

APPENDIX 1

DRAFT

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***HELICOPTER GATHERING PLAN
FOR WILD HORSES IN THE
BITNER, HIGH ROCK, NUT MOUNTAIN, AND WALL CANYON
HERD MANAGEMENT AREAS***

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this removal plan is to outline the methods and procedures to be used in removing approximately 180 wild horses from the Bitner, Wall Canyon, Nut Mountain and High Rock Herd Management Areas. The proposed action would take the wild horse population to the lower limit of the established population range for each area. The populations of wild horses would then be allowed to increase for four years, at which time, it is projected that the populations would be at the upper end of the established population range. At that time, the need for another removal would be determined based upon the actual wild horse populations present.

The proposed removals would begin sometime after September 1, 1993 and would take two to three weeks to complete. If funding does not allow completion of the removal during September, 1993, the removal will take place starting in October, 1993 (Fiscal Year 1994).

GENERAL AREA DESCRIPTION - BACKGROUND DATA

The HMAs are located approximately 40 miles east of Cedarville, California. The HMAs are in northern Washoe and Humboldt Counties, Nevada. See Map 1 for general locations.

The acreage and land status for each HMA is as follows:

<u>HMA Name</u>	<u>Acres Private</u>	<u>Acres Public</u>	<u>Total Acres</u>
Bitner	7,110	43,550	50,660
Nut Mountain	1,840	38,840	40,680
Wall Canyon	1,400	47,877	49,277
High Rock	653	114,447	115,100

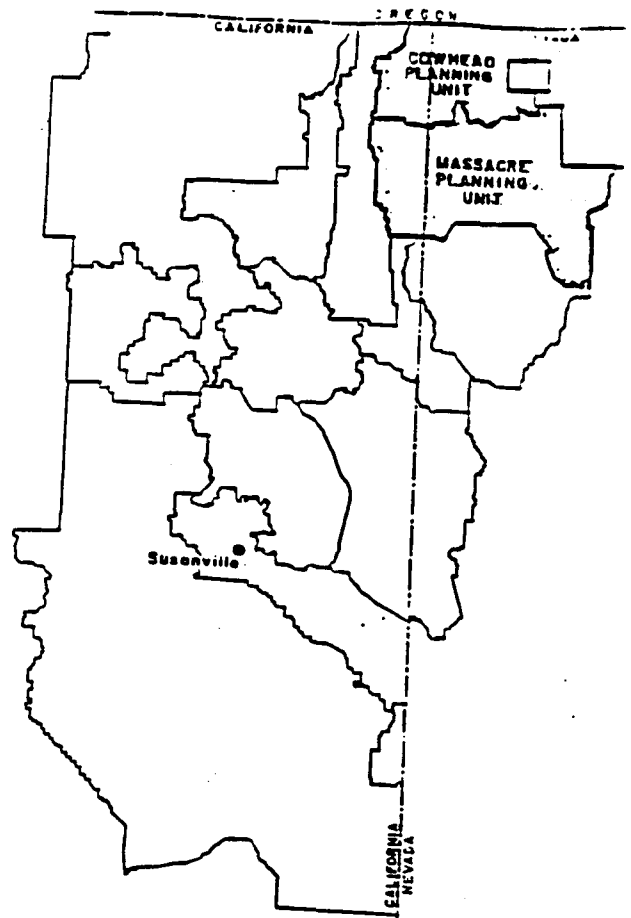
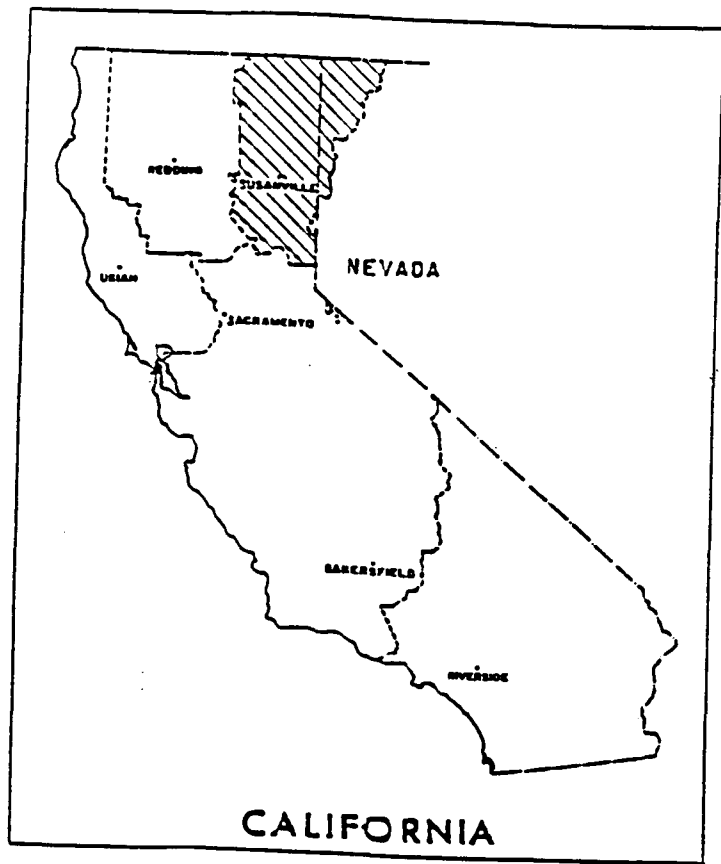
The Herd Management Areas are located in the Cowhead Massacre Planning Unit of Surprise Resource Area. See Map 2- Planning Unit Map. The Environmental Impact Statement for the Unit was completed in 1980.

Elevations range from 5,000 feet to 6,900 feet within the areas.

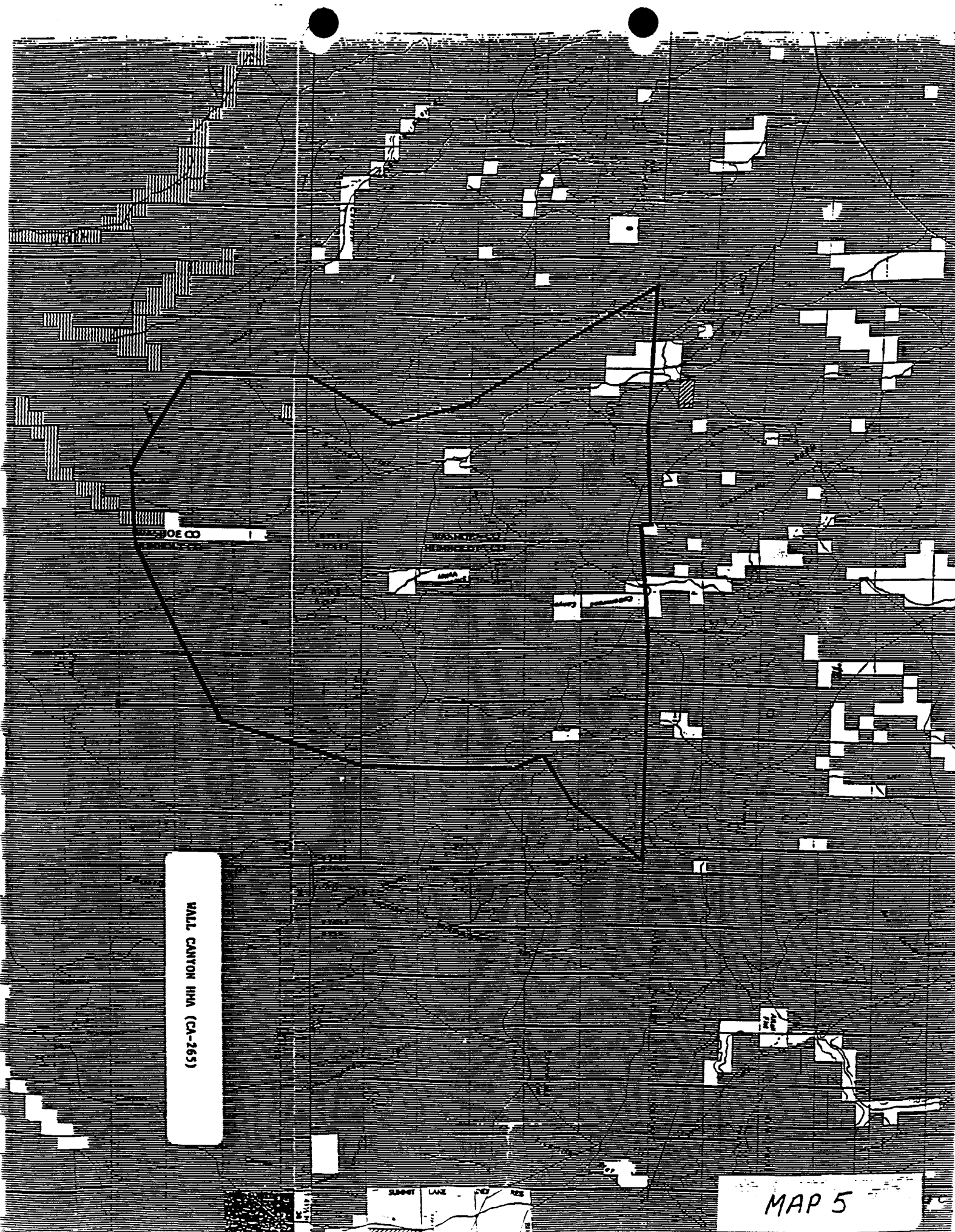
Vegetation is typical of the western Great Basin Ecosystem. Various species of sagebrush dominate the aspect. The dominant perennial grasses are Sandberg bluegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, Thurber's needlegrass, and Idaho fescue.

Appropriate management levels for wild horses in the Bitner, Wall Canyon and Nut Mountain HMAs came from an analysis of the current monitoring data (appendix 2). In these three HMAs the goal is to have wild horses be part of a thriving natural ecological balance among the multiple uses.

The AML for the High Rock HMA, including the East of Canyon Home Range, was also established to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance. The resource management goals in the High Rock area, as defined in the land use plan, were to maintain the canyons in a primitive state and preserve archeological and historical sites. Grazing was determined to be incompatible with these goals. Therefore, forage was allocated for a low number of wild horses and livestock grazing was eliminated.



SUSANVILLE DISTRICT



WAGGON CO

HALL CANYON HMA (CA-265)

MAP 5

SUMMIT LAKE

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POPULATION AND REMOVAL DATA

The Bitner HMA was last gathered in the fall of 1988 when 33 horses were gathered. Thirteen horses were returned to the HMA at that time. The HMA was placed under structured management¹⁰ with the removal.

The Nut Mountain HMA was last gathered in the fall of 1988. At that time 70 animals were gathered and 30 were released back to the HMA. The herd was structured at that time.

The Wall Canyon HMA was also last gathered in 1988 when 142 animals were gathered with 123 being removed. A population of 19 animals was left on the HMA at that time.

The last removal in the East of Canyon Home Range of the High Rock HMA occurred in the fall of 1988. At that time, 53 animals were gathered, 33 released back to the range, and 20 removed.

The population of wild horses in each area is estimated as follows:

HMA Name	1992 Census	9/1993 Projection
Bitner	40	48
Nut Mountain	52	62
Wall Canyon	78	94
High Rock (East of Canyon Home Range)	55	66

Estimates for wild horses are based on the projected average annual increase of 20%

Estimated gathering and removal for each area is as follows:

HMA Name	Est. # to Gather	# Return To The Range	# to Remove	Total to Remain
Bitner	48	15	33	15
Nut Mountain	62	30	32	30
Wall Canyon	94	15	79	15
High Rock (East of Canyon Home Range)	66	30	36	30
Totals	270	90	180	90

The above figures for capture and removal are estimates. It is recognized that all animals within each area cannot be practically captured. Enough animals will be released to insure that the number of wild horses falls within the established population range. Any base herd horses that have died since the last structuring and removal will be replaced with young animals from those gathered. It is recognized also that the minimum range figure may not be able to be achieved by removing only horses four years and younger. The removal of older horses will only be

¹⁰A base herd within a herd management area that has been established through the selection and retention of primarily older animals which are well adapted to the specific area.

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PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The proposed use of a helicopter and motor vehicles for removal of wild horses from the Bitner, Wall Canyon, Nut Mountain and High Rock HMAs will be presented at the Susanville District Multiple Use Advisory Council Meeting on June 16, 1993 in Susanville, California. The Board Meeting will be open to the public.

Prepared by: _____ Date _____
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist

Recommended by: _____ Date _____
Area Manager, Surprise R.A.

Approved by: _____ Date _____
District Manager, Susanville