

8/4/93

DEAR DAWN:

Enclosed are a 1979 memo on the Fox Range and an excerpt from a 79 URA on the Buffalo Hills.

The boundary fence - Frog CK - was a significant factor then & still is today. The way the Coyote Allotment fence lies in forms a natural trap. The portion of the herd that utilizes the slopes above Frog CK - those that are left - need to be managed in conjunction with Duck Flat.

In our benevolent wisdom I'm sure we will find "no significant impact" in terms of the fence.

I find no evidence that open gates or wide "horse gates" are any kind of solution. The Owyhee has these "improvements", yet we have four distinct breeding populations. Evidence of horse use of open gates is non-existent.

I have never seen a fence in a horse area that had a positive influence on the population.

We are continuing ~~our~~ grazing of critical winter habitat with no regard to the needs of the horse. These critical habitats are not being identified & addressed in the allotment eval. process or anywhere else.

I am working on a memo on the impact of the Allotment Eval^{Process} on Wild Horses in WYOMING. This should prove popular.

I've been giving it some thought and I honestly believe our judicial system should allow each individual the right - withouttribution - to kill one person in his lifetime - kind of a limit. It would sure change the way we do business in government.

I'll be gone a couple of weeks starting tomorrow. I am going to pick up my kids and we are going - wherever ever they want to go. It should be fun - I hope they don't recall Disneyland

Hope to see ya soon

I hope Burt is on the mend. - Give him my best
Ron.

Love
Ron

5. The Buffalo Hills were flown December 15, 1978 (by fixed wing aircraft) to determine winter use areas and to try to form some generalizations about migration patterns and seasonal use areas within the herd use area. This flight showed that the majority of the horses congregated on the foothills on the east side of the range. The inventory conducted January 28, 1975, revealed an even distribution of animals throughout the range. The majority of the HUA is between 5,000-6,000 feet in elevation. During mild winters the wild horses will not move down to the lower elevations and will use the same general area yearlong.

There might be some interchange of horses between the Buffalo Hills and the Granite Range in the Crutcher Canyon and Squaw Valley Reservoir areas, as there are very few fences to restrict their movement back and forth (see Physical Profile Step 2 URA-Developments). An interchange of horses might also occur on the west side of the HUA along the Susanville-Winnemucca District boundary fence. This boundary is not a continuous fence, as natural barriers are also utilized. At various times during the year, gates are left open allowing horses to move back and forth.

In January of 1978 a heavy snow of short duration occurred, forcing the wild horses on the northwest end down into the area of Frog Creek. These horses were probably trapped for a short period of time in this vicinity. The Susanville District Boundary Fence runs generally north and south, and the Coyote Allotment Boundary Fence runs east and west in this area. These fences prohibited the wild horses access to lower flats located to the north and west.

Range condition throughout the Buffalo Hills Range was classified as poor at that time due to overuse by both livestock and wild horses in competition for inadequate quantities of forage. In areas of big sagebrush canyons the bark had been stripped from most of the plants and the understory vegetation was non-existent. This combination of events led to a major horse die-off throughout this area (see Figures 7-10).

This die-off was documented between March and April 1978, during a thorough investigation by the District Wild Horse Specialist and other district employees. In the investigation approximately 300 dead horses were found.

Forty-five percent of these animals were located in the relatively small area of the North Fork of Frog Creek. The remainder of the horses were scattered throughout the lower areas of the Buffalo Hills Range.

The majority of the horses that were still alive were in a very weakened condition and were heavily infested with ticks. This fact, coupled with the boggy-wet soil conditions, placed additional stress on animals that were already heavily stressed (see Figures 11-12).

In view of the above situation, a "Notice of Closure of Federally Owned or Controlled Lands to Livestock Grazing" in the Buffalo Hills Range, was initiated by BLM on April 30, 1978, "for conservation of the Federal Range and forage thereon." This, in addition to the reduced population of wild horses, allowed the physical condition of the remaining animals to improve. This fact was verified by the extremely high foal crop this year (approximately 26.6%), and Don Pomi (personal communication August 10, 1979) has stated that the physical condition of the captured horses is excellent.

6. Minimal off-road vehicle (ORV) activity occurs in the Buffalo Hills, but the actual extent is undetermined (see Recreation Step 3 URA, Overlay No.).

The recreation inventory conducted in the late 1960s did not identify any existing recreation sites or any sites suitable for potential development. A minimal amount of hunting and fishing occurs, but the actual extent is unknown.

Mining activity on the Buffalo Hills HUA is low. Increased activity may occur if new mineral sources are discovered. For more information on the actual extent of the activity, refer to the Minerals Step 3 URA.