

MemorandumDEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENTF 7/26/77
IN REPLY REFER TO:4700
(N-023.1)To : Chief, Division of Resources, Paradise-Denio
Area Manager's, District Manager

Date: April 26, 1977

FROM : Ron Hall, Wild Horse Biologist

SUBJECT : Lake Creek Management Fence

The Lake Creek Management Fence traverses a major concentration area of wild horses in the Owyhee Desert. Approximately 18 miles of the fence was constructed during the summer of 1976 with the remaining 20 miles to be constructed during the summer of 1977. This fence is intended to implement the Little Owyhee AMP.

On April 22 I inspected the last four miles of the fence constructed during the summer of 1976 (T. 44 N., R. 46 E., Sec. 18 to T. 45 N., R. 45 E., Sec. 35) and the first four miles to be constructed during 1977. (T. 45 N., R. 45 E., Sec. 35 to T. 45 N., R. 45 E., Sec. 8). Data collected on the existing four miles of fence was as follows:

| | |
|-----------|--------------|
| Torn down | 1 - 64 feet |
| | 1 - 176 feet |

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|----------------------------|-------------|
| Bent Posts & Loose Wire | 9 Locations |
|----------------------------|-------------|

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|---|----|
| Wild Horse Trails at 90° angle to fence | 15 |
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Five of the trails intersecting the fence at 90° are major trails. Hair of varying color, assumed to be wild horse hair, was noted in numerous locations on the barbs of the wire. The location where 176' of fence was torn down was located at a reservoir where horses ranging to the west of the fence were prohibited access to water. At the time of this inspection the reservoir was dry, however, a wet spot indicated water had been available at this site.

Three gates were found in the segment of fence inspected. Two gates were located at a distance from roads while one was located on a road below Corral Lake well. The two gates located away from roads were closed while the one at the road was open. On a flight along the fence on April 20th, 1977 this finding seemed to be consistent throughout the length of the fence.

Signs of wild horses in the vicinity of Corral Lake well and the dry reservoir was heavy. A major horse trail parallels the east side of the fence for several miles. The destination of the trail was not ascertained due to problems with the machine I was riding.

Water was not available at Corral Lake well for wild horses or wildlife. This is a project constructed by BLM in 1971. It is not known whether

water was available along the pipeline but it is assumed it was not because the pump was not working at the well.

Analysis of data collected by aerial census indicates a major concentration area of wild horses during the winter and early spring in the vicinity of Raven Creek and Willow Creek. As water sources dry up the horses move south approximately 12 miles to the vicinity of Twin Valley spring. The second segment of fence to be constructed in FY 77 splits summer range and winter range and prohibits seasonal movement of horses between these necessary habitat components.

A review of the EAR prepared on the Lake Creek Management Fence reveals an inadequate analysis of the impacts of the project. (Copy attached). The EAR appears to be a carbon copy of EARS prepared for other fences. Mitigating measures for the project were not adequately explored. The construction of gates was the only mitigation included in the project. Inspection has revealed that all the gates located away from roads were closed and have apparently been closed since the completion of the project. The gates are supposed to be open during periods when livestock are not on the allotment. Livestock have not been on this allotment since October of 1976.

The EAR also indicates that wild horses would be moved through the allotment on a rotational schedule to provide rest for vegetation. Even if this could be accomplished it would be very expensive. It is my opinion that rotation of wild horses through pastures is in violation of PL 92-195 and is in direct conflict with the concept of wild-free-roaming horses.

The Lake Creek Management fence is, in my opinion, an ecological disaster. If a fence were designed with the object of having maximum negative impacts on wild horses it would be difficult to do a better job than that done by the Lake Creek fence.

The following management recommendations are submitted for your consideration concerning the Lake Creek fence and the Little Owyhee AMP.

1. Do not construct the 2nd segment this FY.
2. Study the distribution and seasonal movement patterns of wild horses on the Owyhee. (1 MM)
3. Prepare an EAR that analyzes the impacts of the fence.
4. Prepare a cost-benefit analysis of the Lake Creek fence.
5. Then - make a decision on the fence based on facts. Data would be available on the true impacts of the fence so whatever management decision is made we would be in a position to face the consequences.

6. Analyze other fences that have been constructed on the Owyhee.
7. Prepare a cost-benefit analysis on the Little Owyhee AMP based upon the new range survey.
8. Make provisions to provide water along the Lake Corral pipeline for wild horses and wildlife.

It is imperative that decisions be made on these recommendations by the last of April. If nothing is done the fence will be constructed and will have tremendous negative impacts on the wild horse population on the Owyhee.

Ron Hall