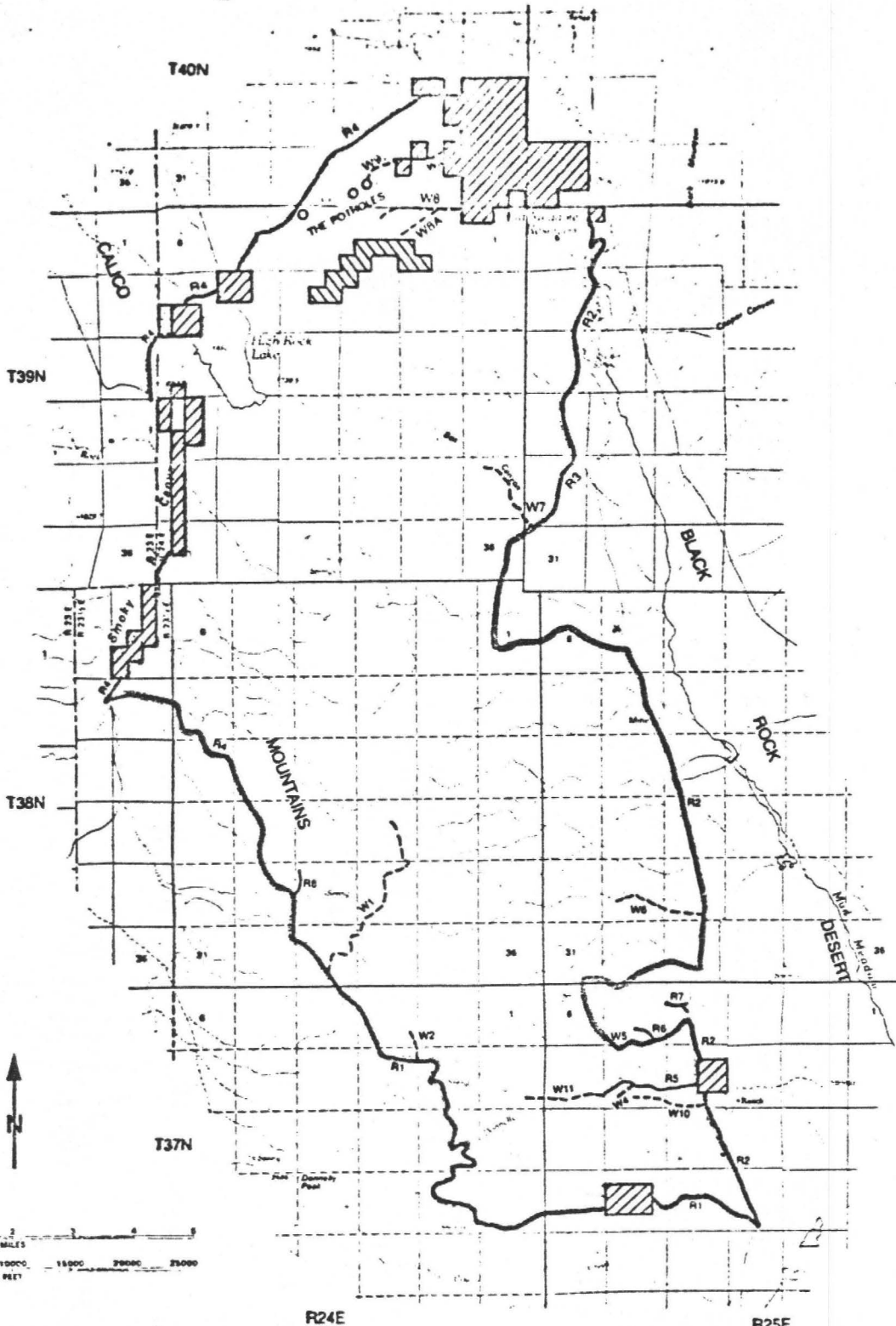
T32N










-  PRIVATE LAND (SURFACE & MINERALS)
-  PRIVATE SURFACE (PUBLIC MINERALS)
-  W.S.A. BOUNDARY
-  ROAD
-  WAY
-  GRAVEL PIT



NV-020-012, CA-020-618 & 621 POODLE MOUNTAIN



-  PRIVATE LAND (SURFACE & MINERALS)
-  PRIVATE MINERALS—PUBLIC SURFACE
-  PRIVATE SURFACE—PUBLIC MINERALS
-  W. S. A. BOUNDARY
-  ROAD
-  WAY
-  GRAVEL PIT



NV-020-007 HIGH ROCK LAKE

T38N

T37N

T36N

T35N

CALICO

MOUNTAINS

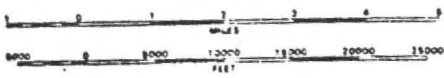
HILLS









CALICO

R26E

R25E

R24E



-  PRIVATE LAND (SURFACE & MINERALS)
-  PRIVATE SURFACE - PUBLIC MINERALS
-  W S A BOUNDARY
-  ROAD
-  WAY
-  PROSPECT
-  MINE
-  GRAVEL PIT



NV-020-019 CALICO MOUNTAINS

the Smoke Creek Desert. The elevation ranges from 6,958 feet at Poodle Mountain to 3,823 feet.

The Granite Range is located in the approximate center of the Buffalo Hills Planning Unit, bordered on the west by Squaw Valley, the Smoke Creek Desert, and the Leadville Allotment, on the east by Hualapai Valley, and on the south by the Black Rock Desert. The elevation ranges from 9,056 feet at Granite Peak to 3,920 feet.

The Buffalo Hills CRMP Plan has been prepared which includes the three HUAs. Although the CRMP Plan has not been signed by all participating parties, the CRMP recommendations for the management of wild horses and burros have been accepted as part of the Winnemucca District's approved Land Use Plan. It is the proposed removal aspect of the CRMP recommendations that this EA will address.

Issues considered by the CRMP group were wild horse and burro numbers, domestic livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, watershed values, and monitoring. The CRMP recommendations for wild horses and burros for each HUA are:

<u>Herd Use Area</u>	<u>Numbers To Be Removed</u>	<u>Appropriate Management Levels</u>
Calico Mountain	223	149
Granite Range	126	121
Buffalo Hills	700	272
	1,049 wild horses	542 wild horses

2. Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)

In 1980, an area encompassing 67,647 acres in the Calico Mountains was designated as a Wilderness Study Area (WSA), NV-020-019. This WSA includes all of the Calico Mountain HUA in this analysis.

Also in 1980, an area (142,050 acres) encompassing all of the Buffalo Hills HUA was designated as a WSA, NV-020-012.

In 1983, a draft Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed for the Winnemucca District which made a recommendation as to what areas would be declared wilderness. Poodle Mountain was not recommended for inclusion in the national wilderness system. The Calico Mountain WSA was recommended. The areas will be managed as WSAs until Congress makes the final determination.

3. Reference to the Land Use Plan (LUP)

The Final Sonoma-Gerlach Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed in September of 1981. It analyzed a proposed rangeland management program, along with several alternatives, for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat resources, and wild horse and burro grazing for the Winnemucca District's Sonoma-Gerlach Resource Area. Upon completion of the EIS, the District began

the last phase of the planning process for these resource management programs for the purpose of determining final land use decisions. The Winnemucca District Manager's MFP Step III decisions were issued June 30, 1982, and received State Director's concurrence July 9, 1982.

The MFP III wild horse and burro decision number 1.1 addresses HUAs that are in a non-checkerboard land pattern. It states:

WHB 1.1

DISTRICT MANAGER'S DECISION - WILD HORSE AND BURRO PROGRAM -
NON-CHECKERBOARD LANDS

Establish wild horse and burro number by herd use area using the following criteria:

Existing/current WH&B numbers (as of July 1, 1982) will be used as a starting point for monitoring purposes except where one of the following conditions exist:

1. Numbers are established by adequate and supportable resource data.
2. Numbers are established through the CRMP process as documented in CRMP recommendations and agreed to by the District Manager.
3. Numbers are established by formal signed agreement between affected interests.
4. Numbers are established through previously developed interim capture/management plans. Plans are still supportable by parties consulted in the original plan. EAs (EARS) were prepared and are still valid.
5. Numbers are established by court order.

The District Manager has signed the MFP III document and has approved the numbers established by the CRMP recommendations.

4. Population Data

The Calico Mountain HUA was last inventoried on August 16, 1983. The Granite Range and Buffalo Hills HUAs were last inventoried on August 17, 1983. Both inventories were conducted using a Bell 47G3B-1 (Soloy conversion) helicopter. The following table shows the results of both inventories.

<u>Herd Use Area</u>	<u>Horses</u>				<u>Burros</u>
	<u>Adults</u>	<u>Foals</u>	<u>% Foals</u>	<u>Total</u>	
<u>Calico Mountain:</u>					
Calico Allotment	86	18	17.3	104	0
Buffalo Hills Allotment	158	40	20.2	198	0
HUA TOTAL	244	58	18.8	302	0
<u>Granite Range:</u>					
<u>Buffalo Hills Allotment:</u>					
North of Cottonwood Fence	87	22	20.2	109	0
South of Cottonwood Fence	124	35	22.0	159	0
HUA TOTAL	211	57	21.3	268	0
<u>Buffalo Hills:</u>					
Buffalo Hills Allotment	574	148	20.5	722	0
HUA TOTAL	574	148	20.5	722	0
<hr/>					
TOTAL OF ALL THREE HUAs	1,029	263		1,292	0

C. Proposed Action

The proposed action is to remove approximately 1,049 wild horses from the Buffalo Hills and Calico Allotments. The number of animals to be removed from each HUA and the number to remain will be as follows:

<u>Herd Use Area</u>	<u>Numbers To Be Removed</u>	<u>Appropriate Management Levels</u>
Calico Mountain	223	149
Granite Range	126	121
Buffalo Hills	700	272
	1,049 wild horses	542 wild horses

If the proposed action takes place as scheduled, it would begin in October of 1985.

Implementation of the gathering plan will involve the construction of temporary traps with deflector wings, the movement of horses by a contracted helicopter and horse riders, the transportation of horses from the traps to temporary holding corrals, the holding of horses in the temporary corrals, and the transportation of horses to the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Placement Center, or other temporary holding facilities.

D. Alternatives

The Sonoma-Gerlach Grazing EIS analyzed four different alternatives to the proposed action: (1) no livestock grazing, (2) no action, (3) maximize livestock grazing, and (4) maximize wild horse and burro grazing. The alternatives outlined in the Sonoma-Gerlach FEIS were discussed in detail. The analysis was subject to an extensive scoping process, public meetings, formal hearings, and protest periods. In an effort to avoid repetition, an analysis of these alternatives will not be reiterated in this document, but can be found in the Sonoma-Gerlach Grazing EIS in the Winnemucca District files.

II. Affected Environment-Environmental Consequences-Mitigating Measures

A very comprehensive environmental assessment (NV-020-9-12) was approved on March 13, 1979, which covered the entire Buffalo Hills HUA. The anticipated impacts of the proposed action on the environment, and the possible mitigating measures of the proposed action will be the same for the Calico Mountain and Granite Range HUAs as those discussed and analyzed in EA NV-020-9-12. This document is filed in the Winnemucca District central files, and can be reviewed upon request.

At the present (1985) time, there are no burros in any of the three HUAs. The CRMP Plan recommended a management level of zero burros within all three HUAs. A population level of zero burros would conform to the District's approved Land Use Plan.

On March 13, 1979, an EA (NV-020-9-12) was approved for the Buffalo Hills HUA. This EA contains very comprehensive background information, physical resource data, objectives, and other pertinent information. The environmental analyses considered and brought forth in the Buffalo Hills EA are applicable to the Granite Range and Calico Mountain HUAs.

Because of the geographic proximity of the Calico Mountain and Granite Range HUAs to the Buffalo Hills HUA, the description of the affected environment, the anticipated impacts of the proposed action on the environment, and the possible mitigating measures of the proposed action will be the same for this EA as those discussed and analyzed in the Buffalo Hills EA. The reader is referred to the Buffalo Hills EA if additional information is desired.

The Gathering Plan provides stipulations to protect the environment and resource values.

No permanent adverse impacts will occur to floodplains and wetlands, wilderness values, water resources, air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, paleontological resources, threatened or endangered animals, cultural resources, or visual resources.

Archaeological clearance will be done on all trap sites prior to their construction. If archaeological values are present, trap sites will be moved.

All temporary trap sites located within the WSA boundaries will be placed on existing roads and ways, not to exceed 50' either side of the access route. Cross-country travel would be allowed so long as it does not cause impacts inconsistent with the requirements of the nonimpairment criteria outlined in the IMP. Refer to maps labeled Poodle and Calico Mountain for a delineation of the WSA boundaries.

III. Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted

A letter was sent to the following groups and individuals describing the circumstances that led to the formulation of the proposed action.

American Bashkir Curely Register, Ely, NV
American Horse Protection Association, Washington, D.C.

American Humane Association, Denver, CO
Animal Protection Institute, Sacramento, CA
Wes Cook, Cedarville, CA
W. B. Ceresola, Wadsworth, NV
Fish Springs Ranch, Reno, NV
Fund For Animals, New York, NY, and Phoenix, AZ
Humane Society of So. Nevada, Las Vegas, NV
International Society For the Protection of Mustangs and Burros, Reno, NV
Andy Jackson, Gerlach, NV
Donald Molde, Sparks, NV
National Mustang Association, Newcastle, UT
National Wild Horse Association, Las Vegas, NV
Nevada Cattlemen's Association, Elko, NV
Nevada Humane Society, Sparks, NV
Nevada State Clearinghouse, Carson City, NV
Nevada Woolgrowers, Ely, NV
Save The Mustangs, Rockwood, PA
Joe Selmi, Gerlach, NV.
Bill Spoo, Gerlach, NV
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reno, NV
U.S. Humane Society, Washington, D.C.
Wild Horse Organized Assistance, Reno, NV

IV. Intensity of Public Interest

Nationwide, the wild horse program is very popular and there is much public sentiment to support keeping the present wild horse/burro numbers. Statewide and locally, the general attitude toward wild horses is very different. The ranchers consider the horses, if left uncontrolled, a definite threat to the existence of their livestock operations. The Nevada Department of Wildlife and wildlife enthusiasts can see the competition they place on forage and water needed for game species.

V. Participating Staff and Signatures

The specialists who have signed the face sheet of this document have been involved in the development and review of the proposed project and concluded it would not significantly impact their resources.

Decision Record/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
Wild Horse and Burro Gathering
EA NV-020-5-15

Decision Record

Based on the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the Management Framework Plan for the Sonoma-Gerlach Resource Area, a net beneficial impact to the total environment would result from implementing the proposed action. Therefore, the proposed action is adopted in its entirety.

Rationale

This decision is consistent with the Sonoma-Gerlach Grazing Environmental Impact Statement, Management Framework Plan, and District Standard Operating Procedures.

FONSI

Based upon the analysis of the attached EA, I conclude that this action will result in no significant impact to the environment, and therefore conclude that no EIS is necessary.

Gerald Brandvold

Gerald P. Brandvold
Sonoma-Gerlach Area Manager

3-26-85
Date

For Robert J. Neary
Frank C. Shields
District Manager, Winnemucca

3-26-85
Date