

10-2-97



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Resource Area
P.O. Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104



October 2, 1997

In Reply Refer To:
4700 (CA-370) P

Cathy Barcomb
Wild Horse Commission
1105 Terminal Way, STE 209
Reno, Nevada 89502-2162

Dear Cathy:

I am sorry I keep missing you by telephone. Based on concerns you voiced, I thought it might be helpful to review the current status of the Coppersmith and Buckhorn HMA's and our proposal to gather to AML for those herds starting next week.

The Surprise Resource Area (SRA) began working to establish appropriate management levels for the two herds in 1993. A draft environmental assessment was issued September 12, 1994, summarizing monitoring data collected for the two HMA's. Public comments on the draft EA requested additional monitoring data. Therefore, the SRA chose to collect additional data during the 1995 field season prior to issuing a final decision.

Based on the additional monitoring data, a final EA was issued November 11, 1995, and I signed the Decision Record on November 13, 1995, establishing an AML of 59-85 head for the Buckhorn and 50-75 head for the Coppersmith HMA's. No protests or appeals were received.

At the time, both the Wild Horse Commission and Nevada Division of Wildlife had concerns about our monitoring data, our compliance with the Stipulated Agreement for the Tuledad Allotment, and providing less than 30 days for comment prior to initiating a gather. Accordingly, Tara deValois and I met with you in Reno on December 7, 1997 to discuss your concerns.

At that meeting, we provided you with the following information:

1. A summary of actions taken on the Tuledad Allotment during 1993-95 in response to the Stipulated Agreement.
2. A summary of our 1995 monitoring data.
3. Also included were data tables summarizing actual use by livestock and wild horses from 1989 through 1995, a summary of actual forage utilization by class during 1992-95, data on bitterbrush utilization, utilization maps, etc.

Based on our meeting, NDOW and the Commission wrote a letter dated December 19, 1995 summarizing our discussion of December 7, 1995 and making the following recommendations:

- ◆ Issuance of all 10-year livestock permits require an environmental assessment.
- ◆ In the absence of a completed integrated management plan, annual grazing authorizations will

be reviewed by affected interests.

- ◆ In the absence of standards and guidelines, annual grazing authorizations will have utilization limits for riparian and bitterbrush key management areas.
- ◆ Any new land use planning will be consistent with existing Wildlife MFP III decisions.
- ◆ Wild horse population models for Buckhorn and Coppersmith herds will be completed.
- ◆ A remedial plan to address compliance deficiencies with the items of Stipulated Agreement will be presented to affected interests.
- ◆ Planning will consider elk introductions in Nevada.

During 1996 and 1997, the SRA has completed NEPA documentation for any 10 year permits being reissued. We have also asked the affected interests to review the annual grazing authorizations (which include the year's plan for livestock use and utilization criteria for key areas).

During those years, we have also worked closely with a Stewardship Technical Review Team to make recommendations about desired future vegetation, specific management actions and projects, and are now working in close consultation, coordination and cooperation with the permittees (as required by PRIA) to finalize the details of a proposed grazing strategy that will help us to reach the recommended desired future condition. A briefing paper describing the current status of our planning effort is enclosed for information.

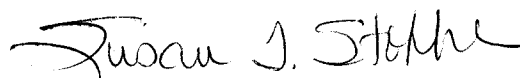
We have been assembling the data to complete accurate population models for the Buckhorn and Coppersmith herds. We plan to use the data collected during our gather next week to supplement our existing data. We have also been in touch with other area offices to learn more about modeling and their experience.

Utilization data gathered in 1996 support our AML decision. In 1996, following the November 1995 gather, we met utilization criteria in all but one key riparian area. Horses were healthy, and remaining within their herd territory. Our census in 1997, indicated that we were above AML's in both HMA's. Therefore, we notified affected interests on September 5, 1997 of our intention to re-gather to established AML. I am very sorry that we inadvertently used the incorrect address for you and that your notification was delayed until last week.

When we met on December 7, 1995, I promised that I would issue a multiple-use decision when we establish an AML for the Fox Hog and High Rock HMA's and that we would try very hard to do that with sufficient lead time for the affected interests. We have collected extensive utilization data for Fox-Hog and hope to issue a multiple-use decision next spring. A gather would then be scheduled for next fall. We will also be collecting monitoring data for the High Rock HMA during the 1998 field season, for a possible gather in Fall 1999.

I hope this information clarifies the situation. Please let me know if you have additional concerns.

Sincerely,



Susan T. Stokke
Surprise Resource Area Manager

COPPERSMITH HMA
AGE/SEX DATA FROM
OCTOBER, 1997 GATHER

COPPERSMITH HMA (CA-261)

GATHER SUMMARY

TOTAL ANIMALS GATHERED: 37

ANIMALS RETURNED TO RANGE: 7

ANIMALS REMOVED: 30

ANIMALS DIED: 0

ANIMALS REMOVED FROM RANGE

<u>AGE</u>	<u>NO. OF MALES</u>	<u>NO. OF FEMALES (LACTATING / NON-LACTATING)</u>
0	5	6
1	5	5
2	2	2 (2/0)
3	0	2 (1/1)
5	0	1 (1/0)
6	0	2 (1/1)
TOTALS	12	18

COPPERSMITH HMA (CONT.)

ANIMALS RETURNED TO RANGE

<u>AGE</u>	<u>NO. OF MALES</u>	<u>NO. OF FEMALES (LACTATING / NON-LACTATING)</u>
7	0	1 (1/0)
9	0	1 (1/0)
10	0	1 (1/0)
12	1	0
18	1	1 (1/0)
25	0	1 (1/0)
TOTALS	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>