



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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In Reply Refer To:
4700 (NV-930)

MAR 06 2008

Catherine Barcomb
Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
885 Eastlake Boulevard
Carson City, NV 89704

Dear Cathy:

Thank you for your letter of February 19, 2008 with respect to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Nevada's proposal to manage a portion of the Nevada Wild Horse Range (NWHR) herd as a non-breeding population of geldings. BLM's current proposal is a pilot project limited to the NWHR. BLM Nevada looks forward to working with you and the Commission to develop site-specific management and monitoring requirements for such a pilot project.

To date, BLM has identified the following management and monitoring requirements relative to the proposed NWHR gelding pilot project:

- Limit gelding to studs between 5 and 15 years of age.
- Transport studs to the nearest available BLM facility for gelding.
- Return geldings to the range once they are healed from the surgery (an estimated 2-6 weeks).
- Hold geldings in a separate pen to facilitate observation by a licensed veterinarian for a minimum of two weeks prior to their release to prevent the risk for introduction of illness into the wild herd.
- Brand geldings with a "G" high on their hip so they are visible from the air and not subject to recapture during future gathers.
- Post treatment monitoring would include visual observations of social behavior at least once during the spring-summer and fall-winter seasons for up to two years following treatment.

BLM Nevada has also asked Dr. Kirk and Dr. Boyd Spratling (National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board) for their professional opinion as veterinarians with regard to the proposed management and monitoring requirements outlined above. We would hope to incorporate any professional recommendations from Dr. Kirk and Dr. Spratling into the preliminary environmental assessment (EA)/HMAP. (Those comments are needed by March 15, 2008).

As next steps:

- The tentative timeline for release of the preliminary EA/HMAP is mid-late March 2008.

- A 30-day review and comment period is proposed for all interested individuals, groups and agencies.
- BLM would like to make a presentation to the Commission at your next meeting (April 11, 2008) to review the proposal, share the results of population modeling, potential impacts to individual horses and the herd as well as other potential impacts, and projected cost savings, etc., as well as answer any questions.
- Comments/suggestions and/or recommendations from the Commission would be needed by April 15, 2008.
- A final decision with respect to the proposed HMAP is expected in about early to mid-May.
- A separate detailed environmental analysis will be prepared for any upcoming future gathers (including the next gather tentatively proposed for December 2008).

In response to a couple of the specific concerns you raise:

- BLM is not proposing to select stallions for gelding based on any "deformities". Rather, BLM proposes to select stallions for gelding based primarily on age, with younger studs (5-9 years of age) as a high priority for gelding. This would allow them to live out their lives on their home range (rather than being shipped to sanctuaries).
- Also, the proposal to manage a portion of the NWHR would be considered a pilot study project which could be expanded to other HMAs, if it is successful.

Lastly, the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board also discussed the option of managing the NWHR as a population of 100% geldings (a sanctuary). This is an option we have considered in the preliminary EA/HMAP; however, it is not one we could implement at the present time without a change in the regulations (refer to 43 CFR 4700.0-6(a) for more information).

I look forward to working with you and the Commission to analyze and assess the proposed pilot project. Please let me know if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Susie Stokke
Wild Horse and Burro Program Lead,
Nevada

cc:
Members, Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
NV-052
Dean Bolstad, WO-260