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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ELKO DISTRICT OFFICE
WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT

4740

ELKO RESOURCE AREA
CAPTURE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this capture plan is to outline the methods and procedures to be used in removing wild horses from the Owyhee Desert and Snowstorm Mountains. The plan involves removal of about 1,183 horses on lands administered by the BLM beginning about October 15, 1980.

II. GENERAL AREA DESCRIPTION

The Owyhee Desert and Snowstorm Mountains are approximately 70 miles north of Battle Mountain, Nevada (see Figure 1). The subject area to be gathered (see Figure 2) includes the Fairbanks Field, Twin Valley Spring Field, Lake Creek Field, and Bullhead Allotment (all administered by Winnemucca District) and the Owyhee, Little Humboldt and Rock Creek Allotments (all administered by Elko District).

A detailed wild horse inventory was conducted in the Owyhee, Little Humboldt, and Rock Creek Allotments (administered by Elko District) on January 31 and February 1, 1980. A total of 503 wild horses were counted as follows:

| <u>Allotment</u> | <u>Adult Horses</u> | <u>Colts</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Owyhee | 178 | 55 | 233 |
| Little Humboldt | 153 | 37 | 190 |
| Rock Creek | 72 | 8 | 80 |
| | | Grand Total | 503 |

A wild horse inventory was conducted in the Fairbanks Field, Twin Valley Spring Field, Lake Creek Field, and Bullhead Allotment on February 25 and 26, 1980. A total of 1,537 wild horses were counted as follows:

| <u>Field or Allotment</u> | <u>Adult Horses</u> | <u>Colts</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Fairbanks | 179 | 49 | 228 |
| Twin Valley Spring | 276 | 53 | 329 |
| Lake Creek | 237 | 61 | 298 |
| Bullhead | 566 | 116 | 682 |
| | | Grand Total | 1537 |

On December 1, 1978, the Elko District received a claim of ownership of horses on public lands from Roaring Springs Associates for 20 horses in the Owyhee Allotment. No horses were found at the attempted gather. The Elko District has received a request from Nevada First Corporation to remove wild horses from their private lands, specifically in the Little Owyhee and Bullhead Allotments.

The Winnemucca District conducted a wild horse gathering in 1977 and removed 1,100 wild horses from Lake Creek, Twin Valley Spring, and Fairbanks Fields.

All of the available forage on the public lands in the allotments was adjudicated for cattle operations and wildlife. No AUM's were adjudicated for wild horses.

The horse gathering area encompasses all or part of 5 separate allotments. A list of permittees by allotment, field, active preference AUM's, and percent public land is as follows:

| <u>Allotment</u> | <u>Field</u> | <u>Active Pref. AUM's</u> | <u>%F.R.</u> | <u>Permittee</u> |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Bullhead | | 12,050 | 83 | Nevada VACA Inc. |
| Little Owyhee | Fairbanks | 3,714 | 98 | Nevada First Corp. |
| Little Owyhee | Antelope | 41,168 | 100 | Nevada VACA Inc. |
| | Capital | | | |
| | Calico | | | |
| | Rock Springs | | | |
| | Lake Creek | | | |
| | Twin Valley Spring | | | |
| Owyhee | | 30,225 | 98 | Roaring Springs Associates |
| Little Humboldt | | 7,656 | 97 | Hammond Ranches, Inc. |
| Rock Creek | | 48,700 | 78 | Ellison Ranching Company |

III. JUSTIFICATION

The Bureau of Land Management is directed to protect, manage, and control wild free-roaming horses and burros as authorized by P.L. 92-195 Section 3, P.L. 94-579 Section 404 and P.L. 95-514 Section 14. This management includes maintaining an ecological balance on the public lands. Over the past years the increase in wild horse numbers and drought in conjunction with other grazing animals have depleted the range condition and adversely effected the ecological balance of the area. One of the allotment operators is applying for total non-use within one pasture of the Owyhee Allotment in 1980 due to decreased forage believed to be caused by the increased wild horse numbers. Twin Valley Spring Field and Lake Creek Field have been in non-use since 1974.

The proposed capture area has historically provided important wildlife habitat and been subjected to heavy livestock and wild horse use. Observations over recent years by qualified Bureau of Land Management field personnel have resulted in growing concern about recurring water shortages and general range deterioration. One of the significant contributing factors is believed to be the result of steadily increasing and unmanaged wild horse populations which reside in the subject area on a yearlong basis.

CAPTURE PLAN AND METHODS

The proposed gathering operation would be conducted within the described allotments (see Figure 2) to remove the following number of horses:

| <u>Allotment/Field</u> | <u>Horses Present</u> | <u>Horses Removed</u> | <u>Horses Remaining</u> |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Owyhee | 233 | 133 | 100 |
| Little Humboldt | 190 | 100 | 90 |
| Rock Creek | 80 | 50 | 30 |
| Bullhead | 682 | 400 | 282 |
| Lake Creek | 298 | 200 | 98 |
| Twin Valley Spring | 329 | 200 | 129 |
| Fairbanks | 228 | 100 | 128 |
| TOTALS | <u>2,040</u> | <u>1,183</u> | <u>857</u> |

A temporary trap with deflector wings encompassing less than one acre would be constructed. The use of a contracted helicopter and horse riders would be necessary to drive and direct horses in an efficient and careful manner. Hazards such as cliffs and fences would be scouted in advance and existing roads and trails would be used. Horses would be truck hauled to temporary holding facilities in Palomino Valley, Nevada, or an alternate location, for processing, then shipped to distribution centers in the midwest for adoption. Horses that might be held at the trap site in excess of 24 hours would have food and water provided. Inadvertently collected horses which are branded or privately owned would be treated under Nevada estray laws.

Captured horses that are obviously lame, deformed, or sick will be humanely disposed of at the trap site.

A cultural resources investigation by an archeologist or district archeological technician will be made prior to any trap construction. If a significant find was discovered, an alternate site would be selected.

Stipulations For Bureau Gathering

1. Archeological clearance will be done by a BLM archeologist or an archeologist holding a Federal Antiquities Permit on all trap sites prior to their construction. If archeological values are present, trap sites will be moved. Traps will not be placed near any of the identified historic sites. The Nevada Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology will be notified before any action is taken.
2. A Bureau employee will make a careful determination of a boundary line to serve as an outer limit within which attempts will be made to herd horses to a given trap. Topography, distance, weather, and current conditions of the horses are factors that will be considered to set the limits so as to avoid undue stress on the horses while they are being herded. Allowances are made for high temperatures so that horses are not driven long distances in hot conditions.
3. All corral panels will be from 72" to 84" high in order to prevent horses from jumping out of traps.
4. Brutality to horses in any form will not be tolerated. Any employee who mistreats any horse will be dismissed immediately from the roundup operation.
5. The helicopter shall be under the direct supervision of a duly authorized BLM employee. He must be able to communicate with the pilot and be able to direct the use of the helicopter so as to observe the effects on the well being of the animals.
6. Only experienced horseback riders will be used in the gathering operations.
7. All saddle horses will be properly shod and over three years in age. All saddles and tack will be in good repair.
8. Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) samples will be taken at the holding facilities at the Palomino Valley holding facility.
9. Only experienced drivers will be used to transport the horses to the holding facilities.
10. The helicopter will have radio communication with the Authorized Officer or his designated representative at all times.
11. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nevada Department of Wildlife will be notified before any action is taken.
12. Disturbed ground around each trap site will be rehabilitated in such a manner that is determined feasible by the District Soil-Water-Air Specialist.

13. A qualified Bureau employee will clear all sites prior to construction, to insure that a trap will not significantly impact any Federal or State listed or proposed threatened or endangered plant speices. If significant disturbance is anticipated, the trap site will be moved.
14. A veterinarian will be on call at all times during the roundup operation. The veterinarian will never be more than 300 miles from the roundup operation. In an emergency, the veterinarian could be helicoptered in, arriving in one to one and a half hours.
15. Every effort will be made to locate a trap near existing horse trails so that once the animals are started towards the capture area they will be able to pick a natural route and proceed at their own pace.

Stipulations For Contract Gathering

1. Archeological clearance will be done by a BLM archeologist or an archeologist holding a Federal Antiquities Permit on all trap sites prior to their construction. If archeological values are present, trap sites will be moved. Traps will not be placed near any of the identified historic sites. The Nevada Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology will be notified before any action is taken.
2. A Bureau employee will make a careful determination of a boundary line to serve as an outer limit within which attempts will be made to herd horses to a given trap. Topography, distance, weather, and current conditions of the horses are factors that will be considered to set the limits so as to avoid undue stress on the horses while they are being herded. Allowances are made for high temperatures so that horses are not driven long distances in hot conditions.
3. All corral panesl will be from 72" to 84" high in order to prevent horses from jumping out of traps.
4. Brutality to horses in any form will not be tolerated. Any employee who mistreats any horse will not be allowed to participate in a job that involved direct handling of horses for the remainder of the roundup.
5. The helicopter shall be under the direct supervision of a duly authorized BLM employee. He must be able to communicate with the pilot and be able to direct the use of the helicopter so as to observe the effects on the well being of the animals.
6. Only experienced horseback riders will be used in the gathering operations.
7. All saddle horses will be properly shod and over three years in age. All saddles and tack will be in good repair.
8. Only experienced drivers will be used to transport the horses to the holding facilities.
9. The helicopter will have radio communication with the Authorized Officer or his designated representative at all times.
10. A qualified Bureau employee will clear all sites prior to construction, to insure that a trap will not significantly impact any Federal or State listed or proposed threatened or endangered plant species. If significant disturbance is anticipated, the trap site will be moved.
11. A veterinarian will be on call at all times during the roundup operation. The veterinarian will never be more than 300 miles from the roundup operation. In an emergency, the veterinarian could be helicoptered in, arriving in one to one and a half hours.

12. Every effort will be made to locate a trap near existing horse trails so that once the animals are started towards the capture area they will be able to pick a natural route and proceed at their own pace.

V. Signatures

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Approved by:

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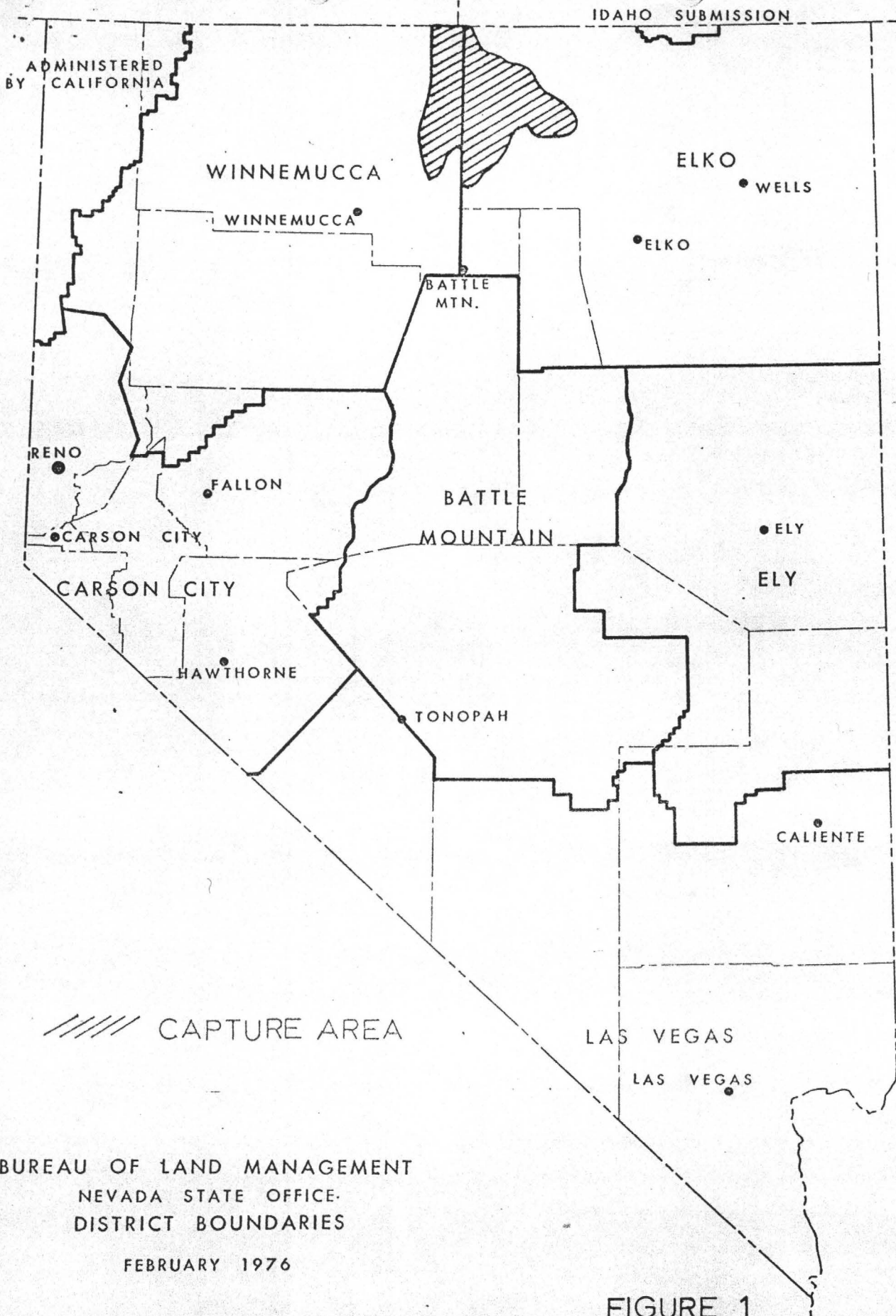
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Date

Approved by:

Ed Spang
State Director, Nevada

Date



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 NEVADA STATE OFFICE
 DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
 FEBRUARY 1976

FIGURE 1

