

5-2-01



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office
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In Reply Refer To:
4700(CA-370) P

May 2, 2001

Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
Catherine Barcomb, Administrator
885 Eastlake Boulevard
Carson City, NV 89704

Dear Cathy:

Thank you for your letter of April 17, 2001, regarding those actions taken on the Wall Canyon East Herd Management Area.

At the time the appropriate management level for wild horses was established in 1993, the monitoring data used in the analysis was utilization by wild horses only. At that time, a cooperative livestock grazing plan with the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge, allowed us to measure forage utilization by horses only on the riparian habitats. As you are aware, since that time, the Sheldon has discontinued livestock grazing within it's boundaries. However, utilization studies conducted in the late summer of the 2000 grazing year, indicated that there was heavy use in Cottonwood Creek, almost exclusively by horses. The permittees had full-time riders during the 2000 grazing season to limit use of the riparian habitats by livestock. As we implement this final grazing plan, we intend to continue monitoring to determine our progress in meeting objectives.

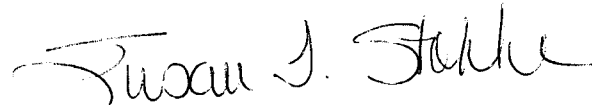
Regarding the current appropriate management level of 15-25 head, we understand your concerns as they relate to herd viability. However, it is important to note that this herd frequency mixes with the Nut Mountain Herd to the north and west and those herds in Winnemucca to the east. This mixing appears to be the greatest on the Surprise/ Winnemucca boundary, where the fence is generally in disrepair. Winnemucca, while conducting census flights last fall and winter, noticed the movement of wild horses from their area to Surprise.

Additionally, we are committed to beginning a comprehensive program of blood testing, which will help us determine genetics in each of our herds. We realize that this data will probably not be collected in the Wall Canyon HMA for several years, but we do intend to implement this at the earliest possible time.

While the creation of new wilderness may complicate some activities, including wild horse management, we envision relatively few impacts for the Wall Canyon HMA. The legislation designated the road from High Rock Canyon to Bernards Corral as a cherry stem road. Bernards Corral is the location where animals from Wall Canyon have historically been trapped. This site allows close proximity to the animals in the HMA, plus access to truck the animals out. Also, the entire north end of the Wall Canyon HMA is still open to vehicular traffic. I am certain additional traps sites can be found to assist us in meeting our appropriate management level objectives.

We appreciate and thank you for your comments. We will continue to keep you informed of actions affecting wild horses and burros in the area administered by the Surprise Field Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan T. Stokke". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Susan T. Stokke
Surprise Field Manager