

G 11/30/95



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Winnemucca District Office
705 East 4th Street
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

In Reply Refer To:
4710.2 (NV-248)

November 30, 1995

Dear Interested Party:

This letter is to inform you that the Winnemucca District plans to remove excess wild horses from the Little Owyhee and Snowstorm Mountains Herd Management Areas (HMAs) from on or about February 1, 1996 to February 29, 1996, contingent upon available funding. Should the gather not take place at this time, it will be rescheduled as soon as possible, based upon available funding and statewide gather priorities. The removal is a continuation of the implementation of the Notice of Final Full Force and Effect Multiple Use Decision for the Little Owyhee and Bullhead Allotments, dated March 26, 1993 and August 25, 1994 respectively, which established the Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) for the HMAs. This removal constitutes no new decision, since current monitoring data indicates that the established AMLs are valid and that the capture methods remain the same as stated in the Little Owyhee and Snowstorm Wild Horse Capture Plans and Environmental Assessments dated September 1, 1993 and August 30, 1994 respectively. The removal is in conformance with the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (P.L. 92-195 section 3(b)(1) and (2), as amended.

The intent of the removal is to achieve AML, and to initiate management of the wild horse population within the ranges established in the Notice of Final Full Force and Effect Multiple Use Decision, Little Owyhee and Bullhead Allotments. As stated in the Little Owyhee and Snowstorm Wild Horse Capture Plans, the primary emphasis will be on removing animals that are five years old or younger.

The following table lists the management range and the estimated current wild horse population for the Little Owyhee and Snowstorm Mountains HMAs. The estimated population is based upon a September 1995 census.

<u>HMA</u>	<u>Management Range</u>	<u>Population Estimate</u>
Little Owyhee	194 to 298	651
Snowstorm Mtns	91 to 140	176

If you have any questions, please contact Dave Stockdale at (702) 623-1500.

Sincerely yours,

Ron Wenker
District Manager



COMMISSION FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF WILD HORSES

255 W. Moana Lane

Suite 207A

Reno, Nevada 89509

(702) 688-2626

January 29, 1996

Mr. Pete Christensen
Paradise-Denio Resource Area
Bureau of Land Management
705 East 4th Street
Winnemucca, Nevada 89406

Subject: Little Owhyee/Snowstorm Data

Dear Mr. Christensen:

We are pleased to receive the population data for the Little Owhyee Wild Horse Herd. Our concerns are focused upon the District's ability to monitor, re-structure and manage the wild horse herd under the proposed actions. The data provided by Mr. Stockdale provides us some assurance that intensive management will result in a herd within its carrying capacity and with recruitment rate that will sustain a viable herd.

It is our interpretation of the Little Owhyee data that at the time of the January 1994 gather the mare cohort of the 297 released horses produced only two colts (assuming no separation of foals from mares) or a ratio of 100 adults to .7 young. At such a low recruitment rate, the mares over the age of six years cannot sustain the population. The September 1995 survey resulted in the observation of 651 horses at a ratio of 100 adults per 26 young. This exceptionally high production rate could have been a result of the mares that escaped capture. It is important to determine the age class of animals producing the foal crop.

It is our interpretation of the Snowstorm data that a similar situation may be occurring adjacent to the Little Owhyee Herd Area. If the October 1994 gather resulted in the release of 96 horses over six years of age with only two colts, the composition ratio would be 100 adults per two young. The proceeding September 1995 survey found 176 horses comprising of 100 adults per 26 young. Again the production could have been a result of the younger mares that escaped capture.

Mr. Pete Christensen
January 29, 1996
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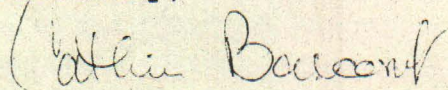
Additional data and interpretation could better explain survey results on these herds. If we assume a 50:50 sex ratio in existing herds, mare numbers might not be able to produce the observed foal crops in 1995. Also, the estimated age classes suggest as a 20 percent mortality factor in horses older than 10 years of age. If the mortality factor is true, another gather removing younger productive mares could reduce production potential below the threshold of each herd.

Data suggests a serious problem may occur as a result of the proposed gather. Additional data may be available to better assess the present situation. It might be appropriate to implement a management criteria to maintain a small percentage of younger age class mares in the herd to sustain a five to eight percent recruitment rate annually.

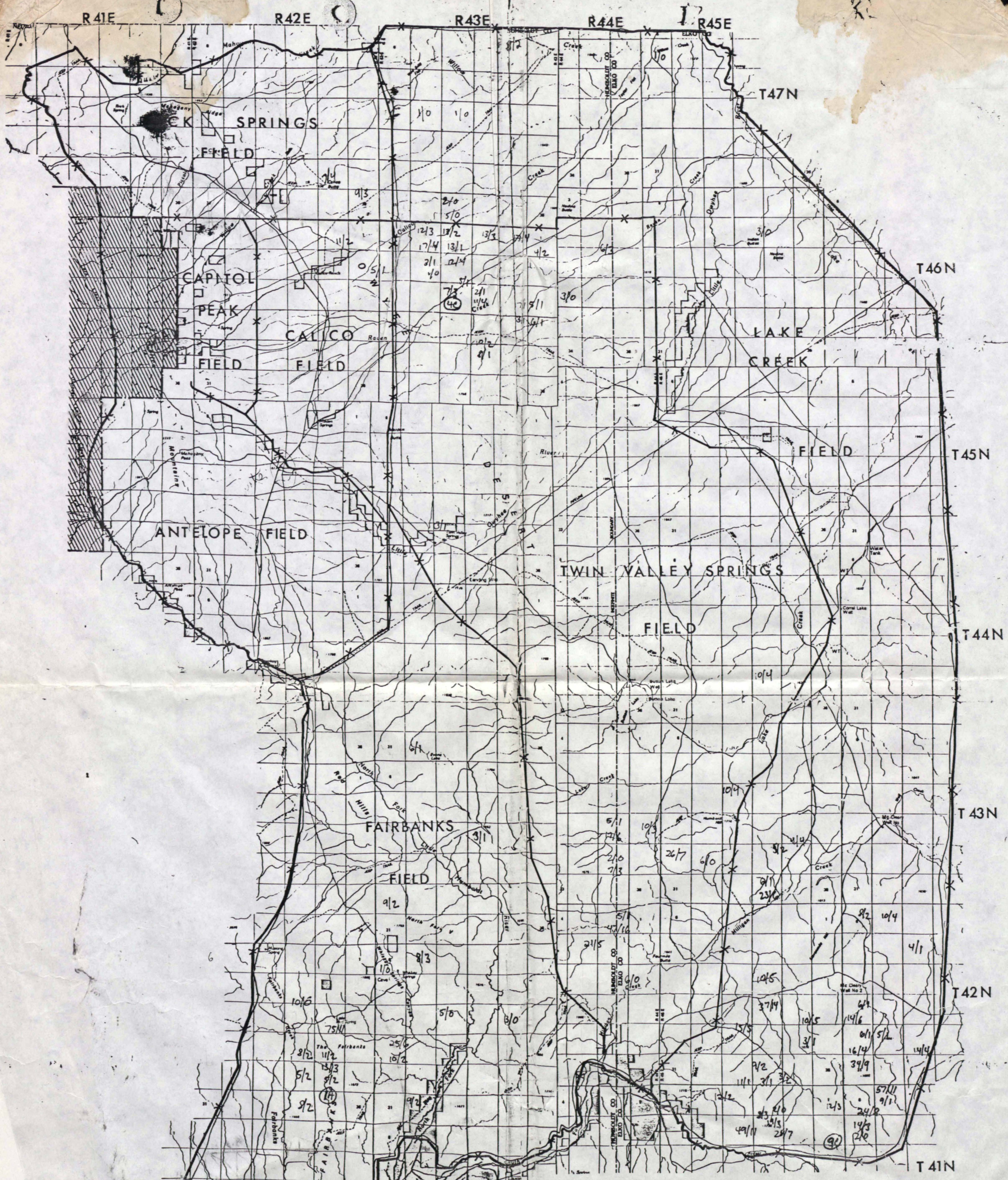
If longevity data finds that these horses only live to 14 years of age, the proposed action to re-structure these herds may exterminats each herd within five years.

Thank you for sharing these data. Obviously, our interpretation is based on just the data provided and some assumptions, better understanding of the data applied to a simple life table would clarify many issues. We are assured that your efforts to collect such essential data will be used in the pending environmental assessment. Mr. Stockdale's and Mr. Hall's long term professional experience and expertise should provide us the needed assurances that future management actions will preserve of the Snowstorm and Little Owhyee herds at the appropriate management levels.

Sincerely,



CATHERINE BARCOMB
Executive Director






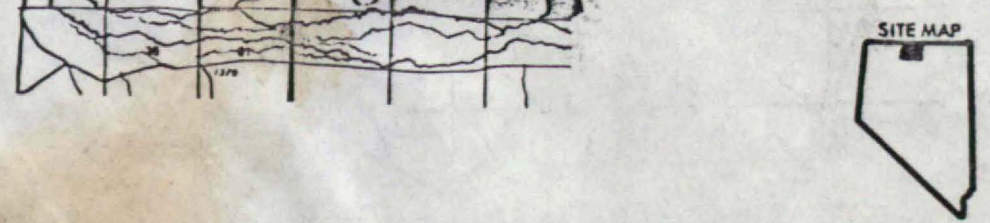
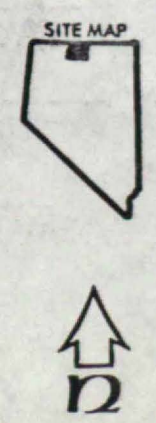
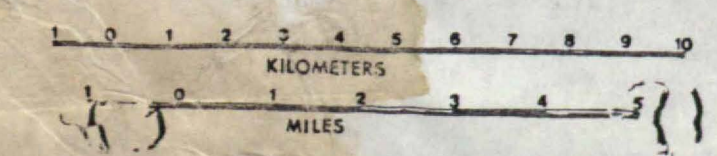
Helicopter Censuses - July 17-18, 1992

x/x - adults/foals
 C - cattle
 A - antelope

7/21/92 D. Stockdale

LITTLE OWYHEE ALLOTMENT

-  PUBLIC LANDS (Administered by Bureau of Land Management)
-  PATENTED LANDS
-  NATIONAL FOREST





not out yet

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Winnemucca District Office
705 East 4th Street
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

1/10/96

In Reply Refer To:
(NV-240)

January 10, 1996

Ms. Cathy Barcomb
Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
255 W. Moana Lane Suite 207A
Reno, NV 89509

Dear Ms. Barcomb:

This is in response to your letter of December 13, 1995, requesting information on the upcoming Little Owyhee and Snowstorm wild horse gathers. I apologize for the delay in responding, which was due to the recent government shutdown.

The Little Owyhee/Snowstorm gather has been postponed until July 1996, due to other state gather priorities. Available funding will determine whether the gather takes place at all.

At the end of the most recent Little Owyhee gather completed in January 1994, 297 older horses were released back onto the range, with 94 aged 6-9, 201 aged 10 and older, and 2 colts. It is estimated that at least 100 horses were not captured. Assuming these had a "normal" age structure of 65% 5 and under, 20% 6-9 and 15% 10 and older, the approximate age structure following the gather was 17% 5 and under, 29% 6-9 and 54% 10 and older.

A fixed-wing aircraft flight in September 1995 counted 651 animals on the Little Owyhee, 516 adults and 135 foals. From approximately 400 animals in 1994, this translates into an annual growth rate of 28%. The current age structure is approximately 49% 5 and under, 18% 6-9, and 33% 10 and older. By the time the gather takes place, a third foal crop will have been born, which will change these percentages in favor of the younger animals.

At the end of the most recent Snowstorm Mountains gather completed in October 1994, 96 older animals were released back onto the range, with 44 aged 6-9, 50 aged 10 and older, and 2 colts. It is estimated that about 30-35 horses were not captured. Again assuming a normal age structure for the remaining horses, the approximate age structure of this herd following the gather was 19% 5 and under, 39% 6-9 and 42% 10 and older.


A fixed-wing aircraft flight in September 1995 counted 176 horses on the Snowstorms, 140 adults and 36 foals, for an annual growth rate of 34%. The current age structure is approximately 36% 5 and under, 31% 6-9, and 33% 10 and older. Again another foal crop will have been born by the time of the gather, which will change the percentages.

These two HMAs appear to follow the pattern observed elsewhere of high reproductive rates immediately following a gather.

The possibility exists that the next Little Owyhee and/or Snowstorm gather will involve a more extensive herd restructuring, with partial removals of animals by age and/or sex in the 0-9 age classes. Should this occur, a new capture plan and environmental assessment will be issued, with impacts analyzed through population modeling.

If you have any questions please contact Dave Stockdale at 623-1500.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin P. Chistensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Colin" being the most prominent.

Colin P. Chistensen
Area Manager
Paradise-Denio Resource Area