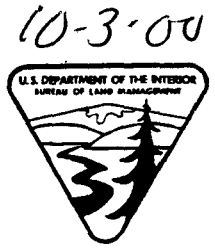




United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

2950 Riverside Drive
Susanville, California 96130



In Reply
Refer to:4700

October 3, 2000

(CA-350)

1060

Dear Interested Party,

Attached is a copy of the environmental assessment for your review and comment concerning a private landowner request for removal of wild horses off of private lands near Ravendale, California.

The wild horse herd was relatively small but has increased dramatically during the last 10 years and is moving off public lands and impacting private lands in their use area.

Please provide comments by October 31, 2000. Thank for your interest in public land management.

Sincerely,

Linda D. Hansen

Linda D. Hansen
Eagle Lake Field Manager

*Acting
for*

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT & FONSI
Eagle Lake Field Office (CA-350)

EA Number: CA-350-2000-19
Date: 09/05/2000

Proposed Action Title/Type: Rave Wild Horse Gather - Request Removal from Private Land
Location of Proposed Action: Near the town of Ravendale, Ca. 50 miles north of Susanville, Ca.
Applicant (if any): N/A

Conformance With Applicable Land Use Plan. This proposed action is subject to the following land use plan:

Name of Plan: Willow Creek EIS and Land Use Plan Date Approved: 1983

This plan has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

Remarks: Justification based on regulations in the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195) as amended, Section 4 states "If wild horses or burros wander from public lands onto privately owned lands, the owners of such land may inform the nearest Federal Marshall or agent of the Secretary, who shall arrange to have the animals removed..." Also see 43 CFR 4720.2-1. Also, wild horse management was recognized in the Land Use Plan to administer and provide for future management for the small wild horse herd in the Rave Allotment (# 0407).

Need for Proposed Action:

The proposal responds to a private land owner request in May 2000, for the removal of wild horses from his private lands that occur within the Rave Allotment. Current funding for the capture of about 65 horses and removal of about 50 horses has been provided.

Description of Proposed Action: A gather plan has been prepared (see attached) to remove the majority of the wild horses on private lands identified on the attached map. The wild horses concentrate on the private land for forage and water. Approximately 65 horses will be gathered and about 50 horses will be removed.

The request stated that the animals "spend a majority of the time on private lands rather than BLM (public lands)" and "is using critical feed and water which is impacting our personal use for cattle grazing". This situation has been observed and confirmed by several BLM employee's and the private landowner for many years. Because water is limited on public lands in this allotment the primary water sources occur on private lands. The horses naturally concentrate on private lands resulting in impacts due to high horse numbers.

There are substantial private lands (over 9,000 acres within the 27,500 acres within the Ravendale Allotment) and horse impacts from grazing and trampling have been observed for several years (R. Mauck, Rangeland Management Specialist, and Tom Cannon, Range Tech). This is especially true when horse numbers have increased dramatically since the last horse removal in 1988. 37 animals were removed and the herd number was adjusted to 15 horses in 1988. Recent helicopter inventory recorded over 100 horses and about half spend the majority of their time on private lands.

Horse Impacts (trampling and soil erosion) have been observed prior to cattle coming into the pasture. Impacts continue after the cattle have left the area for the year. This has prompted the request from the private land owner to reduce horse numbers down to an acceptable or compatible level where horse impacts are not creating long term damage to soil and forage production.

The Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195) as amended, Section 4 states "If wild horses or burros stray from public lands onto privately owned lands, the owners of such land may inform the nearest Federal Marshall or agent of the Secretary, who shall arrange to have the animals removed..." Also see 43 CFR 4720.2-1.

Humane handling, capturing, and care of the wild horses has been addressed in the gather plan.

Other Alternatives Considered:

No Action Alternative

A no action alternative has been considered but not carried forward and is described below. The alternative is not recommend for rational stated.

Under current regulation the BLM is required to respond to private landowner requests to remove stray wild horses and burros from private lands as soon as practicable (43 C FR 4720.2-1).

As mentioned in the environmental consequences listed below, the high number of horses in the area has resulted in trampling of water sources, over utilizing riparian areas, creating soil erosion by exposing bare soil, and affecting water quality by increasing sediment load . This is occurring on both public and private lands. Since the BLM is required to take action if the private land owners request to remove wild horses from their lands we are compelled respond and remove the animals that are concentrating on the private lands.

No further analysis will be done on this alternative.

Affected Environment:

<u>Critical Element</u>	<u>Affected</u>		<u>Critical Element</u>	<u>Affected</u>	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Air Quality	—	<u>X</u>	T & E or Candidate Species	—	<u>X</u>
ACECs	—	<u>X</u>	Other Special Status Plants	—	<u>X</u> (BLM)
Cultural Resources/Paleo	—	<u>X</u>	* Soils	—	<u>X</u> (ELFO)
Environmental Justice	—	<u>X</u>	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid	—	<u>X</u>
Farmlands, Prime/Unique	—	<u>X</u>	Wilderness	—	<u>X</u>
Floodplains	—	<u>X</u>	*Wetlands/Riparian Zones	<u>X**</u>	—
Nat. Amer. Rel. Concerns	—	<u>X</u>	Wild & Scenic Rivers	—	<u>X</u>
Noxious Weeds	—	<u>X</u>	Water Quality	<u>X^</u>	—
Invasive, Nonnative species			Surface & Ground		

* Subject to The Rangeland Health Standards

** Anticipate improvement in riparian/wetlands through a reduction in horse numbers.

^ Water quality should improve with a reduction and a decrease in duration of horse use on the waters.

Environmental Impacts:

Description of Environmental Consequences: We are observing significant impacts related to horse use on both public and private lands. Impacts occur as trampling and heavy to severe utilization around water sources, exposing bare soil possibly affecting water quality. These impacts include damage to root structure and expose soil to surface erosion by hoof action of horses, especially in the spring when soil moisture is high. The presence of wild horses year long on private lands are creating concentrated and negative long effects on water sources and surrounding vegetation.

Because many of these impacts are occurring on private land we are compelled to take action as a result of the private land owners request to remove horses on private land.

Description of Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts: Please refer to the attached gather plan for details on mitigation measures as described in the "Part V. Methods of Removal" for the health and safety of the wild horses removed .

Persons/Agencies Consulted: Eagle Lake Resource Staff, and interested public (see list)

Preparer(s): Ralph E. Mauck, Rangeland Management Specialist

Date: 09/05/2000

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD.

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures described below will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan. It is my decision to implement the project with the mitigation measures identified below.

Mitigation Measures/Remarks: See attached Gather or Capture Plan for Ravendale Horse Herd.

Authorized Official: Linda D. Hays Date: 9-22-00

HELICOPTER CAPTURE PLAN

FOR

WILD HORSES

IN THE

RAVENDALE

HERD MANAGEMENT AREA

FISCAL YEAR 2000

Bureau of Land Management

Eagle Lake Field Office

2950 Riverside Drive

Susanville, CA 96130

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this capture plan is to outline the methods and procedures to be used in removing approximately 50 wild horses from the Ravendale Herd Management Area. (CA-243) of the Eagle Lake Resource Area (See Map 1). This removal is in response to a request by a private land owner to reduce the number of wild horses utilizing his private land and private water in the New Ravendale HMA. The primary water source in the HMA is located on private lands. By a letter dated May 17, 2000 to the Eagle Lake Field Office, the landowner requested immediate removal of those animals occupying his private lands. This request stated that the animals "spend the majority of time on private land rather than BLM property" and "is using critical Feed and water which is impacting our own personal use for cattle grazing."

The proposed removal would begin sometime after September 1, 2000 and would take approximately three weeks to complete.

II. GENERAL AREA DESCRIPTION - BACKGROUND DATA

The New Ravendale Herd Management Area is directly west of the town of Ravendale, California, approximately 45 miles north of Susanville, CA. (See attached Map 2). The HMA consists of approximately 27,500 acres, of which over 9,000 acres is private.

The HMA is located in the Willow Creek Planning Unit of the Eagle Lake Field Office. The Environmental Impact Statement for the Unit was completed in 1980.

Vegetation is typical of the Great Basin Community. The area generally contains scattered patches of mountain mahogany and bitterbrush with large areas of big and low sagebrush.

Environmental Assessment CA-350 - 2000 -19 has been prepared to analyze impacts associated with the proposed removal.

III. JUSTIFICATION

The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195) as amended, Section 4 states "If wild free-roaming wild horses or burros stray from public lands onto privately owned land, the owners of such land may inform the nearest Federal marshal or agent of the Secretary, who shall arrange to have the animals removed..."

43 CFR 4720.2-1 states "Upon written request from the private landowner to any representative of the Bureau of Land Management, the authorized officer shall remove stray wild horses and burros from private lands as soon as practicable."

POPULATION AND REMOVAL DATA

The Willow Creek Land use plan established a planned management level of 8 to 22 head for this area. This area was last gathered in 1988 when 37 animals were removed.

An Appropriate Management Level has not yet been established for the New Ravendale HMA. A census conducted in December of 1999, revealed there were an estimated 102 animals occupying the HMA. Most of these animals were located on private lands at the time of this census. It is estimated there are now 120 animals in the HMA.

Estimated gathering and removal for the New Ravendale HMA is as follows:

Gather 65, Remove 50.

At this time, it is planned to remove only those animals occurring on private lands. If approval is obtained, animals of all age classes will be removed. If the selective gather criteria is applied, only those animals under the age of 5 will be removed. It is estimated a total of 50 animals will be permanently removed from the range.

V. METHODS OF REMOVAL

Gathering will be conducted by contract or by the Susanville District wild horse gathering crew.

Gathering of wild horses will be done by using a helicopter to herd the animals to a trap constructed of portable pipe panels. The helicopter will be used in such a manner that bands will remain together. Rate of movement and distance animals travel will be based on terrain, physical barriers, weather and condition of animals. All traps and wings will be constructed in such a manner to facilitate safe, humane capture of animals. At all times, gathering will be under direct supervision of a duly authorized employee of the Bureau of Land Management. Humane procedures prescribed by the BLM will be used in all gathering and handling operations.

The welfare and humane treatment of the animals will remain the BLM's highest priority. If older animals can be removed, fewer animals will have to be gathered.

Captured animals will be shipped to the BLM's Litchfield Wild Horse and Burro Holding Facility in straight deck trucks. Here the animals will be sorted by age and sex. The Litchfield Facility is well set up to provide for humane handling, preparation, and care of captured animals, with a minimum of stress. Animals to be released will be kept separate from the other animals and returned to their home ranges as quickly as possible.

All publicity, formal public contact and inquiries will be handled through the Eagle Lake Field Manager.

VI. REFERENCE TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Environmental Assessment No. 350-2000-19 was prepared to address impacts associated with the removal operations.

VII. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The Helicopter Gathering Plan and associated environmental assessment will be sent to all interested parties who have requested a copy of these documents.

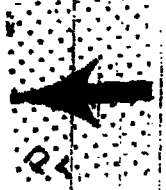
Prepared by: Robinson K. Jeff
Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist

9/22/00
Date

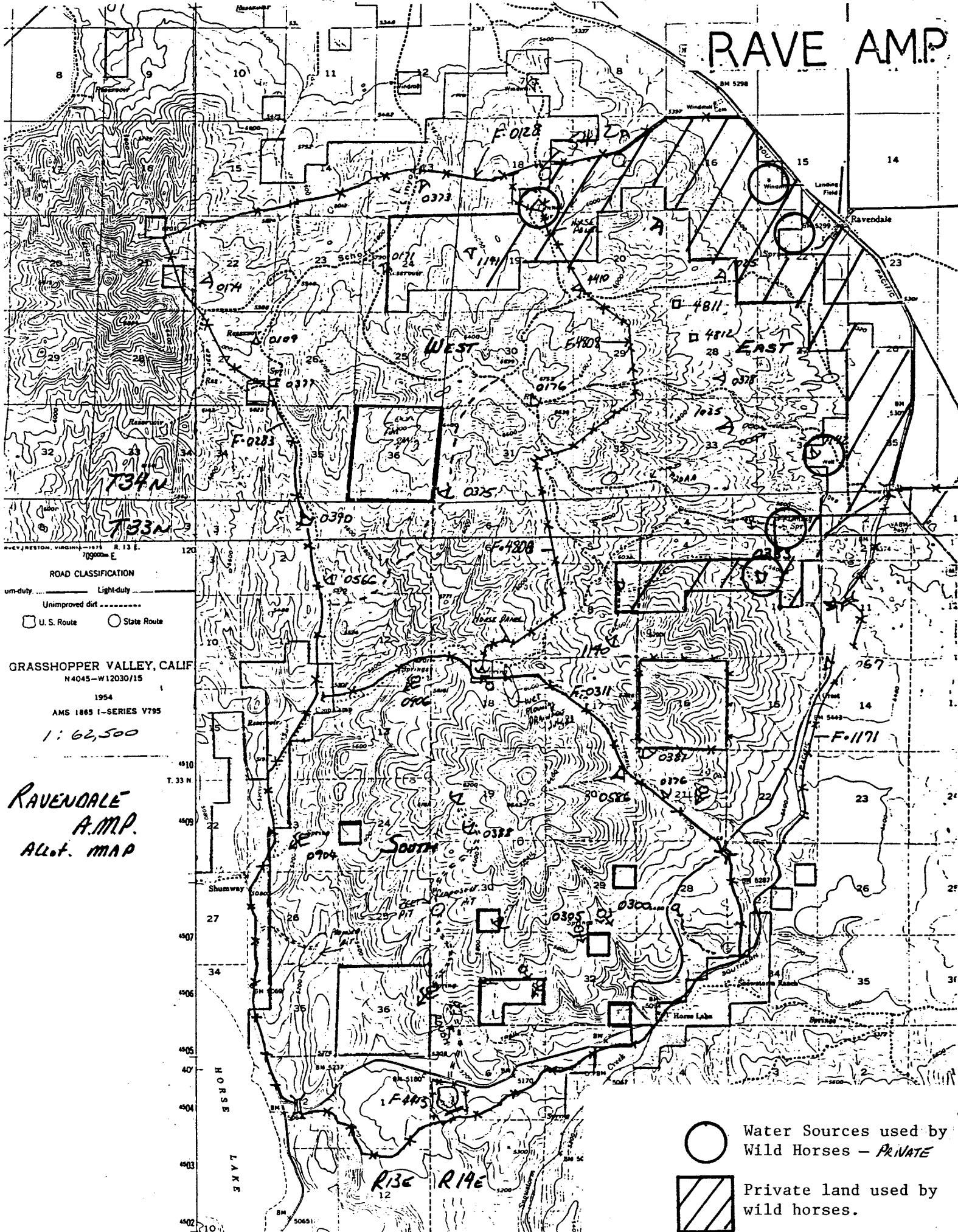
Approved by: Linda D. Hansen
Manager, Eagle Lake Field Office

9-22-00
Date

Attachments



RAVE AMP



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
um-duty Light-duty
Unimproved dirt - - - - -
□ U. S. Route ○ State Route

GRASSHOPPER VALLEY, CALIF
N4045-W12030/15
1954
AMS 1865 I-SERIES V795
1:62,500

RAVENDALE
A.M.P.
Allot. MAP

○ Water Sources used by Wild Horses - PRIVATE
▨ Private land used by wild horses.