

F.S. Powell  
M.M.W.

EST 1983

INTERIM CAPTURE PLAN  
POWELL MOUNTAIN WILD HORSE TERRITORY

I. REASON FOR INTERIM PLAN

The Toiyabe National Forest and Carson City Bureau of Land Management offices have administrative responsibilities within the Powell Mountain Wild Horse Territory. Since its establishment in 1971, no mutually agreed upon management plan has been developed for the area. The Toiyabe National Forest has prepared a management plan for the horse herd. This capture plan implements a portion of the Forest Service Management Plan. The land-use-planning has not been completed for the Bureau of Land Management administered lands. Therefore, until planning is completed establishing a population level, this interim capture will be undertaken.

II. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Interim Capture Plan is to discuss the implementation of the proposed action presented in the accompanying Environmental Assessment.

III. AREA OF CONCERN

The Powell Mountain Wild Horse Territory is located on the south end of the Wassuk Range between Anchorite Pass and Buller Mountain (see attached map).

IV. NUMBERS OF WILD HORSES

In 1982 there were 44 horses actually counted on the territory. The plan is to remove 15 head of excess wild horses. A minimum of 29 horses will remain.

V. CLAIMING - A NOTICE OF INTENT TO IMPOUND

When the public is given notice of the proposed capture program, a Notice of Intent to Impound shall be posted in local post offices and court houses and published in local newspapers. The Notice of Intent to Impound is issued in the case domestic horses are captured in the process of capturing wild horses.

VI. CAPTURE OPERATION X

A Bureau of Land Management capture team will perform the capture operations. The actual number of wild horses captured may exceed the 15 head planned for harvest, as some animals may be returned to the range. Capture of these wild horses will be through the use of a helicopter and temporary capture corrals. The horses will be directed toward the capture corrals with a helicopter. The helicopter will carry a BLM employee, only when necessary, and should the horses become unnecessarily stressed, the BLM employee or the pilot will break off the pursuit, so that the animals may rest and recover. All attempts will be made to move and keep bands together. A BLM employee will make careful determination of boundary lines to serve as an outer limit, which attempts will be made to herd horses to a given trap. Topography, distance,



and current condition of the horses are factors that will be considered in setting the limits to avoid undue stress on the horses while they are being herded. Each area will be flown prior to the start of trapping to locate any hazards to the horses while being herded (fences, cliffs, etc.). If wild horses should leave the wild horse territory while being pursued, the capture team may follow the herd and return it to the territory.

The temporary capture corrals will be constructed from portable pipe panels (height 6 to 7 feet). An adjoining holding corral will be constructed to hold the horses after capture. Extending from the capture corral will be wings (1/8 to 1/4 mile) also constructed from portable panels. The entire trap will be camouflaged with sagebrush or juniper.

The helicopter will drive the horses toward the wings of the trap. When the horses are just about to enter the wings, riders on horseback will then flank the animals and drive them into the trap. Once the horses are in the trap, the gate will be closed by hand. Should a horse turn back at the trap, it will be roped, if possible, by the riders.

A portable chute will be used to load the animals onto stock trucks or trailers for transportation to adoption facilities (Palomino Valley, Ridgecrest, or Bishop).

If the animals are to be retained at the trap overnight, feed and water will be provided.

#### VII. TRAP SITES

One to three trap sites will probably be needed to gather the horses from the areas. Each site will be selected after determining the habits of the animals and observing the topography of the area. In general, all sites will be located to cause as little damage to the natural resources of the area as possible. Sites will be located on or near existing roads and ways, and all sites will receive cultural clearance prior to construction. If significant archaeological values are found, a new location for the trap site will be selected.

#### VIII. BRAND INSPECTION

Brand inspection of wild horses removed from the range will be done at the temporary corrals, or other locations as agreed upon by California and/or Nevada State Brand Inspection agencies.

#### IX. RESPONSIBILITY

It will be the responsibility of the BLM Capture Crew Leader to locate the trap sites, provide humane treatment to the horses (both using the helicopter and on the ground), work in a safe manner, observe the guidelines set forth in this removal plan, and to determine if destruction of any sick or injured animals is necessary.



Forest Service personnel will have the responsibility to assure that the capture is being conducted in accordance with applicable regulations, BLM and F.S. policy, and this removal plan. If for some reason Forest Service personnel is unavailable, the Wild Horse and Burro Specialist or a Walker Resource Area Range Conservationist will act in his absence.

X. DESTRUCTION OF INJURED OR SICK ANIMALS

Any severely injured or seriously sick animal shall be destroyed in accordance with 43 CFR 4740.31. Such animals shall be destroyed only when a definite act of mercy is needed to alleviate pain and suffering.

Destruction shall be done in the most humane method available.

XI. INJURIES AND DISEASE

For injuries and disease not requiring destruction, the animal will be transported to corrals at Palomino Valley or other facilities. Upon arrival the veterinarian will treat the animal.

XII. SAFETY

All capturing and handling of the horses shall be done in the safest manner possible for the wild horses, personnel and saddle horses. Some guidance may be obtained from "Safety Guidelines for Handling Wild Horses", prepared by the BLM.

XIII. LONGEVITY OF THE CAPTURE PLAN

This Capture Plan is in effect for the duration of removal of 15 horses from the Powell Mountain Wild Horse Territory through September of 1983. The total operation should take about 5 days to complete. Should the capture not occur by the end of September, a modification of the Capture Plan would be required.



XIV. SIGNATURES

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
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Toiyabe National Forest  
Bridgeport Ranger District





Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
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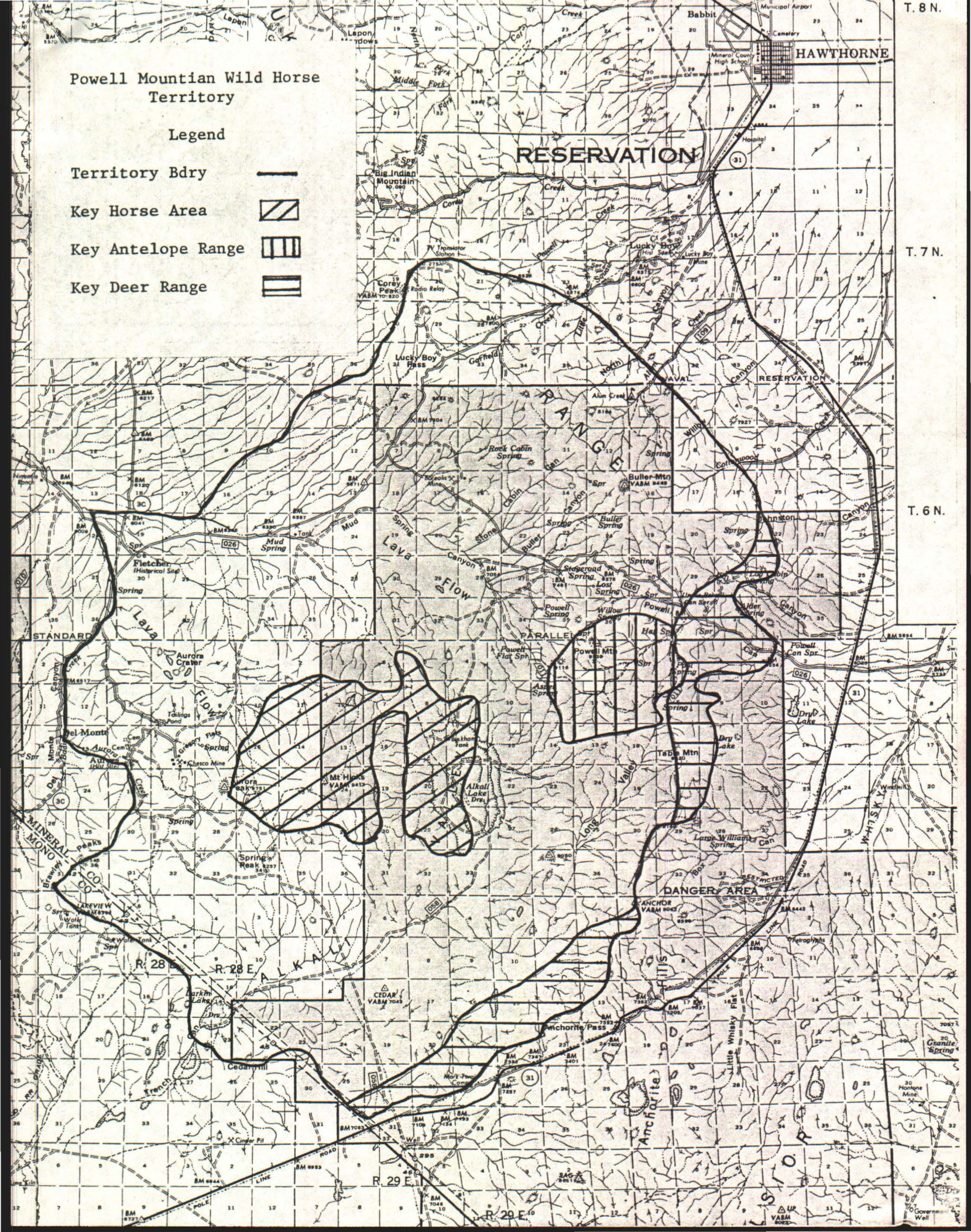
Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
R. M. "Jim Nelson  
Forest Supervisor  
Toiyabe National Forest  
Reno, Nevada



# Powell Mountain Wild Horse Territory

## Legend

- Territory Bdry 
- Key Horse Area 
- Key Antelope Range 
- Key Deer Range 





DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR  
CAPTURING WILD HORSES ON THE  
POWELL MOUNTAIN WILD HORSE TERRITORY

INTRODUCTION

The Powell Mountain Wild Horse Territory is located on the south end of the Wassuk Range between Anchorite Pass and Buller Mountain (see attached map). The lands within the territory boundaries are managed by both the USDA Forest Service (F.S.) and USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM). There are 132,800 acres within this territory. Approximately 59% of the land within the territory is managed by the F.S. and 36% is managed by the BLM. The remaining 5% is private land.

I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

The Powell Mountain Wild Horse Territory Management Plan established a management level of 29 horses for this area. This number was identified as the level that would "maintain a thriving ecological balance in the existing territory". The ecological balance is maintained by having proper populations of wildlife, wild horses and domestic livestock.

The current population of wild horses is in excess of the management level identified in the management plan. The most recent inventories, 1982, indicates that there are at least 44 horses in this territory. Approximately 15 wild horses would have to be removed to attain the desired management level.

The territory is within the Lower and Intermediate Zones of Bridgeport District's Multiple Use Plan. Included in the territory are Management Units for a wildhorse territory, key deer winter range and key antelope range (See Map). Management direction for these units is to manage the area west of Alkali Lake for wildlife and wildhorses.

In the key antelope range, forage will be allocated primarily to antelope. Allocation of forage in the sagehen concentration area has not been specified but utilization on meadows cannot exceed 50%. The primary management objective is to provide quality wildhorse habitat. This objective can best be accomplished by maintaining the wild horse population at a level which will prevent deterioration of range and watershed conditions.

The issues that were identified as relating to the capture are:

1. How will interested parties be involved in the planning of this capture?

The BLM has established a process to involve interested parties in the planning of wild horse captures. A draft Environmental Assessment and Capture Plan are sent to each of the interested parties and they are given 30 days to comment on the proposal. The Forest Service will follow this process to ensure full public involvement and to avoid confusion.



2. How will the wild horses be processed after capture?

All wild horses captured will be adopted out through the BLM established process and facilities.

3. What will be the effect of the capture process on the wild horse safety and populations?

This issue will be addressed for each alternative in Section IV (Environmental Consequences).

4. What effect will the capture operation have on the soils and vegetation in the territory?

This issue will be addressed for each alternative in Section IV (Environmental Consequences).

5. What effect will the capture operation have on archaeological resources?

An archaeological clearance will be completed prior to any ground disturbing operations. Any impacts must be mitigated.

## II. ALTERNATIVES

- A. The following alternative was considered, but eliminated from detailed study.

- 1) Capture of horse with water trap.

This method has been tried in other locations with little success.

- B. The following alternatives were considered in detail.

- 1) Propose Action - Remove 15 wild horses from the Powell Mountain Wild Horse Territory.

The result of the proposed action would be to reduce the population to the level identified in the management plan.

The capture method used would be a combination of gathering with helicopter and horseback riders to herd the horses toward and into a temporary trap. The traps will be built from portable pipe corrals. The trap locations may have to be moved several times depending on the terrain and location of the horses.

The captured horses will be transported to the Palomino Valley Corrals where the wild horses will be made available for adoption under the Bureau of Land Management Adoption Program. Other wild horse facilities may be utilized if conditions should require a change in plans.



## Possible Mitigating or Enhancing Measures

- a) Traps will be constructed of materials and in such a manner as to minimize injury to the horses.
- b) Scouting for hazards such as cliffs and fences in the vicinity of the traps will be done before capture operations.
- c) Pursuit will be discontinued if the horses become stressed.
- d) Archaeological clearance of specific sites would be done prior to construction of the traps.
- e) No new roads, trails or permanent structures will be constructed. Travel will be confined to existing roads and trails.
- f) No capture operations will occur during the months of March, April and May when the majority of foaling takes place.

## 2) Alternative A - Do Not Reduce the Wild Horse Population

The alternative would allow all horses to remain on the territory. Horse numbers would only be restricted by the capacity of the ecosystem.

## Possible Mitigating Enhancing Measures

- a) Develop springs and watering sites to allow better opportunities for watering by livestock, wildlife and wildhorses.
- b) Reduce livestock as wild horse number increases.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The territory includes approximately 132,000 acres administered by the F.S. and BLM as stated previously. The key use areas for the wild horses are in the Mount Hicks and Alkali Lakes areas.

Past inventories in this territory vary in the number of horses sighted. The following is a list of inventories that have been completed.

Year	Horses
1975	53
1978	60
1980	37
1981	10
1982	44



Although it appears from this data that the population has varied dramatically over the past seven years, the changes in numbers counted are most likely caused by differing inventory methods and intensities rather than real changes in horse population. For example, in 1978, 60 horses were counted during an intensive ground inventory, whereas in 1981, only 10 horses were counted utilizing a helicopter for a one time inventory. The best data available indicates that there were at least 44 horses on the territory in 1982.

There are four major vegetation communities within the territory, sagebrush, pinyon-juniper, meadows, and playas.

There are several livestock allotments partially and one allotment, Powell Mtn. C&H, completely within the territory. The Powell Mtn. Allotment, Toiyabe N.F., encompasses all of the key wild horse range. The permittee, Flying M Ranch, runs 133 cattle from 6/1 to 10/15. The cattle are limited to areas with developed water. The primary range for cattle is in the Powell Flat, Alkali Lake, and Powell Mtn. areas. There is limited conflict between cattle and horses for forage. The horses appear to have developed use patterns that tend to avoid the livestock concentration areas. The major area of conflict is at Alkali Lake. In this area the cattle and horses compete for both forage and water.

#### Range Condition

In 1978, Range Analysis was completed on the F.S. portion of the territory. This analysis showed the majority of the range in fair or better condition with a stable apparent vegetative trend. The only area that has a preponderance of poor condition range and a downward apparent trend is that area adjacent to Alkali Lake. This area is used by both cattle and horses for forage and water.

Three trend studies were established in 1979 on the Powell Mtn. Allotment. All of these studies are within the territory boundary. Because these studies have only been in place for three growing seasons they have not been reread. No data is available currently on long term trend.

Wildlife diversity is somewhat low due to lack of adequate amounts of water, especially meadow areas. Deer and antelope are the only big game species in the Mt. Hicks-Powell Mountain area. The territory is in the Wassuk unit of the East Walker-Mono Lake Deer Herd. The south eastern portion has been closed to cattle as deer winter range. The key horse area around Mount Hicks is not Deer winter range. Deer winter range is found in the Long Valley region south to pole line road.



IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

## A. Proposed Action

The proposed action is to remove 15 wild horses from the Powell Mountain Wild Horse Territory.

## 1. Anticipated Impacts

- a. After a successful wild horse capture program 29 or more animals will remain in the territory.

Horses will experience stress during the actual capture operations, but will be properly cared for following capture, both in the corrals and when adopted or returned to their owners. Some horses may be injured or killed in the process of capture or being transported to the adoption center. From past gatherings in Nevada, this has been approximately 1 to 2 percent.

There will be some disturbance to the vegetation and soils associated with the capture operation, but it will provide the forage and soil resource with the fastest opportunity for improvement. The resource condition would improve, providing a better habitat for wildlife and wild horses.

The annual forage needs by grazing animals would be brought into line with the available forage concept of grazing management.

- b. Recommendation for Mitigation or Enhancement

All of the mitigating or enhancing measures be adopted as stated.

- c. Residual Impacts

Localized disturbance to soil and vegetation cannot be entirely avoided under the proposed action. Natural revegetation will reduce the severity of the disturbance over a short period of time.

Injury or death of some wild horses could occur despite safety and humane precautions.

## 2. Relationship Between Short-Term Use and Long-Term Productivity

The proposed action best maintains the Long-Term Productivity of the range resource.

## 3. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

None



B. Alternative A - Do Not Reduce the Wild Horse Population

(No Action)

1. Environmental Impacts

a. Anticipated Impacts

This alternative would initially have the least impact on the horses, since they would not be subject to the stress of capture. The horse population could increase over time through natural demographics. The vegetation resource would be subject to a slightly increased utilization from that in the past. The competition for forage and water would increase between livestock, wildlife and wild horses as the horses increase in the future.

The opportunity for forage and soil resource improvement with sustained forage production would be foregone.

b. Recommendations for Mitigation or Enhancement

The above mitigating or enhancing measures will be adopted with the exception of the livestock reduction. Any needed adjustment in livestock use will be established by agency planning and management documents.

2. Relationship Between Short-Term Use and Long-Term Productivity

The utilization of forage by wild horses would continue and become accelerated as the population continues to increase. The depletion of forage could cause the animals to move into other areas. Achievement of objectives to be identified in planning documents currently being developed may become more difficult.

3. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

If horses are left to populate at an unrestricted rate, at some time in the future, the basic soil and vegetation resource would be damaged to a point where it may never be able to return to a desirable state.

Wildlife habitat degradation may eventually occur.



V. PERSONS, GROUPS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES CONSULTED

This Draft Environmental Assessment was sent to the following persons, groups and agencies for review and comment:

American Horse Protection Association  
1904-A T Street, NW  
P. O. Box 53399  
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American Humane Association  
5351 So. Roselyn  
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Animal Protection Institute  
P. O. Box 22505  
Sacramento, CA 95822

U. S. Humane Society  
2100 L Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20037

International Society for the Protection  
of Wild Horses and Burros  
11790 Deodar  
Reno, NV 89506

Funds for Animals  
7126 N. 19th Ave.  
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Phoenix, AZ 85021

National Mustang Association  
c/o June Sewing  
New Castle, UT 84756

National Wild Horse Association  
P. O. Box 12188  
Las Vegas, NV 89112

Nevada Farm Bureau Federation  
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Tina Nappe  
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Sierra Club  
c/o Rose Strickland  
Public Lands Committee of the  
Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club  
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Reno, NV 89503



Flying M Ranch, Inc.  
c/o George Wright  
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Nevada Cattlemen's Association  
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Elko, NV 89801

Nevada Wildlife Federation  
P. O. Box 8022  
Reno, NV 89507

Nevada Humane Society  
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Sparks, NV 89431

State Clearinghouse  
State Planning Coordination  
Capitol Complex  
Carson City, NV 89701

Wild Horse Organized Assistance  
P. O. Box 555  
Reno, NV 89505

Save the Mustang  
669 Somerset  
Rockwood, PA 15557

Mineral County  
Board of Commissioners  
County Courthouse  
Hawthorne, NV 89415

Nevada State Department of Agriculture  
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Reno, NV 89510

Sweetwater Ranch Company  
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Pasadena, CA 91106

Wildhorse & Burro Committee for the  
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Chairman Fred Wagner  
College Natural Resources  
Utah State University  
Logan, UT 84322

American Bashkir-Curley Register  
c/o Mrs. Sunny Martin  
P. O. Box 453  
Ely, NV 89301



Humane Society of Southern Nevada  
900 E. Karen  
Las Vegas, NV 89101

VI. INTENSITY OF PUBLIC INTEREST

It is anticipated that interest in reduction of wild horse numbers will be moderate. If there is no controversy, there is chance for confusion about management authority due to two offices having management responsibility in the area.

VII. LIST OF PREPARERS

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Bridgeport Ranger District

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Bureau of Land Management  
Carson City District

Gary E. Sayer  
District Forest Ranger  
Toiyabe National Forest  
Bridgeport Ranger District







T. 8 N.

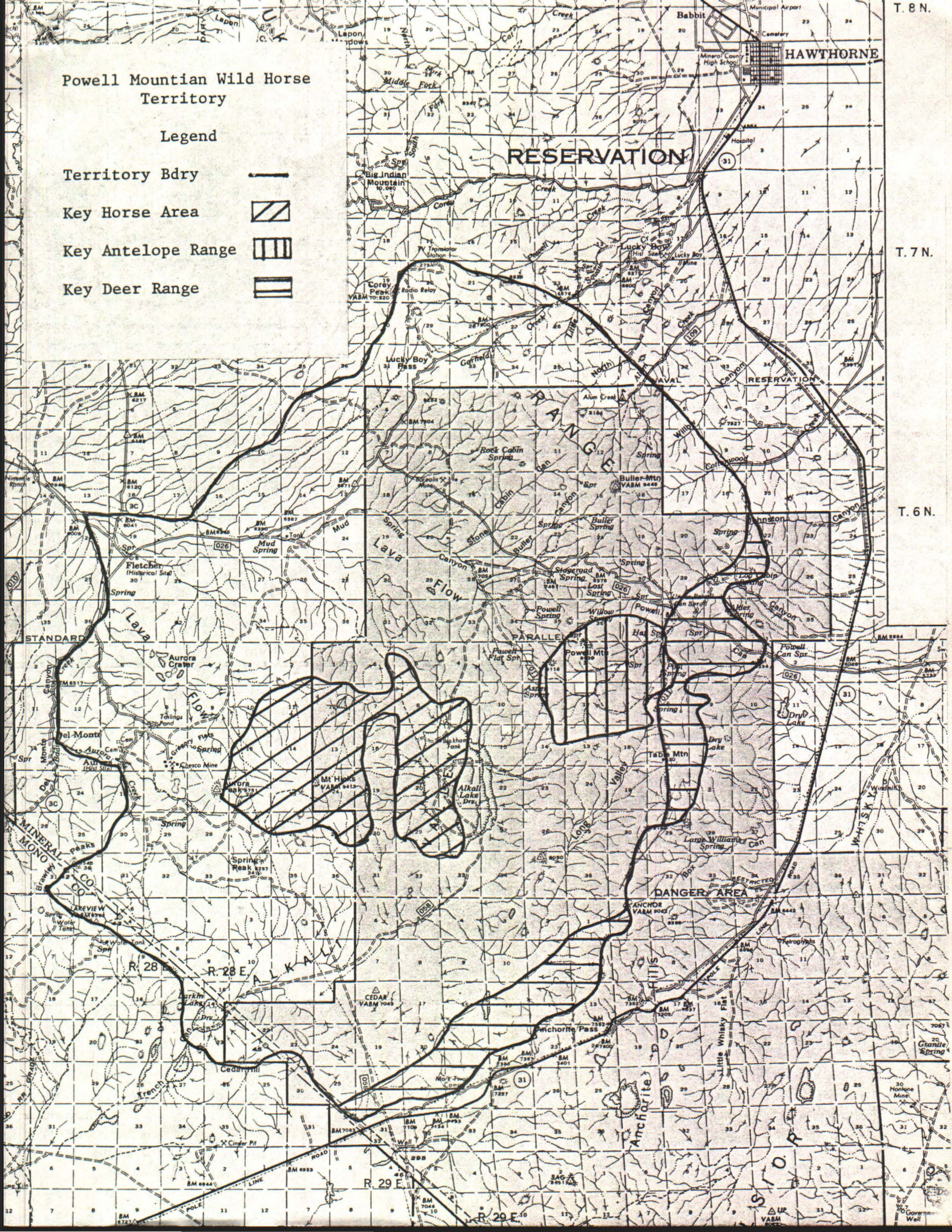
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# Powell Mountain Wild Horse Territory

## Legend

- Territory Bdry 
- Key Horse Area 
- Key Antelope Range 
- Key Deer Range 



HAWTHORNE

RESERVATION

RESERVATION

DANGER AREA

R. 29 E.

R. 29 E.

UP

W. Govern Well