

**B. Wild Horse Use**

**1. Historical Wild Horse Use in Pilot Allotment**

The Pilot Allotment is completely contained within the Toano Herd Area (HA). This herd area is to be managed as a horse free area (HFA) i.e., the appropriate management level (AML) is 0.

Background - The Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act became law on December 15, 1971. With the passage of this act, the authority to manage wild horses and burros on public land was assigned to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service. The Act proclaims that wild and free-roaming horses and burros are protected from capture, branding, harassment, or death. They are to be considered, in the area where they were found in 1971, as an integral part of the natural system.

Wild horses are currently found in 4 herd management areas (HMAs) in the Wells Resource Area, established by the Wells RMP Wild Horse Amendment, which was approved on August 2, 1993. The HMAs are as follows: Antelope Valley, Maverick-Medicine, Goshute and Spruce-Pequop. The Amendment also established the Toano HFA( see Appendix 1 Map 4). HMAs have been established based upon historical horse use areas, inventory data gathered from 1975 to 1981 and consideration to land ownership patterns. No complete counts were made in the HMAs in 1971, the year the Act was passed. The first aerial census of wild horses occurred in 1975; however, this included numerous claimed horses that were gathered prior to 1978. The first true wild horse census, after the claiming period, occurred in March 1978. Table 1 below, shows the years census were completed in the Toano HFA and the number of horses within the HFA.

Table 1. Census Data for the Toano Horse Free Area		
Date	# in Toano HFA	AUMS <sup>3</sup>
1/75	5	60
3/78	ND	ND
6/85	27	324
10/89	28	336
3/92	17	204
10/93	35 <sup>1</sup>	420
12/94	7 <sup>2</sup>	84

<sup>1</sup> - This is the number removed during a gather.  
<sup>2</sup> - This was a ground survey.  
<sup>3</sup> - AUMs were calculated by taking the number of horses observed in the HFA and multiplying it by 12 months.

## 2. Appropriate Management Levels (AML)

The initial management level for wild horses, as specified in the Rangeland Program Summary (RPS), was to provide forage to sustain 540 AUMs for wild horse use. This came from the Wells Record of Decision dated July 16, 1985. Under the preferred alternative of the RMP, wild horses were to be managed at existing numbers (March 11, 1981) as a starting point for monitoring purposes.

Since the RPS was issued, the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) rendered a decision (IBLA 88-591, 88-638, 88-648, and 88-679) which clarified that a wild horse herd size is to be established based on the concept of maintaining a thriving ecological balance. Therefore, the objective for managing wild horses has been reworded as follows:

"Manage for a wild horse herd size which will maintain a thriving ecological balance consistent with other multiple uses while remaining within the wild horse herd management area."

As the Wells Resource Area began collecting data to establish thriving natural ecological balances within the Herd Areas (HAs), it became apparent that a RMP Amendment was needed to establish HMAs, clarify boundaries, and to set initial herd sizes. The Wells RMP Wild Horse Amendment became final on August 2, 1993 and established initial herd sizes for the Goshute, Maverick-Medicine, Antelope

Valley and Spruce-Pequop HMAs at 160, 389, 240 and 82 wild horses respectively. The AML for wild horses in the Toano HFA and Pilot Allotment is zero.

**C. Wildlife Use**

**1. Mule Deer**

- a. existing numbers: 416 deer (719 AUMs)
- b. reasonable numbers: 686 deer (1,244 AUMs)
- c. key/critical mgmt. areas: The Wells RMP identified the following habitat areas: deer yearlong (DY-3), deer summer (DS-4), and deer winter (DW-11). Based on updated maps provided by the Nevada Division of Wildlife (NDOW), some changes have been made. There is no separate designation for deer summer range, DS-4. Deer yearlong range (DY-3) covers approximately 2,060 acres, and deer winter range (DW-11) covers approximately 13,850 acres within the Pilot Allotment. See Appendix 3, map 1 for mule deer habitat boundaries.

**2. Pronghorn Antelope**

The RMP did not identify existing or reasonable numbers, AUMs, or use areas for pronghorns within the Pilot Allotment. However, the updated maps provided by the NDOW show approximately 130,030 acres of pronghorn yearlong range and 1,550 acres of pronghorn summer range within the allotment. See Appendix 3, map 1 for pronghorn habitat boundaries.

**3. Bighorn Sheep**

- a. existing numbers: 30 bighorn sheep (72 AUMs) (based on professional judgement and NDOW consultation)
- b. reasonable numbers: 120 bighorn sheep (288 AUMs)
- c. key/critical mgmt. areas: The Wells RMP identified the following habitat area: bighorn sheep yearlong (BSY-5). This range covers approximately 15,450 acres. See Appendix 3, map 2 for bighorn sheep habitat boundaries.

**4. Elk**

- a. existing numbers: 200 elk (896 AUMs) (based on professional judgement and NDOW consultation)
- b. reasonable numbers: 90 elk (528 AUMs)
- c. key/critical mgmt. areas: The Wells RMP identified the following habitat area elk yearlong (EY-1). The NDOW updated map shows approximately 26,770 acres of elk yearlong range within the allotment. See Appendix 3, map 2 for elk habitat boundaries. The Wells RMP has been amended to address the issue of pioneering elk in the former Wells Resource Area. Several alternatives were analyzed in the final Wells RMP Elk Amendment and Decision Record which include the proposed establishment of elk management objectives and target populations for the Pilot Management Area.