

8/3/93



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Winnemucca District Office

705 East 4th Street

Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

IN REPLY REFER TO:

4100

(NV-240)

AUG 03 1993

Cathy Barcomb
Commission For the Preservation of Wild Horses
50 Freeport Blvd #2
Sparks, NV 89431

Dear Ms. Barcomb:

As you have requested in your letter dated July 23, 1993, I am sending you a copy of the Unit Resource Analysis and the Management Framework Plan that covers the McGee Mtn. Area of the Alder Creek allotment.

As you review the documents, you may note that the McGee Mtn. area has not been a year long area for burros to reside in. At this point, the west side of McGee Mtn. is unfenced, giving the burros ample opportunity to use not only the McGee Mtn area but also areas inside the Sheldon Refuge. This places the burros in jeopardy when gather actions take place on the Sheldon.

I have researched our files and have found that reservoirs have been constructed in various locations on McGee Mtn., but they are not dependable sources of water as the watersheds above the reservoirs are not very large.

There was also an attempt in the mid 80's to drill a well on the mountain with no success. The site selection for the well was done by Geothermal Surveys, INC.

It appears that the best option that we have at this point is to re-evaluate the boundaries of the HMA with the current information that we have on distribution and recommend a boundary change through the Resource Management Plan process.

If you have any other questions, please give me a call at 623-1500.

Sincerely yours,

Scott Billing
Area Manager
Paradise-Denio Resource Area

Enclosures--2

1. Unit Resource Analysis--McGee Mtn (5 pgs)
2. MFP-Wild Horses (9 pgs)

cc: Dawn Lappin--WFOA w/enclosures

Although the area involved receives a greater amount of precipitation, there is a striking similarity in the range types of this area and the Winnemucca District, which is directly west and overlaps the Winnemucca District. Dietary overlaps for this area and the Winnemucca District would be similar.

VI. Herd Use Areas

Herd use areas delineated in this Unit Resource Analysis (URA) are the geographic limits used by a particular herd over a period of years and under varying seasons and weather conditions. Insufficient data are available to accurately delineate herd use area boundaries, thus resulting in an estimate of present wild horse and burro use areas (see Range Management Step 3 URA Overlay #3). Much more intensive inventory data are required to accurately ascertain present herd use area boundaries and individual herd home ranges. An ideal end product of such studies would be a breakdown of the herd use areas into a larger number of smaller herd use areas for more intensive management purposes.

Further studies would also provide insight into distribution, home ranges, movement patterns, sex and age ratios, recruitment rates, birth rates, size, colors, and types of wild horse and burros. Information of this type, as well as conflicts with livestock and wildlife, and effects of outside influences is lacking.

Information that is specifically lacking from each of these herd use areas is seasonal use areas, and physical characteristics of the herds within the use area. As more intensive management occurs on these use areas, this information will become available.

A. McGee Mountain Use Area

The McGee Mountain use area is located in northwestern Humboldt County, Nevada. The area is in the northwestern corner of the Denio Planning Unit (see Range Management Step 3 URA Overlay #3). This use area is bordered on its northern and western boundaries by the Charles Sheldon Antelope Range, which is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and is bordered on its southern and eastern boundaries by Craine Creek.

The area is characterized by fairly steep slopes, high elevations, and sparse vegetation. Elevations vary from 6,667 feet on McGee Mountain proper to approximately 4,300 feet in Bog Hot Valley area. Big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, shadscale, horsebrush (Tetradymia spp.), spiny hopsage (Grayia spinosa), Indian ricegrass (Oryzopsis hymenoides), bluebunch wheatgrass, and cheatgrass (Bromus tectorum) predominate at higher elevations, whereas shadscale, rabbitbrush, bud sagebrush (Artemisia spinescens), horsebrush, spiny hopsage, and cheatgrass are the major species at the lower elevations.

Halogeton (Halogeton glomeratus) occurs in the lower elevations, especially in disturbed areas, as does greasewood (Sarcobatus vermiculatus). Locoweed (Astragalus spp.) occurs randomly throughout most of the area. The extent to which any of these poisonous plants affects the burros is undetermined. For distribution of poisonous plants see Range Management Step 3 URA narrative and Overlay #2. The herd use area is comprised of approximately 50,000 acres, all of it public land.

A burro census was conducted in the winter of 1974. At that time there were 30 adult animals inventoried. Mr. Buster Dufurrena (personal communication) estimated the 1976 population level at 100 animals.*

It should be noted that all wild horse/burro inventories were conducted from either fixed wing aircraft or helicopter and that aerial surveys are at best a rough estimate of the actual population size. Caughley (1974) found in his study and search of the literature that the closest an aerial survey ever came to the actual population size was 89%.

Mr. Dufurrena captured 99 head of burros on the Antelope Refuge in 1977. Present estimations of burros on the Sheldon Antelope Range is 35 to 40 animals (Bruce Wiseman assistant refuge manager personal communication).

Migrations do occur along the entire boundary of the Sheldon Antelope Range. The degree of the migrations is not known, but only small numbers of burros have been observed on public land east of the antelope refuge.

There is a drift fence that runs from Thousand Creek southwest to the base of McGee Mountain. This fence forms a boundary against further migration onto the flats.

* SEE Appendix 1

D-WH/B-

Prepared by: Erick G. Campbell 6/76

Revised by: Paul A. Jancar 5/15/79

The Sheldon Antelope Refuge is in the process of constructing a fence on the east boundary. This will also stop most migration. The fence is expected to be completed in late 1979. Depending on the time of completion, the number of burros in the McGee Mountain use area will be minimal or possibly nonexistent.

The area is broken down into two wilderness study areas. The northern half is reclassified as multiple use area, which will cause no conflicts with wild burro management activity.

The southern half has been classified as an intensive study area which could limit future activity of wild burro management. If this area is included in a "wilderness" classification, harassment of the burros in this area would decrease (see Wilderness Step 3 URA Overlay).

Mining activity and off-road vehicles (ORV) activity are limited in this area and have a very minimal effect upon the burros (Simontacchi personal communication; Hand personal communication).

Mule deer and chukar partridge (Alectoris chukar) hunters frequent the area in the fall, but no data are available as to their effect upon the burros (see Recreation Step 3 URA, Overlay #2 and narrative p. 14).

The higher elevations of the McGee Mountain use area constitutes the winter range for approximately 50 mule deer (see Wildlife Step 3 URA Overlay #2). Approximately 95 pronghorn utilize "critical" winter habitat in the southern portion of the area (see Wildlife Step 3 URA Overlay #1). The season of use for the mule deer and antelope for this area is November 1 to April 30. No data are available on competition between big game species and burros, and data must be acquired to accurately ascertain the extent of burro-mule deer, burro-pronghorn, and burro-miscellaneous wildlife competition.

Phase I Watershed Conservation and Development (WC&D) Inventory data for the area and immediate vicinity indicates a general slight to moderate erosion condition class. For further information refer to Watershed URA Step 3 Overlay #2.

D-WH/B-

Prepared by: Erick G. Campbell 6/76

Revised by: Paul A. Jancar 5/15/79

Most local ranchers feel that the burro population should be reduced drastically and then maintained at a low level. A public relations program directed to the local level for the preservation of wild horses and burros would aid in alleviating some of these problems. In 1972 several animals were reported shot in the immediate vicinity, although not on the area proper. Due to the large size of the Winnemucca District and the relatively small number of Bureau personnel, protection in this, and essentially all, areas has been negligible. The full extent of violations of Public Law 92-195 are unknown, although violations have occurred throughout the Winnemucca District. Increased protective measures would benefit wild horses and burros.

Water supplies and developments are discussed in detail in the Physical Profile (see Physical Profile Step 2 URA Overlay #7a and tabulations p. 67).

An individual burro consumes between 10 (2.6 gallons) and 15 liters (4.0 gallons) of water per day (Baudelaire 1972). Annually an individual burro consumes between 949 and 1,460 gallons which means that the McGee Mountain burros consumed between 28,470 (0.09 acre feet) and 43,800 gallons (0.13 acre feet) in 1974. Available water supplies are a major limiting factor of burro use. Burros may use snow, when available, which could extend their range.

The herd use area is located within the Alder Creek and Bilk-Wilder Allotments. Table 9 gives the breakdown for each allotment.

Table 9.

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Active Use In AUM's</u>	<u>% Herd Use Area Within Allotment</u>
Alder Creek	Bill Pendola	11,787	93%
	Rich Drake	6,032	
		17,819	
Bilk-Wilder	Ivory Ranches	13,877	7%
	Duffurena Sheep Co.	3,430	
	Melvin Casey	102	
		17,409	

D-WH/B-

Prepared by: Erick G. Campbell 6/76

Revised by: Paul A. Jancar 5/15/79

The number of burros presently utilizing public land in this area is from 45-60 burros from November to April. This would mean that approximately 300 AUM's would be used by the burros for this period. There is no distribution pattern for the use area, thus the assumption that the 300 AUM's would be taken uniformly over the entire use area. With that assumption it was surmised that 93% or 279 AUM's would be utilized from the Alder Creek Allotment and 7% or 21 AUM's were utilized from the Wilder-Bilk Allotment.

At this time there is no allocation of forage for wildlife or burros, thus the 279 AUM's and 21 AUM's are over and above the licensed use of ~~each of the~~ respective allotments.

As the population of burros increases, the allocation of forage is proportionately overextended.

Data on the following subjects are notably lacking for this and all use areas. Acquisition of the following data would greatly facilitate management: wild horse and burro distributions and home ranges; population condition; sex and age ratios; recruitment; birth rates; sizes; colors; types; wild horse and burro-livestock conflicts; wild horse and burro-wildlife conflicts; trend, condition, and utilization of forage resources and effects of poisonous plants, mining, and recreationists on wild horse and burro populations.

B. Jackson Mountains Use Area

The Jackson Mountains use area is located in the south-central portion of the Denio Planning Unit (see Range Management Step 3 URA Overlay #3). The area is bordered on the west by the Black Rock Desert, on the east by Desert Valley, on the north by State Highway 140 and the Quinn River and on the south by the Western Pacific railway. The elevation ranges from 8,923 feet on King Lear Peak to approximately 4,000 feet in both valley floors. The area is approximately 283,000 acres; 274,920 acres (97%) public land and 8,080 acres (3%) private lands. Big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, juniper (Juniperus osteosperma), quaking aspen (Populus tremuloides), serviceberry (Amelanchier alnifolia), snowberry (Symphoricarpos spp.), oceanspray (Holodiscus discolor), miscellaneous annual forbs, Sandberg bluegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, and Idaho fescue (Festuca idahoensis) predominate at the higher elevations, whereas shadscale, greasewood, bud sagebrush, horsebrush, clasping pepperweed (Lepidium perfoliatum), seepweed (Sueda spp.), cheatgrass, and squirreltail (Sitanion hystrix) predominate at the lower elevations.

D-WH/B-

Prepared by: Erick G. Campbell 6/76

Revised by: Paul A. Jancar 5/15/79

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (MFP)

Paradise-Denio

Activity

Wild Horses

Overlay Reference

Step 1 P-1 D-1 Step 3

MFP I

Recommendation WH/B 1.3

Establish Herd Use Areas in three areas for extensive management of wild horses and burros (See Wild Horse MFP I Overlay Paradise-Denio).

Herd Use Area #1 Snowstorm Mountains Herd Use Area

- 1) Numbers for this Horse Use Area would be allowed to build to the 1971 levels if forage is available.
- 2) Domestic livestock use should fluctuate so that, in combination with horse numbers, carrying capacity is not exceeded.
- 3) Extensive management would consist of population regulation and inventory.
- 4) Livestock water would be made available to wild horses and burros on a yearlong basis.
- 5) The Snowstorm Fire Rehab. Area would be made available to horses when they would normally be using that area.
- 6) No further fencing will be constructed within the herd use area.
- 7) Horses will not be moved with cattle in any grazing rotation system.
- 8) Horses would be reduced to the number that the present herd use area can accommodate.
- 9) Conduct gatherings at intervals that will maintain management numbers.

<u>Herd Use Area</u>	<u>Estimated Present Numbers</u>	<u>Management Numbers</u>
Snowstorm Mountains	734*	123

*Numbers projected from 1977 inventory using 14% survival rate.

Rationale

- A) The Snowstorm Mountain Herd Use Area has a viable herd of horses but has a large amount of private land within its boundary. If this land was to be fenced, this would virtually cut the area in half and make intensive management difficult, therefore it is not a good candidate for an HMA.
- B) Horse and burro numbers will fluctuate over time. To prevent over-grazing of the range domestic livestock number will have to be adjusted to suit the carrying capacity. Livestock numbers are easier to control than are horse numbers.

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (MFP)	Paradise-Denio
Activity	Wild Horses
Overlay Reference	
Step 1	Step 3

Rationale WH/B 1.3 (con't)

- C) Only inventory and gathering are needed within these areas. The amount of outside influences (i.e. grazing) would be large enough that they would have a bias effect on studies attempted within the area.
- D) Water availability is critical for the survival of wild horses and burros. If water is available in several areas, utilization will be more uniform.
- E) The rehab area would provide good forage to horses when they would normally be in the area.
- F) Fencing within the area would limit the range of wild horses and burros and possibly adversely impact areas of critical environmental concern.
- G) It would be virtually impossible to have wild animals within a grazing system. The horses or burros would have to be herded into the use pastures and fence construction have to be such that the horses or burros would not break through. These two points above make a grazing system unfeasible.
- H) Reduction of herd numbers would ensure that the herd that remained was vigorous and that adequate forage would be available.
- I) Gatherings would be necessary to keep horse numbers within the carrying capacity. If no gatherings were conducted horse numbers would increase and an overpopulation would soon exist.

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (MFP)

Paradise-Denio

Activity

Wild Horses

Overlay Reference

Step 1 P-1 Step 3

Recommendation WH/B 1.3 (con't)

Herd Use Area #2 Slumbering Hills North Herd Use Area

- 1) Numbers for this area would remain as they presently are found.
- 2) This herd would be allowed increase unchecked for 3 years to determine if the herd is viable.
- 3) Domestic livestock numbers should fluctuate so that in combination with horse numbers the carrying capacity is not exceeded.
- 4) Extensive management would consist of population regulation and inventory for herd number stabilization.
- 5) Livestock water would be made available to wild horses and burros on a yearlong basis.
- 6) No further fencing would be allowed within the HUA.
- 7) Horses would be allowed to increase to management levels.
- 8) As horses reach management levels, gatherings will be conducted at intervals that will maintain management numbers.
- 9) Horses will not be moved with cattle in any grazing rotation system.

<u>Herd Use Area</u>	<u>Estimated Present Numbers</u>	<u>Management Numbers</u>
Slumbering Hills	7*	146

*Present numbers projected from 1977 inventory using 14% survival rate.

Rationale

- A) There is a question of the viability of the herd that uses the Slumbering Hills North Herd Use Area. There is an estimated number of seven head that use the area. The viability of the herd will be checked by close inventory after three years of growth.
- B) There are only 7 horses presently on the area; if this is a viable herd it would be allowed to grow; if the herd is not viable no further management is needed.
- C) Horse numbers will fluctuate over time. To prevent overgrazing of the range domestic livestock number will have to be adjusted to suit the carrying capacity. Livestock number are easier to control than are horse numbers.

UNITED STATES
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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (MFP)

Paradise-Denio

Activity

Wild Horses

Overlay Reference

Step 1

Step 3

Rationale WH/B 1.3 (con't)

- D) Only inventory and gathering are needed within these areas. The amount of outside influences (i.e. grazing) would be large enough that they would have a bias effect on studies within the area.
- E) Water availability is critical for the survival of wild horses and burros. If water is available in several areas utilization is more uniform.
- F) Fencing within the area would limit the range of wild horses and burros and possibly adversely impact areas of critical environmental concern.
- G) Increase of horses to management levels would guarantee viable and vigorous horses within the areas. If horses only increase to management levels and cattle numbers are controlled there would be no adverse impact to the range resources.
- I) It would be virtually impossible to have wild animals within a grazing system. The burros or horses would have to be herded into the use pastures and fence construction have to be such that the horses or burros would not break through. These two points alone make a grazing system unfeasible.

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

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Activity

Wild Horses

Overlay Reference

Step 1 D-1 Step 3

Recommendation WH/B 1.3 (con't)

Herd Use Area #3 McGee Mountain Herd Use Area

- 1) Numbers for this Herd Use Area would remain as they are presently found.
- 2) An intensive inventory would be conducted to determine the exact number of burros using the area and their seasonal distribution.
- 3) Domestic livestock numbers would then be calculated to bring utilization to carrying capacity. These numbers would fluctuate to maintain livestock and burro use within carrying capacity.
- 4) Extensive management would consist of population regulation and inventory.
- 5) Livestock water would remain available to wild burros throughout the year.
- 6) No further fencing would be allowed within the Herd Use Area.
- 7) If a viable herd of burros can exist within the Herd Use Area, their numbers can increase to 323 animals or equal to the forage available to them.
- 8) Burros will not be moved with cattle in any grazing rotation system.
- 9) Gatherings will be conducted to prevent overgrazing of the range.

<u>Herd Use Area</u>	<u>Estimated Present Numbers</u>	<u>Management Numbers</u>
McGee Mountain	50 burros	50 burros

Rationale

- A) Herd Use Area was established in this area because it was not suitable for HMA's. There was question of the viability of herd of burros that seasonally use the McGee Mountain Use Area. If the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completes the fence on the east side of the Sheldon Antelope Range this may eliminate the burros that use this area.
- B) Presently the exact number of burros that use the area is not known. The Fish and Wildlife Service will complete construction of a boundary fence that will limit the range of the burros. The burros remaining on the HUA will then be the management numbers.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
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Name (MFP)

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Activity

Wild Horses

Overlay Reference

Step 1

Step 3

Rationale WH/B 1.3 (con't)

- C) Burro numbers will fluctuate over time. To prevent overgrazing of the range domestic livestock number will have to be adjusted to suit the carrying capacity. Livestock number are easier to control than are burro numbers.
- D) Only inventory and gathering are needed within these areas. The amount of outside influences (i.e.grazing) would be large enough that they would have a bias effect on studies within the area.
- E) Water availability is critical for the survival of wild horses and burros. If water is available in several areas utilization is more uniform.
- F) Fencing within the area would limit the range of wild horses and burros and possibly adversely impact areas of critical environmental concern.
- G) Forage presently available to wild burros is enough to allow their numbers to increase to 323 animals if cattle numbers are controlled.
- H) It would be virtually impossible to have wild animals within a grazing system. The burros or horses would have to be herded into the use pastures and fence construction have to be such that the horses or burros would not break through. These two points alone make a grazing system unfeasible.
- I) Reduction of herd numbers would ensure that the herd that remained was vigorous and that adequate forage would be available. Gatherings would be necessary to keep horse numbers within the carrying capacity. If no gatherings were conducted horse number would increase and an overpopulation would soon exist.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

Instructions on reverse)

Form 1600-21 (April 1975)

UNITED STATES
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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (MFP)

Paradise-Denio

Activity

Wild Horses

Overlay Reference

Step 1

Step 3

Support WH/B 1.3 (con't)

Palomino Valley Gathering Crew - for removal of horses and burros.
Range - to ensure carrying capacity is not exceeded.
Engineering - to develop roads if needed to remove captured animals.
Archeology - to clear areas identified as trap sites.
Safety - for horse gathering and public safety.
Rehabilitation - of lands if necessary.
State Brand Inspector - inspection of captured horses.
Public Affairs - P.R. work.
Law Enforcement - protection of horses in accordance with the law.

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (MFP)

Paradise-Denio

Activity

WH/B 1.3

Overlay Reference

Step 1

Step 3

WH/B 1.3

Multiple Use Analysis

Conflicts

Cultural Resources 1.7 Designate all S1 and S2 sites as ACECs.

Minerals 1.1 Make no land use decisions that would interfere with mineral development.

Range 1.2 Remove all wild horses and burros from all allotments by 1984.

Watershed 3.3 Eliminate all surface disturbing activities from areas having a deteriorating erosion trend, in critical or severe erosion condition, having a high erosion susceptibility or high vegetal soil factor.

Watershed 4.1 Prevent any surface disturbing action which would result in the destruction of existing populations for any Federally or State listed endangered, threatened or sensitive plant. Designate such areas as ACECs.

Wildlife 1.1 Designate all crucial wildlife use areas as ACECs.

Wildlife 1.3 Improve the condition of aspen habitat for wildlife.

Wildlife 1.4 Improve the condition of mountain browse habitat for mule deer and antelope.

Wildlife 1.5 Improve the condition of meadow and riparian habitat for wildlife.

Wildlife 1.8 Limit off-road vehicle use during the lambing season (February 1 to May 31) in bighorn sheep use areas (Snowstorms).

Wildlife 1.11 Protect crucial wildlife use areas.

Wildlife 1.14 Establish and fence water catchment units to provide free water for wildlife species (McGee Mountain).

Wildlife 1.20 Restrict new road or trail construction on potential California bighorn sheep range to minimize access (Snowstorms).

Wildlife 1.27 Fence Lybo Spring in the Montana Mountains and one unnamed spring in the Slumbering Hills by 1984.

WHB 1.3 (Continued)

Multiple Use Recommendation

Drop the recommendation.

Rationale

1. About 15% of the Snowstorm area is in private ownership and the owner has requested the wild horses to be removed under 43 CFR 4750.3.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife has identified the Snowstorm Mountains as an area for the reintroduction of California bighorn sheep. Wild horses and bighorn sheep may not be competitive for forage but periodic gatherings will be required to balance the wild horses with the stocking rate and this requires helicopters, motor vehicles, and men which creates a serious conflict with bighorn sheep.

Management of the various resources is not feasible in horse use areas. Grazing systems are designed for livestock to use the range at certain seasons-of-use and to provide rest and seedling establishment of the vegetative resources, it is not practical to herd wild horses to follow a grazing system.

2. It is doubtful that seven head of horses in the Slumbering Hills could be considered a viable population or that these animals were present in the immediate locale at the time of the passage of the 1971 Act.
3. The Fish and Wildlife Service are in the process of fencing their boundary along McGee Mountain and it is likely the fencing would be completed in the summer. If this is the case the burros would be fenced in the Sheldon Refuge as it is their summer range. If they were fenced out of the Sheldon Refuge, a large portion of their habitat or range would be removed and any area they moved to would be different from that at the passage of the 1971 Act.

DISTRICT MANAGER'S DECISION

Manage and protect wild horses and burros in herd use areas where wild horses and burros occurred on December 15, 1971, on noncheckerboard lands of the resource area, and on checkerboard lands where cooperative agreements can be obtained. Management of these areas will be coordinated with all activities preferably through the CRMP process.