



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office
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In Reply Refer to:
4130 (CA-370) P

February 17, 1999

Ms. Catherine Barcomb
Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
123 W. Nye Lane, Room 230
Carson City, Nevada 89706-0818

Dear Cathy:

Thank you for your letters of February 5, 1999 concerning the Bare/Fox Hog Allotment Evaluation, the Tuledad Allotment Assessment, and the Proposed Decisions for Permit Renewal on the Massacre Lakes, Sand Creek, and Nut Mountain Grazing Allotments.

Bare Allotment/Fox Hog HMA

Regarding the Bare/Fog Hog HMA Allotment Evaluation, I refer you to my letter of response dated January 7, 1999. I believe we responded to an earlier faxed copy of your most recent letter. Please let me know if you did not receive my response, and I will fax a copy to you immediately. Be advised that we are currently finalizing the Environmental Assessment for the Bare Allotment and Fox Hog HMA, and plan to issue a Proposed Decision about March 1st.

Tuledad Allotment Assessment

The AML for the Coppersmith and Buckhorn Herds was established through monitoring, evaluation, environmental analysis and decision in November 1995. Excess wild horses were gathered and removed from the allotment that fall. A subsequent decision in October 1997 affirmed that the AML set in 1995 was correct, and an additional gather of excess wild horses was completed in October 1997. The proposed prescribed fire projects have been designed to take into account wild horse use during post-treatment. Additional rest from livestock use may be needed to offset wild horse use, but we do not anticipate the need to make any further adjustment in the established AML for wild horses. Our monitoring indicates that the AML established in 1995 is appropriate to meet a thriving natural ecological balance on the allotment. However, we do plan to continue to monitor wild horse numbers and will complete additional removals of excess wild horses (numbers above AML) as needed/appropriate.

Appendix C defines post-treatment monitoring objectives for the proposed prescribed burns as follows:
"Monitor to determine when the site has recovered post-burn to 80% of original herbaceous production."
The prescribed burns will be rested from livestock use until this objective has been met.

Permit Renewal - Massacre Lakes Allotment

An environmental assessment and decision for renewal of the grazing permit for use on the Massacre Lakes Allotment was completed by this office in December 1998. A copy of the EA together with my Proposed Decision was forwarded to you on December 15, 1998.

An AML has not yet been established through monitoring, evaluation, environmental analysis and assessment for the Massacre Lakes HMA. The Rangeland Health Assessment completed in support of permit renewal finds that the allotment is meeting all standards and that no significant conflicts exist between livestock and wild horse use and other resource uses.

The Massacre Lakes Allotment has not currently been scheduled for an Allotment Management Plan revision or for AML establishment. This is because BLM-California has directed Rangeland Health Assessments be completed for all our grazing allotments within the next five years, and that significant action be taken for all allotments where standards are not currently being met. Because Rangeland Health Standards are currently being met for the Massacre Lakes Allotment, it is a lower priority for the Surprise Field Office.

A copy of our current Plan of Work for AMP revisions, Rangeland Health Assessments, and permit renewal is enclosed for information.

Permit Renewal - Sand Creek Allotment

We agree that an AML has not yet been established for the Sand Creek HMA. The Sand Creek Allotment and Sand Creek HMA are scheduled for AMP revision and AML establishment in FY2002. An AML for wild horses and an appropriate grazing capacity for livestock will be established through monitoring and evaluation, environmental analysis and decision at that time. In the interim, we do not anticipate the need to gather any wild horses from the Sand Creek Allotment. We agree that new data is needed to support any decision regarding grazing capacity for either livestock or wild horses.

The Surprise Field Office prepared an Environmental Assessment and Decision for renewal of the grazing permit(s) for use on the Sand Creek Allotment in January 1999. A copy of the EA together with my Proposed Decision was forwarded to you on January 7, 1999. The Rangeland Health Assessment completed in support of permit renewal for this allotment finds that the allotment is meeting one of four Rangeland Health Standards and the remaining three are not currently met but significant progress is being made toward achieving the standards. Regulations provide that permit terms and conditions may be modified at any time based on new information which supports that revision is necessary.

Permit Renewal - Nut Mountain Allotment

The Nut Mountain Allotment has been tentatively scheduled for an AMP revision in FY2000. Through past and continuing management efforts, this allotment's upland areas are in healthy and functioning condition, and ample forage is available to meet current demands. This is supported by actual utilization averaging slight/light during the past ten year period.

However, riparian areas typically receive moderate to heavy use by both livestock and wild horses. During the upcoming planning effort, we will be focusing on the condition of the allotment's riparian areas. From our perspective, riparian areas and their management are the key factor affecting the allotment's overall carrying capacity. Riparian issues have already been discussed with the new permittee, and he has expressed willingness to work with us to implement the management changes needed to improve riparian conditions. NEPA analysis will be completed as needed. I look forward to your participation in the upcoming planning effort.

I hope this information is helpful in addressing the concerns you expressed. Thank you for your continuing interest in public lands management.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan T. Stokke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Susan T. Stokke
Surprise Field Manager

Enclosure (1)

MANAGING FOR HEALTHY RANGELANDS

Plan of Work

BLM-Surprise Resource Area

2/99

FY 1999			
AMP Revisions	RHAs ¹	Permit Renewal ²	USFWS Consultation
Bare (I-2) Bitner (I-2) Mosquito (I-2) Tuledad (I-2) Wall Cyn W. (I-1)	Bare Bitner Tuledad Wall Canyon West Massacre Lakes Nut Mountain East South Bidwell Sand Creek Scammon Ninemile Nevada Cowhead Selic Alaska McCulley Bull Creek North Cowhead	Bally (C) Tuledad (I) Wall Cyn W (I) East (I) Nv Cowhead (I) Scammon (C) Granger (C) Home Camp (I) Corral (C) Massacre Lks (I) Upper Lake (C) Nut Mountain (I) Sand Creek (I) McCulley (C) Nv Coleman (I)	North Cowhead Nevada Cowhead

FY 2000			
AMP Revisions	RHAs	Permit Renewal	USFWS Consultation
Long Valley (I-2) Nut Mtn (I-2) Selic Alaska(M-2) RRL (M-2) Board Corral (I-1) Duck Lake (I-1) Highway (C-3)	Wall Canyon East Home Camp Bicondoa Corral Bally Board Corral Red Rock Lake Duck Lake Highway	Mosquito (I) Long Valley (I) Bicondoa (I) Crooks Lake (I) Horse Lake (I) Massacre Mtn (I)	North Cowhead Nevada Cowhead Wall Canyon West Duck Lake

¹ Rangeland Health Assessments were completed for the Mosquito and Long Valley Allotments in FY1998.

² Boldface type denotes allotments with expiring permits which will have formal Rangeland Health Assessments completed concurrently or prior to permit renewal.

FY 2001			
AMP Revisions	RHAs	Permit Renewal	USFWS Consultation
Nv Cowhead Home Camp Nv Coleman Horse Lake Massacre Mtn	Denio Crooks Lake Nevada Coleman Horse Lake Granger Massacre Mtn	Bare (I) Ninemile (C) N Cowhead (C) Wall Cyn E. (I) Denio (I) Red Rock Lk(M) Boggs (I) Goose Creek (C) Gravelly (C) Warner Valley (C) E. Bally Mtn (C)	North Cowhead Nevada Cowhead Wall Canyon West Duck Lake

FY 2002			
AMP Revisions	RHAs	Permit Renewal	USFWS Consultation
Sand Creek Crooks Lake Boggs North Cowhead	Little Basin Lower Lake Boggs South Larkspur	Little Basin (I) S. Larkspur (I)	North Cowhead Nevada Cowhead Wall Canyon West Duck Lake

FY 2003			
AMP Revisions	RHAs	Permit Renewal	USFWS Consultation
Wall Cyn East Denio	Goose Creek Alkali Lake Calcutta Bidwell Fandango Gravelly North Larkspur Warner Valley West East Bally Upper Lake Buck Mtn Upper Sand Crk Lartirogoyen 12 Mile	Lower Lake (M) Alkali Lake (C) Calcutta (I) Bidwell (C) Fandango (C) N. Larkspur (M) West (C) Duck Lake (I) Highway (C)	North Cowhead Nevada Cowhead Wall Canyon West Duck Lake

Schedule Summary: 23 AMP Revisions and 50 Rangeland Health Assessments (1999-2003).