Form 1790-1
April 1973

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

G 6/27/77

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD (EAR)
FACE SHEET

1. Public Purpose or Environmental Goal to be Served by (this, these) Bureau Action(s)

- ☐ fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations
- ☐ assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings
- ☐ attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences
- ☐ preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice
- ☐ achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities
- ☐ enchance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources

Office
Winnemucca District Office

EAR number
NV-020-7-46

Environmental assessment reference number *(only for EAR update or supplement)*

2. Discrete Operations *(attach additional sheets, if necessary)*

		DECISION* a	b	c	d
PROPOSED ACTION(S)	☐ Construction of Traps	X			
	☐ Road Maintenance	X			
	☐ Capture Process	X			
	☐				
	☐				
	☐				
ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S)	☐				
	☐				
	☐				
	☐				
	☐				
	☐				

3. Mitigating Measures** *(attach additional sheets, if necessary)*

☐	See attached sheets - All accepted as stated in EAR	X			
☐					
☐					
☐					
☐					
☐					

4. Environmental Impact Statement recommended ☐ Yes ☐ No

Approved by (Signature of Area Manager)
Robert L. Morey — Date 6/27/77

Signature of District Manager — Date 6/27/77

* See reverse
** Summarize if decision is b or c

Possible Mitigating Measures

1. Archeological clearance will be done on all trap sites prior to their construction. If archeological values are present, trap sites will be moved. No traps will be placed near any of the identified historic sites.

2. The Wild Horse Specialist 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. This boundary line will be noted on the same map. Topography, distance and current conditions of the horses are factors that will be considered to set the limits so as to avoid undue stress on the horses while they are being herded.

3. Horses will not be moved during the hottest part of the day if at all possible. Movement of horses will occur either early in the morning or in the evening.

4. The peak of foaling occurs on the East Range about April 15th. No movement of horses will take place until colts are at least 2½ months old or until July 1st.

5. A vetrenarian will be contracted to be on call at all times during the round-up.

6. All corral panels will be from 72" to 84" high in order to prevent from jumping out of traps.

7. Brutality to horses in any form will not be tolerated. Any employee who mistreats any horse will be dismissed immediately from the round-up operation.

8. A Bureau official will be in the helicopter at all times in order to insure that all stipulations are met and that horses are not over

stressed.

9. All holding facilities will meet U.S. Department of Agriculture specifications.

10. Only experienced horse back riders will be used in the gathering operations.

11. Experienced horse wranglers from the local area will be employed whenever possible.

12. All saddle horses will be properly shod and over three years in age. All saddles and tack will be in good repair.

13. EIA samples will be taken at the holding facilities at Carson City.

14. Alcoholic beverages will not be allowed in or near the horse corral premesis.

15. Only experienced drivers will be used to transport the horses to the holding facilities.

16. The helicopter will have radio communication with the authorized officer or his designated representative at all times.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

1. Action

East Range Horse Gathering

2. Stages of implementation

Surveliance and location of traps, construction of traps, capture

3. DISCRETE OPERATIONS

4. COMPONENTS, SUBCOMPONENTS, AND ELEMENTS IMPACTED	5. ANTICIPATED IMPACTS: Surveliance	Construction	Capture			6. REMARKS
I. NONLIVING COMPONENTS						
A. AIR						
Air Space	0	0	0			Vehicle travel and light construction will not cause a dust hazard or problem. Access is already provided for the majority of the area.
Particulate Matter	0	L-	L-			
Visual Resource	0	0	0			
B. LAND						
Soils-general	0	0	L-			Soils profile will not be impacted appreciably by the implementation of the action.
erosion	0	0	M+			
C. WATER						
Surface Water	0	0	M+			Riparian habitat pressures will be lessened.
Ground Water	0	0	M+			
Evepo-Transpiration	0	0	L+			
Hydrologic Cycle	0	0	L+			
II. LIVING COMPONENTS						
A. PLANTS (*Aquatic*)						
Riparian Habitat	0	0	M+			

COMPONENTS, SUBCOMPONENTS, AND ELEMENTS IMPACTED	DISCRETE OPERATIONS: Surveillance	Construction	Closure			REMARKS
II. LIVING COMPONENTS (Con.)						
B. PLANTS (*Terrestrial*)						
Shrubs	0	L-	H+			Pressure on an over obligated
Forbs	0	L-	H+			forage resource will be eased.
Grasses	0	L-	H+			
C. ANIMALS (*Aquatic*).						
Non-Applicable						
D. ANIMALS (*Terrestrial*)						
Mammals	0	L-	H+			Removal of horses will ease com-
Reptiles	0	L-	H+			petition with mule deer for forage.
Birds	0	L-	H+			
III. INTERRELATIONSHIPS						
A. ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES						
Succession	0	0	H+			
Energy Transfer	L-	L-	L-			
IV. HUMAN VALUES						
A. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER						
Aesthetics	0	L-	L-			
Open Space	0	L-	0			
B. SOCIOCULTURAL INTERESTS						
Human Interests	0		H+			Some controversy may arise as a
						result of the action.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. *Action* – Enter action being taken, analytic step for which worksheet is being used, environmental viewpoint of impact, and any assumptions relating to impact.
   a. Worksheet is normally used to analyze *"Anticipated Impacts"* of action; *however*, it may be used to analyze *"Residual Impacts."* Worksheets may also be used to compare impacts before and after mitigating measures are applied.
   b. State viewpoint that best describes environmental impact. For example, a fence viewed down the fence line has greater impact than the same fence viewed over an entire allotment. Generally, narrow viewpoints better illustrate specific impacts than will broad viewpoints.
   c. Assumptions may be made to establish a base for analysis *(e.g. estimated time periods, season of year, etc.)*.
2. *Stages of Implementation* – Identify different phases of proposed project *(e.g. a road project consists of survey, construction, use, and maintenance stages)*.
3. *Discrete Operations* – Identify separate actions comprising a particular stage of implementation *(e.g. the construction stage of the road project has the discrete operations of clearing, grading, and surfacing)*.
4. *Elements Impacted* – Enter under appropriate heading all environmental elements susceptible to impact from action and alternatives. Relevant elements not contained in the [illegible] should also be entered. See BLM Manual 1791,
5. *Anticipated Impact* – Evaluate anticipated impact on each element and place an entry in the appropriate square indicating degree of impact as low (L), medium (M), high (H), no impact (O), or unknown or negligible (X). Precede each entry by a plus (+) or minus (-) sign indicating a beneficial or adverse type of impact. If type of impact reflects a matter of opinion or is not known, *do not* precede with a sign. For example, construction of a wind mill on open range has a definite visual impact; *however*, to some people the effect is detrimental while to others it is an improvement. By not entering a plus (+) or minus (-) sign the worksheet is kept factual and unbiased. If both degree and type of impact are unknown, place an (x) in the appropriate square.
   a. The measures of impact *(e.g. low, medium, and high)* are relative and their meaning may vary slightly from action to action. The term *"low"* should not be applied to impacts of a negligible nature. For example, we know that a pickup truck driving down a proposed fence line laying wire has some impact on air quality. However, the significance of this impact is not normally great enough to warrant even a *"low"* rating. In cases like this, the impact will usually be marked *"O"* or the element left off the worksheet.
   b. It is recognized that some environmental elements may defy accurate measurement or in-depth analysis within current Bureau capabilities or expertise. The nature of the action as well as type and degree of impact should guide in the decision to seek outside expertise or assistance.
6. *Remarks* – Enter clarifying information.

Environmental Assessment Record
East Range Wild Horse Gathering Plan
NV-020-7-46

I. Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

A. Background Data

The East Range has a wild horse population of approximately 1,100 animals. The herd is spread throughout the whole mountain range but major concentrations do occur in the White Horse Allotment and the Table Mountain Area.

The East Range is approximately 71.2% public land and 28.8% private. All but three of the grazing users which have privately petitioned the Bureau to remove the horses from their private land.

Section 4 of Public Law 92-195 states "if wild free-roaming horses or burros stray from public lands onto privately owned land, the owners of such land may inform the nearest Federal Marshall or agent of the Secretary, who shall arrange to have the animals removed."

The East Range is in the Sonoma Planning Unit of the Sonoma-Gerlach Resource Area. The Unit Resource Analysis and Management Framework Plan for the area was complete in 1970. No

recommendations were made for the management of wild horses in the East Range other than that they be managed and protected in accordance with Public Law 92-195. The Unit Resource Analysis for the Sonoma Planning Unit is scheduled to be updated in FY 80. The MFP is scheduled for revision in FY 81.

Implementation of the gathering plan will involve the construction of traps and trap wings, the movement of horses by use of a helicopter, the transportation of horses from the traps to holding corrals, the holding of horses in the corrals and some road work.

Traps and trap wings will be constucted of portable corral panels. All panels will be of high strength steel tube or railing of approximately 1-1/4" within a 2" frame. Heights of the panels will be from 72" to 84". Panels shall contain at least six horizontal rails with two sets of vertical stays between end posts. All gates must be complete with a self locking latch. Loading chutes will be at least 30" wide at the floor and flare to 42". Chutes must be at least 84" high and approximately 144" long with a gate in each end.

Archeological clearance will be completed on all trap sites prior to construction of the trap. If archeological values are found on the trap site, the trap site will be moved.

The helicopter use plan will incorporate the precautions specified in the proposed rulemaking for the use of helicopters (7440.4). A public meeting will be held on June 29th in Reno, Nevada.

The Wild Horse Specialist 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. This boundary line will be noted on the same map. Topography, distance and current condition of the horses are factors that will be considered to set the limits so as to avoid undue stress on the horses while they are being herded.

A Bureau employee designated by the Authorized Officer will be in the helicopter at all times. Radio communications with the Authorized Officer will be maintained at all times.

Only experienced horse wranglers that meet Bureau criteria will be used. Brutality to horses in any form will not be tolerated.

Drivers of vehicles transporting wild horses from the capture area to holding facilities will be knowledgable of handling such animals. All stock trucks will be equipped with radio communication in case of emergencies. The unloading of wild horses shall be in an orderly fashion and involve not more than four people.

A veterinarian will be on call at all times during the roundup operation. The veterinarian will never be more than 70 miles from the roundup operation.

All holding facilities will meet U.S. Dept. of Agriculture specifications.

B. The Proposed Action

The proposed action consists of removing as many wild horses as is possible from the East Range. An inventory conducted in April 1977 placed the current population of 1,093 animals. The actual population may be somewhat higher than this figure. It is hoped that at least 75% of the horses can be removed. Capture will be by use of a helicopter to run the horses into portable traps.

The Winnemucca District has received requests from all but one of the users in the checkerboard area to remove the horses from their private lands. This action is in response to that request as well as an attempt to alleviate the grazing pressure on a seriously overobligated range resource. The range adjudications made in the 1960's did not allocate any forage to wild horses. All of the forage was allocated to the ten livestock operations which operate on the mountain range. The horse herd has increased 101% in the last three years, causing the entire mountain range to be overgrazed.

The proposed action will be implemented in several stages. Surveillance of animal movements and location of trap sites is the first stage. This operation was begun approximately June 20th. Construction of traps and trap wings is scheduled to be completed as the roundup progresses. All traps will be portable and will be moved as the need arises. The first traps must be in place by July 8th. Archeological clearance of the trap sites will be completed prior to construction.

The actual capture process will begin on July 8th and proceed as long as it is economically feasible to keep trapping or until September 1st whichever comes first.

C. Alternatives to the Proposed Action

1. Alternative No. 1

No action would allow the horse population on the East Range to continue to increase. Control would come eventually in the form of disease or starvation. Wildlife populations already on the decline would also be eliminated. Elimination of all the livestock operations on the mountain range would also result if no action is taken.

2. Alternative No. 2

Reduction of cattle numbers to accommodate horse numbers. This alternative would completely eliminate the ten ranches presently licensed in the area from the livestock business. It would also make their private lands which amount to 29% of the land on the mountain range unusable to them. They would never tolerate this action. Nor should they be asked to. The horse populations would continue to grow under this alternative and control would be necessary eventually anyway. If control were not exercised it would come in the form of disease and starvation.

II. Description of The Existing Environment

A. Previous Actions Pertinent to the Proposal

Prior to the enactment of P.L. 92-195, the Wild Horse and Burro Act, many wild horses were gathered on the East Range. It is since passage of this law in 1971 that horse herds in the area have multiplied to such large numbers.

B. Non-Living Components

1. Air

The prevailing winds are from the west or southwest with an average velocity of 5-10 miles per hour. Extreme velocities of from 0 to 80 miles per hour occur, with high velocities primarily during the spring months of March and April.

A wide range of temperatures can be noted in the East Range. Maximum summer temperatures can exceed 100°F. with winter lows to -30°F. No official temperatures are kept in the area.

Some particulate matter originates from the playas and sandy soils of the surrounding valleys. This occurs primarily in the spring as a result of high winds.

Noxious gases are rare in the East Range due to its low human population and its distance from major population centers.

No radiological contaminants or nonionizing radiation levels are known to exist in the area.

2. Land

BLM land is classified for retention and multiple use management. Ownership is checkerboard with 71.2% of the total 534,715 acres in public ownership and 28.8% in private ownership. Private lands are managed in conjunction with public lands primarily for grazing.

Major drainages are Rose, Dun Glen and Willow Creeks all of which have perennial streams. Spaulding, Klondike and Inskip Canyons all of which have intermittent streams.

Dun Glen Peak, Table Mountain, Granite Peak and Auld Lang Syne Peak serve as area landmarks.

Soils over the unit are fine textures alluvial deposits near the valley bottoms becoming coarser as the elevation increases. On the north end of the adjacent Buena Vista Valley there are deposits of windblown sand ranging from a few inches to many feet thick. Infiltration rates are moderate to high. The steep slopes are dominantly composed of Paleozoic sedimentary and metamorphic rocks.

Soil depth varies from 2 to 60 inches with the shallower soils occurring on the steeper slopes and the deeper soils in the canyons and valley bottoms.

Rocky soils with moderate to high infiltration rates help to deter erosion. Spring run-off accounts for most of the erosion. There is a significant amount of wind erosion occurring during high velocity winds. Gully erosion is evident throughout the area and sheet erosion does occur during heavy thunderstorms. As overgrazing continues sheet and gully erosion will intensify, removing valuable topsoil needed for vegetation growth.

3. Water

The majority of the precipitation that falls on this area falls during the winter months from November through March. Spring rains occur but are irregular:

Investigations of water quality of all the streams in the area will be conducted during the 1977 field season. No data is presently available on the amounts of sediment that is carried in Rose Creek, Willow Creek or Dun Glen Creek which are the only perennial streams in the area.

C. Living Components

1. Aquatic Plants

The riparian habitat along the perennial streams has been severely overgrazed to the extent that willow (Salix) most of the sedges (Carex) and other plants normally found in the riparian zone can only be found in areas that are inaccessible to livestock. Upper Willow Creek is an exception to this but the land there is mostly privately owned and is fenced. In this portion of Willow Creek the riparian habitat is in good condition.

2. Terrestrial Plants

Big sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata) is the dominant shrub in the vegetative cover on the East Range. Shadscale

(Atriplex confertifolia), white sage (Seratoides lanata) and bud sage (Artemesia spinescens) are the dominant shrubs on the valley floors and lower slopes.

Associated with big sagebrush on the mountain slopes are other shrubs such as rabbitbrush (Chrysothamnus spp.), Utah juniper (Juniperus osteosperma), bitterbrush (Purshia tridentata) and snowberry (Symphoricarpos spp.). Grass understory on these higher elevation sites consists dominantly of Sandberg bluegrass (Poa secunda), cheatgrass (Bromus tectorum), squirreltail (Sitanian hystrix), Thurber needlegrass (Stipa thurberiana), Great Basin wildrye (Elymus cinereus) and bluebunch wheatgrass (Agropyron spicatum). Arrowleaf balsamroot (Balsamorhiza sagittata), buckwheat (Eriogonum spp.), lupine (Lupinus spp.) and phlox (Phlox spp.) are the dominant forbs in the mountains.

Associated with big sagebrush at the lower elevations on the alluvial fans and terraces are spiny hopsage (Grayia spinosa) and littleleaf horsebrush (Tetradymia glabrata). The grass understory consists of cheatgrass, squirreltail and Sandberg bluegrass. Russian thistle (Salsola kali), milkvetch (Astraglas spp.) and annual mustards (Brassica spp.) are common forbs in this area.

Associated with shadscale, white sage and bud sage are cheatgrass, squirreltail, Sandberg bluegrass, annual mustards and Russian thistle.

There are some black greasewood (Sarcobatus vermiculatus) stands on the saline bottoms in both Grass Valley and Buena Vista Valley.

3. Animal Life Aquatic Mammals

Few aquatic mammals inhabit the area. The possibility exists that beaver (Castor canadensis) may inhabit Willow Creek. Beaver are not found in any of the other perennial streams. No other aquatic mammals are known to inhabit the area.

(a) Birds

The only water associated birds known to inhabit the area are the killdeer (Charadrius vaciferus) and some migratory waterfowl during their annual migrations north and south.

(b) Fish

There are no fisheries in any of the perennial streams in the East Range.

4. Animal Life Terrestrial

(a) Mammals

The most common species of mammals include mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus), which have a population of less than 200 animals. Occasionally transient mountain lion (Felis concolor), coyote (Canis lantrans), bobcat (Lynx rufus), badger (Taxides taxus), black-tail jackrabbit (Lepus californicus), Richardson's ground squirrel (Otospermopholis richardsonii), kangaroo rat (Dipodomys ordi), domestic cattle (Bos taurus) and wild horses (Equus caballus).

(b) Birds

Sage grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) and chukar (Alectoris graeca) occur in minor populations. A variety of bird life is common to the area. Many species are unidentified. However, the most common include golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos), red-tailed hawk (Buteo jamaicensis), mourning dove (Zenaidura macroura), common raven (Corvus corax) and a wide variety of passerine and non-passerine birds.

(c) Reptiles

Reptiles include collared lizard (Crotaphytus collaris), northern side-blotched lizard (Uta stansburiana), horned lizard (Phrynosoma spp.) and Great Basin rattlesnake (Crotalus viridis lutosus).

(d) Invertebrates

No intensive inventory of insect species occupying the area has been made. However, the more common species do exist on the area.

(e) Man

There are no residences which are occupied year round in the area. Ranches are located in the valleys on either side of the mountain range. Human activity is mainly in the form of mining, hunting and those activities associated with domestic livestock grazing. During the winter months, practically no human activity occurs in the area.

D. Ecological Interrelationships

1. Succession

The East Range is part of the northern Nevada cold desert biome. Overgrazing from the late 1800's to the present has led to the invasion of sagebrush, cheatgrass and other less desirable species. Competition by horses is reducing forage for wildlife and livestock even further. These deteriorated ranges will take many years to recover due to the semi-arid conditions that exist in the area, poor sites and competition by the now dominant, less desirable species.

2. Nutrient and Energy Cycle

In all terrestrial ecosystems, the food chain begins with the vegetation. Vegetation growth is dependent upon the soil for its nutrients and weather for moisture. Wild horses are mainly grass eaters judging from our field observations and available literature. The wild horses, domestic livestock and mule deer are the major forage consumers in the East Range. There are no effective predators in the East Range that will prey on the wild horses.

E. Human Values

1. Landscape Character

The East Range has an air of ruggedness about them. The basins, washes and draws add to the diversity of topography. The mountains display a sharp contrast to the playas and shrub flats of the valleys.

2. Sociocultural Interests

a. Archeological and Historic

Archeological data for the East Range is scarce. However, three historic sites have been identified within the area. They are:

(1) Dun Glen

This place was a good silver producer between 1862 and 1880. From 1880 to 1895 Chinese placer miners worked the surrounding mountains and canyons. Some old graves, mill foundations, rock walls and one dilapidated log cabin remain.

(2) Jacobs Well

This was the water and whiskey stop on the Star City-Dun Glen road in the 1860's. Very little remains of this stage station.

(3) Kennedy

A small gold mining camp from 1892 to 1902. Mill ruins, rock walls, foundations and a few dilapidated wooden cabins still remain.

Trap sites will not be located near any of the above sites.

b. Unusual Ecological Areas

No unusual ecological areas are known to exist in the East Range.

c. Unusual Geological Formations

No unusual geological formations have been identified in the East Range.

d. Hunting and Fishing

Hunting is a minor activity in the East Range as there are less than 200 mule deer and only small populations of sage grouse and chukar. There are no fisheries in the East Range.

e. Wild Horses and Burros

A helicopter census was taken in April of 1977. This inventory revealed a total of 1,093 horses, 2 burros and 2 mules on the East Range. In 1974 the inventory conducted on the same range showed a total of 544 horses and 19 burros. In the past three years the wild horse population on the East Range has increased by 101%.

There are no outstanding claims for horses on the East Range.

f. There is no wilderness potential in the East Range.

3. Social Welfare

The population of the East Range is practically zero. The nearest community of any appreciable size is Winnemucca which is approximately 10 miles north of the north end of the mountain range. There are ranches in the valleys on either side of the mountain range but in all the population is still very small.

Livestock grazing and mining are the main uses of the East Range. The income generated by these operations is not large. Nearly all economic exchange takes place outside of the area to be gathered.

Most local people have a very negative attitude toward wild horses. Organized livestock interest groups have been very vocal in calling for the removal of most or all of the wild horses particularly from intermingled public and private lands.

Pershing County is governed by a three member County Commissioner system. Law enforcement in the area is by the Pershing County Sheriff's Department.

III. Analysis of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

A. Anticipated Impact of Proposed Action

1. Air

Air quality should not adversely be affected by the proposed gathering. There will be periods of time when the gathering will cause dust to be locally heavy. However, these time periods will be of short duration and the areas involved would be widely scattered. Drive trapping will create some dust as the animals are driven several miles to a trap. Vehicular traffic will create dust because of the heavy use roads will receive while a particular trap site is used. Dust and the exhaust gases should be rapidly dispelled because the wind is constantly blowing whether it is gentle or near gale force. Winnemucca, to the north, is the closest large town (approximately 70 miles on a straight line). However, the prevailing winds are generally from the west so there should be no impact to the air in any populated areas. In addition, the gathering should only last approximately three months, so impact to the air should be short lived.

2. Land

The land will only receive slight disturbance from the proposed gathering. The roads that will be improved have existed for years so the impact has already occurred. By regrading, making water bars, ditches, turnouts, etc. as needed, soil erosion should be greatly reduced from

the roadbeds.

The other major land disturbance would be clearing areas of land to build the traps and holding facilities. The drive traps should require only about ¼ acre to be cleared.

With the removal of a large number of horses a lot of the pressure on the depleted forage resource should be removed. As recovery proceeds, native grasses and forbs should regain vigor and add organic matter to the soil. Because of the poor condition of the range it will probably take several years before a noticeable change can be seen. Wind erosion should decrease as soil cover increases. The long term benefits to the land should outweigh the detrimental effects of clearing approximately 5 acres of land. Pit will be used as the burial site for all old, sick, or lame animals which must be humanely destroyed. At each trap site this will require only a small additional ground disturbance.

3. Water

No detrimental effects are anticipated to any waters. Water quality should improve after the gathering as fewer animals will be using it. Trap sites will not be located on any of the perennial streams.

4. Living Components

The vegetation which supports the wild horse population will improve with the removal of a significant amount of

the year-long grazing pressure. Deterioration of the winterfat areas in the northern portion of the East Range has been severe and these areas are most in need of rest from grazing. All other forage plants (mainly perennial bunchgrass) should respond with increased vigor. These benefits will help to begin restoration of the forage resource. These benefits will be short-lived, however, if further reductions of wild horse numbers do not take place in the following years.

As for the relationship between wild horse reduction and benefits to wildlife, no firm conclusions can be made at this time. It is likely, though, that the decreased pressure on forage resources should benefit mule deer by reducing competition for forage. It is not anticipated that any harassment to mule deer should occur during trapping operations. No known raptor nesting areas exist in the gathering areas so no conflict is anticipated. No threatened or endangered species are known to live in the areas where trapping will take place.

5. Ecological Interrelationships

Wild horses are currently the largest consumers of forage on the East Range. The grazing pressure they apply to the range is on a year-round basis. No other large herbivore (cattle and deer) exerts year-round pressure in this manner. The removal of a large number of animals should provide a large measure of relief to the forage resource.

The native perennial bunchgrasses and forbs should begin to regain vigor. It is probable that retrogressive succession would be at least slowed. Complete halt to retrogression is highly unlikely until further grazing pressure, especially during the growing season, is removed through further horse reductions and livestock grazing plan modifications. When retrogression is halted, secondary succession can begin. As secondary succession progresses toward climax, the habitat for species such as mule deer and sage grouse should also improve.

6. Human Values

The landscape character should become more varied as the land takes on the appearance of sagebrush-grass savannah, instead of a monotonous stand of sagebrush.

Much information can be obtained from the gathered animals. All of this information will be useful in management of the horses in the future.

Local public opinion would most likely be strongly in favor of gathering wild horses. National opinions might be entirely the opposite, however, no firm conclusion can be made at this time. With such a large scale gathering planned it is very probable that it will draw national attention.

The gathering should have no significant effect on the local economy.

B. Anticipated Impact of Alternatives

1. No Action

a. Air

The only effect on air quality might be the long term increase in dust as the soil binding perennial grasses are overgrazed and killed.

b. Land

As vegetative cover is removed, especially the perennial grasses, soil protection from plant cover will decrease. Erosion, especially from wind would most likely increase. Water caused erosion might also increase. Since soil forming processes in all semi-desert areas create topsoil at a very slow rate, accelerated soil loss whether by wind or water only degrade the entire community.

c. Water

It is presently unknown how much sedimentation is caused by horses using the perennial streams and springs to water. Therefore, no conclusion can be made as to whether or not sedimentation will increase if no action is taken.

d. Living Components

No action would be very detrimental to the vegetative resource which supports the wild horse populations. The winterfat and shadscale areas are severly overgrazed. The continued drought and heavy overgrazing may de-

stroy these important wintering areas for decades. In the big sagebrush areas, the native perennial grasses have either been grazed out or are in a low state of vigor. The big sagebrush sites contain for less prennial grass than they would in a high seral or climax condition. Big sagebrush has replaced the grasses and this effectively limits reestablishment of the perennial grasses once they are gone. As the habitat is degraded, it becomes poorer for both mule deer, sage grouse and most other mammaliam and avian species.

e. Ecological Interrelationships

If no action is taken to relieve the forage overobligation, retrogrssive succession will continue. The whole ecosystem will be degraded until the pressure which causes the degradation is removed. As vegetative cover is removed, soil erosion will increase. This will decrease soil productivity which in turn hinders vegetative recovery. So a cycle is started which will be very difficult to break.

f. Human Values

No action will bring a loud outcry from the local population. If the situation on the East Range continues to deteriorate, a large number of horses will die from starvation, or diseases caused by weekened condition. This would probably cause an outcry from wild horse pro-

tection groups. Thus the Bureau could very conceivably receive more bad publicity from doing nothing than if they gather such a large number of animals.

2. Reduction of Cattle Numbers to Accomodate Horse Numbers

a. Air

Overall effects should be the same as described in the No Action Alternative.

b. Land

Removal of the cattle from the area would have a beneficail effect on the vegetation in that it would relieve the pressure on the depleted resource. However, this relief would be only temporary if horse numbers are not controlled. The same number of cattle are turned on to the allotment each year. Horse numbers without control would continue to increase until they had surpassed what they are at present plus what would be removed by cattle reductions. Without horse control depletion of the forage resource is inevitable. This will cause an increase in erosion of all types and cause a general overall degradation of the land.

c. Water

Again removal of the cattle without control of the horse populations is only a temporary measure and a degradation of the waters in the area will eventually occur.

d. Living Components

Deterioration of the forage resource and wildlife

habitat will continue until the proposed gathering is implemented. The effect on all living components should be the same as described in the Proposed Action section.

e. Ecological Interrelationships

Effects are the same as the No Action Alternative.

f. Human Values

Effects are the same as the No Action Alternative.

C. Unmitigated Impacts

The horse population would be directly effected. The population would be drastically reduced.

Soil compaction and vegetation trampling will occur in traps and other places of heavy concentration of horses.

Removal of a large number of horses from the East Range will reduce the conflict and competition for forage between range users on critical areas. Reduction in forage use will increase the amount of forage available to the horses that are left, cattle and wildlife.

Also the pressures being placed on the Bureau by vocal local livestock interests will be lessened.

The gathering operations will cause some stress on the horses and disturbance to wildlife and cattle.

D. Possible Mitigating Measures

1. Archeological clearance will be done on all trap sites prior

to their construction. If archeological values are present, trap sites will be moved. No traps will be placed near any of the identified historic sites.

2. The Wild Horse Specialist 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. This boundary line will be noted on the same map. Topography, distance and current condition of the horses are factors that will be considered to set the limits so as to avoid undue stress on the horses while they are being herded.

3. Horses will not be moved during the hottest part of the day if at all possible. Movement of horses will occur either early in the morning or in the evening.

4. The peak of foaling occurs on the East Range about April 15th. No movement of horses will take place until colts are at least 2½ months old or until July 1st.

5. A veterinarian will be contracted to be on call at all times during the round-up.

6. All corral panels will be from 72" to 84" high in order to prevent horses from jumping our of traps.

7. Brutality to horses in any form will not be tolerated. Any employee who mistreats any horse will be dismissed immediately from the round-up operation.

8. A Bureau official will be in the helicopter at all times in

order to insure that all stipulations are met and that horses are not over stressed.

9. All holding facilities will meet U.S. Department of Agriculture specifications.

10. Only experienced horse back riders will be used in the gathering operation.

11. Experienced horse wranglers from the local area will be employed whenever possible.

12. All saddle horses will be properly shod and over three years in age. All saddles and tack will be in good repair.

13. EIA samples will be taken at the holding facilities at Carson City.

14. Alcoholic beverages will not be allowed in or near the horse corral premises.

15. Only experienced drivers will be used to transport the horses to the holding facilities.

16. The helicopter will have radio communications with the authorized officer or his designated representative at all times.

E. Adverse Impacts That Cannot Be Avoided

There are no adverse impacts which cannot be avoided. The use of portable panels for traps and wings will allow that all evidence of the roundup be removed.

IV. Relationship Between Short-Term Use and Long-Term Productivity

Short-term use under existing condition would have subtle adverse effects on the animal and plant community. Without control of horse numbers range and watershed conditions would continue to deteriorate effecting the animals supported by them.

Increased horse numbers would further magnify the conflict between range users and produce a high degree of population stress. Reduction of horse numbers would help stabilize and/or improve the range and reduce population stress. This benefit would be recognized until horse numbers increase substantially. With periodic removal of excess horses the balance between range users can be properly managed pending evaluation of the plan and adjustments if needed. The ultimate goal is to manage wild horses, wildlife and livestock in an ecological balance for the maximum use without jeopardizing the range health.

V. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

There should be no permanent loss of any resources in the East Range because of the proposed gathering.

Possible injury may result from the gathering of horses; if so the animals would have to be destroyed in a humane way.

VI. Persons, Groups And Government Agencies Consulted

William Casey, Rancher
Grass Valley, Nevada

Mike Burke, Rancher
Grass Valley, Nevada

Robert and Cesar Siard, Rancher
Pleasant Valley, Nevada

Robert Vesco, Rancher
Pleasant Valley, Nevada

Arnold & Mike Paris, Rancher
Pleasant Valley, Nevada

Vern Heckman, Rancher
Winnemucca, Nevada

Robert Belzarina, Rancher
Buena Vista Valley, Nevada

Jerry Reeves, Rancher
Buena Vista Valley, Nevada

Fred Lynch, Rancher
Buena Vista Valley, Nevada

John and Eugene Thacker, Rancher
Imlay, Nevada.

Mrs. Velma Johnson, Wild Horse
Organized Assistance
Reno, Nevada

Phillip Benolkin
Nevada Department of Fish & Game
Lovelock, Nevada

VII. Public Interest And/Or Controversy

Due to the large nature of the proposed gathering, the public, both locally and even nationally, should show a high level of interest. Wild horse interest groups will undoubtedly closely scrutinize all phases of the gathering. Many of these horse protection groups have been very influential in shaping BLM policies concerning wild horse management. The Bureau has been enjoined many times by these groups and has been forced into court battles long before a roundup could begin. In the case of this gathering, it is possible that the Bureau may be taken to court. Basically, in the past, injunctions have been based on the premise that no management is the proper management for horses. Without adequate data, the Bureau has often lost these court cases and been stopped from gathering. Another problem should, theoretically at least, have been solved by the United States Supreme Court ruling in 1976 which clearly places wild

horse responsibility with the United States. An agreement concerning brand inspection of captured animals has been tentatively drawn up for this gathering.

VIII. Recommendations Of Preferrer Action

Based on the foregoing facts and analysis it is recommended that the proposed action be approved and adopted. It is further recommended that the stipulations and mitigating measures called for in this document be adopted.

IX. Participating Staff

Brad Hines, Range Conservationist Les Boni, Wildlife Biologist

Ron Hall, Wild Horse/Burro Specialist

Robert Carroll, Chief, Division of Operations

Eugene Dahlem, Wildlife Biologist John Roney, Archeologist

Tom Pagnano, Range Technician

X. Signatures

Robert J. Neary
Team Leader

6/27/77
Date

Henry B. Beauchamp
Environmental Coordinator

6/27/77
Date

Robert J. Neary
Area Manager Sonoma-Gerlach
Resource Area

6/27/77
Date

Chester E. Conard
District Manager

6/27/77
Date

Owyhee Desert Wild Horse Capture Plan

I The Proposed Action

The proposed action consists of capturing approximately 1100 wild horses out of a herd of approximately 1800 animals on the Spring Range of the Owyhee Desert. This would reduce the herd down to the number counted after Public Law 92-195 became effective on December 15, 1971. The law does allow for herds to be managed at the 1971 population level. This gathering is proposed because there are only three water sources which the horse population can use. These sources provide an insufficient amount of water to support such a large population of horses. This has caused great physical stress on the population. A large die off is very possible unless water availability is increased by abnormally high summer precipitation.

II Background Information

Wild horses have been part of the fauna of the Owyhee Desert since the settlement of the area by European man in the mid-ninteenth century. Until the 1960's many mustangers made their living rounding up wild horses from the Owyhee Desert and surrounding country.

Due to public concern, Congress passed a law in 1959 making it illegal to use aircraft in the pursuit, harassment, and capture of wild horses. However, enforcement of this law was left up to the individual states. The states did nothing to enforce this law. Pressure continued to mount on Congress to pass a stricter law to

protect wild horses. In 1971, P.L. 92-195 passed both houses of Congress unanimously and the President signed it. This law charged the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior with the protection and management of all wild, free-roaming horses and burros on public lands.

The main use of the Owyhee Desert by man has been livestock grazing. Before the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1936 bands of sheep grazed the Owyhee along with cattle especially during the spring grazing season.

In the early 1960's the Winnemucca District conducted a forage inventory over the entire district. The Owyhee Desert was fenced into Spring use and Summer use areas. The Spring Range contains virtually all of the wild horses in the allotment (approximately 1800). The forage resource on the Spring Range is currently over-obligated by nearly 20%. A summary is presented below.

Species	Present Animal Numbers	Animals per AU	Present Estimated AUMs Consumed
Pronghorn	300	5	720
Deer	150	4	450
Horses	1,800	1	21,600
Cattle		1	18,500
			-41,270 AUMs consumed
			+34,321 AUMs available (1964 survey)
			-6,949 AUMs overobligated

This does not take into account consumption of forage by insects, especially ants. Aerial reconnaissance of the Desert gives a vivid picture of just how great the impact from ants is.

From October 1976 to the end of April 1977 only 2% of the total amount of precipitation fell in the Winnemucca area. Precipitation

for May 1977, was nearly 2.5 inches, which is far above the normal .88 inches. However, the precipitation received between October and March is most important for providing runoff. The winter of 1976-77 was so dry that practically no snowpack accumulated on the Calico Mountains. These mountains are the upper watershed for the three main drainages on the north end of the Spring Range. These streams, Raven Creek, Willow Creek, and the East Fork, Little Owyhee River, are intermittent but usually flow into May in most normal years. These streams have been dry since the spring of 1976. This has caused all of the horses on the north end of the Spring Range to concentrate around Twin Valley Spring. This spring had dried up considerably by the end of April 1977. Several young colts had been caught in the deep mud around the spring and were trampled to death in the mud. It was readily apparent that the spring needed to be dug out. This was done on April 30, 1977 as a temporary measure to provide more water. However, as the summer progresses evaporation from the spring will increase as well as the water demand by the horses. Thus, the water supply will be reduced.

In addition, all reservoirs on the north end of the Spring Range have been dry since the fall of 1976. Only two reservoirs on the Spring Range have water currently. These are located in the Fairbanks Field. The legal locations are T. 42 N., R. 44 E., Sec. 21, and T. 41 N., R. 43 E., Sec. 23. With the hot summer months ahead, these reservoirs should dry up. It is for this reason, the lack of water, and to a lesser extent, the depleted forage resource, that this emergency gathering is proposed.

Trapping: Methods, Location, Timing

Two different trapping methods will be used to capture wild horses. Water trapping will be used at Twin Valley Spring to capture approximately 500-700 animals. This is the only known water source for the horses that winter on the north end of the Spring Range. The location of the trap will be T. 45 N., R. 43 E., Sec. 28 SW¼. A fence will be constructed around the spring area. Powder River type hollow steel tube panels, six feet high, will be used to make this enclosure. Gates will be placed upstream and downstream from the spring. When the animals enter the enclosure the gates would be closed. The animals will be driven to a narrow end of the trap where they will enter a small loading area constructed of wood. This loading corral and ramp will be the only permanent structures left at the spring after the trapping is finished.

If normal weather returns in June, trapping should commence the second week of July at this site and last no longer than the middle of August.

The second trap site will be located in the vicinity of the lower gorge of Milligan Creek. Approximately 500-700 horses utilize this area. Water is found in the creek bottom in small isolated pools just as the canyon starts to deepen. Water is also available at the mouth of the canyon from a spring-fed stream which enters the Little Humboldt Ranch. If the water in this streambed dries up considerably, and the horses are forced to use one or two small areas to water, a water trap will be used. If the horses remain

spread out due to water availability, a drive trap will be used. The approximate location of such a trap would be T. 42 N., R. 45 E., Sec. 17 NW¼. This trap would be used to capture animals that are watering at the South Fork Little Humboldt River. All horses captured in this trap would be driven by a helicopter under strict BLM supervision. Because of the central location of the trap, most horses would be forced to run no more than 10 miles. Since trapping at this site would not begin until mid-July, the colts should be old enough and strong enough to withstand such a drive.

The trap will be constructed out of portable panels, like those used at the Twin Valley Spring trap. The trap will be laid out in a manner that would make maximum use of the terrain to hide the trap.

A large herd of approximately 400 animals is watering at the South Fork, Little Humboldt. Some of these animals may be trapped using the Milligan Creek trap. If this is done, a two mile section of the Lake Creek Fence would be dropped to allow the horses to be driven to the trap.

Trapping would take place from mid-July until the end of August.

Holding Facilities

All animals trapped will be eventually shipped to the Nevada central holding facility at Palomino Valley, just north of Sparks, Nevada. In order to more efficiently handle captured animals, a temporary holding facility will be constructed to support the trapping operations at each trap. The corrals will be constructed from portable panels. To support the trapping operation at Twin

Valley Springs, a temporary holding corral will be constructed adjacent to the Owyhee Road. The location is T. 45 N., R. 42 E., Sec. 10 SW¼. This is adjacent to an old gravel pit. This pit will be used to bury any animals which must be humanely disposed of. The location of the holding facility to support the Milligan Creek trap will be located near Little Humboldt Ranch on the South Fork, Little Humboldt River.

Disposal

Captured horses that are obviously old, lame, deformed, or sick will be humanely disposed of using a .22 caliber rifle. The carcasses will be buried in the old gravel pit adjacent to the temporary holding facility near Owyhee Camp. A similar burial pit will be located corral near Little Humboldt Ranch. The remaining animals will be transported to the temporary holding corrals. From there, the animals will be sorted by age and sex criteria, and will be shipped in groups of 20-30 in open top livestock trailers hauled by a semi-truck tractor.

These animals will be given away under the Bureau's Adopt-a-Horse program. This will be the most expensive part of the gathering. The food cost for 1,100 horses will cost approximately $100,000. Any animals that can not be given away will be humanely disposed of.

Participating Staff

Bob Carroll	Chief, Division of Operations
Chester Conard	District Manager
Ron Hall	District Wild Horse/Burro Specialist
Bill Markenrider	Paradise-Denio Area Manager
Ray Hoem	District Wildlife Biologist (Former)
Glen Stickley	Chief, Division of Resource

Approved:

William J. Harkenrider, Jr. — 6-27-77

William J. Harkenrider, Jr.
Area Manager

Date

Vaden G. Stickley — 6-27-77

Vaden G. Stickley
Acting District Manager

Date

E. I. Rowland — JUL 6 1977

E.I. Rowland
State Director

Date

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD (EAR)
FACE SHEET

1. Public Purpose or Environmental Goal to be Served by (this/these) Bureau Action(s)

- ☐ fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations
- ☐ assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings
- ☑ attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences
- ☐ preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice
- ☐ achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities
- ☐ enchance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources

Office

Winnemucca

EAR number

NV-020-7-44

Environmental assessment reference number *(only for EAR update or supplement)*

2. Discrete Operations *(attach additional sheets, if necessary)*

		DECISION* a	b	c	d
PROPOSED ACTION(S)	☐ Construct a water trap at Twin Valley Spring	✓			
	☐ Construct a drive trap near Milligan Creek	✓			
	☐ Construct a holding facility to support each trap operation	✓			
	☐ Remove a total of 1100 wild horses	✓			
	☐ Improve roads to trap sites	✓			
	☐ Dispose of old, sick, lame, deformed animals by shooting	✓			
ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S)	☐ No action				✓
	☐ Delayed action				✓
	☐				
	☐				
	☐				
	☐				

3. Mitigating Measures** *(attach additional sheets, if necessary)*

☐	Archeological clearance of all traps, and holding corrals	✓			
☐	Place holding facilities away from live streams	✓			
☐	Seed cleared areas to protect soil	✓			
☐					
☐					
☐					

4. Environmental Impact Statement recommended ☐ Yes ☑ No

Approved by (Signature of Area Manager) William J. Mathewson Jr. — Date 6-27-77

Signature of District Manager Gordon R. Stoltz (acting) — Date 6-27-77

* See reverse
** Summarize if decision is b or c

[a] Accepted as stated in EAR
[b] Accepted with environmentally-significant modification
[c] Accepted with environmentally-significant modification which has been assessed and appended to *(or incorporated in)* the initial EAR
[d] Rejected

Remarks (Explain if conclusion is that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The explanation should relate to significance of residual impacts, whether beneficial or adverse, and/or relate to controversy about impacts.)

NOTE

The principal purpose of this form is to provide a written record of the management decision and its salient environmental aspects. When properly completed, it attests to the consideration of environmental amenities and values in planning and decisionmaking. Its completion by the decisionmaker, or authorized officer, provides subordinate officials with explicit written guidance as to the complexion of the decision.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

1. In this section, record the linkage, if any, of the decision and the pursuit of national environmental goals expressed in Section 101(b) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The authorized officer should check any of the listed purposes/goals which this decision helps attain.

2. Record discrete operations of the proposed action which was assessed and discrete operations of its alternatives. A checkmark corresponding to the type of decision made *(see asterisk above)* should be entered in the pertinent box *(a, b, c, or d)* following the description of each discrete operation.

3. The authorized officer records the selection of mitigating measures. Every mitigating measure assessed should be listed. A checkmark corresponding to the type of decision made *(see asterisk above)* should be entered in the pertinent box *(a, b, c, or d)* following the description of each mitigating measure. If the decision corresponds to items *b*, or *c*, summarize the modification of the mitigating measure. The findings concerning significance of associated residual impacts should be summarized if the decision corresponds to items *b, c, or d.*

4. The authorized officer records recommendation concerning the need for an environmental impact statement *on the action proposed SUBSEQUENT* to the environmental assessment.

April 1977)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD (EAR)
FACE SHEET

1. Public Purpose or Environmental Goal to be Served by (this/these) Bureau Action(s)

- ☐ fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations
- ☐ assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings
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- ☐ enchance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources

Office

Winnemucca

EAR number

NV-020-7-44

Environmental assessment reference number *(only for EAR update or supplement)*

2. Discrete Operations *(attach additional sheets, if necessary)*

PROPOSED ACTION(S)	DECISION* a	b	c	d
☐ Dispose of horses through the Adopt-A-Horse Program				
☐ Convey branded horses to the State of Nevada				
☐				
☐				
☐				
☐				
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☐				
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☐				
☐				

*Mitigating Measures** (attach additional sheets, if necessary)*

☐				
☐				
☐				
☐				
☐				
☐				

Environmental Impact Statement recommended ☐ Yes ☐ No

oved by *(Signature of Area Manager)*	Date
ature of District Manager	Date

e reverse
marize if decision is b or c

[a] Accepted as stated in EAR
[b] Accepted with environmental[illegible] insignificant modification
[c] Accepted with environmentally significant modification which has been assessed and appended to *(or incorporated in)* the initial EAR
[d] Rejected

Remarks (Explain if conclusion is that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The explanation should relate to significance of residual impacts, whether beneficial or adverse, and/or relate to controversy about impacts.)

NOTE

The principal purpose of this form is to provide a written record of the management decision and its salient environmental aspects. When properly completed, it attests to the consideration of environmental amenities and values in planning and decisionmaking. Its completion by the decisionmaker, or authorized officer, provides subordinate officials with explicit written guidance as to the complexion of the decision.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

In this section, record the linkage, if any, of the decision and the pursuit of national environmental goals expressed in Section 101(b) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The authorized officer should check any of the listed purposes/goals which this decision helps attain.

Record discrete operations of the proposed action which was assessed and discrete operations of its alternatives. A checkmark corresponding to the type of decision made *(see asterisk above)* should be entered in the pertinent box *(a, b, c, or d)* following the description of each discrete operation.

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4. The authorized officer records recommendation concerning the need for an environmental impact statement *on the action proposed SUBSEQUENT* to the environmental assessment.