3-13-74

Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Burro Management Group

13 March 1974
Naval Weapons Center
China Lake, California

Attendees:

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Fred Crafts, Environmental Coordinator, Bakersfield District
Merrill L. DeSpain, Desert Planning Staff
Jerry D. Harrell, Chief, Public Affairs, California State Office
Walter Isaacks, Chief, Resources Management, Bakersfield District
Neil P. Pfulb, Desert Planning Director
Carl M. Rice, Range Management Specialist, California State Office
Thomas Stewart, Area Manager, Riverside District
Richard F. Wright, Range Conservationist, Bakersfield District

FOREST SERVICE

Ernie DeGraff, Resource Forester, Inyo National Forest
Dave Garber, Biologist, Inyo National Forest
Douglas P. Reed, Range Forester, Inyo National Forest

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Peter Sanchez, Resources Specialist, Death Valley National Monument

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

James W. Koehler, Chief, Control and Eradication
Charles C. Siebe, Program Supervisor

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Tom C. Harrison, Fish & Game Patrol Captain, San Bernardino
Frank Hubbard, Information Officer, Long Beach
Glenn Moor, Fish & Game Warden, Barstow
Bob Reser, Wildlife Manager, Ridgecrest
Dick Weaver, Biologist-Manager, Sacramento
Mike Wolter, Fish & Game Warden, Baker
Ralph L. Young, Information Officer, Long Beach

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS, INC., Las Vegas, Nevada

Dr. W. Glen Bradley, Chairman, Department of Biological Sciences,
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

James Wakeman, Field Representative, Manhattan Beach

SIERRA CLUB

Dottie Conlon, Wildlife Coordinator, Van Nuys

THE FUND FOR ANIMALS

Patt Mitchell, West Coast Coordinator, Studio City

NAVAL WEAPONS CENTER

Tilly Barling, Natural Resources Specialist
CDR J. L. Uhe, Assistant Public Works Officer and
Chairman, Natural Resources Advisory Council

VISITORS

Captain D. W. Alderton, Deputy Commander, NWC
Captain W. H. Sturman, Public Works Officer
CDR H. O. Brickson, Member, NWC Natural Resources Advisory Council
John DiPol, Member, NWC Natural Resources Advisory Council
B. A. Sword, Member, NWC Natural Resources Advisory Council
R. F. Barling, Member, NWC Natural Resources Advisory Council
James R. Ouimette, Environmental Engineer
J. H. McGlothlin, Public Affairs Office
R. J. Whiting, Security Department

Each of the agencies represented commented informally on programs underway for biological and behavioral study of burros. Completion of management plans and environmental impact statements is expected early in the summer by Death Valley National Monument and the Naval Weapons Center.

Need for basic data, additional research and comprehensive resource planning was stressed by most of the agency representatives.

Formal studies underway or nearing completion were:

Bureau of Land Management	(Susanville District)	-	Horses
Bureau of Land Management	(Lake Havasu Area)	-	Burros
Inyo National Forest	(White Mountains)	-	Horses
National Park Service	(U of Nevada)	-	Burros
NWC (Environmental Consultants, Inc.)		-	Burros

Panel Discussion - The Public Reaction Barrier:

Moderator and panelists approached the question of how to broach the public reaction barrier from several aspects.

In brief, the ideas offered for consideration addressed the need for concerted action by all agencies with respect to a federal law (PL 95-192) passed a year and a half ago, and the opportunities that each agency member has to reach the public (Weaver). The philosophical aspects of the public relations problem were discussed in terms of the need to convey factual information, compete with other news and to involve an informed public (Sanchez). A third aspect presented an analysis of 100 samples of individual reactions to examine how and by what techniques widespread adverse emotional reactions are triggered (Barling).

General discussion elicited expressions from many participants. Concensus was that timing, objective treatment by the media and communication with the general public in layman's language are prime factors to be considered in developing an effective information and eduction program.

Generally, it was felt that interface between all agencies is vital not only in communicating with the public but in the solution of the real problem - protection, management and control of wild burros in the spirit and intent of PL 92-195.

Attached are copies of flip charts and brain-storming notes used during the meeting.

NOTE: We're working up the reference list of literature from your contributions. It will probably be collated and ready for distribution in a week or so. Because we can't isolate the burro from his environment, we're including contributed references that deal with desert eco-systems in general.

References are being filed on cards, so if anyone runs across new material, send it to me and we'll update the literature file.

Tilly Barling

TILLY BARLING
Natural Resources Specialist

MAILING LIST

13 March 1974 — Ad Hoc Burro Management Group

NAME	TITLE	MAILING ADDRESS
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Patt Mitchell	(West Cost Coord)	The Fund for Animals, P. O. Box 1214, Studio City, CA 91604
Dottie Conlon		Sierra Club, 14007 Runnymede St., Van Nuys, CA 91405
Glenn Moor	F&G Warden	1525 DeAnza St., Barstow, CA 92311
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Peter Sanchez	Resources Spec.	Death Valley National Monument, Death Valley, CA 92328
Glen K. Griffith	Director, DFG	1100 Valley Road, Reno, NEV 89510
John Donaldson	Regional Supv	1100 Valley Road, Reno, NEV 89510

FLIP CHART #1

ANALYSIS OF 100 LETTERS FROM INDIVIDUALS (RANDOM)

Wrong/cruel to kill an animal	24
Relocate	53
General protest (non-specific)	15
Immoral decision/act	11
Adopt an alternative (unspecified)	11
Burros belong "to the people"	14
Preserve "few remaining burros"	6
Navy killing burros - for target practice, sport for officers, sinister weaponry	8
Want burro(s) - 1 to infinity	17
Offer to donate $ for food	2
Burros have "a right to live"	7
Mention other controversies (i.e. Tennessee walking horses, eagles)	4
Want to hunt/capture for sport	3
No protest - request information	6
Mention "management" "burro problem"	2
Sell excess burros	1
Commendation	2
Mention state or federal law	14

FLIP CHART #2

CATCHWORDS

(Used 2 or more times in same 100 letters)

(from 100 individuals)

Wanton killing/killers (military)

Disgrace/disgraceful

Extermination

Slaughter/destruction

Defenseless beasts/wildlife animals

Mindless cruelty

Outrage/outrageous

Shock - dismay - saddened

Sweet gentle burros - beautiful

Cruel/cruelty

Inhuman/inhumanity

Trigger-happy

Navy does not belong on the desert

FLIP CHART #3

TARGET SPECIES

(Mental Niche - Emotion)

LOPITS (Little Old Persons in Tennis Shoes)
Preservationist Organizations
News Media - (the headline makers)

(Mental Niche - Facts)

The Thinking Public
Conservation Organizations
News Media - (objective reporters)

(Uncommitted)

Me-tooers
Legislators
News Media - (opportunists)

BACKGROUND

Since the North American continent was devoid of horses or other animals that could serve as beasts of burden when the Spaniards began to settle and explore the continent in the sixteenth century, they brought both horses and burros. Practical uses to which such animals could be put were obvious to Indian, explorer, miner, and settler; they were bred extensively. Some of the animals escaped or were turned loose and became the ancestors of the wild herds found today.

Most of the burros brought to the Mojave Desert were brought by charcoalers rather than miners or prospectors, because the smelters and stamping mills at mining communities, such as Cerro Gordo or Darwin, used charcoal as fuel. Two burro breeding farms existed in the area now encompassing the Naval Weapons Center: one at Hunter Mountain at the northern end of the Panamint Valley adjoining Navy land, and one in Knight Canyon in the Argus Mountains on the Center. When the mines played out and the automobile became sturdy enough to traverse the rugged country, the animals were turned loose.

Feral burros (animals that have escaped from domestication and become wild) roam areas from elevations of 11,000 feet (the peaks of the Panamint Mountains, where they subsist on plants like the bristlecone pine, which are among the world's oldest living things) to below sea level in Death Valley. With no natural predators to check population growth, they have spread throughout the desert.

Jennies and jacks are found in approximately equal numbers; both have a life expectancy of 25 to 40 years. A jenny can begin to breed at $1\frac{1}{2}$ years of age; the period of gestation is 12 months, and she can again become pregnant 7 days after giving birth. Biologists estimate conservatively that the average jenny will produce 20 foals during her breeding life. A foal is weaned at about 14 months old.

Burros were hunted for sport and food (both human and pet food) prior to the establishment of federal and state laws forbidding such operations. Droughts have periodically reduced herds through starvation or thirst. The prolific breeding capacity of the burro, however, has overcome these obstacles, just as the burro's hardy nature has allowed it to flourish in some of the harshest and most barren territory in North America.

In recent years the burro population has exploded. Inter-agency aerial counts on Naval Weapons Center land in 1964 showed 412 burros; biologists and population specialists estimate that only one-third to one-half the total number of burros will be seen during an aerial count, but no research has definitely established the percentage. By 1978, 1,110 burros were counted in an aerial survey on-Center, and in the 1980 survey, 2,225 burros were counted. Since the population grows geometrically rather than arithmetically, more than 9,000 burros may exist on-Center by mid-decade, which would probably eradicate native wildlife that is rare or endangered. The burro is neither rare nor endangered.

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By 1978 the population pressure of burros had led to marauding animals breaking through the fences of farmers and homeowners on lands adjoining the Naval Weapons Center's perimeter. Fences proved no obstacle; Conrad Neal, an alfalfa farmer living west of the Naval Weapons Center's boundary, reports that a standard five-wire barb fence with chicken wire half way up for rabbits is no deterrent, because "a jack burro just sticks his head underneath the top wire, rolls the wire up on the back of his neck and walks through it."

These predations continue and are expected to increase as burro population pressure mounts.

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(As of March 1981)

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Increasing numbers of burros on the runways of Armitage Airfield at the Naval Weapons Center, on roads within the Center's boundaries, and on public highways were a direct hazard to human life.

In one two-month period in 1979, doctors at the emergency room of the Ridgecrest Community Hospital reported seeing the victims of five separate car-burro collisions on just one section of Highway 178. In September 1980, a young Navy enlisted man was so severely injured when his motorcycle struck a burro on the road to the airfield that he had not yet been returned to full duty five months later. The roads are narrow and many have embankments, making evasive action difficult even if the burros could be seen. At 9:10 p.m., March 2, a 2-ton truck driven by a Navy contractor struck a burro on the G-2 Tower Road on the Center's inner test range area; the burro was killed, the truck was damaged, but the driver was unhurt. On March 18 at 11:15 p.m. a car traveling on California State Highway 178 struck a burro within yards of the Center's boundary. The accident wrecked the vehicle. The driver, fortunately, only sustained minor injuries. The burro was killed.

The well-watered fields and gardens of farms and homes to the west and south of the inner range/main site area of the Naval Weapons Center provide a magnet for marauding burros to break through the Navy's perimeter fencing to search for food and water, according to numerous complaints received by Gene Tackett, Kern County Supervisor for the district. These burros cross roads to reach the gardens and fields, adding to the hazards.

While no burro-aircraft collisions on Armitage Airfield runways have yet taken place, the danger is ever-present, especially during the 75 to 100 night-time landings and takeoffs each month. During daylight hours control tower personnel can spot burros on or near runways and alert pilots; at night, runway lights are low and neither tower personnel nor pilots can see burros. Yet, at night the runways, which hold heat, are especially attractive to burros seeking warmth. On March 9, the day after the first reduction program, at about 4:30 p.m. four burros were spotted at the end of a runway by Navy air traffic control tower personnel as a military transport aircraft was making a landing. The pilot was alerted to the burro problem and emergency vehicles were immediately dispatched to chase them away. And while the same aircraft was taxiing after landing, the pilot spotted an additional four burros at the other end of the runway that tower personnel had been unable to view. Burro droppings also create a hazard; burro scat sucked into a jet engine intake is a potential disaster.

The public has suggested that the runway area be fenced to keep burros out. Fencing, such as the standard five-strand barbed wire or chain link, is not feasible. Fencing would deny ready access to the outside runway area to crash trucks and ambulances responding to emergencies if an accident occurred.

Burro behavior patterns are as dangerous to the native desert environment as to human safety. Both burro grazing and abuse of scarce water resources adversely affect native desert wildlife.

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Burros often tear plants out by the root, rather than just gathering a mouthful or two of each plant before moving on as the bighorn sheep do. Other plants are denuded to such an extent that these slow-growing shrubs die. As the burro population has increased, the bighorn sheep, native to the Naval Weapons Center range areas has nearly vanished; not one was counted in 1980 surveys of wildlife on-Center. Deer population, too, has dropped.

Seeps and springs used by burros as watering holes become unusable for man and other wildlife because they defecate in the water and wallow in it. Springs or seeps used by burros have a high level of both coliform and streptococcus bacteria. In dry years any water source that has been despoiled ensures inevitable death to native wildlife such as the bobcat, fox, squirrels, and a variety of birds.

The land itself suffers, too.

Burros establish trails; as these are repeatedly used, the ground surface compacts to a depth of 6 to 8 inches and plant life dies. Burros wallow to rid themselves of parasites; a burro wallow kills vegetation and compacts the ground to a depth of two feet. Trails and wallows lead to further erosion by action of wind and water. Both compaction and erosion spell death to the small ground creatures whose burrows are destroyed; through the chain of life, the birds dependent on these rodents for food also die. Hillsides near water sources become spider-webbed with burro trails.

Federal law mandates that the Naval Weapons Center protect cultural resources since these are totally non-renewable; the cultural resources include both those of ancient peoples in the area and of early miners and settlers.

The mobile life-style of early dwellers in the region means that their artifacts were left on the ground surface where they are readily endangered by burro hooves. Middens--refuse around a dwelling area--are one of the archaeologist's best sources of information, not only about the life and culture of the early resident, but also about plants and animals existing and used; these middens, since they tend to be softer than the surrounding terrain, are irresistible to burros as dusting sites. Petroglyphs in Little and Big Petroglyph Canyons on-Center (which are a registered National Historic Landmark) are being despoiled by burro fecal matter and also are endangered by being used as scratching rocks against which burros rub.

Equally irresistible to burros are the dwellings erected by miners and early settlers. These wooden structures serve as rubbing posts and as sources for paper and wood to munch.

Fencing the sites used by both the Indians and the settlers to protect against burro incursion is not feasible, either logistically or financially.

(As of March 1981)

POSITION STATEMENTS FROM VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

The Naval Weapons Center has sought the help of professional biologists and other experts to develop a responsible and far-sighted policy for managing what has become a serious burro problem. Organizations and individuals concerned with the whole desert environment and its life forms have freely offered their support and advise. Excerpts from some of the letters received are included to indicate the variety and depth of opinion in support of reduction.

SIERRA CLUB

The Kern-Kaweah Chapter of the Sierra Club supports the proposal by the Naval Weapons Center to reduce the number of wild burros on federal property. Our support is in accordance with adopted Sierra Club policy regarding the need of eliminating this exotic species where they compete with native species for food and water.

We, of course, would want extermination done by expert marksmen rather than opening the range to a "hunt." Humaneness would dictate that the marksmen be deployed out on the range rather than a reduction taking place in holding pens.

--Joe Fontaine, Conservation Chmn.
Kern-Kaweah Chapter, Sierra Club

CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

In line with the position of the California Wildlife Federation, we ask for the elimination of the feral burro and the control of the feral horse.

--Donald Carper, President
California Wildlife Federation

SPORTSMEN'S COUNCIL OF CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

...

The plight of the Natural Resource Lands is becoming grave. It may already be too late to restore much of these rangelands. The least we can do is to make an effort to restore them. This cannot be done without reducing the present animal-unit-months of overuse by livestock, and this must include both the feral animals as well as the domestic animals.

--Lewis E. Carpenter
Legislative Secretary
Sportsmen's Council of Central California

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DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL

Recently the Council has become very concerned about the impact of feral burros on desert tortoise and other indigenous wildlife habitats.

--James A. St. Amant, and
--Glenn R. Stewart, Co-Chairmen
Desert Tortoise Council

SOUTHWEST REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The Naval Weapons Center controls a substantial portion of Mojave Desert which contains unique flora, fauna and archaeology. You should work as diligently as possible to the complete removal of feral burros from the Naval Weapons Center.

--Milford R. Fletcher, Ph.D.
Chief, Division of Natural Resources Management

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME, REGION 4

The California Department of Fish and Game has for many years been acutely aware of the ever increasing problem that an expanding burro population is causing to native wildlife species on these ranges (NWC ranges). We are now convinced that unless the burro population is eliminated or at least drastically reduced, wildlife species and their habitat will soon be irretrievably impacted.

--George D. Nokes
Regional Manager

(As of March 1981)

JUSTIFICATION FOR EMERGENCY DIRECT REDUCTIONS

Increasing hazard to life and safety of Navy personnel due to the number of burros roaming on the Center's inner ranges has forced Naval Weapons Center Command to implement two emergency short-range plans for burro reduction in a limited area until the long-range plan can be finalized.

In March 1980, the Naval Weapons Center initiated an interim emergency feral burro management program for the control of feral burros in a 275-square mile area in the southwest corner of the China Lake complex. The Council on Environmental Quality was notified of this urgent action. This interim control program had three basic objectives:

a. Eliminate burros from the vicinity of the airfield to reduce the collision hazard for aircraft.

b. Eliminate burros from high-speed roads, both on the Naval Weapons Center ranges and on adjacent public roads.

c. Eliminate marauding by burros on private property adjacent to the Naval Weapons Center boundary, where they were damaging fences, crops and orchards.

The control program consisted of live removal by Bureau of Land Management under a cooperative agreement with Bureau of Land Management's Bakersfield District. Between March 1980 and January 1981, Bureau of Land Management wranglers removed 258 burros at a cost of $69,600 to the Naval Weapons Center. Burros were disposed of through Bureau of Land Management's Adopt-A-Burro program.

The live removal program has been underway for nearly a year. Despite the expenditure of considerable effort and money, the safety hazards posed by burros have actually increased. Approximately 650 burros moved into the control area, more than double the amount when live removal started.

Under the revised interim plan, a team of three civilian professional sharpshooters was contracted to reduce the burros in the control area. The reduction programs were held on two weekends, March 7 and 8 and again on March 21 and 22. The three-man team was led by an animal population specialist; the team leader served as a spotter. When the burros were spotted, the helicopter landed the shooting team in a good position to insure quick, humane kills. By state law, carcasses must be left where the animals are shot unless they are close to a road or building and would cause a health hazard. In the latter case, carcasses were either buried or moved.

The emergency reduction plan cost $3,500 for the two days of shooting on March 7 and 8, and $4,700 for the March 21 and 22 program. The two programs resulted in the destruction of 648 burros.

The two emergency reductions resulted in immediate lessening of danger to Naval personnel and others on-Center. The improvement in safety is expected to last until the long-term burro management plan can be implemented later this year.

(As of March 1981)

EARLY NAVAL WEAPONS CENTER EFFORTS TO CURB BURRO POPULATION EXPLOSION

As early as 1958 recommendations were made to reduce the number of burros in the Argus Mountains on Navy land because of the adverse effect that the animals were having on native desert wildlife and environment. In the Slate Mountains on the Mojave B range, the problem increased sufficiently so that a direct reduction was conducted in 1965-66, when 50 burros were shot, and in 1966-67, when 150 burros were shot; these reductions were authorized by depredation permit from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and were conducted by China Lake Police Department personnel under the supervision of the California Department of Fish and Game.

Severe drought in 1971-72 dried the desert further; a depredation permit was obtained at that time by the Naval Weapons Center for a reduction of 200 animals as a humane measure because many burros were starving or dying of thirst. A public outcry, primarily from persons not living in the desert, not familiar with desert climate, terrain, or burro living patterns, halted the reduction, although professional biologists felt it was essential. Despite the number of animals that died from starvation or thirst, enough survived to result in the current population explosion.

Many of the methods suggested by concerned citizens at either the scoping hearing or in letters written throughout a number of years to manage the burro population are either infeasible or illegal. The National Park Service has major burro overpopulation problems; rounding burros up and moving them to the closest national park is infeasible. (A total roundup for live removal in itself would be extremely costly and impractical because of the rugged desert and mountain terrain of the Naval Weapons Center.)

Because of Navy test operations and also because much unexploded ordnance dropped over the 37 years of the Center's existence still remains in the ground, range areas could not safely be opened to the public for individuals to catch burros that they would like to adopt.

A 1952 California law specifically forbids hunting burros; burros were often hunted earlier, both for food and for sport.

No contraceptive chemical has been developed that could be spread in order to stabilize the burro population. If such a chemical were to be developed, it still could not be used at large because it would adversely affect native wildlife as well as the feral burros.

(As of March 1981)

NAVAL WEAPONS CENTER BURRO MANAGEMENT PLANS

Management of wildlife on federal lands such as the Naval Weapons Center is governed by both federal and state laws. Under the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976, federal land managers are mandated responsibilities to manage lands, protect natural and cultural resources and ensure that these resources are protected for the future. Wildlife management at the Center also comes under the Cooperative Wildlife Management Agreement signed in 1962 between the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the Naval Weapons Center.

The Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (PL92-195) does not apply, because this act defines the "public lands" as any lands administered by the Secretary of Interior through the Bureau of Land Management and by the Secretary of Agriculture through the Forest Service. Since the Naval Weapons Center lands are withdrawn from public domain for use by the Navy, the Secretary of the Interior does not administer the resources on these lands.

Any action affecting the environment (which includes wildlife management plans) is governed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 to ensure that information is available to public officials and the public at large before any actions affecting the environment are taken. An Environmental Impact Statement required prior to action must show a real-world analysis of reasonable alternatives; required also is a commitment to restore and enhance the environment.

Three plans for management of the feral burro on Naval Weapons Center lands were developed: a long-term plan, an interim emergency plan, and an amended interim emergency plan for a limited area of the Naval Weapons Center China Lake complex. The initial interim emergency plan involved live removal. The amended interim emergency measures were necessary to counter the threat to lives of Navy personnel posed by the more than 650 burros that were roaming the inner ranges and airfield area of the Center.

Data to be used for a long-term burro management program have been actively gathered on-Center since 1974. Under NEPA, development of an Environmental Impact Statement must be preceded by a public scoping hearing to determine what questions and concerns must be met. Following a Notice of Intention to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (published in the Federal Register, volume 44, number 227, of Friday, 23 November 1979), a public scoping meeting was held in Ridgecrest, which adjoins the Naval Weapons Center, on 12 December 1979. (A transcript of this meeting was prepared by the Commerce Court Reporting Company of Boston, Massachusetts, and is available.) A contract was let to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement; this draft statement, which uses a programmatic approach because of the long-term, phased character of the problem, was received by Center Command in March. Once released the public, through the Chief of Naval Operations and the Environmental Protection Agency, will have 45 days to submit written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement and the plan; during this 45-day period a public meeting will be scheduled to permit oral comments. The comments will be incorporated in the final Environmental Impact Statement to be released by late spring, and implementation of the long-term plan is expected to begin by early summer.

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The programmatic approach referred to above defines the problem and allows action to begin while follow-up studies are being conducted to allow the burro management plan to be revised as necessary; this complies with the Council on Environmental Quality guidelines. Additional field work will be carried out in spring and summer 1981.

(As of March 1981)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON BURROS

Q: Are there any native wild burros?

A: Not in the western hemisphere. All burros and horses in the western hemisphere--North and South America--are descendants of animals brought from Europe, Asia and Africa since the beginning of the sixteenth century. Native equids in American all died out about 10,000 years ago; scientists surmise that climatic changes caused their death.

Q: What native animals in this area fall into the same size or category as the burros?

A: None in the 400- to 500-pound range since the Pleistocene era ended 10,000 years ago, when not only the equids became extinct in this region, but also the camel and the woolly mammoth. The largest animals in the region today, the bighorn sheep, mule deer, and mountain lion are all smaller and lighter. No predator in the area, other than man, is large enough or numerous enough to serve as a natural control.

Q: Are the bighorn sheep gone forever from the Naval Weapons Center lands?

A: After the implementation of the long-term burro management plan, it is hoped to reintroduce this shy and endangered species into the closed environment of the Navy lands where they can be protected.

Q: Why can burros live where cattle, bighorn sheep and deer no longer can?

A: Burros have a simple stomach; cattle, deer and sheep have a multi-chambered stomach that restricts the amount of fiber it can process and still provide nutrients from the forage. Equids such as burros can survive long after the range will no longer support these other animals.

Q: How much does each burro actually eat in a day?

A: The average burro will each eat from 10 to 14½ pounds of grass or other vegetation each day. Burros may destroy more than that because they tend to pull plants up by the roots rather than foraging like many other animals.

Q: What about the feral horses on-Center? Don't they cause a problem?

A: The Center's wild horse herd (667 by aerial count) has not grown as rapidly as the burro herd. Also, the horses don't monopolize water sources; they drink about once a day and move on so that other animals can use the same water. The horses remain on the north range area.

Q: Do cattle graze on the Center?

A: About 600 head of cattle in a "cow-calf" operation graze on the Center's northern ranges in spring and fall. Cattle grazed on these lands for decades before the Navy acquired title; grazing rights extend back

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over a hundred years in much of the desert. The number of cattle grazing is carefully managed so that no permanent damage to the land results.

Q: What is the physical condition of the burros on the Naval Weapons Center?

A: At this time, most of the animals are healthy, although distemper is suspected to exist. Until an autopsy is conducted on one of the dead animals, distemper cannot be proven; the carcasses spotted have been in locations where removal of the carcasses would be difficult.

Q: Why not simply feed the burros?

A: First, all would have to be rounded up and located in some central area; second, burro populations under the harsh desert environment are already exploding, and feeding the burros would enhance the population explosion; third, these animals would then totally lose the urge to forage for themselves and would become totally dependent on continued care. The cost to the taxpayer for such a long-term operation would escalate as the herd grew.

Q: Is there a manageable number of burros that could exist indefinitely on Naval Weapons Center lands?

A: On-going studies have not yet developed firm conclusions. This issue will be addressed in the long-term management plan.

Q: Do the burros interfere with the Naval Weapons Center's mission as the primary research, development, test and evaluation facility for Naval tactical air weapons and the National Parachute Test facility?

A: Yes, the burros constitute very real danger, particularly at night, to aircraft taking off or landing on Armitage Airfield runways and to vehicles on the Naval Weapons Center roads because the animals stray onto both. The roads are narrow and have embankments so that evasive action is not possible. Burros also have damaged Midas missile tracking equipment by rubbing against it and destroying essential calibration; they delay tests because they need to be cleared from test areas; and they have dug up and broken pipelines and cables in search for food or water.

Q: What are the alternatives suggested in the long-term management plan?

A: Complete burro removal by direct reduction; complete removal by live trapping/direct reduction combined; partial retention of burros on the Naval Weapons Center lands by live capture to ecosystem carrying capacity; and no action, which is unacceptable because of accelerating damage to the environment and dangers posed to lives of Navy personnel.

Q: Can the Center be fenced to keep stray burros out? Or the existing herds in?

A: Fencing the Center would be logistically infeasible because of the mountainous and rugged terrain; the cost of fencing would in any case

(more)

be prohibitive. (Estimates place the cost of more than $9,000,000, with an annual maintenance bill of over $100,000.) This would still not solve the population explosion problem.

Q: Why can't the Naval Weapons Center start an "Adopt-A-Burro" program?

A: The principal mission of the Naval Weapons Center is research, development, test and evaluation in support of national defense. Operation of an "adopt-a-burro" program would divert scarce manpower and funding resources from this principal mission. Over the last year our efforts to use the "adopt-a-burro" program operated by the Bureau of Land Management has convinced the Navy that this program is too expensive and is simply not effective in view of the enormous numbers of burros scattered widely over very difficult terrain, some of which contains high explosives. After almost a year of effort, there are more burros in the area we attempted to clear than there were when we started.

Q: Who has conducted the burro studies at the Naval Weapons Center?

A: In addition to the professional natural resources specialists on the Center's staff, the help of professional biologists, universities, conservation groups, and personnel from state and federal agencies has been sought to study the effects of burros on Navy lands to other wildlife and plants. The environmental firm of Phillips Brandt Reddick (PBR) was awarded a contract by the Naval Weapons Center in March 1980 to study the problem and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Management Plan for the control of feral burros on the Naval Weapons Center ranges. On request, tours of the ranges have been arranged for conservation and other groups so these could see for themselves what conditions are.

Q: What groups support direct reduction?

A: Most conservation organizations such as the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, and Desert Protective Council, as well as many professional organizations and sportsmen clubs support humane reduction.