

Lava Beds HMA m 7/14/80

IN REPLY REFER TO

4700/1791
(N-027.8)



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

705 East Fourth Street
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

July 14, 1980

Dawn Lappin
WHOA
P.O. Box 555
Reno, NV 89504

Dear Mrs. Lappin:

Enclosed, please find a copy of the memorandum dated July 13, 1980, which summarizes the comments and suggestions discussed during the meeting on June 18, 1980, concerning a course of action that may be taken in the Lava Beds area. This action will be an attempt to solve a significant problem of overgrazing that is presently occurring in this area.

If you have any further comments or feel that we have neglected some area of concern, please contact myself or Rodger Bryan at this office. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Brad Hines
Area Manager

Enclosure

cc: State Director, BLM, NV (N-931.6)

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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TO : Acting District Manager, Winnemucca
FROM : Rodger T. Bryan, Natural Resource Specialist
SUBJECT : Summary of Comments from the Public Meeting Initiated to
Discuss a Course of Action that may be taken in the
Lava Beds Herd Use Area (HUA).

Date: July 13, 1980

A meeting was conducted June 18, 1980, at 10:30 AM, in the conference room at the Winnemucca District Office of the BLM. The subject of this meeting was to decide on a course of action to be taken in the Lava Beds HUA to alleviate the pressure on a heavily stressed, overpopulated wild horse/burro herd, and to serve as a rehabilitative measure to aid in the reestablishment of the vegetative communities.

The following is a list of the interested parties invited to attend the meeting:

Robert G. Irvin
President, C-Punch Corporation

Jiggs Goodwin*
Range Manager, C-Punch Corp.

Dawn Lappin*
President, WHOA

Helen Reilly
President, ISPMB

Phil Benolkin*
Wildlife Biologist, NDOW

B.G. Bunyard
Livestock Operator (in affected area).

*Attended Meeting

The following is a list of Bureau personnel that attended the meeting:

Brad Hines
Mark Gish
Dave Favre
Barbara Bruce
Paul Jancar
Rodger Bryan

Brad Hines and I explained to the group that there was a serious problem of overobligation in the Lava Beds HUA. It was explained to the group that the bureau was proposing to remove approximately 786 wild horses and 12 wild burros. This would reduce the herd to an interim management level of 90 horses and 30 burros, which would allow the range condition to improve until such time as a Management Framework Plan (MFP) decision sets the optimum herd size. Concurrent with the reduction in horse numbers, Brad indicated to the group that he would also like to get a consensus on some degree of suspension in domestic livestock use.

At this point, Brad asked the group if they had any comments or suggestions on the bureau's proposed action, and what alternative courses of action they thought the bureau might take to aid in solving the problem of overuse.

Phil Benolkin agreed that the Lava Beds range was in extremely poor condition. Mr. Benolkin stated that the area immediately around the few springs found in the range is bare and completely void of vegetation (approximately 100-200 feet in diameter). This condition affords no protective cover for birds and other species of wildlife that approach the springs for water. Mr. Benolkin feels that soil erosion is a severe problem and that both permitted and wild livestock numbers need to be reduced. He stated that livestock use during the vegetative growing season has the most serious impact on the plants, but that winter sheep use doesn't pose a severe problem, and summer sheep use would be extremely damaging.

Jiggs Goodwin then described his livestock operation in the Lava Beds. He also agreed that the range was in extremely poor condition, and because of this situation is only running approximately 50 head of cattle in this area yearlong. He said that before the large increase in wild horse numbers, he would normally run up to 300 head of cattle in the same area. Mr. Goodwin also stated that if it would result in a reduction of wild horse numbers, he would cut his present herd in half to 25 animals, but he also added that he felt he has already undergone a large enough voluntary reduction (approximately 84%).

As an alternative to removing any cattle or sheep, Mr. Benolkin was curious as to the viability of a change in the season of use (i.e., remove cattle during the growing season). Mr. Goodwin responded by stating that to remove the cattle for the growing season would in effect remove them indefinitely as he has no place to move the excess cattle without jeopardizing another area. Mr. Goodwin assured the group that he would maintain the number of cattle at 50, and would remove any excess numbers that might move into the area.

Dawn Lappin stated that the bureau's proposed action would probably cause some concern with most of the major wild horse groups in that they're afraid the reduction to the low numbers would not be an interim action. Mrs. Lappin also wanted some assurance that the livestock numbers would not be allowed to increase before the District Manager's Final Decision is made on the land use plan, and that we should state what vegetative conditions must exist before the livestock are allowed to return to the range. In the bureau's letter to solicit public comment on the proposed action, Mrs. Lappin wants us to state that one of the livestock operators has taken a voluntary 84% reduction in numbers because of the large numbers of wild horses currently utilizing the area.

In summation, it was the general consensus of all parties present that severe range damage is occurring in the Lava Beds herd use area due to the large numbers of wild horses, and that something must be done to stop the decline in range condition. The group decided on several alternative courses of action that they would like to see analyzed in the environmental assessment in addition to the proposed action:

1. Reduce the wild horse numbers to levels identified in the proposed action and don't alter the present domestic livestock use.
2. Reduce the wild horse numbers to levels identified in the proposed action and allow domestic livestock numbers to increase at the same rate as the wild horses.
3. Reduce the wild horse numbers to levels identified in the proposed action and modify the season of use for the sheep operation by having them come off one month earlier than the present license requires or change their area of use to the valley floors, or a combination of both.

Everyone agreed that studies involving forage utilization and range trend should be established in the area to monitor any changes that might occur. Mr. Benolkin stated that he would like to get involved in the selection of critical wildlife areas as sites for future studies.

If enough interest is generated by the general public after being notified of the proposed action, the group suggested that a field trip, similar to the one conducted in the Fox Range, be taken to show the public exactly what the problems are.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Rodger T. By