



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Toiyabe National Forest
Tonopah Ranger District
P.O. Box 3940, Tonopah, NV 89049

FD. Monitor

11/21/83

Reply to: 2260

Date: November 21, 1983

┌

Dawn Lappin
P.O. Box 555
Reno, NV 89504

└

Dear Ms. Lappin:

Enclosed are the Wild Horse Management plans for South Monitor and Table Mountain Wild Horse Territories.

If you have any questions, give us a call.

Sincerely,

Eloy A. Romew
MR. GLADE QUILTER
District Ranger

Enclosures



WILDHORSE MANAGEMENT PLAN
SOUTH MONITOR WILDHORSE TERRITORY

Tonopah Ranger District, Toiyabe National Forest, Region 4

Prepared By Gary R. Smith Date 11/13/78
Range Conservationist

Approval Recommended By G. G. Ladd Date 11/27/78
District Ranger

Approval Recommended By James E. Schestel Date 2/12/79
Chief, Branch of Resources

Approved By Hugh Pangman Date 2/20/79
FOR Forest Supervisor

INTRODUCTION

Public Law 92-195 was enacted to protect "all unbranded and unclaimed horses and burros on public lands of the United States". It also stated that "they are to be considered in the area where presently found, as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands". The Act provides that all such animals on the public land administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or by the Secretary of the Agriculture through the Forest Service are committed to the jurisdiction of the respective Secretaries who are "Directed to protect and manage wild free-roaming horses and burros as components of the public lands". It further stated that "the Secretary shall manage wild free-roaming horses and burros in a manner that is designed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on public lands".

Wild free-roaming horses have been an integral part of the southern Monitor mountains for decades. They have for many years provided an esthetic experience for visitors to the area. They are in every sense "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West".

Progeny from strays of early emigrants, as well as abandoned and stray animals from early mining booms and settlement of homesteads account for much of the current wild horse population within the management area. Many of the abandoned animals were the result of economic slumps and periodic droughts which plagued the early settlers. Also many of the wild horses are descendants of the Dixon strain.

The Dixon strain, developed by Tom Dixon, a rancher who came from Ireland to California and then to Nevada 1869, was a mixture of Shires, Percherons, Morgans, Hambletonians, and various Irish stock. At one time his horses ran at large over much of Nevada (including Long Valley to Fish Creek, Spring, Diamond, and Monitor Valleys) and numbered over 10,000.

Also adding to the population are remnants and descendants of the Clifford "steeldusts". These iron gray colored horses were bred by the Clifford family and add much color to the population.

In addition periodic releases and/or abandonment of animals up to the passage of Public Law 92-195 contributed to the population.

SOUTH MONITOR WILDHORSE MANAGEMENT AREA

The Monitor mountains are the eastern most portion of the Tonopah Ranger District. That portion of the mountain range in the Tonopah District is approximately 60 miles long, averages about 8.5 miles in width, and encompasses some 393,169 acres. A subdivision of the mountain range into a northern and southern unit is necessary because of differences in wildhorse population and behavior.

The South Monitor Management Area includes all of the Monitor range from

The northern boundary of the Hunts Canyon cattle allotment south to the District boundary. It is bounded on the west by Ralston Valley and on the east by Stone Cabin Valley (refer to appendix for map). This management area encompasses some 240,415 acres, and four cattle allotments. (Information on these allotments can be found in the appendix).

Six of the seventeen (17) management areas set forth in the Central Nevada Land Use Plan occur within the South Monitor Wildhorse Management Area.

These management areas and units are:

Arid Foothill Lands

AF 4, AF 5, AF 6, AF 7, AF 8, AF 10

Arid Alluvial Fan Lands

AAF 1, AAF 4, AAF 5, AAF 6, AAF 10, AAF 16

Mountainous Canyon Lands

MC 1, MC 2, MC 3, MC 4, MC 7

Mountain Buttress Spur Lands

MBS 2, MBS 3, MBS 19

Semi-Arid Alluvial Fan Lands

SAF 10

Major Canyon Bottoms

MCB 9

For a description of the management areas and units refer to the Central Nevada Land Use Plan.

SOUTH MONITOR WILDHORSE HERD INFORMATION

Due to a lack of information pertaining to management of wildhorses a study plan was developed. The study was initiated in 1974. A summary of information gathered to date is reflected in this management plan.

Wildhorses occupy the management area yearlong. In some areas there is daily as well as seasonal movement from National Forest lands to adjacent National Resource lands. Daily and seasonal weather patterns and resulting conditions have the greatest affect on wildhorse movement. Water is one of the major factors involved in wildhorse movement and area occupied. Approximately 58 percent of the animals observed were less than two miles from water. Only on rare occasions were animals observed more than four miles from water. Human occupation and/or disturbance of an area appeared to have minimal impact on wildhorse movement. Also of significance is that domestic livestock had very little impact on wildhorse movement or distribution. Often cattle and wildhorses were observed grazing or watering side by side.

The largest percentage of wildhorses were observed in the low sage community (83 percent). Approximately 9 percent of the animals were observed in the desert shrub community, and the remaining animals were found in the pinyon-juniper type. In all vegetative types the various grass species (except squirreltail and cheat grass) were the most utilized type of forage, however, some browse is taken, particularly in winter.

The majority of animals observed (69 percent) were in valley bottoms or on slopes of less than ten percent. Fifteen percent of the animals were observed on upper slopes (greater than 20 percent) or on ridgetops. North slopes were the least occupied areas. Also it should be noted that resting areas were generally on slopes of less than 5 percent. These were generally valley bottoms although occasional resting areas on ridge tops were observed.

The wildhorse population was made up of almost equal numbers of male and female animals. It might be noted that the BLM's Stone Cabin Valley removal program also indicated nearly equal numbers of both sexes (48% male, 52% female).

Only limited information on breeding habits was obtained. However of significance is the foals were observed from May through November. There has been speculation that wildhorse breeding is correlated with either green-up periods or is a phototropic response. Information gathered from the management area tends to indicate that breeding is related to green-up periods. Based on the "best guess" approach, no mares of less than three years of age were observed having an estrus cycle. Also it is estimated that 40 to 50 percent of the mature mares produce foals annually.

Little information on mortality was collected. However, field observations tend to indicate significant foal mortality (40-45 percent). It appeared that yearling and adult mortality was low.

Teeth from wildhorse remains were collected in an attempt to determine life span. It was estimated that horses over 13 years of age were rare. However, information from the BLM wildhorse removal program in Stone Cabin Valley indicate that wildhorses in excess of twenty years old were not uncommon.

The wildhorses within the management area generally occurred in bands from 1 to 10 animals. There was very little, if any, correlation between band size and the size of area occupied. Home ranges, in some cases were utilized year around and in other cases were only used seasonally. The "sphere of intolerance" concept was much more applicable than the territory concept. The actual establishment and defending of territories was not observed. In fact in most instances the home ranges of different bands would overlap.

Population of the management area is presently estimated to be 249 animals. In 1976 the estimated population was 215 animals. In 1971 the population was estimated at 119 animals. It is felt that a large portion of the increase between 1971 and 1976 is primarily a result of increased inventory efforts, and not an actual increase in numbers. The greatest fluctuation in population occurs in the areas adjacent to National Resource Lands during green-up periods, i.e., movement onto the valley areas in early spring, back to the foothills as the season advances, and back to valley areas when localized summer thunder storms result in areas of green-up. As a result of this movement, BLM control efforts will have a direct bearing on horse use of adjacent National Forest lands.

WILDHORSE MANAGEMENT

POLICY

Wild free-roaming horses will be managed in a manner that confines them to those areas occupied at the passage of Public Law 92-195, as an integral component of the "Natural System" at a population level which is compatible with other uses recognized under the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act, and given protection to assure their well being.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE

The objective of wildhorse management within the management area is to maintain a viable population of wildhorses in harmony with a thriving ecological balance. A thriving ecological balance is defined as management which perpetuates the existence of animal species, compatible with the available natural resources, particularly the soil, water, and vegetative resources, and in a manner which does not change the biological or genetic quality of the animals, unless a special value is to be realized.

This includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. Maintain wild free-roaming horse population throughout the area.

2. Maintain and provide for the needs of wildhorse populations at a level which is compatible with existing resources including wildlife and livestock management needs.
3. Provide access to the area to allow for public viewing of the wildhorses.
4. Alleviate or mitigate wildhorse use which is causing resource damage.
5. Coordinate wildhorse management on National Forest Lands with wildhorse management on adjacent National Resource Lands.
6. Wildhorse management will be at the minimum feasible level to obtain the above objectives.

METHODS

As stated above, wildhorse management will be at the minimum feasible level to accomplish the management objective. This approach will maintain a viable wildhorse population, provide resource protection, reduce management expenditures, and maintain the wild free-roaming nature of the animals.

Wildhorses within the management area appear to be existing within the tolerable limits of the management objective. However continued monitoring of the herd is essential to assure that provisions of the act are being met and that management is responsive to problems that may arise.

Monitoring techniques planned are as follows:

The wildhorse study of the South Monitor Wild Horse management area since 1974 has identified key areas which are felt to be good indicators of horse use. Two of these areas are Saulsbury Basin and Georges Canyon. Range condition and trend photo plot transects will be permanently established in these key areas during the 1978 field season. In addition, permanent forage production studies will be established in two areas. Both of these studies will be read at 3 year intervals.

To monitor population trends will require a system of marking individual horses with tags or neck collars to facilitate positive identification. By keeping precise sighting records of marked animals and accurate population structure records, a lincoln index will be developed which will accurately reflect trends in the horse population. Movements of individuals and/or bands of wild horses could also be studied by fixing radio transmitters to individual horses and periodically locating them. Each time they were located th

their position would be accurately plotted on a map. Over a period of time and the range of movement of the marked horses would be accurately delineated. Availability and priorities for funding will determine the feasibility of this technique.

Before a program of this type is initiated a detailed study plan will be prepared and submitted in conjunction with requests for financing. Target date for completion of a detailed study plan is September 30, 1979. Funding will be requested beginning in FY 1981.

DISCUSSION

At the time Public Law 92-195 was enacted wildhorses occurred throughout the management area. As such wildhorses will be maintained throughout the area.

Coordination with BLM management is necessary as there is significant wildhorse movement between National Forest Land and National Resource Lands. The Battle Mountain District of the BLM has prepared a wildhorse management plan which covers the following area: The east slope of the Monitor Range, north to McCann Canyon; Stone Cabin and Willow Creek Valleys north to the Willow Creek fence on the northwest and Hot Creek Canyon on the northeast; the eastern boundary generally coincides with the crest of the Hot Creek range; the southern boundary is US highway 6.

The BLM management plan is similar to this plan in that management will be at the minimum feasible level to obtain the desired objectives. The objectives of the BLM management plan are of two kinds: Those oriented towards the animals and those oriented towards the "human notion of management".

1. Animal oriented

"In general, this objective is to provide sufficient forage, water, and habitat to allow a healthy livelihood for the wildhorses existing here and to insure reproduction sufficient to maintain the population".

This objective is compatible with and similar to the objective of this plan.

2. Human oriented

"Manipulation of the population will be at the minimum feasible level while still attaining the objectives of : (1) maintaining the population between the extremes of 65 and 115 head; (2) limiting population growth by selective culling; (3) providing suitable animals for the adopt a horse program; (4) maintaining a healthy

disease free population; (5) providing for public viewing of and information about wild horses. In addition, cooperative studies will be initiated to obtain information on mortality, fertility, diet, and the influence of fences and range management procedures on behavior and seasonal movements. These factors will influence the management program".

This management plan is similar in regard to the following:

If a wildhorse removal program becomes necessary the adopt-a-horse program will be utilized as means of disposing of animals. Management efforts will not be directed towards this as a goal however.

Also the north/south movement of wildhorses which utilize both National Forest lands and National Resource lands must be preserved. Under the proposed BLM Allotment Management Plans, US highway 6 will be fenced except for that portion of National Forest lands from immediately south of Red Mountain to the eastern boundary of the forest (approximately 9 miles). It is expected that this will allow adequate north/south movement.

Other movement (i.e. from higher to lower ground) may be impeded by fences proposed in the BLM Allotment Management Plans. While some wildhorse movement will occur around the fences, efforts will be made to assure that gates are left open when not needed for livestock control. The movement around open gates will be monitored to determine the impact of these structures on the animals.

The Central Nevada Land Use Plan states that wildhorse interpretive signs will be posted within the area. The BLM has also proposed interpretive signing. Coordination with BLM will be done where possible so as not duplicate interpretive efforts.

Wildlife populations occur throughout the management area. Conflicts between wildhorses and wildlife, direct or indirect, will be most prevalent within the riparian zones and in winter browse areas. Known concentration areas for wintering deer and year long antelope use areas have been identified. In these areas management will be aimed at sustaining no less than the existing populations of deer and antelope. Specific needs for other wildlife species within the management area have not been identified. As information becomes available and needs identified the appropriate recommendations will be made. It should also be noted that when any structural range developments are built within the management area, whether for livestock or wildhorses, wildlife needs will be considered and provided for.

Rare and endangered and/or unique species which may occur within the management-area are as follows:

Rare

Spotted bat (Euderma maculatum)

Unique

Ferruginous hawk (Buteo regalis)

Western burrowing owl (Speotyto cunicularia hypugaea)

It is believed that wild horse conflicts with rare and endangered and/or unique species will be indirect and very minimal.

Conflicts between livestock and wildhorses will be more noticeable than those with wildlife. Wildhorses and cattle occupy the same areas and have similar forage preferences. As cattle allotment management plans are developed wildhorse needs will be recognized. (Except for the Hunts Canyon allotment cattle use in the management area is relatively low. In the Hunts Canyon allotment wildhorse use is fairly light). As with wildlife the greatest conflict will be within the riparian zones and/or winter range occupied by both cattle and wildhorses. Key areas and areas of heavy use will be monitored throughout the year to determine vegetative and soil trend as well as animal response.

It is anticipated that most conflicts between wildhorses, wildlife, and livestock can be identified and remedial action recommended prior to the development of serious problems. It should be noted that in certain areas, as identified in the Central Nevada Land Use plan, preference will be given to wildhorses if conflicts occur, but not to the detriment of present wildlife species and numbers. A map showing horse emphasis areas is attached as Appendix II.

Wildhorse needs are centered around open space and other habitat needs; specifically food and water. Wildhorse needs are presently being met within the management area. As cattle allotment management plans are developed and/or changed, provisions will be made for wildhorse needs (i.e. water will be available at all troughs; gates not needed for livestock control will be left open). If additional needs are identified, or if present needs change, then the appropriate measures will be taken.

Resource damage from wild horses is minimal throughout most of the management area. Some trailing and subsequent compaction of soils is occurring, however it is felt that mitigating measures are unnecessary at the present time. If trails deteriorate to where watershed and/or erosion problems begin to occur then corrective measures will be taken.

Forest Service system roads 007, 065, 056, 095, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, and 167 bisect the management area. These roads provide adequate access

for the public to view wildhorses. These roads will be maintained so as to allow for access by two wheel drive vehicles. Also, interpretive signs will be placed at advantageous points along routes that pass through major wildhorse concentration areas. (Interpretive signing efforts will be coordinated with the BLM)

Wildhorse management will be at the minimum feasible level to accomplish the management objective. This approach will maintain a viable wildhorse population, provide adequate resource protection, reduce management expenditures, and maintain the wild free-roaming nature of the animals.

Wildhorse within the management area appear to be existing within the tolerable limits of the management objective. However continued monitoring of the herd is essential to assure that provisions of the act are being met and that management is responsive to problems that may arise.

APPENDIX I

(Allotment Information)

Saulsbury Allotment

Past Use

This allotment was winter range for sheep from 1910 to 1930. In 1910, the number permitted was 2,350 head for 14,625 sheep months. From 1922 to 1934 the permitted numbers were 4,001 head for 12,600 sheep months. Sheep months on the allotment per year from 1934 to 1948 were 14,003 sheep months. Much inter-change of permittees was experienced between 1934 to 1948. At this time the use was reduced to 360 sheep months. The allotment was used lightly until 1963. In 1963 only 15 head of cattle were permitted to use the allotment. At present 30 head of cattle for 174 cow months are permitted on the allotment.

It is estimated that approximately 58 head of wild free-roaming horses spend 12 months on the allotment for 696 horse months. Cattle use equals 432 AUM's.

Condition and Trend

Range environmental analysis was completed in 1964. All rangeland within the allotment was either in poor or very poor condition at that time. Additionally, all range was in downward trend. Eighty-four percent (54,083 acres) is either unsuitable range, not used or nonrange for cattle (Table 1). Re-analysis scheduled for FY 1980 to determine present condition and trend.

Water

There are no streams or bodies of water on the entire allotment. However, there are several springs and seeps. There are two man made water developments on the allotment.

Table 1 A summary of the range environmental analysis completed during 1964, showing the present acreages in various suitability, condition and trend classes on the Saulsbury Allotment.

Condition Class	Trend	Primary	Unsuitable Used	Unsuitable Non Used	Non Range	Total
		*63				*63
Poor		5,411				5,411
Very Poor			7,003	945	*137	7,948
7 & 8					53,138	53,138
		5,411	7,003	945	53,138	66,497

Hunt's Canyon Allotment

Past Use

The earliest date that is recorded as to the actual use on this allotment is 1908 when W. A. Marsh had a permit to graze 265 cattle and horses on the forest. From 1916 to 1920, part of the area was grazed by 1,000 to 2,000 head of sheep for 3,500 sheep months to 7,000 sheep months. From 1920 to present the permitted numbers of cattle have fluctuated due to changes in allotment boundaries and range carrying capacity. There are an estimated 22 head of wild free roaming horses for 264 horse months on the allotment.

Condition and Trend

In general the useable range is overburdened and can be classed only in poor condition. Most canyon bottoms are in downward trend. The steeper side slopes show an upward trend probably due to the elimination of sheep use, and the reduction of cattle use since 1942.

Range allotment analysis was completed in 1976. The management plan will be written in the near future.

Water

There are several man made water developments on the allotment. Three perennial streams and numerous springs and seeps also provide water.

Stone Cabin Allotment

The Stone Cabin allotment was created in 1972. Portions of the Hunt's Canyon and Saulsbury allotments went into forming the new Stone Cabin allotment.

Livestock use has remained constant since the inception of the allotment. There are 50 head of cattle for 150 cow months permitted on the allotment. The period of use is from 7/1 to 9/30.

There are an estimated 145 head of wild free-roaming horses for 1740 horse months on the allotment. Many of these wild horses migrate between Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands.

Condition and Trend

The range allotment analysis field work was completed in 1977. Much of this allotment is unavailable to cattle because of steep and rocky terrain.

Water

Water is a limiting factor on the allotment. One perennial stream, several springs, and a few manmade water developments exist on the allotment.

McKinney Allotment

Past Use

This allotment was formerly part of the Saulsbury Allotment. It was used as winter range for sheep from 1910 to 1934. In 1910 the number permitted was 2,050 head for 14,003 sheep months, and from 1934 to 1948 the use was 2,000 sheep for 13,000 sheep months.

From 1922 to 1934 the permitted number was 4,001 head for 12,600 sheep months. The permitted number went down to 3,600 head for 12,600 sheep months between 1935 to 1945. In 1946 and 1947 non use was taken for sheep and 300 head of cattle for 900 cow months were allowed. There was much permittee interchange during the late 40's and early 50's. In 1957 the allotment was converted to cattle. At present 58 head of cattle are permitted on the allotment.

There has been in the past quite a large amount of wild horse use on the allotment but it has decreased in recent years. The northwest part is still used by estimated 24 head for 240 horse months.

Condition and Trend

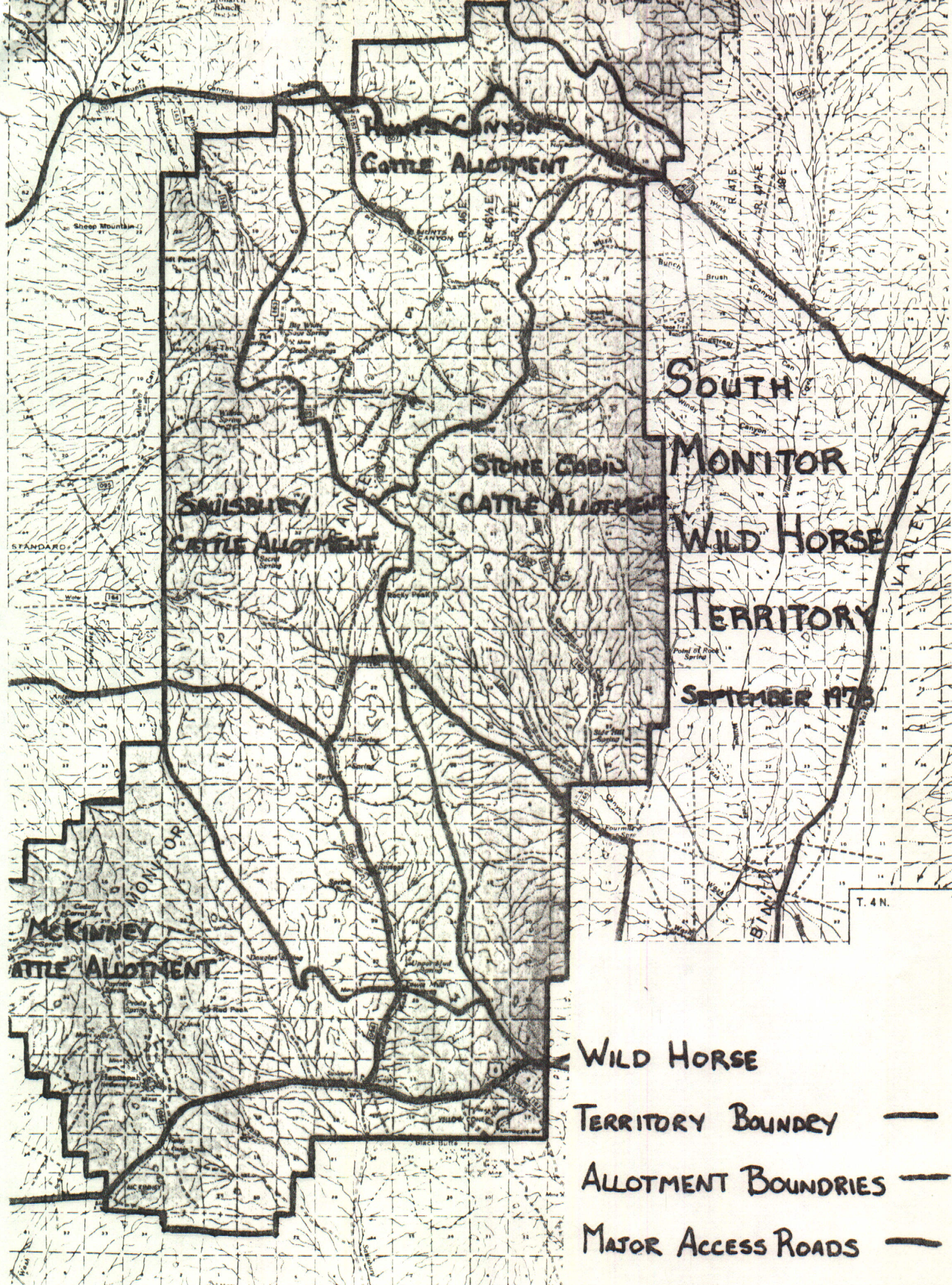
The allotment analysis was completed in 1963. Sixty-seven percent (44,252 acres) of the allotment is not available for livestock use. Approximately 44% (9609 acres) of the suitable range is in poor condition. Only one percent of the suitable range is in good condition. Seventy-six percent (16,463 acres) of the suitable range is in downward trend (Table 2). Re-analysis is scheduled for FY 1980.

Water

There are no streams or bodies of water on the allotment. The water source is mainly from underground and springs.

Table 2. A summary of the range environmental analysis completed during 1963, showing the present acreages in various suitability, condition and trend classes on the McKinney allotment.

Condition Class	Trend	Suitable Used	Unsuitable Used	Unsuitable Non Used	Non Range	Total
Good		322				322
Fair		5,251	1,270	131		6,652
Fair		5,197				5,197
Poor		4,805	4,805	4,114		13,613
					40,117	
		15,585	6,074	4,135	40,117	65,911



WILD HORSE
 TERRITORY BOUNDARY ———
 ALLOTMENT BOUNDRIES ———
 MAJOR ACCESS ROADS ———