



United States Department of the Interior

G 8/25/87
IN REPLY REFER TO:

4700 (NV-013)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ELKO DISTRICT OFFICE

3900 E. Idaho Street
P.O. Box 831
Elko, Nevada 89801

AUG 25 1987

Dawn Lappin
Wild Horse Organized Assistance
P.O. Box 555
Reno, NV 89504

Dear Ms. Lappin:

Attached are copies of the completed gathering plan and associated environmental analysis for the Little Humboldt, Rock Creek, and Spruce-Pequop Herd Management Areas.

You will note that the Little Owyhee and Bullhead Herd Management Areas have been left out of the final document.

Sincerely yours,

for *Mark Good*

for
RODNEY HARRIS
District Manager



United States Department of the Interior
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 NEVADA STATE OFFICE

IN REPLY REFER TO:

4700
 (NV-931.3)

1987 AUG 18 A 10: 53

850 Harvard Way
 P.O. Box 12000
 Reno, Nevada 89520

AUG 14 1987

Memorandum

To: District Manager, Elko

From: State Director, Nevada

Subject: Little Humboldt, Rock Creek and Spruce/Pequop Wild Horse Removal Plan

Attached is the approved copy of the subject plan. You may proceed to implement the removal plan as soon as the necessary contractual arrangements have been made.

Fred Wolf
 Associate

- 1 Attachment
- 1 - Wild Horse and Burro Removal Plan (13 pp)

ELKO DISTRICT OFFICE	
DISTRICT MGR.	<i>[Signature]</i>
RECORDS	<i>[Signature]</i>
ADMINISTRATION	
INSPECTION	
PLANNING	<i>[Signature]</i>
TELETYPE	<i>[Signature]</i>
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GENERAL	
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MAIL ROOM	

WILD HORSE CAPTURE PLAN

Little Humboldt - Rock Creek - Spruce/Pequop Herd Use Areas

INTRODUCTION

The proposed gathering area covers three wild horse herd management areas and portions of four adjoining allotments outside designated horse herd management areas. The majority of the area is located in the Elko Resource Area of the Elko District. The gathering area also covers a herd management area in the Wells Resource Area of the Elko District. This area is in eastern Elko County (see Figs. 1 & 2).

This document outlines the process that will be involved in the wild horse gather for the Little Humboldt, Rock Creek, and Spruce/Pequop wild horse herd management areas and portions of Jakes Creek, Tall Corral, Big Springs and Chase Spring Allotments. Included are the number of horses to be captured, the time and method of capture and the handling and disposition of captured horses.

None of the herd management areas are presently covered by a herd area management plan, however RMP/EIS's have been developed for the two Resource Areas involved. The RMP/EIS's established management numbers for horses in the respective herd management areas. The proposed gather is to reduce horse numbers to conform to the appropriate management levels within herd management areas and to gather horses which are outside of designated herd management areas. This action is therefore considered a part of long-term management.

Number of Horses to be Gathered

The proposed number of horses to be gathered is shown by herd management area as follows:

<u>Herd Area</u>	<u>Nos. to be Managed</u>	<u>No. Inventoried</u>	<u>Nos. to be Gathered</u>
Little Humboldt	107	168	61
Rock Creek	119	190	71
Spruce/Pequop	64 to 80	116	52
TOTAL	290 to 306	474	184

Horses from the above herd areas are expanding their range into allotments outside herd area boundaries specifically Jakes Creek, Tall Corral, Big Springs, and Chase Spring Allotments. Gathering efforts will be concentrated to remove all horses from these allotments and to leave the appropriate management level within the herd area boundaries. This is based on March 1987 census. A post gather census will be conducted on the HMA to ensure that the AML remains after the gather is complete.

Time and Method of Capture

The gather contract is expected to be awarded in FY1987 with the work being done in early FY1988. The gather should last approximately 15 days.

The method of capture to be used will be a helicopter to bring the horses to trap sites. Horseback riders at the wings of portable traps may be used if necessary. Roping will be done only when necessary with prior approval of the COR. Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one hour. The temporary traps and corrals will be constructed from portable pipe panels. Trap wings will be constructed of panels, netting or other material not harmful to horses. Traps will need a holding area for horses prior to transport to the temporary holding facility. Traps will be constructed on existing roads, outside Wilderness Study Areas (see Figs. 3 & 4).

Trap sites will be selected by the COR after determining the habits of the animals and the topography of the area. Specific siting may be selected by the Contractor with the COR's approval within this general preselected area. Trap sites will receive cultural and T&E plant and animal clearance prior to use.

At least one trap site per herd area will be required to complete the gather. Trap sites will be located to cause as little injury to horses and as little damage to the natural resources of the area as possible. Additional trap sites may be required, as determined by the COR, to relieve stress to horses caused by conditions at the time of the gather (i.e., dust, rocky terrain, temperatures, etc.).

Due to the many variables such as weather, time of year, location of horses, and suitable trap sites, it is not possible to identify specific locations at this time. They will be determined at the time of the gather.

Branded and Claimed Animals

A notice of intent to impound and a 28 day notice to gather wild horses will be issued concurrently by the BLM prior to any gathering operations in this area.

The Nevada Department of Agriculture and the District Brand Inspector will receive copies of these notices, as well as the Notice of Public Sale if issued.

The COR/PI will contact the District Brand Inspector and make arrangements for dates and time when brand inspections will be needed.

When horses are captured, the COR/PI and the District Brand Inspector will jointly inspect all animals at the holding facility in the gathering area. If determined necessary at that time by all parties involved, horses will be sorted into three categories.

- a. Branded animals with offspring, including yearlings.
- b. Unbranded or claimed animals with offspring, including yearlings with obvious evidence of existing or former private ownership (e.g. photo documentation, saddle marks, etc.).

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SP
1989

- c. Unbranded animals and offspring without obvious evidence of former private ownership.

The COR/PI, after consultation with the District Brand Inspector, will determine if unbranded animals are wild and free-roaming horses. The District Brand Inspector will determine ownership of branded animals and their offspring and if possible the ownership of unbranded animals determined not to be wild and free-roaming horses.

Branded horses with offspring and claimed unbranded horses with offspring for which the owners have been identified by the District Brand Inspector will be retained in the custody of the BLM pending notification of the owner or claimant.

A separate holding corral will be set up near the temporary holding corral to house these horses until the owner or claimant can pick them up.

The animals will remain in the custody of the BLM until settlement in full is made for impoundment and trespass charges as determined appropriate by the Elko Area Manager or Wells Area Manager in accordance with provision in 43 CFR Subpart 4150. In the event settlement is not made the horses will be sold at public auction by the BLM.

Branded horses with offspring whose owners cannot be determined and unclaimed, unbranded horses with offspring having evidence of existing or former private ownership will be released to the Nevada Department of Agriculture (District Brand Inspector) as estrays.

The District Brand Inspector will provide the COR/PI a brand inspection certificate for the immediate shipment of wild horses to Palomino Valley (Reno) and for the branded or claimed horses where impoundment and trespass charges have not been offered or received for shipment to public auction or another holding facility.

Destruction of Injured or Sick Animals

Any severely injured or seriously sick animal shall be destroyed in accordance with 43 CFR 4730.1. Animals shall be destroyed only when a definite act of mercy is needed to alleviate pain and suffering. The COR will make this determination, with advice from a veterinarian, when unsure of the severity of the illness or injury. Destruction will be done in the most humane method available. A veterinarian can be called from Elko if necessary to care for any injured horses.

Disposal of the carcass will be in accordance with I.M. No. NV-83-84.

Administration of the Contract

The COR will be the Elko District Wild Horse Specialist. The COR will be directly responsible for conducting the roundup and can appoint other BLM personnel to assist with the roundup as necessary.

To assist the COR in administering the contract, BLM will have a second helicopter available at the round up site. This helicopter will be used to assure compliance and to assure that horses are not run too far too fast or in

a manner that will cause horses to split up. It will be used as needed to assure that the contractor is complying with the specifications of the contract. If the contractor fails to perform in an appropriate manner at any time, the contract will not be allowed to continue until problems encountered are corrected to the satisfaction of the COR.

The COR is directly responsible for the conduct of the gathering operation, and is responsible for keeping the Elko District Manager and the Nevada State Office informed on the progress of the gathering operation.

Contractors Briefing

The contractor, after award of the contract, will be briefed on his duties and responsibilities before the notice to proceed is issued. There will also be an inspection of the Contractor's equipment at this time to assure that it meets specifications and is adequate for the job. ANY equipment that does not meet specifications must be replaced within 36 hours.

The contractor will also be informed of the terrain involved, the condition of the animals, the condition of the roads, potential trap locations, and the presence of fences and other dangerous barriers.

Public Meeting

One public meeting will be held in Elko at a place and time to be announced prior to the start of the gather. This meeting is required by law to get public input on the use of helicopter in the gathering process and motorized vehicles in transporting the animals.

Temporary Holding Facility

The holding facility shall be on public land unless an agreement is made between the contractor and a private landowner for use of private facilities. When private land is used, the contractor must guarantee BLM, and the public, access to the facility and accept all liability for use of such facilities. Use of private facilities is subject to approval by the COR.

The contractor shall provide all feed, water, labor and equipment to care for captured horses at the holding facility, and transportation of captured horses from the temporary holding facility to the Nevada Distribution Center, Palomino Valley (Reno), Nevada. All work will be done according to the following specifications and attached work location map. All labor, vehicles, helicopters, traps, troughs, feed, temporary holding facilities and other equipment, including but not limited to the aforementioned, shall be furnished by the contractor. BLM will furnish contract supervision.

Detailed Specifications

A. Roundup procedures within contract area:

1. The COR/PI will determine specific roundup areas and number of horses within each herd area as animal concentration and weather conditions dictate. Numbers of horses to be gathered by herd area are as follows:

<u>Herd Area</u>	<u>Numbers</u>
Little Humboldt	61
Rock Creek	71
Spruce/Pequop	<u>52</u>
TOTAL	184

2. The COR will determine specific roundup areas and numbers of animals within general contract areas as animal concentration and weather conditions dictate.
- B. In addition to the provisions of 43 CFR Part 4700 the use of the helicopter shall be further regulated to the extent that:
1. The helicopter shall be used in such a manner that bands or herds will tend to remain together.
 2. The rate of movement shall not exceed limitations set by the COR who shall consider terrain, weather, distance to be traveled, and condition of the animals.
 3. When refueling, the helicopter must remain a distance of at least 1,000 feet or more from the temporary holding facility, vehicles (other than fuel truck), and personnel not involved in refueling.
- C. Motorized Equipment
1. All motorized equipment employed in the transportation of captured animals shall be in compliance with appropriate State and Federal laws and regulations applicable to the humane transportation of animals.
 2. Vehicles shall be in good repair, of adequate rated capacity, and operated so as to insure that captured animals are transported without undue risk or injury.
 3. Only stocktrailers shall be allowed for transporting animals from traps to temporary holding facilities. Only Bobtail trucks, stocktrailers, or single deck trucks shall be used to haul animals from temporary holding facilities to final destination. Sides or stockracks of transporting vehicles shall be a minimum height of 6 feet 6 inches from vehicle floor. Single deck trucks with trailers 40 feet or longer shall have two partition gates to separate animals. Trailers less than 40 feet shall have at least one partition gate to separate the animals. The use of double deck trailers is unacceptable and shall not be allowed.
 4. All vehicles used to transport animals to final destination shall be equipped with doors at the rear end of the vehicle. At least one of these rear doors shall be capable of sliding either horizontally or vertically.
 5. Floors of vehicles shall be covered and maintained with a non-skid surface such as sand, mineral soil or wood shavings, to prevent the animals from slipping.

6. The number of animals to be loaded and transported in any vehicle shall be as directed by the COR and may include limitations on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament and animal condition.

7. The COR shall consider the condition of the animals, weather conditions, type of vehicles, distance to be transported, or other factors when planning for the movement of captured animals. The COR shall provide for any brand and/or inspection services required for the captured animals.

8. If the COR determines that dust conditions are such that the animals could be endangered during transportation, the contractor will be instructed to adjust speed. The maximum distance over which animals may have to be transported on dirt road is approximately twenty miles per load.

9. Vehicles traveling within WSA boundaries will be confined to existing roads and ways.

D. Trapping and Care

1. All capture attempts shall be accomplished by the utilization of a helicopter. Wing riders may be used if necessary. Roping will be done only when necessary, with prior approval by the COR. Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one hour.

2. The helicopter shall be used in such a manner that bands or herds will to remain together as much as possible.

3. The rate of movement and distance the animals travel shall not exceed limitations set by the COR who will consider terrain, physical barriers, weather, condition of the animals and other factors.

4. It is estimated that seven trap locations will be required to accomplish the work. All trap locations and holding facilities must be approved by the COR prior to construction. The contractor may also be required to change or move trap locations as determined by the COR. All traps and holding facilities not located on public land must have prior written approval of the landowner.

5. All traps, wings, and holding facilities shall be constructed, maintained and operated to handle the animals in a safe and humane manner. Traps and holding facilities shall be constructed of portable panels, the top of which shall not be less than 72 inches high, and the bottom rail of which shall not be more than 12 inches from ground level. All traps and holding facilities shall be oval or round in design. All loading chute sides shall be fully covered with plywood or like material. The loading chute shall also be a minimum of 6 feet high. All runways shall be a minimum of 20 feet long and a minimum of 6 feet high and shall be covered with plywood or like material a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level. Wings shall not be constructed out of barbed wire or other materials injurious to animals and must be approved by the COR. All crowding pens including the gates leading to the runways shall be covered with a material which prevents the animals from seeing out (plywood, burlap, etc.) and shall be covered a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level.

6. No fence modification will be made without authorization from the COR. The contractor shall be responsible for restoration of any fence modification or damage which he has made.

7. When excessive dust conditions occur within or adjacent to the trap or holding facility, the contractor shall be required to wet down the ground with water at such location as directed by the COR.

8. Alternate pens, within the holding facility shall be furnished by the contractor to separate mares with small foals, sick and injured animals, and stray animals from the other horses. Where required by the COR, animals shall be sorted as to age, number, size, temperament, sex, and condition when in the holding facility so as to minimize, to the extent possible, injury due to fighting and trampling.

9. Animals shall be transported to final destination from temporary holding facilities within 24 hours after capture unless prior approval is granted by the COR for unusual circumstances. Animals shall not be held in traps and/or temporary holding facilities on days when there is no work being conducted except as specified by the COR.

10. Animals held for 10 hours or more in the traps and/or holding facilities shall be provided fresh clean water by the contractor, in an amount of a minimum of 10 gallons per animal per day. Animals held for 10 hours or more in the traps or holding facilities shall be provided good quality hay at the rate of not less than two pounds of hay per 100 pounds of estimated body weight per day.

11. It is the responsibility of the contractor to provide security to prevent loss, injury or death of captured animals until delivery to final destination.

12. The contractor shall restrain sick or injured animals so that they may be provided treatment by the COR. The COR will determine if injured animals must be destroyed and provide for destruction of such animals. The contractor shall dispose of the carcasses as directed by the COR.

E. Helicopter, Pilot and Communications

1. The contractor must operate in compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 91. Pilots provided by the contractor shall comply with the Contractors Federal Aviation Certificates, applicable regulations of the State of Nevada and shall follow what are recognized as safe flying practices.

2. When refueling, the helicopter shall remain a distance of at least 1,000 feet or more from animals, vehicles (other than fuel truck), and personnel not involved in refueling.

3. The COR shall have the means to communicate with the pilot and be able to direct the use of the gather helicopter at all times. The frequency(s) used for this contract will be assigned by the COR when the government furnished "slip-in" VHF/FM portable radio is used. When a VHF/AM radio is used, the frequency will be 122.925 MHz.

4. The contractor shall obtain the necessary FCC licenses for the radio system.

5. The proper operation, service and maintenance of all contractor furnished helicopters is the responsibility of the contractor. The BLM reserves the right to remove from service pilots and helicopters which, in the opinion of the contracting officer or COR violate contract rules, are unsafe or otherwise unsatisfactory. In this event, the contractor will be notified in writing to furnish replacement pilots or helicopters within 48 hours of notification. All such replacements must be approved in advance of operation by the contracting officer or his/her representatives.

F. Contractor-furnished Property

1. All hay, water, vehicles, saddle horses, helicopters and other equipment shall be provided by the contractor. Other equipment includes, but is not limited to, a minimum of 1,000 linear feet of 72-inch high (minimum height) panels for traps and holding facilities and enough water troughs for a minimum storage capacity of 300 gallons.

2. The contractor shall furnish an avionics system that will allow communications between the contractor's helicopter and his fuel truck.

3. The contractor shall furnish a VHF/AM radio transceiver in the contractor's helicopter which has the capability to operate on a frequency of 122.925 MHz.

4. The contractor shall provide an avionics system in the contractor's helicopter to accommodate a government furnished "slip-in" VHF/FM portable radio, manufactured by GE, Model HN-56 Porta-Mobil II, including the plugs necessary to connect the government radio to the aircraft's integrated audio and transmit selector system (see paragraph H, entitled "Avionics Systems Furnished by the Contractor to Accommodate Government-Furnished Equipment" and Illustration f1) and the connectors to an external antenna (see Illustration No. 2).

TYPE-ERASE
25% COTTON FIBER USA

Prepared by:

D. Waive Stager
D. Waive Stager
Range Conservationist
Elko District Office

8-4-87
Date

Reviewed by:

Bruce E. Portwood
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Wild Horse & Burro Specialist
Elko District Office

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Tim Hartzell
Tim Hartzell, Manager
Elko Resource Area
Elko District Office

8/4/87
Date

John A. Phillips
John A. Phillips, Manager
Wells Resource Area
Elko District Office

8/4/87
Date

Concurred by:

Rodney Harris
Rodney Harris
District Manager
Elko District Office

8/5/87
Date

Approved by:

Fred Wolf
For Edward Spang
State Director

8/14/87
Date

TYPE-ERASE
52% COTTON FIBER USA

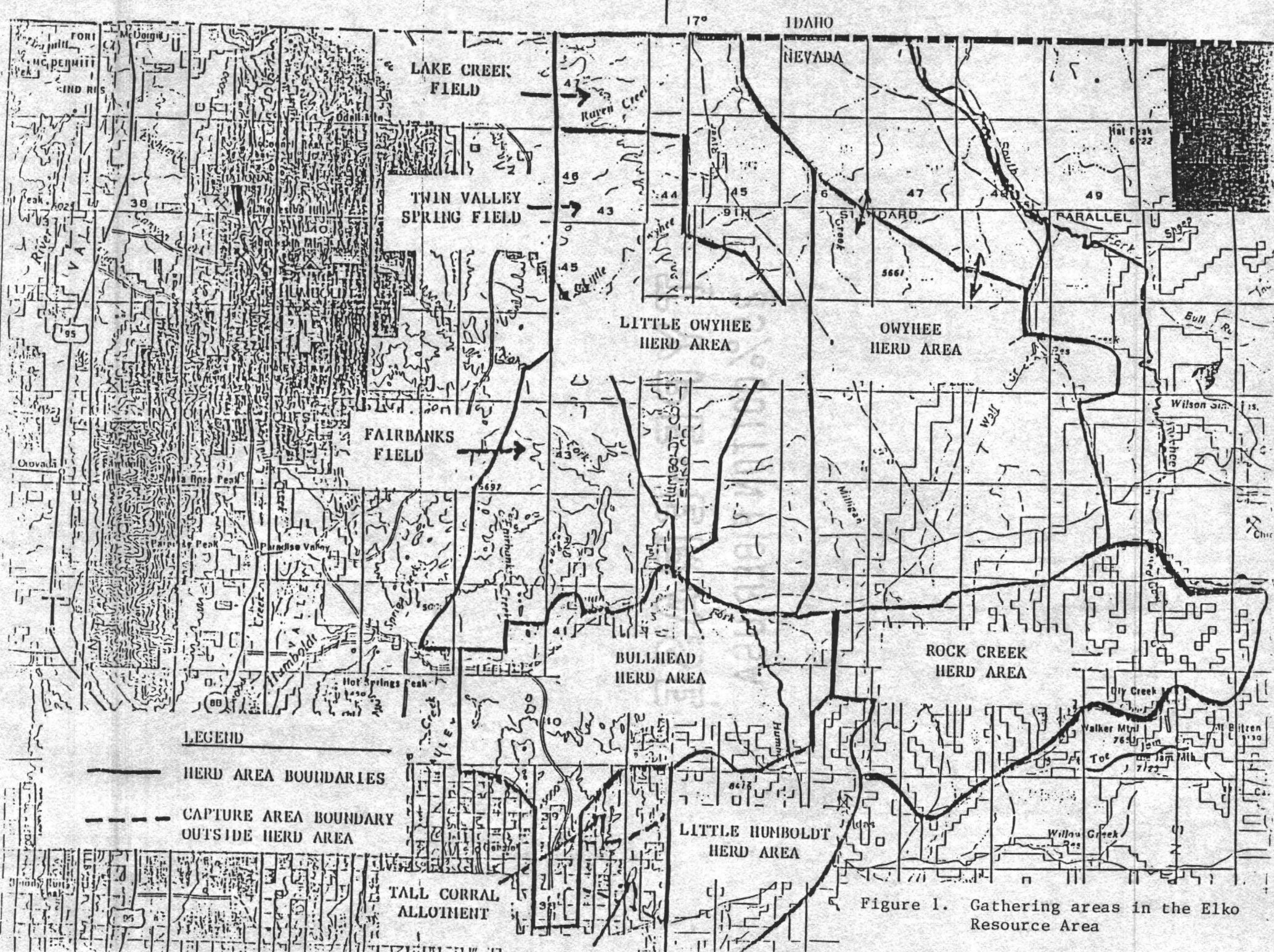


Figure 1. Gathering areas in the Elko Resource Area

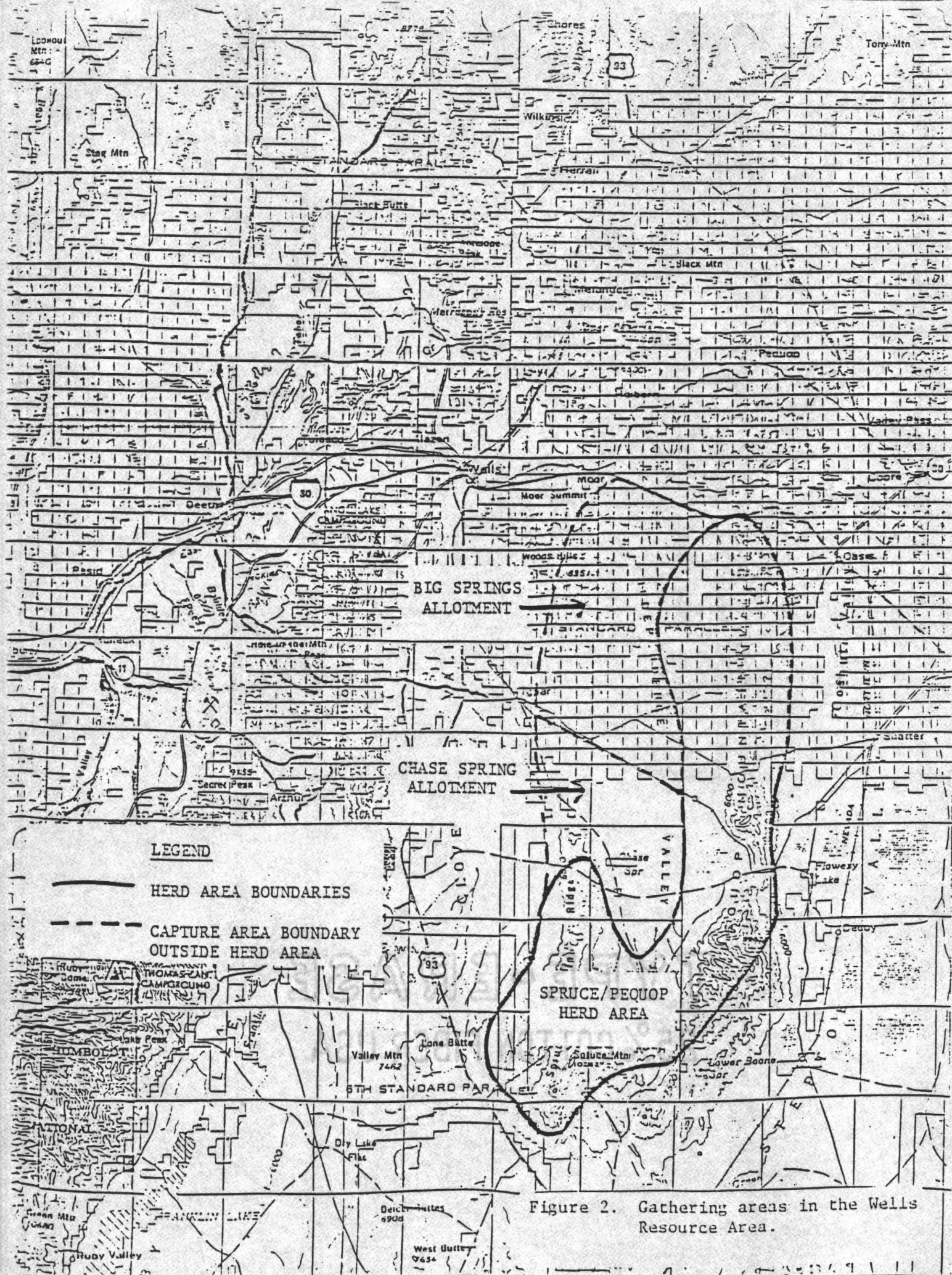
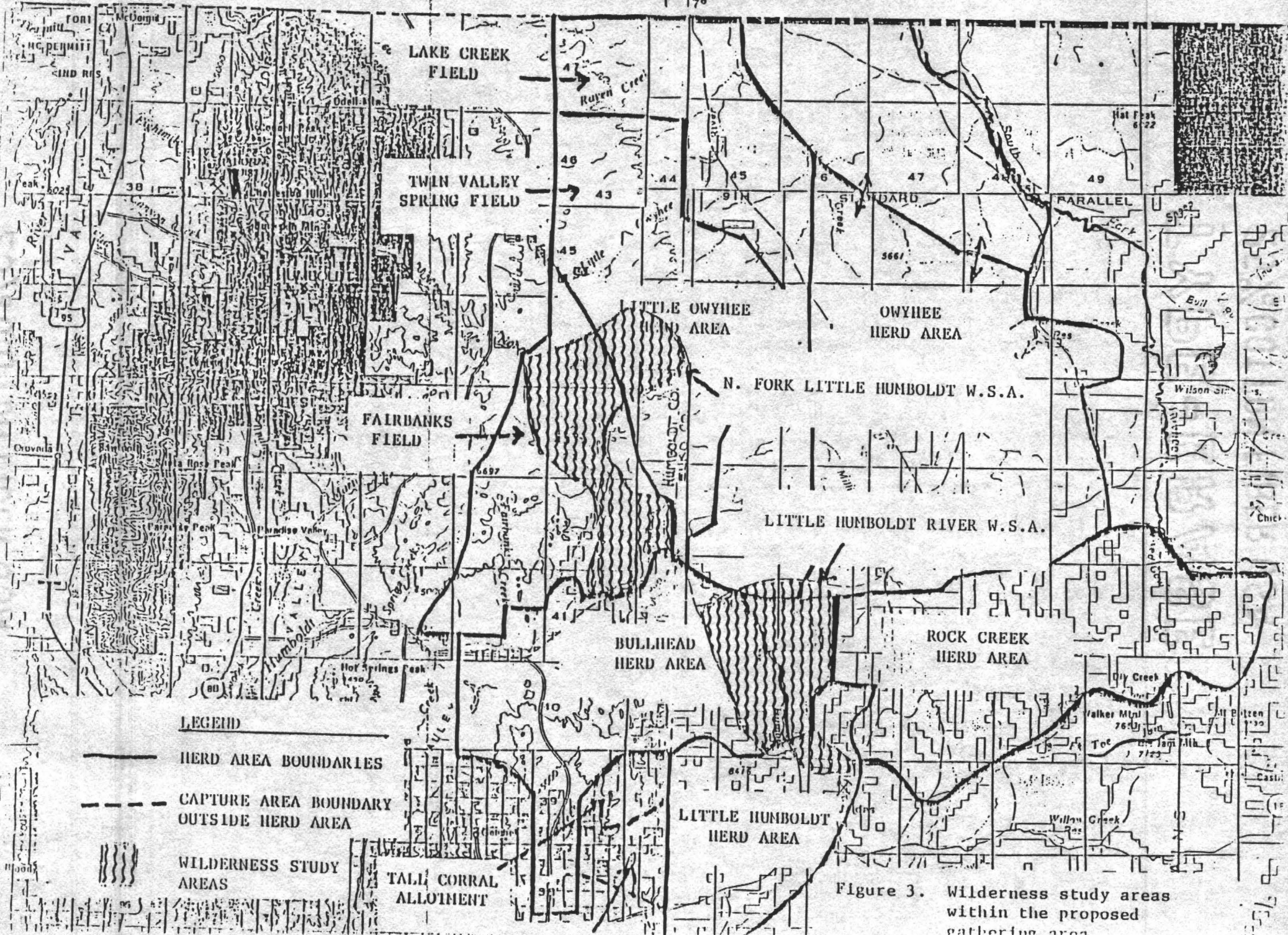


Figure 2. Gathering areas in the Wells Resource Area.



LEGEND





-  HERD AREA BOUNDARIES
-  CAPTURE AREA BOUNDARY OUTSIDE HERD AREA
-  WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS
-  TALL CORRAL ALLOTMENT

Figure 3. Wilderness study areas within the proposed gathering area

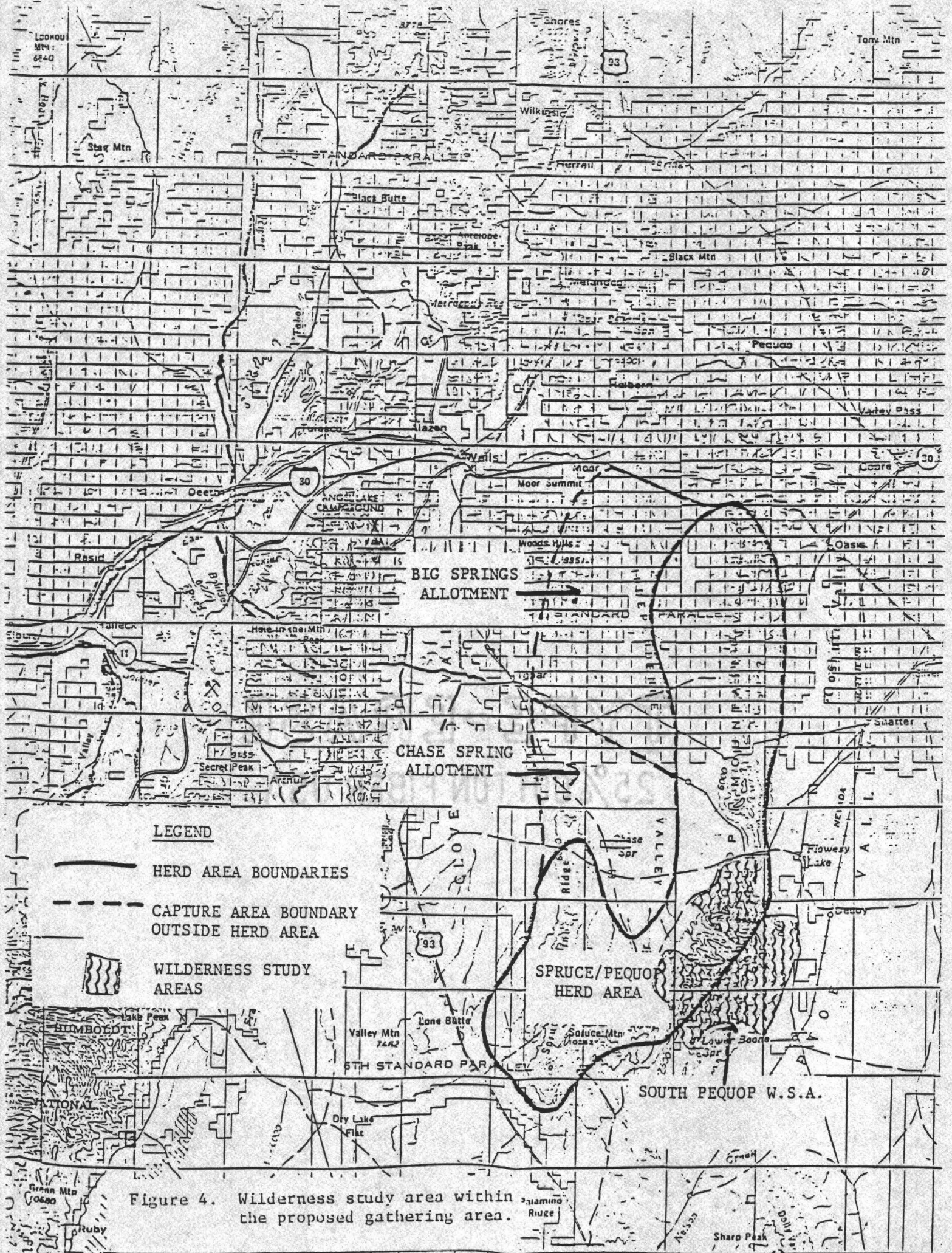


Figure 4. Wilderness study area within the proposed gathering area.

8/5/87

RECORD OF DECISION/FONSI
ELKO DISTRICT FY87 HORSE ROUND-UP
EA-NV-010-7-036

DECISION

The proposed action is accepted.

RATIONALE

The environmental assessment has indicated that implementation of the proposed action would result in beneficial impacts to the environment. Use of helicopters for the gathering of wild horses, as well as erection of temporary traps and holding corrals is in compliance with the Elko Resource Management Plan/Environmental Statement (RMP/EIS), Wells RMP/EIS, as well as applicable laws and regulations. This project will manage, improve the quality of, and regulate wild horse herds within the Elko district in compliance with the aforementioned land use plans.

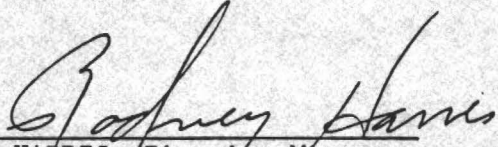
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS (FONSI)

The EA has shown that implementation of the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

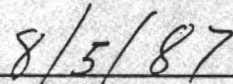
Stipulations

1. Horse handling will be kept to a minimum. Capture and transporting operations are exceedingly traumatic to the animals. Minimizing the handling would increase the safety of the animals, as well as the handlers.
2. No gathering will be allowed after March 1, 1988 because of the potential stress to pregnant and lactating mares and the possibility of induced abortions. Gathering may be resumed after the foaling period and after foals are grown enough to withstand the stress of gathering operations.
3. Horses will not be run more than 10 miles during gathering operations.
4. A veterinarian will be on call during gathering operations.
5. Helicopters will be used with caution. A qualified district BLM representative will be present during gathering attempts to insure strict compliance with the above mileage limitations and CFR 4700 regulations.
6. Captured horses that are obviously aged, lame, deformed, or sick will be humanely disposed of at the trap site.
7. No traps or corrals will be established within the WSAs and motorized vehicles will be confined to existing roads and ways.

8. A cultural resources investigation by an archaeologist or D.A.T. will be made prior to any trap construction. If a significant find is discovered, an alternative trap site will be selected.
9. Trap sites or holding corrals will not be placed on any sites with any threatened or endangered plant species present.



RODNEY HARRIS, District Manager
Elko District Office



Date

TYPE-ERASE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. NV-010-7-036
ELKO DISTRICT FY87 HORSE ROUND-UP

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The Elko Resource Area and Wells Resource Area, both in the Elko District are proposing the use of a helicopter, construction of traps, and holding corrals to gather excess wild horses. Refer to the Resource Management Plans for the aforementioned resource areas for analysis of the appropriate management levels of wild horses.

A. Introduction

As a result of excess wild horses within several Herd Use Areas (see attached Elko District FY87 Horse Capture Plan), it is necessary to determine the most cost efficient, effective and safest (to horses, as well as people, involved in the gather) method of gathering excess animals.

Several methods of wild horse capture exist, but only those methods accepted by BLM will be discussed.

Regardless of the method of capture chosen, it will also be necessary to construct temporary traps as well as temporary holding corrals. Impacts from such construction will be discussed within the proposed action.

B. Proposed Action

The proposed action consists of using a helicopter to gather excess wild horses in FY88. The helicopter would locate the bands of wild horses and drive them into the traps using wing riders (wranglers on horse back) where desired and necessary. The gathering would continue until the appropriate herd management levels have been reached. Hazards such as cliffs and fences would be scouted in advance and existing roads and trails would be used.

Several temporary traps with deflector wings encompassing less than one acre would be erected on lands in each herd area. Temporary trap and corral sites would be selected by the contractor from potential sites selected by the BLM. Each facility would be constructed from portable panels. These traps and corrals would be moved from place to place during the gathering operation and completely removed from the area after the contract is completed. It is estimated that three trap sites will be needed encompassing less than three acres of surface disturbance.

C. Stipulations

1. Horse handling will be kept to a minimum. Capture and transporting operations are exceedingly traumatic to the animals. Minimizing the handling would increase the safety of the animals, as well as the handlers.

2. No gathering will be allowed after March 1, 1988 because of the potential stress to pregnant and lactating mares and the possibility of induced abortions. Gathering may be resumed after the foaling period and after foals are grown enough to withstand the stress of gathering operations.
3. Horses will not be run more than 10 miles during gathering operations.
4. A veterinarian will be on call during gathering operations.
5. Helicopters will be used with caution. A qualified district BLM representative will be present during gathering attempts to insure strict compliance with the above mileage limitations and CFR 4700 regulations.
6. Captured horses that are obviously aged, lame, deformed, or sick will be humanely disposed of at the trap site.
7. A cultural resources investigation by an archaeologist or D.A.T. will be made prior to any trap construction. If a significant find was discovered, an alternative trap site will be selected.
8. Trap sites or holding corrals will not be placed on any sites with any threatened or endangered plant species present.

D. Alternatives

1. Water trapping as an alternative has been considered. This involves placing temporary corrals with one way gates at water sources.

Due to the numerous water sources within the areas being trapped, it would not be possible to use this method and will no longer be considered.

2. Gathering of wild horses by wranglers on horse back as an alternative has been considered. This involves people on horse back locating the horses and trying to drive the wild horses into the portable traps.

Often times, the wild horses will out run the wranglers and scatter prior to reaching the trap. There is also an increased risk of injury to the wild horses as well as the wranglers and their horses since hazards cannot be seen in advance. This method takes longer and is not cost effective. For these reasons, this alternative is not feasible and will not be considered further.

3. No Action - the no action alternative would result in no wild horses being gathered, and herd levels would not be held at authorized management levels, therefore, this alternative is not considered further.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

The proposed gathering area covers three wild horse herd management areas and portions of four adjoining allotments outside designated horse use areas. The majority of the area is located in the Elko Resource Area of the Elko District (Figure 1). The gathering area also covers a herd management area in the Wells Resource Area of the Elko District. This area is in eastern Elko County (Figure 2).

The following table shows the herd areas/allotments (non herd areas) that will be affected as well as the number of wild horses to be gathered:

<u>Herd Area</u>	<u>Nos. to be Managed</u>	<u>No. Inventoried</u>	<u>Nos. to be Gathered</u>
Little Humboldt	107	168	61
Rock Creek	119	190	71
Spruce/Pequop	64 to 80	116	52
TOTAL	290 to 306	474	184

This is based on March 1987 census.

For discussion purposes, the subject area will be divided into 2 major geographic locations, the first being that portion of the subject area lying within Elko (A) Resource Areas and the second being that portion lying within the Wells Resource Area (B)

A. Elko Resource Areas

1) Topography

Topography of the subject area consists of a flat desert in the northern part and mountains, canyons, alluvial fans, basins and valley floors in the southern part. Annual precipitation varies from 20 inches in the Snowstorm Mountains to 8 inches on the Owyhee Desert. Precipitation occurrences are highest from November through January, occurring mostly as snow. Average temperatures range from 95° F. in summer to -10° F. in winter.

2) Air, Soils and Water

Prevailing winds are usually out of the west and are common from April through October.

Air quality is good and does not appear to exceed the State of Nevada Ambient Air Quality Standards. Air inversion layers may occur in some areas but are generally of short duration. There is no knowledge of air pollution occurring due to these inversions.

Soils are predominantly Aridosols and Mollisols and are shallow to moderately deep. The following table depicts soil characteristics.

<u>GENERAL DISTRIBUTION</u>	<u>PRODUCTIVITY</u>	<u>EROSION SUSCEPTIBILITY</u>	<u>TEXTURES</u>
Alluvial plains, bottoms	Moderate-High	Moderate	Mod. fine-medium
Benches, fans, terraces	Moderate	Moderate	Fine-Mod. fine
Mountain uplands	Moderate-High	Slight	Fine-Mod. fine

The majority of the streams flow intermittently and contribute most runoff during the spring. Reservoirs, springs and wells provide additional water.

3) Vegetation

Major plant associations are characterized as big sagebrush-grass, low sagebrush-grass, shadscale and riparian.

The big sagebrush-grass and low sagebrush-grass types are dominated by big sagebrush and low sagebrush respectively. Other shrubs include currant, rabbitbrush, snowberry, and antelope bitterbrush. Major grass species include bluebunch wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, Idaho fescue, Sandberg bluegrass, and bottlebrush squirreltail. Forbs include arrowleaf balsamroot, lupine, phlox and aster.

The shadscale type is found in the northern portion of the Owyhee Desert. Major plant species include shadscale, bud sagebrush and big sagebrush. Smaller amounts of winterfat grow in this type. Major grass species include squirreltail, Sandberg bluegrass, and cheatgrass.

The only major riparian areas are along the South and North Forks of the Little Humboldt River. The major tree species is willow. Major shrub species include big sagebrush, currant, Wood's rose and rabbitbrush. Various rushes, sedges and grasses comprise stringer meadows along portions of the streams. Forbs are typical of those found in wet meadows and include dandelion, varrow and iris.

4) Animals

Wildlife in the subject area include deer, pronghorn antelope, chukar, dove, and sage grouse as game species and coyote, bobcat, small mammals and birds as nongame species.

Domestic livestock include horses, sheep and cattle.

5) Mining Claims

Mining claims exist in the area however, will not be affected as a result of the proposed activities and will not be discussed further.

6) Threatened and Endangered Plant Species

The following species, located within 10 miles of the subject area, have been given a 3C status in the Federal Register (Volume 50, Number 188, Friday, September 27, 1985). A status of 3C are "taxa that are no longer being considered for listing as threatened or endangered species."

Hackelia ophiobia - has been located in shaded areas at the base of cliffs along Milligan Creek and extending up the cliff.

Eriogonum ammophilum - apparently associated with low sage plant community where soils are usually shallow.

The following species located within 10 miles of the herd area(s) have been given a 2 status in the same Federal Register. The information now available indicates it may be appropriate to list these plants as either threatened or endangered. The plants in this status need further research to determine their vulnerability, taxonomy and/or threats to these taxa.

Ivesia rhypara - found on tuffs and volcanic ash soils.

Mentzelia pachardiae - associated with loose slopes high in volcanic ash devoid of woody vegetation.

Astragalus yoderwilliamsii - found in association with low sage.

Leptodactylon glabrum - is not listed in the Federal Register. Though it is not Federally listed, it is on a "watch list". It is found on steep canyon walls and vertical cliffs.

7) Wilderness Study Area (WSA)

One WSA (Little Humboldt River WSA) occur, in part, within the area to be gathered (see Figure 3). The use of aircraft for removing wild horses from within WSAs is consistent with the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines (IMP), for lands under wilderness review 12/12/79, and revised 7/12/83, since it is considered as a nonimpairing activity.

No traps or corrals will be established within the WSA's and motorized vehicles will be confined to existing roads and ways therefore, no impacts are anticipated to the WSA's.

8) Visual Resource Management

Visual resources will not be affected by the proposed action since all structures are temporary.

9) Archeology

Numerous archeological sites occur within the subject area. To ensure no impact to this resource, an archeologist or a district archeological technician will be required to clear selected areas prior to any ground disturbing activity, including erection of the traps or corrals. Only areas with existing roads or trails will be used.

B. Wells Resource Area

1) Topography

Topography of the subject area is valley bottom in the western part and mountains, canyons and alluvial fans to the east. Annual precipitation varies from 4 to 8 inches in the valley bottoms to 8 to 16 inches on the upper benches and mountains. Precipitation is received primarily during the winter in the form of snow.

2) Air, Soils, Water

See II.A.2 for Air, Soils, and Water information.

3) Vegetation

The major plant associations are very similar to those mentioned in II.B.1.a except for the domination of juniper on the uplands and the larger percentage of shadscale and winter fat vegetation types within the Wells Resource Area.

4) Animals - Refer to II.A.4.

5) Mining Claims - Refer to II.A.5.

6) Threatened and Endangered Species - The following species located within 10 miles of herd area(s) have been given a 3C status in the Federal Register (Volume 50, Number 188, Friday, Sept. 27, 1985). Status of 3C "are taxa that are no longer being considered for listing as threatened or endangered species."

Lepidium nanum - has been found on dry gravelly knolls, rocky hillsides, and chalky areas associated with black sagebrush plant community.

Cryptantha interrupta - associated with rocky hillsides on sandy or clayey soils with a big sagebrush plant community.

7) Wilderness Study Area (WSA)

A portion of the South Pequop WSA occurs within the boundary of the subject area (see Figure 4).

No traps or corrals will be established within the WSA and motorized vehicles will be confined to existing roads and ways so no impacts are anticipated to the WSAs.

- 8) Visual Resource Management - Refer to II.A.8.
- 9) Archeology - Refer to II.A.9.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A. Proposed Action

The use of helicopters to capture excess wild horses may result in leppy foals and split bands, as well as injured horses. Incidents like these tend to be increased if the animals are pushed too hard. However, a Bureau official will be present at the gathering site to ensure minimum injury occurs to the horses and that the stipulations in I.B.3. are adhered to. The authorized officer will also have a helicopter on site to use in monitoring and supervising the contract. This helicopter will be used with discretion to minimize disturbance of horses that would make gathering more difficult. However it will be used as needed to assure that the Contractor is complying with the specifications of the contract.

Vegetation may be disturbed as a result of erection of the portable traps and/or corrals. Some soil compaction and vegetation trampling may occur due to the concentration of horses within a 1 acre area. The horses may be kept within these facilities for no longer than 3 days unless approved by the authorized officer. Numbers of horses may vary depending on how many are caught in any one area.

Any areas having a threatened or endangered species occurring within the area or archeological artifacts will not be used for trap sites or corral sites. If either of these resources are discovered at any proposed sites, locations will be recorded and turned into the appropriate specialists or area manager.

Since the helicopter will not result in any ground disturbing activity, and trap and corral sites are temporary (5 days or less), no significant impacts to any other resources are anticipated.

B. Alternatives

The alternatives have been discussed and determined not to be feasible for the reasons mentioned in I.C.1-3.

IV. APPENDICES

- A. Location Map, Elko RA,
- B. Location Map, Wells RA
- C. T&E Species Map, Elko RA,
- D. T&E Species Map, Wells RA
- E. WSA Map, Elko RA,
- F. WSA Map, Wells RA
- G. Wilderness Clearances
- H. VRM Clearances

V. PERSONS, GROUPS AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

- A. American Horse Protection Assn.
- B. National Mustang Assn.
- C. International Society for the Protection of Wild Horses and Burros
- D. Fund for Animals
- E. U.S. Humane Society
- F. Nevada State Dept. of Agriculture
- G. Animal Protection Institute
- H. American Humane Assoc.
- I. National Wild Horse Assoc.
- J. Wild Horse Organized Assistance
- K. Deborah Allard
- L. Save the Mustangs
- M. American Bashkir Curley Register
- N. Humane Society of Southern Nevada
- O. Nevada Humane Society
- P. Mr. Donald Molde
- Q. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- R. Nevada Federation of Animal Protection Organization
- S. Craig C. Downer
- T. Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
- U. Elko District Office
- V. Winnemucca District Office
- W. Nevada Dept. of Wildlife

VI. COMMENTS RECEIVED

- 1. Comments were received from WHOA, Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses, Craig Downer, and the State Clearinghouse. Comments were addressed by letter to each individual. Comments and responses are filed with this document.