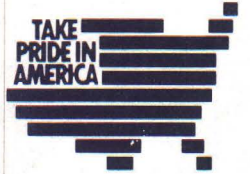




United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
WINNEMUCCA DISTRICT OFFICE  
705 EAST 4TH STREET  
WINNEMUCCA, NEVADA 89445

DEC 06 1991



IN REPLY REFER TO:

4100  
(NV-240)

Ms. Cathy Barcomb  
Commission for the Preservation  
of Wild Horses and Burros  
Stewart Facility  
Capitol Complex  
Carson City, NV 89710

Dear Ms. Barcomb:

We have received a request for a Section 4 permit from Circle A Ranches to construct a 160 acre holding field in the Lake Creek Pasture of the Little Owyhee allotment.

Please find enclosed for your review and comment an environmental assessment that addresses the development of the holding field.

Please return any comments you may have by January 10, 1992.

If you have any questions, please refer them to Gene Seidlitz of my staff at (702) 623-1500.

Sincerely yours,

*Scott Bellamy*  
Area Manager  
Paradise-Denio Resource Area

Enclosure: Environmental Assessment  
Maiden Pipeline Holding Field

Environmental Assessment  
Maiden Pipeline Holding Field

I. Purpose and Need.

The need exists to be able to gather livestock using large expanses of the Little Owyhee Allotment into central holding fields from which the cattle can then be trailed to different areas and other pastures. Under present conditions, gathering and trailing of livestock using the northern portion of the Lake Creek Pasture from their initial point of gathering to the nearest summer-pasture fence requires moving a distance of approximately 17 miles. This creates a very slow progression of livestock movement from the spring-use Lake Creek Pasture to the summer pastures, due to the large area to be gathered and the slow trailing progress of young calves.

The purpose of the proposed action is to facilitate the orderly and more efficient gathering and trailing of livestock within the Lake Creek Pasture of the Little Owyhee Allotment. The construction of this project would provide a holding/gathering facility approximately mid-way between the longest gathering point in the northern Lake Creek Pasture, and the normal terminal point of trailing (closest gates) to the summer pastures.

The proposed action is in conformance with the Land Use Plan for the Winnemucca District, and the Little Owyhee Allotment Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP).

II. Proposed Action.

The proposed action is to construct a holding field for the temporary holding of cattle being gathered in the northern portion of the Lake Creek Pasture of the Little Owyhee Allotment. The proposed holding field would encompass the last trough of the Maiden Springs Pipeline Extension within the SW1/4 NE1/4 of section 30, T47N R45E (see Map 1). The holding field fence would run approximately 1/4 mile to the south of the terminal trough location, thence 1/2 mile to the east, thence 1/2 mile to the north, thence 1/2 mile to the west, thence to the point of origin. It would encompass approximately 160 acres of range. Livestock would be gathered into the field for a few days at a time, until sufficient numbers could be gathered to make up a trail herd to be moved elsewhere within or out of the allotment.

The holding field would be constructed so that the terminal trough of the Maiden Springs Pipeline extension would be near the western-most fenceline, and the trough would

additionally be fenced in a lot which could be selectively opened or closed, so that animals using the range outside the field would have access to water at the trough but be excluded from the holding field (see diagram A) during the majority of the grazing period. The outside fence would be closed when livestock are gathered into the holding field to prevent their escape, but provide a water source during their brief holding.

The size of gates to allow access from either the outside area or the holding field will be approximately 14 feet. The fence will be constructed to BLM specifications derived from the 1989 fencing handbook, with wire spacing at 16 inches, 24 inches, 32 inches, and 40 inches from the ground, all wires barbed. This spacing is designed both for greater control of livestock within the holding field, and to allow passage of pronghorn through the paddock.

### III. Alternatives.

#### A. No Action.

The No Action Alternative is that no holding field be constructed, and the past management and livestock handling be continued.

#### B. Alternative Locations.

Alternative B is that the proposed holding field be located at a location other than that proposed.

No other locations of significantly different local area are feasible for the purpose of this project, and this alternative was rejected for further analysis.

### IV. Existing Environment.

The environment of the area to be served by the proposed holding field is typical of the Little Owyhee spring range, the Little Owyhee desert in general, and portions of north-central Nevada. Overstory vegetation in the area is dominated by low sagebrush (Artemisia arbuscula), with scattered areas and individuals of budsage (Artemisia spinescens) and winterfat (Eurotia lanata). Grass species are predominately Bottlebrush squirreltail (Sitanion hystrix) and Indian ricegrass (Oryzopsis hymenoides). Small pockets of big sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata) and Indian ricegrass are also found in the area.

The Maiden Springs Pipeline Extension is a range improvement constructed under authorization of a Section Four (Range

Improvement) Permit. Water rights to the water source rest with Circle A Ranches, base property owner for the Little Owyhee Allotment, and holders of the Section Four Permit for the Maiden Springs Pipeline Extension.

V. Impacts.

A. Proposed Action.

Adoption of the proposed action would have the expected benefit of improving livestock gathering and movement in an area of the allotment presently unserved by such a facility. Livestock within an area of approximately 75 square miles in the northern extreme of the Lake Creek Pasture could be gathered into the facility. In addition, short-duration stops would be facilitated for the herd being gathered and trailed north from points farther south in the pasture. Trailing distance would be reduced by approximately 1/2, to approximately 8-9 miles from the farthest point serviced by the field, and 8-9 miles from the field to the nearest summer-pasture fence. While the total distance of gathering and trailing would obviously not decrease, the efficiency of "cleaning" consecutive areas of the range serviced by the facility would improve. Rather than having to drop a gathered herd mid-way to the summer pastures, and then having to gather them again the following day before continuing a trail, the livestock gathered in a particular day could be held in the field overnight or for a few days, and then trailed to the summer pasture without the permittee having to spend several hours or days re-gathering the herd.

The facility would have no adverse impacts to the free movement of wild horses which use the allotment. The livestock spring grazing range of the allotment, in which the wild horses reside, is approximately 400,000 acres in size, and the construction of a 160 acre holding field would not impede their passage or opportunity to harvest forage of the allotment. Water sources other than the terminal trough on the Maiden Springs Pipeline lie approximately one mile from the pipeline terminal trough, and would adequately serve wild horses whenever livestock are being held in the facility and outside access would be restricted. Current wild horse access to water from the terminal trough occurs only when livestock are using the northern area of the pasture, the livestock operator operates the private pipeline for the service of his livestock, and horses are allowed serendipitous use of the facility. The overall impact to the movement of wild horses using the general area is expected to be negligible, because other troughs exist on the Pipeline Extension within easy travel distance for horses, and because the Lake Creek Reservoir normally contains water which services large numbers of horses to the east of this location. Wild horses are expected to

temporarily avoid the immediate area of the holding facility when it is being gathered into, as a result of human activity which the horses generally tend to avoid. Past observations indicate that such avoidance will be very short term in nature, and that horses will often return to areas of use within a day of the passage of the human activity.

Primary big game use of the general area of the project is as a widely-dispersed movement corridor for pronghorn. Very occasional use by mule deer occurs. Wire spacing will be a combination of standards designed to achieve greater restriction of livestock movement within the relatively small area of the holding field and to remain compatible with pronghorn and deer movement through the area. Top wire height, bottom wire height, and internal spacing match standards for deer to go over (40 inches or less), pronghorn to go under (16 inches or greater), and to block their heads from entering (8 inches or less). Barbs on the bottom wire are necessary for livestock control within the holding field. While barbs could interfere with pronghorn movements in greater numbers across a longer fence, they are consistent with antelope requirements and Bureau specifications. In addition, the clear, level terrain around the holding field will allow pronghorn to easily bypass the holding field. There are no improved roads near the proposed holding field along which traffic could panic pronghorn into diving under the fence in unfamiliar locations.

No sagegrouse or other gamebird species are known to occupy the area of the proposed holding field.

For these reasons, construction of the proposed facility is not expected to have any impact to wildlife using the area.

The area has been inventoried for archeological resources (see Archeological Report CR2-2459 [N]). No impact is expected to archeological resources.

Short-term (less than one year) impacts would occur to the vegetation on the fenceline route, with vehicular access to accomplish the fencing. These are considered to be extremely minor in nature, since developments of this kind normally revegetate quickly. The area is well vegetated and an abundant source of native seed is present, resulting in the anticipation of such rapid revegetation or recovery of the vegetation on the fenceline route. Within the holding field, no adverse impacts are expected from either the construction or use of the proposed facility. A similar facility exists near Button Lake in the Twin Valley Springs Pasture of the Little Owyhee Allotment, and is used similarly to the proposed use of the proposed facility. Visual inspection of the interior of the existing facility at Button Lake indicates similar vegetation density and

vigor within the holding field as in the allotment spring range in general. No long-term adverse impacts are therefore anticipated to accrue to soil or vegetative resources of the area in the proposed project area.

Consultation of the Nevada Sensitive Plants Handbook reveals no known populations of sensitive or threatened and endangered plant species in the area of the proposed pipeline route. No T&E animal species are known to exist in the area.

No impacts are anticipated to visual resources, wilderness values, recreational opportunities, minerals, ACECs, floodplain values, air quality, or any other multiple-use resource values not specifically covered in this section.

#### B. No Action Alternative.

The status quo of the area in northern Lake Creek would continue. Gathering of the livestock using the area would continue to be a time-consuming exercise in which livestock, once gathered, have to be trailed approximately 17 miles to be removed to the nearest summer pasture fence. This results in a slower gathering of the area than would be possible with the proposed holding field, since livestock gathered and trailed part-way on one day currently have to be dropped, re-gathered, and moved the remainder of the distance to the summer pastures each time a gather occurs. Total distances of trailing obviously would not be decreased, and the efficiency of doing so would remain at its current undesirable level. Such necessity is inconsistent with the CRMP objectives for the allotment and contrary to proper and improved range management practices.

#### VI. Decision Record/Rationale.

##### Decision:

The Maiden Pipeline Holding Field will be constructed as proposed. The No Action Alternative is rejected.

Use of the pipeline will be in compliance with stipulations on the existing Maiden Springs Pipeline Extension Section 4 Permit, except as necessitated by use of the holding field.

Use of the facility is authorized for holding of livestock during gatherings. Any group of livestock will be held no more than 10 days during gathering operations before being moved on to their next destination.

Rationale:

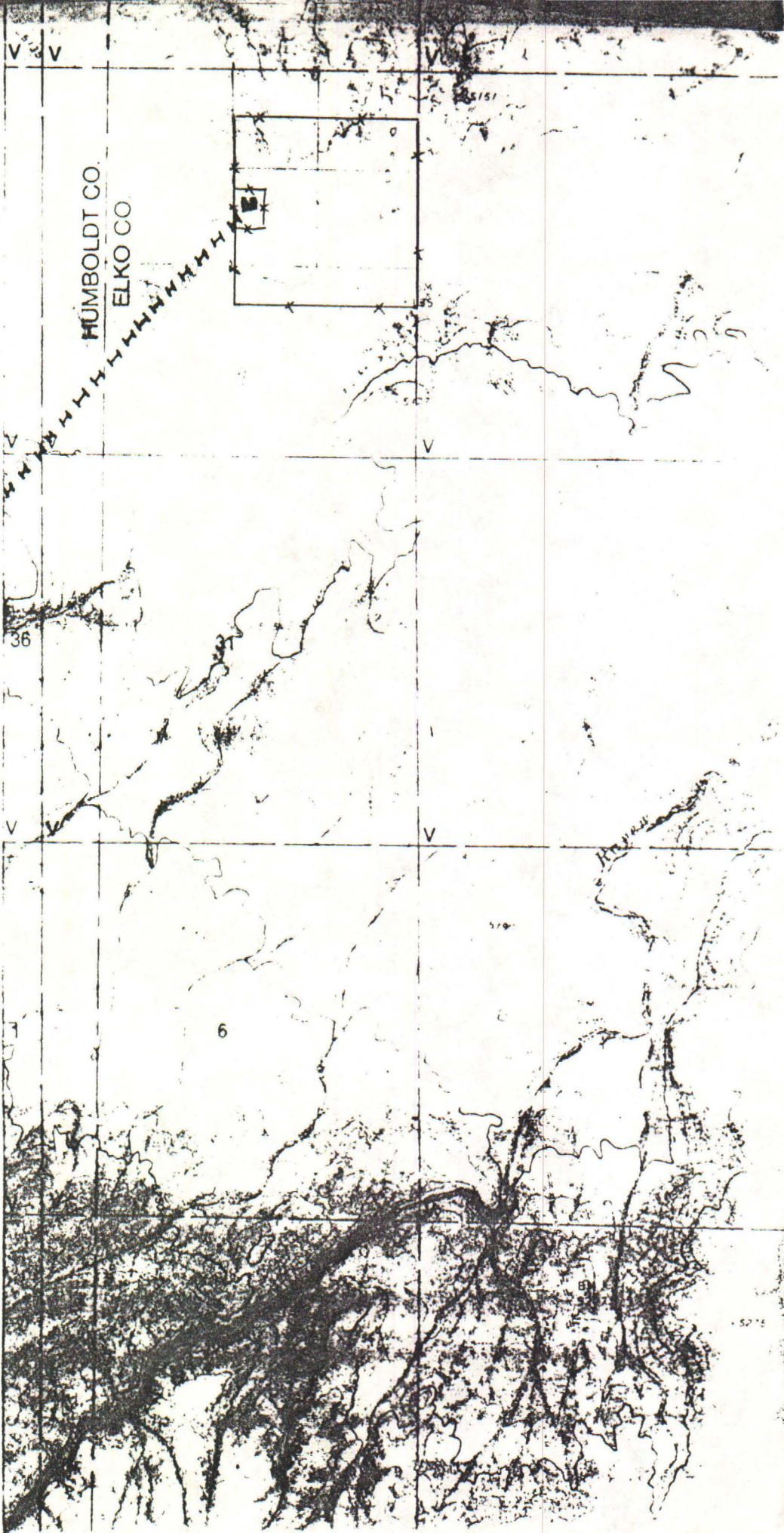
Development of this project is within the intent of the Land Use Plan and the CRMP developed for the allotment. It will serve to enhance the management opportunities on the particular area of the range which it will service, will alleviate long trailing of livestock and therefore improve the timeliness of livestock removal from the spring-use Lake Creek Pasture to the summer-use pastures. It will result in no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of the natural resource values of the allotment.

Due to the local, minor, and noncontroversial nature of the development, and the fact that it will impair no state or federal programs, this project does not require the development of an Environmental Impact Statement, according to Section 102 (2)(c) of NEPA.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Scott Billing, Area Manager

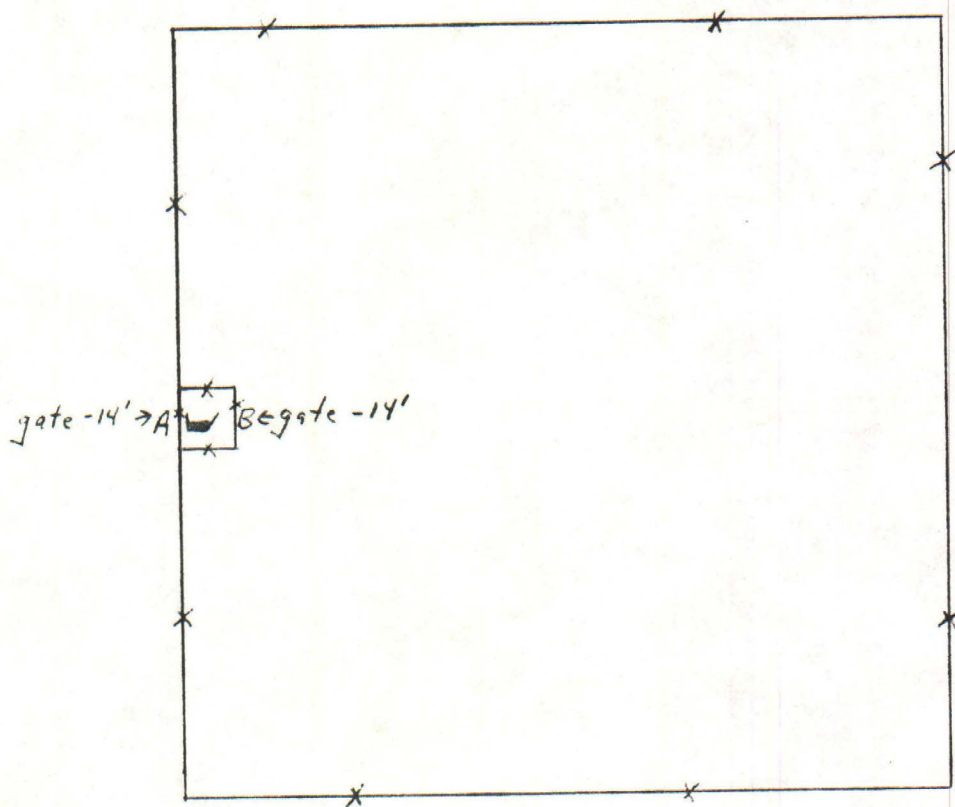
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

MAP 1  
Maiden Pipeline  
Holding Field





# Maiden Pipeline Holding Field Diagram A



Side A open when livestock are not being held in the holding field. Side B gates closed to prevent access to field.

Side B open when livestock are being held in the holding field. Side A gates closed to prevent escape of gathered herd.

BOB MILLER  
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

1/9/92  
CATHERINE BARCOMB  
Executive Director



**COMMISSION FOR THE  
PRESERVATION OF WILD HORSES**

Stewart Facility  
Capitol Complex  
Carson City, Nevada 89710  
(702) 687-5589  
January 9, 1992

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Dawn Lappin  
Reno, Nevada

Scott Billing, Area Manager  
Paradise-Denio Resource Area  
BLM-Winnemucca District Office  
705 East 4th Street  
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

Dear Mr. Billing,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Section 4 permit from Circle A Ranches to construct a 160 acre holding field in the Lake Creek Pasture of the Little Owyhee allotment.

We believe the addition of the holding field will better facilitate livestock movement. We do have several concerns we request be addressed;

1) that the additional vegetative impacts that are made to a more concentrated number of livestock, not be accessed to wild horses;

2) and that the fenced be flagged for safety.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Barcomb".

CATHERINE BARCOMB  
Executive Director