



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SURPRISE RESOURCE AREA
P.O. BOX 460
CEDARVILLE, CALIFORNIA 96104-0460



IN REPLY REFER TO:

8500 (CA-028)

August 18, 1992

Dawn Lappin
WHOA
15640 Sylvester Road
Reno, NV 89511

Dear Dawn:

You have expressed an interest in receiving advance notice of any actions that are being proposed for a Wilderness Study Area (WSA) within the Susanville District of the Bureau of Land Management.

Enclosed for your review is a notice of proposed action in the East Fork High Rock Canyon and the Massacre Rim WSAs. BLM plans to gather wild horses in the ~~Baker~~, Carter Reservoir, High Rock, Massacre Lakes, Nut Mountain, and Wall Canyon Herd Management Areas (HMAs).

All comments and questions should be referred to the Surprise Resource Area Manager for his consideration and use in evaluating the proposed action. We would appreciate it if you would submit any comments within 30 days to:

J. Anthony Danna
Bureau of Land Management
Surprise Resource Area
P.O. Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104

Sincerely,

J. Anthony Danna
Surprise Resource Area Manager

Enclosure



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SURPRISE RESOURCE AREA
P.O. BOX 460
CEDARVILLE, CALIFORNIA 96104-0460



IN REPLY REFER TO:

8500 (CA-028)
August 18, 1992

NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION IN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Wild Horse Gathering in the Bitner, Carter Reservoir,
East High Rock, Massacre Lakes, Nut Mountain, and Wall Canyon
Herd Management Areas

State: Nevada
County: Washoe
District: Susanville, CA
Area: Surprise Resource Area, Cedarville, CA

WSA: <u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
WSA-020-914	East Fork High Rock Canyon	52,639
WSA-020-1013	Massacre Rim	101,290

Date of 30 days notification period ends: **September 18, 1992**

1. Description of Action

Beginning in October 1992, BLM plans to gather wild horses in the Bitner, Carter Reservoir, High Rock, Massacre Lakes, Nut Mountain, and Wall Canyon Herd Management Areas (HMAs). The Massacre Lakes and Bitner HMAs lie partially or completely within the Massacre Rim WSA. The East High Rock home range of the High Rock HMA and the Wall Canyon and Nut Mountain HMAs lie completely or partially within the East Fork High Rock Canyon WSA. These horses are being gathered will be gathered for three reasons:

1) The wild horses are exceeding the maximum levels set in the Herd Management Area Plans for each HMA. These numbers were determined through the Cowhead/Massacre EIS. The decisions were recorded in the Cowhead/Massacre Management Framework Plan (MFP). The six HMAPs were developed from the EIS and the MFP. The plans were updated most recently in 1989.

2) To comply with the cultural resources protection decisions for High Rock Canyon and the Massacre Lakes and Bench area.

3) To return the wild horses to numbers which are in balance with the carrying capacity of the rangeland in combination with the other resource values on the six HMAs.

2. Location of Action

See attached map.

3. Description of Activity

The horses will be gathered and driven to the traps using a helicopter. They will not be herded over 10 miles and most horses can be herded less than five miles. Traps will be constructed of panels with jute wings. The traps will be completely removed following use. Vehicles will be used to construct the traps and remove the horses. Vehicle use will be limited to existing "ways." There will be some temporary disturbance at the trap sites from horse trampling and turning the stock truck around. This disturbance will be completely rehabilitated on the last day that the trap is used as part of removing the trap.

It is anticipated that an individual trap will be used for five days or less. The entire gather of all six HMAs is planned to take three weeks.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) is available upon request (EA# CA-028-92-15)

4. Chronology of Events

Cowhead/Massacre EIS. 1980

Cowhead/Massacre MFP. 1981

Bitner Herd Management Area Plan. 1985

Carter Reservoir Herd Management Area Plan. 1985

High Rock Herd Management Area Plan. 1985

Massacre Lakes Herd Management Area Plan. 1985

Nut Mountain Herd Management Area Plan. 1985

Wall Canyon Herd Management Area Plan. 1985

Environmental Assessment: Bitner, Carter Reservoir, High Rock, Massacre Lakes, Nut Mountain, and Wall Canyon Wild Horse Herd Management Areas; Maintenance of Wild Horses at Planned Management Levels. 1992

Proposed Helicopter Gathering Plan for Wild Horses and Burros: Susanville District, Fiscal Year 1993. 1992

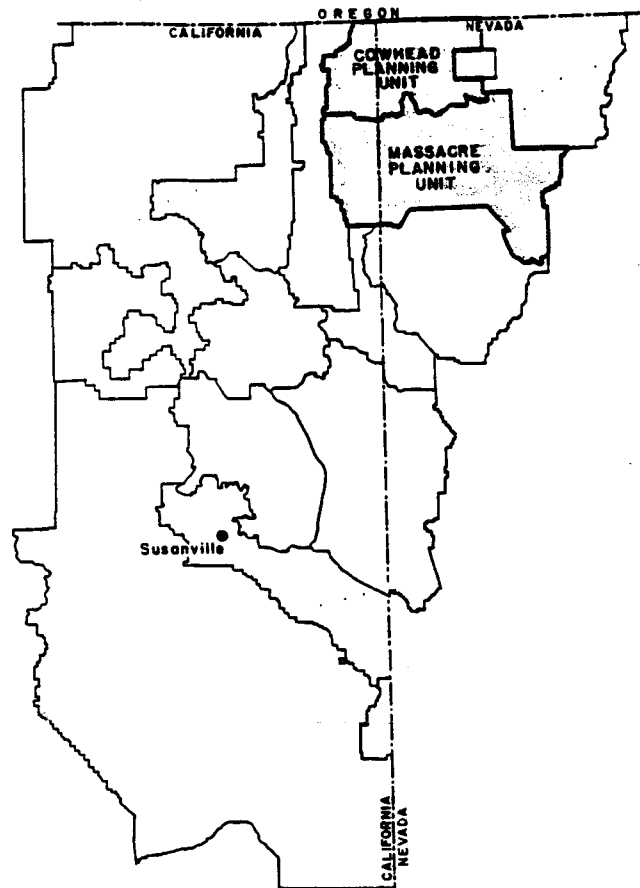
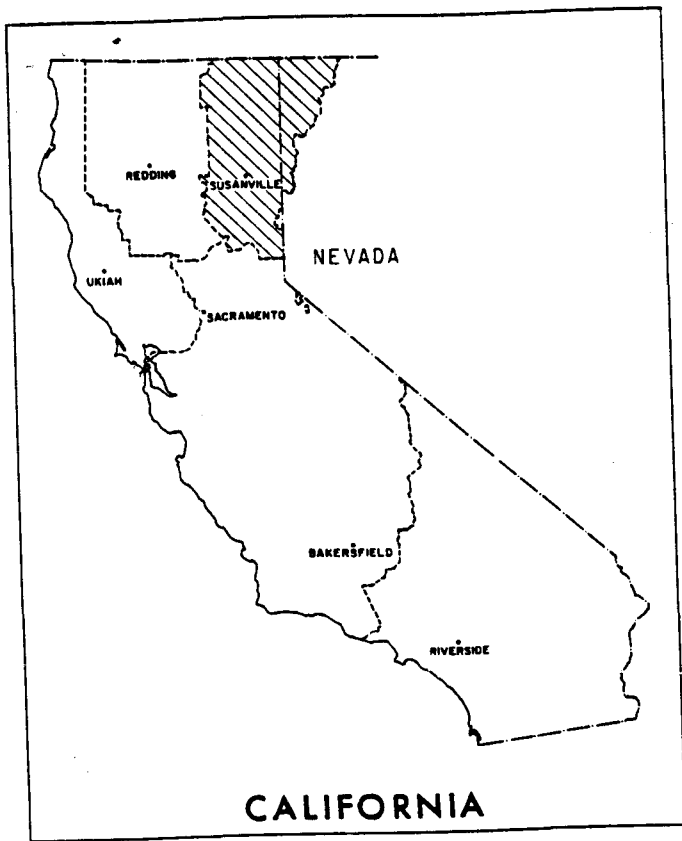
5. Contact for Further Information

J. Anthony Danna,
Surprise Resource Area Manager

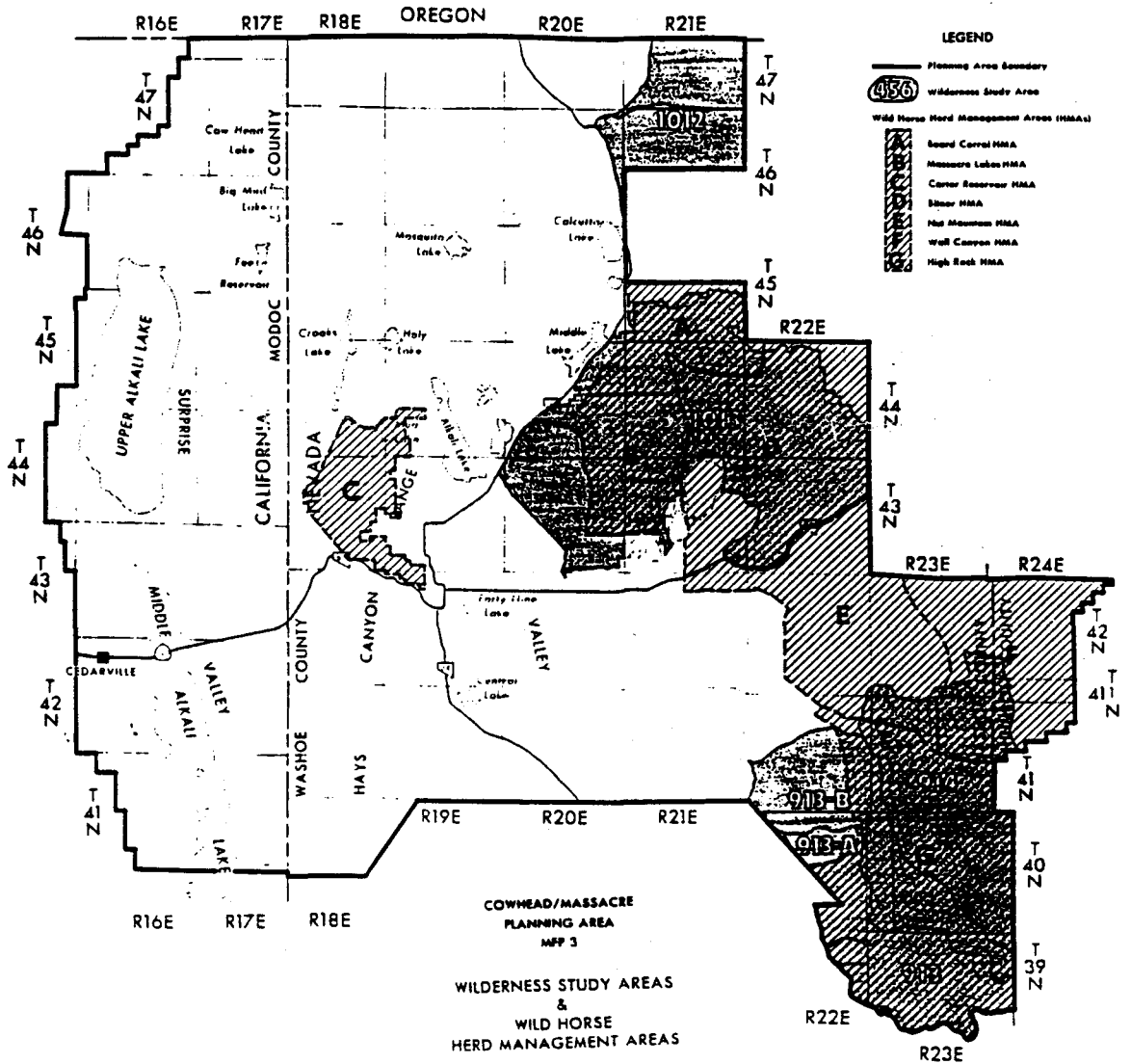
or

Richard Westman,
Supervisory Range Conservationist

Surprise Resource Area
Bureau of Land Management
Cedarville, California 96104
(916) 279-6101



SUSANVILLE DISTRICT



1985

BITNER
HERD MANAGEMENT AREA PLAN

Surprise Resource Area
Susanville District
1985

INTRODUCTION

A. Location

The Bitner Herd Management Area (HMA) lies in northern Washoe County, Nevada, approximately 40 miles east of Cedarville, California (see Map #1). The HMA is within the boundaries of the Bitner and Nut Mountain Grazing Allotments and encompasses 50,660 acres of which 43,550 acres are BLM and 7,110 acres are private.

The northwestern boundary is the Board Corral Allotment fence, the north and east boundary is the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) fence, the south boundary is Nevada Highway 8A and the western boundary is the Massacre Lakes Allotment fence (see Map #2).

This area is situated in and around an interior basin without an outlet. The Bitner Table makes up two-thirds of the area and wraps around the Massacre Lake Basin. The Basin itself is made up of one large alkali lake known as Massacre Lake. The elevation in this area ranges from 5600 to 6600 feet.

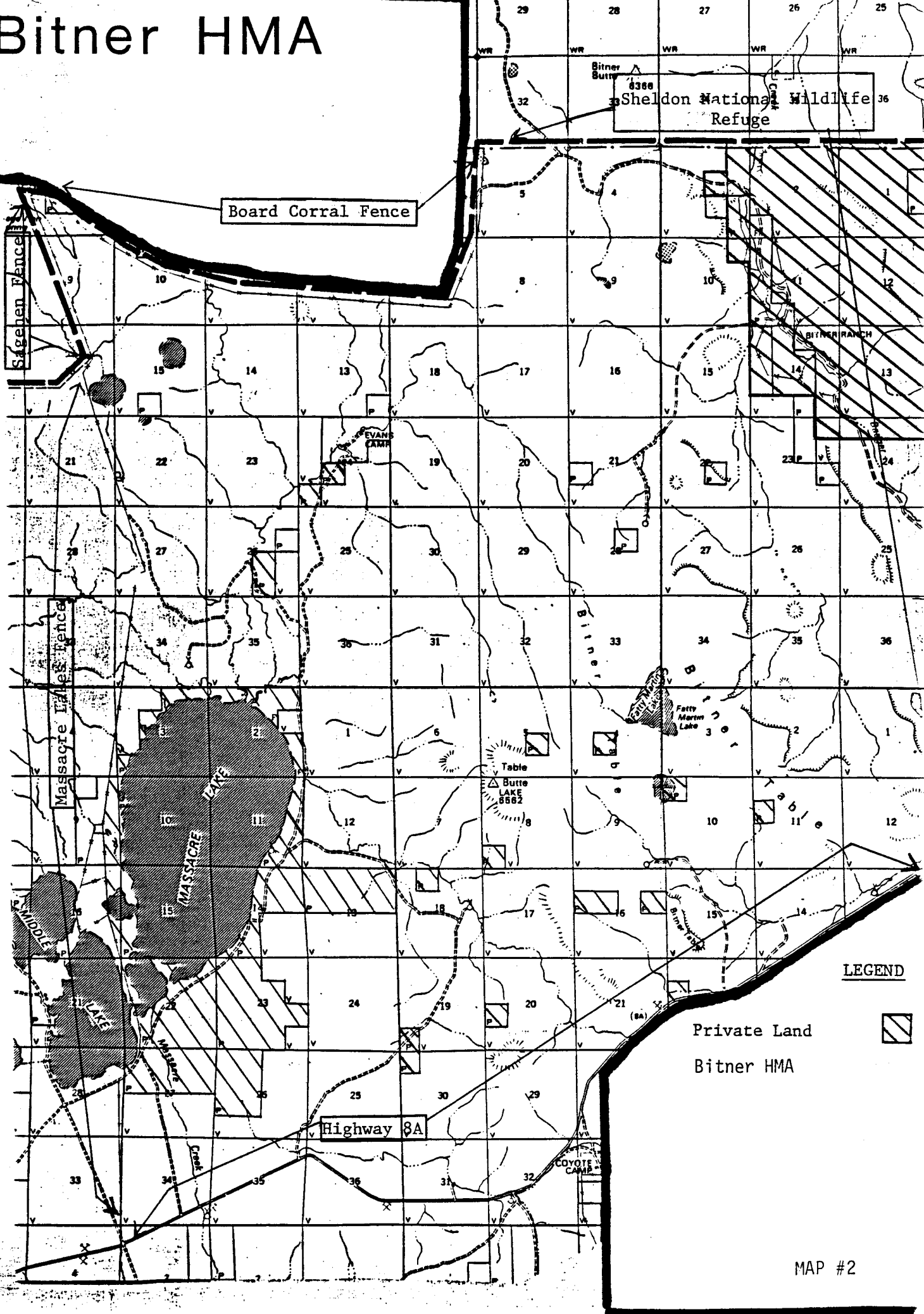
B. Wild Horse Use History

The original Massacre Lakes HMA encompassed the Bitner HMA and the new Massacre Lakes HMA. The two units are separated by an existing allotment boundary fence built in 1964 (see Map #3).

Appendix A provides a brief summary of past and present wild horse numbers in the Bitner HMA. In 1984, the Bitner HMA had horses removed to the minimum management level of fifteen.

The Susanville District Wild Horse and Burro Plan provides a general history of wild horses in the District.

Bitner HMA



Board Corral Fence

Sagenen Fence

Massacre Lakes Fence

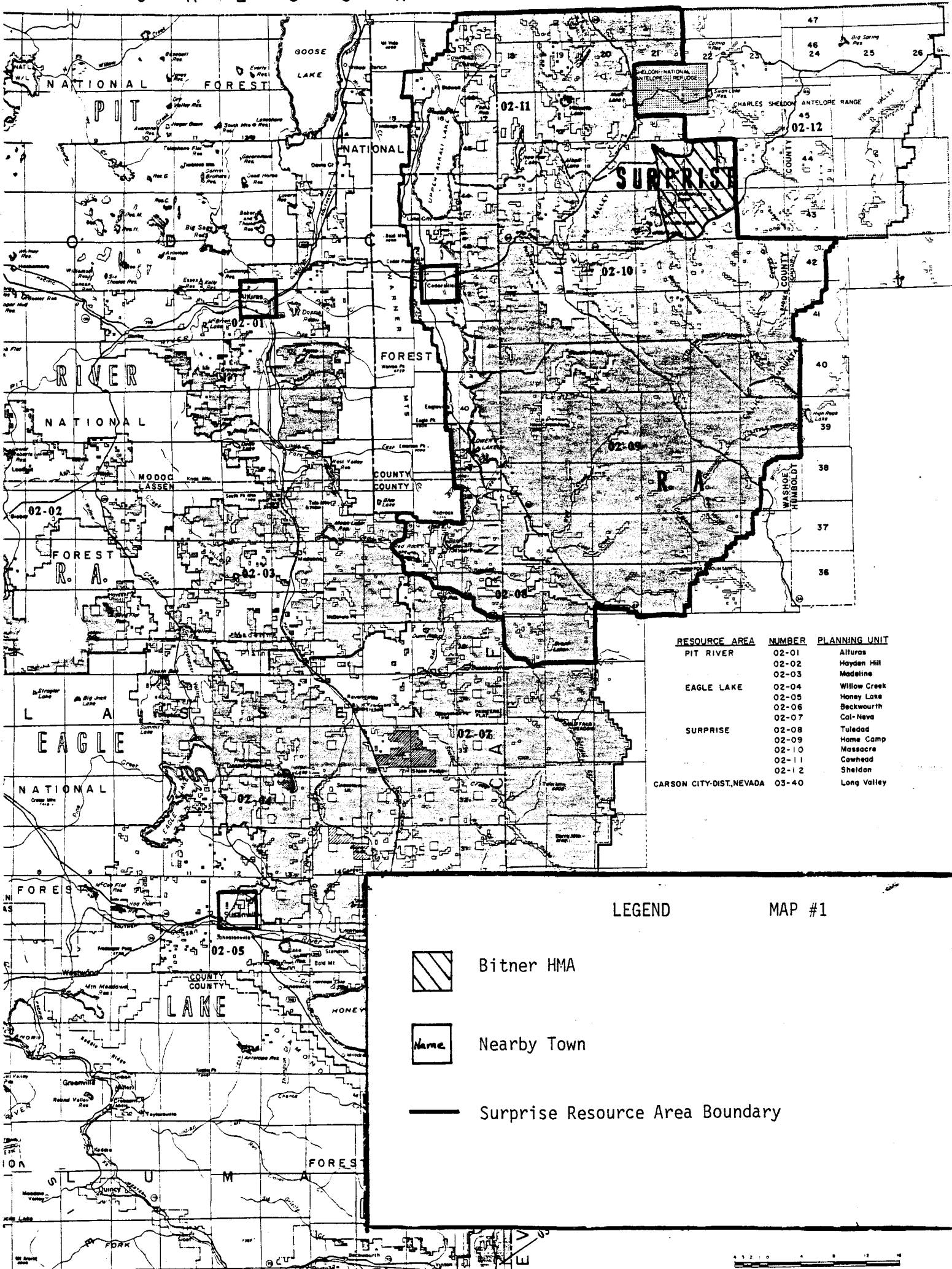
Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge

Highway 3A

LEGEND

Private Land
Bitner HMA





RESOURCE AREA	NUMBER	PLANNING UNIT
PIT RIVER	02-01	Alturas
	02-02	Hayden Hill
	02-03	Madeline
EAGLE LAKE	02-04	Willow Creek
	02-05	Honey Lake
	02-06	Beckworth
	02-07	Col-Neva
SURPRISE	02-08	Tuledd
	02-09	Home Camp
	02-10	Massacre
	02-11	Cowhead
	02-12	Sheldon
CARSON CITY-DIST, NEVADA	03-40	Long Valley

LEGEND

MAP #1



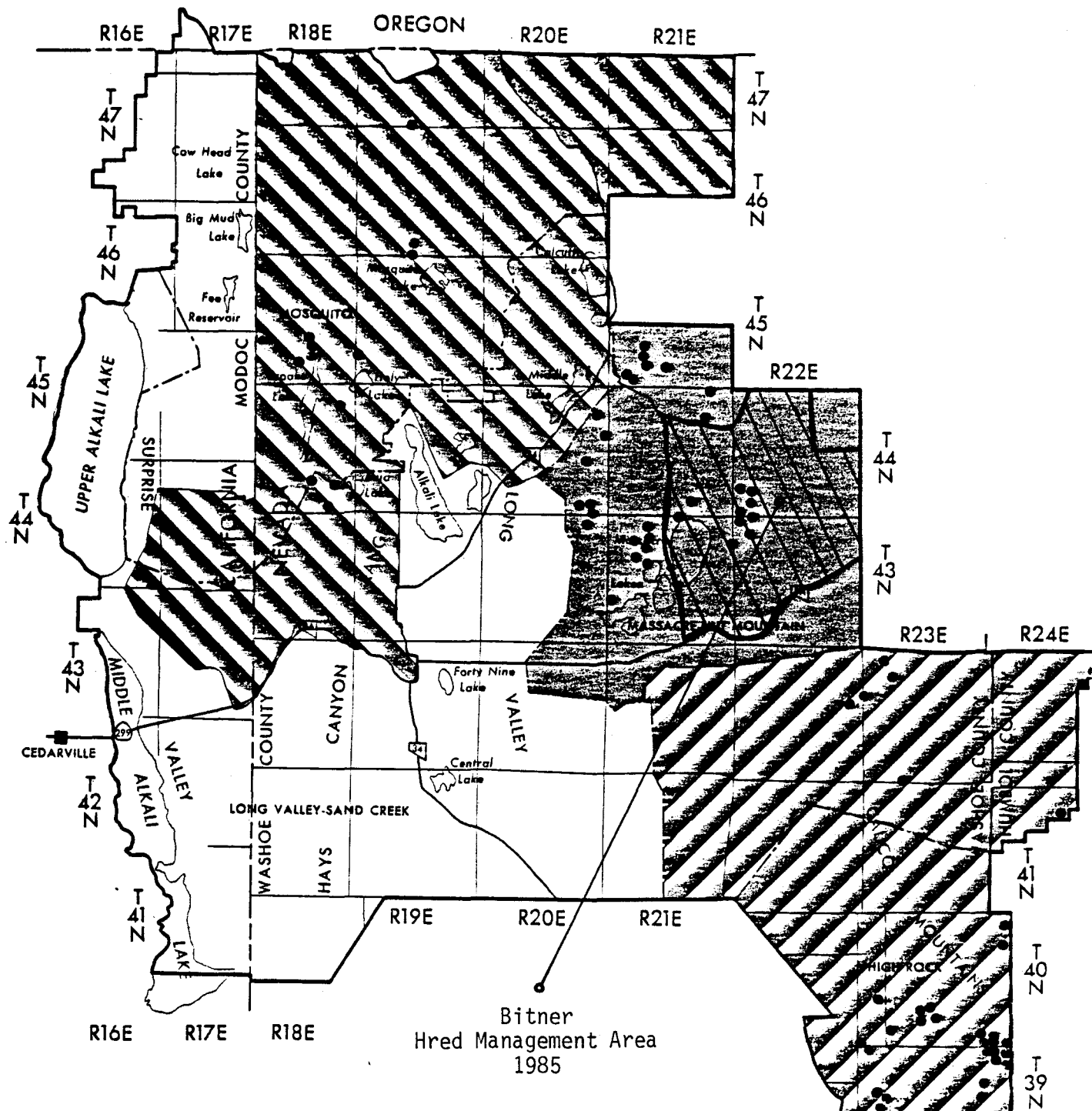
Bitner HMA






Nearby Town

— Surprise Resource Area Boundary





- LEGEND**
- Study Area Boundary
 - - - Sub Unit Boundaries
 - Herd Management Areas**
 -  New Years Lake
 -  Massacre Lakes
 -  High Rack
 - Band Locations September 1977

COWHEAD/MASSACRE
 STUDY AREA
 GRAZING ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY
 WILD HORSES

RESOURCE INFORMATION

A. Land Use Plan

The Cowhead/Massacre Environmental Impact Statement was completed in 1980. Land use decisions were formed from this Environmental Statement through the Cowhead/Massacre Management Framework Plan (MFP) in April 1981. The MFP established a minimum herd number of 15 and a maximum of 25.

Due to the small size of this herd, any stocking rate reductions determined through monitoring in the Bitner HMA would be taken by livestock. Any increases in stocking rate would be given to livestock up to the total preference for livestock. Any increases above total preference would be shared proportionately between wild horses and livestock.

B. Wild Horses

The Bitner HMA provides sufficient yearlong range for the management levels specified in the MFP. Summer and winter range areas overlap, however, most of the summer use occurs on the higher elevation low sage-brush tablelands. Most of the winter use occurs on the lower elevation sites around Massacre Lakes and the south and west facing slopes below the tableland rims (see Map #4).

Interaction of wild horse herds in the Bitner HMA, Massacre Lakes HMA and the Bitner Butte HMA (Sheldon NWR) is suspected. Despite the fact there are several fences surrounding and within the Bitner HMA, wild horses have adapted to moving through or around these barriers. Interaction which has occurred has taken place during the winter period. Wild horses in this area tend to move toward the Massacre Lake Basin during this time. The degree of interchange should be minimal while herds are at the proper management levels.

C. Other Resources

The Bitner HMA encompasses the entire Bitner Allotment and a portion of the Nut Mountain Allotment. The two Allotments were divided from each other in 1982 by the Bitner Division Fence. This fence split the Bitner HMA virtually in half. Most of the winter range is to the west of this fence. The fence was built to facilitate livestock management in the area. Several large gates were constructed along the fence where major horse trails intersected with the fence. In addition to the pasture division fence, two additional fences were built for livestock management purposes. The first is the Cavalry Camp Seeding Fence and the second was the Saltgrass Drift Fence. Both fences have minimal impact on wild horse movements. The Bitner Division Fence has the greatest potential for conflict, however, the gates have been a very effective mitigation measure. Wild horses pass through the gates going to and from winter range with no problems to date (see Map #5).

In addition to livestock, the Bitner HMA is part of Wilderness Study Area 1013 and the Massacre Bench Cultural Resource Management Area. One

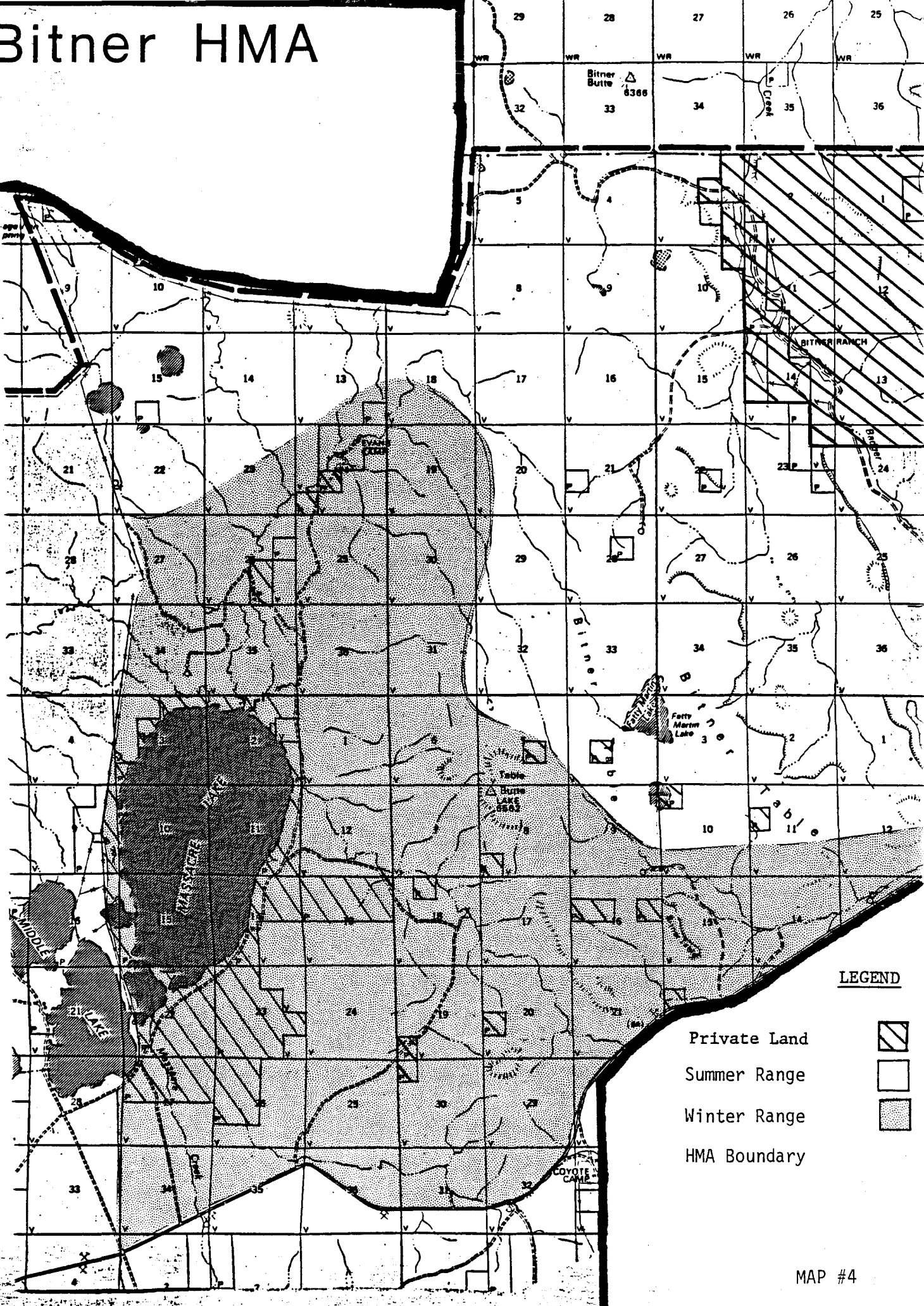
archaeological exclusion was constructed in the HMA in 1984. The fence is intended to exclude wild horses and cattle from various sites north of Massacre Lakes (see Map #5).

The area also provides habitat for typical Great Basin wildlife species. The most notable game species are antelope, mule deer and sage grouse.





The vegetation in the area is typical for the Great Basin with the exception of the areas seeded to crested wheatgrass.

Additional resource information and maps are provided in Appendix B.

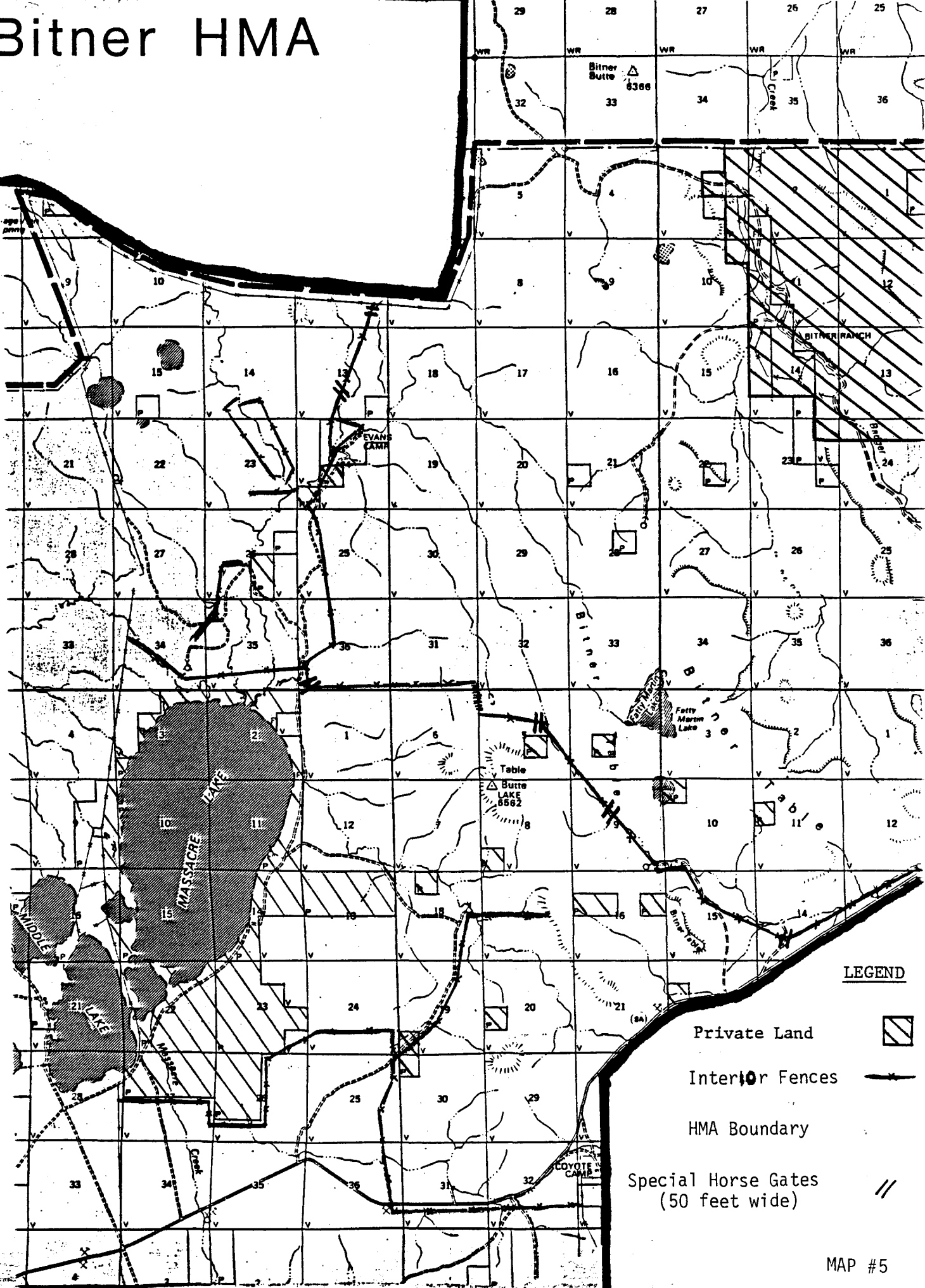
Bitner HMA




LEGEND


- Private Land 
- Summer Range 
- Winter Range 
- HMA Boundary 


Bitner HMA




LEGEND

Private Land 

Interior Fences 

HMA Boundary 

Special Horse Gates
(50 feet wide) 

MAP #5

OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain a healthy and viable wild, free-roaming horse herd in the Bitner HMA.

Method: Control herd numbers and implement an AMP so as to maintain the vegetative base in a healthy stable condition.

Monitor: Herd reproduction levels will be used as an indicator of health and viability. A rate of increase at or below 10% will be an indicator of low herd health and viability. In addition, vegetative trend will be monitored to evaluate vegetative condition.

2. Maintain a minimum of 15 head and a maximum of 25 head of wild horses.

Method: Periodic removal of horses through accepted gathering methods.

Monitor: Bi-annual inventory of the herd will be made to determine herd size.

3. Assess the amount of wild horse interchange between the Massacre Lakes and Bitner HMAs in the Surprise Resource Area and the Bitner Butte Herd of the Sheldon NWR.

Method: Mark a small percentage of the horses in all three HMAs with color coded plastic collars for observation.

Monitor: Bi-annual inventory of wild horses in each of the HMAs.

4. Develop a highly adoptable horse through the selection of desirable breeding animals.

Method: Gather additional (greater than the excess) horses when gathering this herd. Select horses with desirable characteristics for return into the breeding population.

Monitor: Adoptability will be based on number of attempts required to adopt a horse compared with other HMA horses.

5. Reduce the incidence of inbreeding in the Bitner herd.

Method: Introduce new horses into the herd from other wild, free-roaming horse herds on years when the Bitner herd is gathered.

Monitor: Viability as determined by rate of increase will be the primary indicator. Visual observations of conformation may also indicate inbreeding problems.

MANAGEMENT METHODS

Removal

The Bitner herd will be gathered when adult horse numbers reach or exceed 25 head. The herd would be reduced to the minimum management level of 15 horses including foals selected for retention. (Foals do not count toward maximum numbers until January 1 following the spring in which they were born.)

Horses in addition to the excess number will be gathered when possible to allow for the selection of animals based on size, color, sex, conformation and age.

Wild horses will not be gathered during the foaling season. In most cases this herd will be gathered in the late summer or early fall. Trap site locations can be seen on the trap site map (see Map #6).

Selection

Wild horses in addition to the excess will be gathered to facilitate the selection process. This will allow the manager to up grade the herd in an orderly manner. Those horses meeting the selection criteria will be returned to the breeding population.

Criteria

1. Quality

Quality will be based on the commonly accepted conformation standards for a light horse type, without regard to a particular breed.

2. Color

All colors will be acceptable in this herd. Some paint horses will be selected for return into the herd.

Dark or black hooves will be preferred over light or white hooves.

3. Size

A fifteen hand or taller horse is preferred.

Selection criteria will be applied in order to quality, color and size.

It is assumed, the use of specific conformation, color and size selection criteria will allow for the development of a more adoptable horse.

Sex Ratio

The commonly accepted natural sex ratio of 50% male and 50% female will be managed for in the Bitner HMA herd. When gathering an equal number of males and females will be removed from the herd.

In herd of this size a 50/50 sex ratio should reduce potential inbreeding problems in this herd.

Age Structure

An exact age structure will not be managed for in this HMA. However, when possible those horses which are less adoptable due to age will be left on the HMA to live out their natural life.

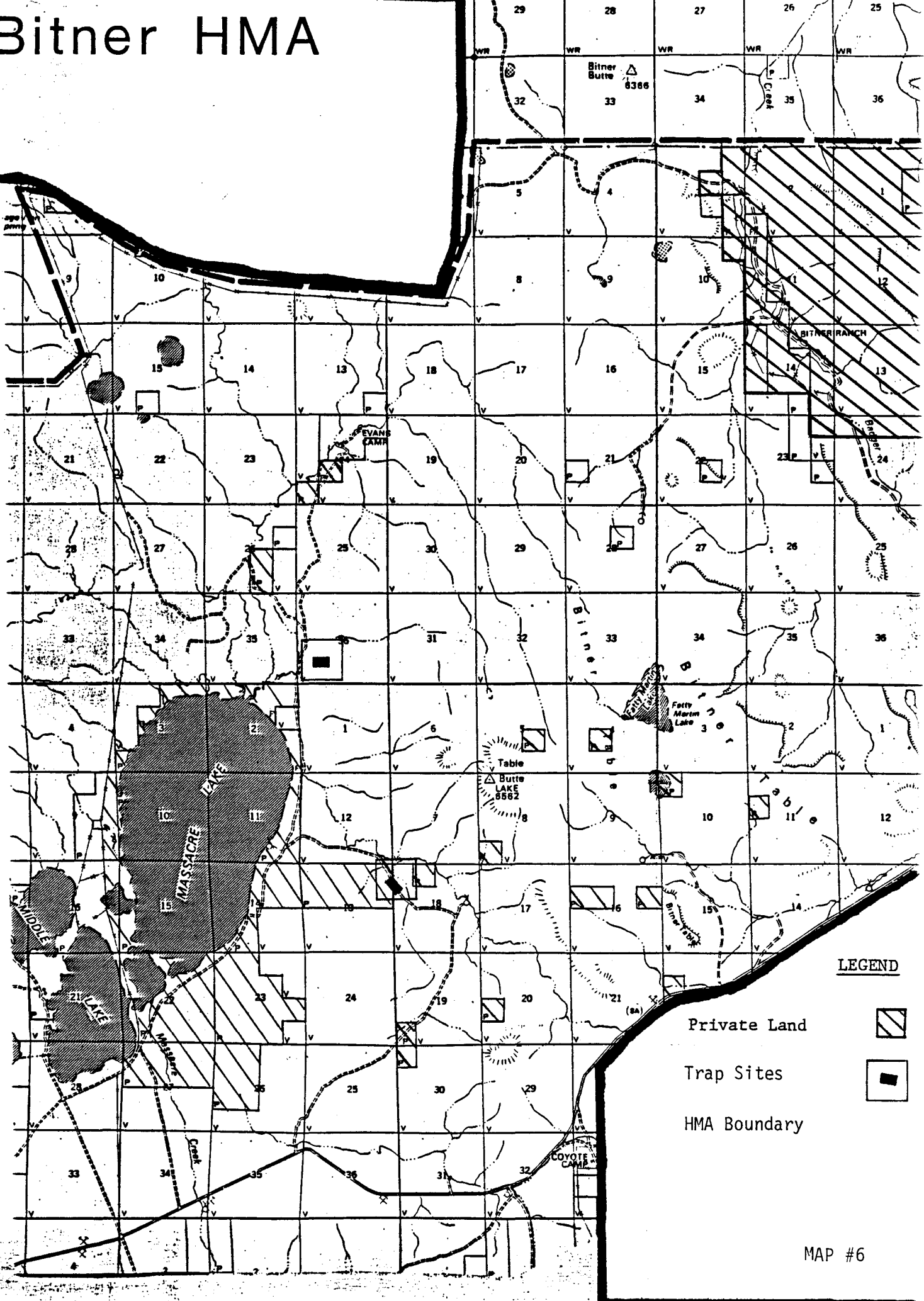
Interchange

In order to ascertain the degree of interchange between the Massacre Lakes, Bitner and Bitner Butte HMAs, horses will be marked with color coded plastic collars. Two horses per HMA will be collared to monitor herd movements in each of the HMAs. A small amount of interchange might be beneficial in terms of gene flow, however, a large amount of interchange could result in wild horse concentrations in a relatively small forage area.




Project Development

Specific improvement project for wild horses have not been proposed in this Plan. Wild horses in this area have ready access to water in the form of reservoirs and springs. Existing water developments are identified on Map #7. Fences have already been illustrated on Map #5.

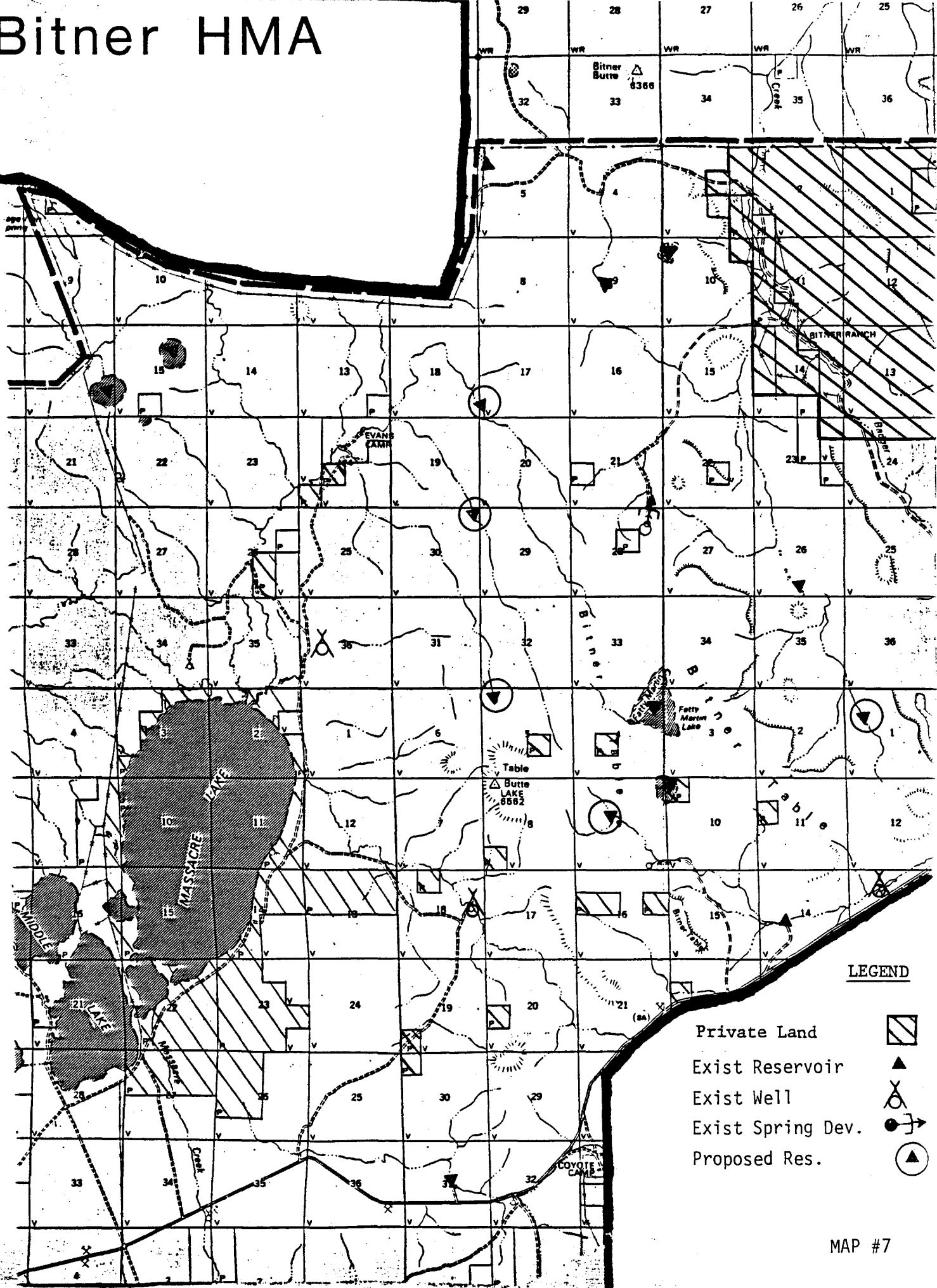
Bitner HMA








LEGEND

- Private Land 
- Trap Sites 
- HMA Boundary 

Bitner HMA



LEGEND

- Private Land 
- Exist Reservoir 
- Exist Well 
- Exist Spring Dev. 
- Proposed Res. 

EVALUATION AND REVISION

A. Evaluation

Management methods as they relate to achieving the HMA's objectives will be evaluated based on the following monitoring techniques.

1. Rate of increase will be measured on the gather years. Reproduction information can best be gathered at this time. Bi-annual aerial counts of herds will assist in achieving an accurate rate of increase for the herd.
2. Visual observations of horses in the field, trap site or the corrals. These observations will enable observers to evaluate whether selection criteria is achieving conformation, color and size objectives. In addition, these observations may indicate inbreeding problems.
3. The tracking of horses through the adoption program by HMA will allow for the evaluation of selection criteria for the improvement of adoptability.
4. Bi-annual aerial counts and observations will allow for the evaluation of wild horse interchange between HMA boundaries. An aerial count in the winter and in the summer will be necessary to evaluate this problem.

Information will be recorded in Appendix C of this document.

B. Revisions

Upon completion of annual evaluations minor revisions may be made to simplify the Plan or correct specific problems. Major revisions will be necessary if the Plan is not working as written or if reasonable progress towards objectives is not being made.

COOPERATION IN MANAGEMENT

Coordination with adjacent Herd Management Areas in the Surprise Resource Area and with the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) will be necessary. Presently, we believe there is some interchange of wild horses from and to the Bitner HMA. The bi-annual monitoring of this herd will enable the manager to determine the extent of this interchange. Should it be significant, control measures may have to be taken. These measures may be coordinated gathering and fence maintenance between the Susanville District and the Sheldon NWR.

Evaluation and revisions of all resource management plan (Wildlife Habitat, Cultural Resource, Allotment and Herd Management Plans) in this area will be coordinated to ascertain the effects on each resource. This coordination process must take place prior to finalizing revisions to any of the plans.

IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

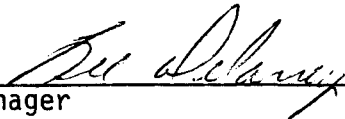
The following specific actions and costs will be required to implement the Bitner HMAP. Specific actions will be broken into three categories; project development, annual costs and every three year costs.

1.	<u>Project Development</u>	<u>\$ Cost</u>
	Cattleguards (1 - @ \$2520.50 ea.)	2,520.50
	TOTAL	\$2,520.00
2.	<u>Annual Monitoring</u>	
	2 Hours of flight time (@150.00/hour)	300.00
	.15 WM to record data track adoptability	525.00
	TOTAL	\$ 825.00
3.	<u>Every Three Years</u> ^{1/}	
	Selection, adoption	
	Capture 27 horses (@\$25/each)	6,250.00
	Select 15 horses for return to HMA (@ \$50/each)	750.00
	Adoption 12 horses	
	Processing (@ \$38/each)	456.00
	Adoption (@ \$180/each)	2,160.00
	Fixed & overhead (@145/each)	1,740.00
	TOTAL	\$11,356.00

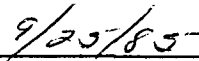
^{1/} It is anticipated this herd will be gathered every three years based on the current rate of increase of wild horses in this area.

APPROVAL

I, the undersigned, have reviewed this Herd Management Area Plan and agree it meets the elements of the Land Use Plan Decisions for wild, free-roaming horses in the Surprise Resource Area. This Plan is consistent with and subject to all provisions of the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 4700).



Area Manager



Date