

3-14-80



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
NAVAL WEAPONS CENTER
CHINA LAKE, CALIFORNIA 93555

IN REPLY REFER TO:
26309/TB:k1r
Reg 26309-098
MAR 14 1980

Mrs. Dawn Y. Lappin, Director
Wild Horse Organized Assistance, Inc.
P.O. Box 555
Reno, Nevada 89504

Dear Mrs. Lappin:

As you will recall, the Naval Weapons Center is proceeding with its compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 for a management program for the humane reduction and control of feral burros on our ranges. We are in the process of concluding contract negotiations to award a contract for preparation of an environmental impact statement.

In addition to the need for a long-range burro management program, the Commander of the Naval Weapons Center has become increasingly concerned about a severe, but localized burro problem which requires immediate action. There is high potential for burros causing an accident on landing or takeoff at our naval airfield, Armitage Field, especially at night. The runways are illuminated by low to the ground, variable intensity lights designed to mark the pavement edge for a pilot without blinding him. Burros in bands of up to 12 congregate on the runways and cross and recross them at all hours. Personnel in the aircraft control tower cannot see the burros at night to warn pilots, nor can the pilots themselves see the burros in time to take evasive action. Additionally, burros are a hazard on the Navy range roads in the same area and there have been several collisions, fortunately with no serious human injuries. For about the last six months burros have been crossing State Route 178 which parallels the Center's southern boundary. There have been a number of burro-auto collisions on this heavily traveled highway with minor injuries to drivers or passengers. An aerial survey conducted in 1978 and road counts in 1979 indicate a permanent population of approximately 150 feral burros on this area. During the winter this population is substantially increased by burros moving down from the nearby mountains of the Coso and Argus Ranges located on the Naval Weapons Center.

To alleviate this hazardous situation which could cause death or serious injury to human beings, and has caused the death of 10 or more burros in the last six months, the Commander has directed the immediate development and implementation of an Interim Emergency Burro Management Plan on approximately 200 square miles in the southwest corner of the Naval Weapons Center. The Naval Weapons Center has prepared an environmental assessment in addition to the Emergency Management Plan. To implement the emergency plan the Naval Weapons Center and the Bakersfield District Bureau of Land Management have executed a Memorandum of Understanding. Under the terms of this agreement the Bakersfield District will gather and remove for adoption out to the public the feral burros from the vicinity of the aircraft runways, Navy roads and the Center's southwestern boundaries. The Naval Weapons Center will fund this emergency management plan, which is scheduled to commence on 17 March 1980.

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This project is being coordinated by my office and you can reach me by telephone weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Yours truly,



Tilly Barling
Head, Natural Resources Management Office

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