

8/28/91



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Region 4

Toiyabe National Forest
Las Vegas Ranger District
550 E. Charleston
Las Vegas, NV 89104

Reply To: 1950/2260

Date: August 28, 1991

Wild Horse Organized Assistance
ATTN: Dawn Lappin, Director
P.O. BOX 555
Reno, NV 89504

Dear Ms. Lappin:

Enclosed you will find a scoping document regarding the wild free-roaming horses in Lee Canyon. You are invited to participate in the environmental analysis process as your comments will assist the Forest Service in determining the scope of issues to be addressed. To be most effective, your comments need to be received no later than September 30, 1991. Please contact George Perkins or Sara Mayben at the Las Vegas Ranger District at (702) 477-7782 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

For KIM E. MARSHALL
District Ranger

Enclosures



Caring for the Land and Serving People

FS-6200-28 (7-82)

SCOPING STATEMENT

PROPOSED FENCE CONSTRUCTION
McFARLAND CANYON

PROBLEM HORSE REMOVAL
LEE CANYON

Las Vegas Ranger District
Toiyabe National Forest
Clark County, Nevada

I. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTIVITY

A. Location and General Size of Area Involved

The Toiyabe National Forest, Las Vegas Ranger District, is proposing to remove wild free-roaming horses from Lee Canyon. The proposed site is located in Sections 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 15, Township 19 South, Range 56 East. To accomplish this, the Toiyabe National Forest, Las Vegas Ranger District is proposing the construction of a fence at the lower end of McFarland Canyon. This proposed site is located in Section 21 and 28, Township 18 South, Range 56 East within the Mt Charleston Wilderness. The project areas are approximately 45 miles northwest of Las Vegas (Exhibit 1).

The McFarland fence proposal consists of the construction of a four-strand barbed wire fence at the narrow portion of the canyon. The fence will have a gate designed for recreational access by hikers and horsemen. The fence and gate will be properly signed to prevent the gate from being left open and the fence from being damaged. With this proposal, the wild free-roaming horses will not be gathered. They will be allowed to migrate out of Lee Canyon through McFarland Canyon as the weather forces them to lower elevations. The gate in the fence will be left open until all horses are out of the area. The gate will then be closed, prohibiting their return.

The purpose of the fence at McFarland Canyon is to eliminate the wild free-roaming horses in Lee Canyon. McFarland Canyon is being used by the wild free-roaming horses as a migration route into Lee Canyon. Lee Canyon is not a part of, or within the boundaries of any wild free-roaming horse territory. Therefore grazing use by wild horses in this area is not a recognized use under current management. The presence of these horses and their grazing use on the vegetation, specifically the Ski Lee slopes and the meadow in Lee Canyon, is causing significant vegetative resource damage. Ski Lee is required through the terms and conditions of their permit to maintain vegetative cover on the ski slopes to provide for watershed stability and soil protection from rain and snowmelt runoff. This permit requirement represents a large financial investment by Ski Lee. Elimination of these wild horses is necessary in maintaining the integrity of the ski slope watershed project. The presence of the wild horses in Lee Canyon poses a safety threat to visitors of this popular

recreational site and also to themselves because of the high level of vehicular travel through this narrow canyon.

B. Relationship to Other Plans and Documents

The surface area involved with the McFarland Fence proposal is under the administrative jurisdiction of the Las Vegas Ranger District, Toiyabe National Forest. The area associated with the proposed fence is located in the the Mt. Charleston Wilderness.

Wild free-roaming horses were not considered in the management objectives for the Wilderness because the Wilderness area is outside the Spring Mountain Wild Horse Territory.

Management objectives for Lee Canyon are contained in the Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. It states that wild horses continue to be excluded from this area (IV-146).

C. Nature of Decision to be Made

The decision to be made regarding the McFarland Fence involves:

- o A determination if whether implementation of the project conforms with existing Forest Service policies, regulations, and approved land management direction in effect for the project area.
- o A determination of whether the McFarland Fence project could be implemented in a manner that is environmentally suitable, meets the needs of other resource management activities, and acceptably mitigates surface resource impacts while eliminating wild free-roaming horses from Lee Canyon.
- o A determination if a gather could be implemented if the wild free-roaming horses return to Lee Canyon.

II. IDENTIFIED LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The following issues and concerns have been identified by the Forest Service. These identified preliminary issues and concerns are not all-inclusive, but are provided as a starting point for public input and to assist in identifying additional interdisciplinary team (IDT) or resource specialist input needed for completion of the environmental analysis.

Issues and Concerns

- o A management concern exists regarding possible impacts to recreational use of the Mt. Charleston Wilderness Area as accessed through McFarland Canyon.
- o There is a concern regarding wild horse use in the Mt. Charleston Wilderness which is outside the Spring Mountain Wild Horse Territory.
- o There is a concern regarding possible impacts to threatened or endangered plant species that may exist in the project area.

- o The proposed fence will be visible to recreational users in McFarland Canyon. There is a concern regarding the impact the proposed fence will have on visual quality of the area.
- o There is a concern regarding possible impacts to wildlife habitat in McFarland Canyon and wildlife accessibility around the fence.
- o There is a concern regarding possible impacts to the wild free-roaming horses in the Spring Mountain Wild Horse Territory.
- o There is a concern regarding wild free-roaming horses accessing Lee Canyon from an unknown area other than McFarland Canyon. If the wild free-roaming horses return to Lee Canyon in the spring of 1992, they will need to be gathered and taken to the Kingman Wild Horse Handling Facility.

Opportunities

Opportunities that could be realized with the implementation of the proposed project include:

- o Increase in wildlife use of McFarland Canyon due to increase of available forage and water with the removal of wild free-roaming horses from the area.
- o Increased effectiveness of the watershed project on the Ski Lee slopes due to increased vegetative cover. This will decrease the possible flow intensity and duration from flash flooding in Lee Canyon.

III. TIMING NEEDS OR REQUIREMENTS

The public is encouraged to participate throughout the environmental analysis process, which is expected to be completed by early fall, 1991. However, to be most effective, public comments should be received by the date specified in the cover letter. Comments should be addressed to: Toiyabe National Forest, Las Vegas District Ranger, 550 E. Charleston Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89104.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public comments received during the scoping process will be used in the framework for developing an environmental document. Comments received will assist the Forest Service in determining the scope of issues to be addressed, and to identify the significant issues related to the proposal early in the analysis process.

o Interdisciplinary Team (IDT)

A preliminary identification of possible Interdisciplinary Team members of resources specialist skills for the analysis included a T & E specialist, wildlife specialist, range specialist, and recreation/landscape architect. The response to this scoping will identify additional specialist skills that are needed for the analysis.

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Public Participation

Individuals and organizations on the Las Vegas Ranger District mailing list will receive a copy of this scoping statement. You are invited to participate in the evaluation process. We would prefer a written statement of your issues and concerns regarding this proposal. However, we are including a rating scale for your use which covers the seven environmental factors listed above. We will review, evaluate, and consolidate comments to form a list of issues, concerns and opportunities that will be addressed in the environmental analysis.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS RATING SCALE

McFarland Canyon Fence

The purpose of this scale is to allow the participant to rate each identified factor in relation to the following:

1. How important is the factor to you. The scale used is from one to ten, with 1 being no value and 10 being the highest value. Circle the number which represents the value the factor has to you.
2. Please indicate how each factor will be impacted by this proposal: Negative Impact, No Impact, or Beneficial Impact. Circle the one that best represents your perception or belief.

SAMPLE: In this example, the respondent felt the proposal would have a negative impact on archeological resources and rated the value (importance) of archeological resources to him as medium high.

Archeological: This factor covers the impact the proposal may have on any cultural or archeological sites within the proposal area.

No Value								High Value		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Negative Impact				No Impact			Beneficial Impact			

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1. **Recreation:** A management concern exists regarding possible impacts to recreational use of the Mt. Charleston Wilderness Area as accessed through McFarland Canyon.

No Value								High Value		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Negative Impact				No Impact			Beneficial Impact			

2. **Wilderness:** There is a concern regarding wild horse use in the Mt. Charleston Wilderness which is outside the Spring Mountain Wild Horse Territory.

No Value								High Value		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Negative Impact				No Impact			Beneficial Impact			

3. Vegetation: There is a concern regarding possible impacts to threatened or endangered plant species that may exist in the project area.

No Value							High Value		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Negative Impact				No Impact			Beneficial Impact		

4. Aesthetics: The proposed fence will be visible to recreational users in McFarland Canyon. There is a concern regarding the impact the proposed fence will have on visual quality of the area.

No Value							High Value		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Negative Impact				No Impact			Beneficial Impact		

5. Wildlife: There is a concern regarding possible impacts to wildlife habitat in McFarland Canyon and wildlife accessibility around fence the project area.

No Value							High Value		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Negative Impact				No Impact			Beneficial Impact		

6. Wild Horses: There is a concern regarding possible impacts to the wild free-roaming horses in the Spring Mountain Wild Horse Territory.

No Value							High Value		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Negative Impact				No Impact			Beneficial Impact		

7. Wild Horses Gather: There is a concern regarding wild free-roaming horses accessing Lee Canyon from an unknown area other than McFarland Canyon. If the wild free-roaming horses return to Lee Canyon in the spring of 1992, they will need to be gathered and taken to another Herd Management Unit (other than the Lucky Strike HMU) within the Spring Mountain Wild Horse Territory or taken out of the Wild Horse Territory entirely to the Kingman Wild Horse Handling Facility.

No Value							High Value		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Negative Impact				No Impact			Beneficial Impact		

Other: This factor identifies concerns you have which are not covered above. Please write in the factor and then give it a rating.

No Value										High Value	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Negative Impact				No Impact				Beneficial Impact			

Comments:

Name

Date