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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SUSANVILLE DISTRICT OFFICE
705 Hall Street
Susanville, California 96130

APR 21 1989

MEMORANDUM

To: District Advisory Council
Modoc/Washoe Stewardship Committee
Grazing Advisory Board

ESP

From: District Manager, Susanville

Subject: Policy Statement for the Management of Wild and Free Roaming
Horses and Burros in the Susanville District

It is my desire to develop an updated policy statement for inclusion in the District (Umbrella) Wild Horse and Burro Management Plan. We have developed a draft for discussion purposes and a copy is attached.

I am seeking the help of the District Advisory Council, the Grazing Advisory Board, and the Stewardship Committee in the development of the Policy Statement. The District Advisory Council and Grazing Advisory Board will be meeting jointly on May 3, 1989 where we can discuss it. The Stewardship Committee will be meeting on June 12-14, 1989 when they can take it up.

A central feature of the policy is stopping the removal of unadoptable animals from the range in order to stop contributing to the unfortunate and costly pool of such animals gathered from public lands. At the same time, features are built in to the policy to assure the perpetuation of healthy, viable and wild populations. These two features seem contradictory on the surface, but we have learned from the Stewardship experimentation that they are not mutually exclusive and can both be accomplished effectively and efficiently.

Last year (1988), I initiated implementation of the so-called adoptability management District-wide. The implementation is being phased-in with full implementation scheduled by the start of 1992.

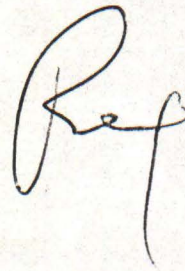
I took this action for the following reasons:

1. As already mentioned, the Stewardship experimentation demonstrates the theory is feasible.
2. My desire to stop contributing to the Bureau's "unadoptable" dilemma.

3. My commitment to the adoption program.
4. To fashion the entire Susanville District into a Pilot for the "Adoptability Management Theory". By so doing the results of a sample larger than the initial three experimental herds can be observed and judged for broader application.
5. And finally the timing was critical because we were rapidly approaching management level for all herds. You have more gene pool diversity and quality to work with if you start selection before you reach management level than if you wait until you are there.

I have also attached a background document entitled "A Brief History of the Adoptability Program". This will help understand the evolution of the District Program.

In addition to the Umbrella Plan modification, I want to amend the individual herd management plans to be more specific on how the policy is to be implemented for each herd. I didn't furnish an example here, but if time allows I'd like to discuss and get your help on some of the plan amendments as well during the meeting.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be the name 'Ray' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Attachments

Policy Statement
History-Adoptability Program

cc: (with attachment)

SD, Calif.
Dawn Lappin
Dr. Philip Ottinger
Mary Ann Simonds
Susanville Management Team

Policies

1. Sufficient forage will be allocated in each Land Use Plan to properly maintain the planned population levels established for each Herd Management Area.
2. Animals will be gathered in the safest and least stressful manner possible.
3. Animals will be handled, transported, fed and processed in a manner so that they will be kept free of injury, protected against disease, and receive proper nutrition to keep them in top condition while at BLM holding facilities.
4. Because horses older than four years of age are more difficult to adopt, the Susanville District, to the extent practical, will work toward placing excess progeny of the Susanville herds into the Regular Adoption program at four years of age and younger.
5. The Base Herd horses for each Herd Management Area will consist of horses that are selected on the basis of their apparent ability to propagate adoptable progeny.

NOTE: The Base Herd is the breeding herd selected and left on the range.

6. Once selected for the Base Herd, horses will remain in the Base Herd until they die. When they die they will be replaced by younger horses (four years of age and younger) selected from the herd or by horses selected from other Herd Management Areas.
7. When selecting Base Herd horses, consideration will be given to maintaining herd integrity (residual animal characteristics).

NOTE: In general, a high degree of integrity should be maintained for each herd. However, there may be some logical reason to bring about some change. The selection process offers an excellent opportunity to preserve some unique characteristics of some groups of horses.

8. Develop and continually update specific management plan for each Herd Management Area to implement policy.
9. Perfect marketing and public service strategies and techniques for the adopting of wild horses and burros in the State of California.

A BRIEF HISTORY
OF THE ADOPTABILITY PROGRAM
MAY 3, 1989

GENERAL HISTORY

Public Law 92-195 "The Wild Horse and Burro Law" was passed on December 15, 1971. This was eighteen (18) years ago.

Early on, for most districts, the number one priority was to get numbers down to a planned level. This continues to be the priority for many districts. Only in a few cases was serious consideration given to any type of management, other than removal.

There has been an adoption program from the beginning. This program went through several approaches during its development. Changes were mostly centered around the adoption fees.

From the beginning some horses adopted while others did not. As a result, horse numbers in BLM facilities grew and grew to the point that feeding these horses became a major budget item.

Later came the Contract Feeding Centers. This made it possible to store and feed even more horses. The cost of feeding unadoptable horses became a staggering amount, something in excess of 9 million dollars.

Then along came the Fee Waiver Program where horses could be adopted at no cost for the adoption fee. The adopter used multiple powers of attorney to obtain large numbers of horses. These were held for one year until title was obtained, then the horses were moved into the private sector. The outlet for many of these horses was the slaughter house. This very predictably brought an outcry from many horse groups as well as individuals.

Had the Fee Waiver Program been used, as a short term solution, to promote management, it could have had a long term beneficial effect on the program. However, in general it failed in this respect, since often the wrong horses went into the program. Most if not all interests were somewhat to greatly relieved when the program was discontinued in the fall of 1988.

In 1989 comes the Sanctuary Program. This program while providing better conditions for the horses (open pasture compared to a confined feed lot) still is expensive, and its future is uncertain. The big question is what happens at the end of the three (3) year period of Government funding. Will the horses be returned to the Government if private funding can not be found?

It appears that Government funding for the program will cost between \$1.00 to \$1.50 per day per horse. For three years this is somewhere between \$1,095 and \$1,643 per horse. This does not include administrative cost to the BLM plus other costs that may occur.

The Sanctuary Program can be a great aid in the management of horse herds on public lands, when used in combination with a selection program for the breeding herds held on the public land. However, if it is used for a dumping ground for hard to adopt horses without instigating herd management on public land, the need for sanctuary space will grow and grow until it consumes most of the budget, while herd management goes begging.

SUSANVILLE DISTRICT HISTORY

Priority for the program in the Susanville District, has advanced through three (3) stages since passage of the Act in 1971, and is now in a fourth stage.

Stage No. 1 consisted of inventory, defining home ranges and protection of the animals from illegal capture. This stage lasted from December 15, 1971, at the passage of the Act until October 1976.

Stage No. 2 consisted of a priority of control of excess animals by capture and adoption of those that were adoptable. This stage was from October 1976 until July 1984. The first animals were gathered in the District in October 1976.

Stage No. 3 consisted of a change to a priority of management and adoption. This stage began in July 1984, with the writing of three (3) Herd Management Area Plans in the Surprise Resource Area. These plans were promoted under the Modoc/Washoe Experimental Stewardship Program. These plans began an experiment to increase adoptability, by selecting Base Herd horses (the breeding herd) and by harvesting of off-spring at 4 years of age and younger.

Stage No. 4 began in the fall of 1988 with the expansion of the program to increase adoptability for all herds in the District. By 1992 it is planned that all herds in the District will be in a high adoptability program with the goal of 100% adoptability.

EXPERIMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The Experimental Stewardship Program (ESP) Steering Committee became aware of the problem of unadoptable horses as early as 1982. At the June 11, 1982 meeting they wrote a DRAFT Position Statement (See Attachment No. I). This explains some of their thinking at that time.

The DRAFT Position Statement later became a FINAL Position Statement (See Attachment No. II). There was no change from DRAFT to FINAL.

On November 18, 1983 they further explored ways of getting the program to be more effective. One of the primary considerations, at that time, was a limited sale authority to be used in combination with wild horse management and an aggressive Adoption Program (See Attachment No. III).

The ESP appointed a Sub Committee to deal with how to best approach wild horse management in the ESP area. It was hoped that a management approach would be developed that would have wider application outside of the ESP area and outside of the District. This Sub Committee met on February 3 and 4, 1983 in Alturas.

As a result of recommendations by the Sub Committee, three (3) Herd Management Area Plans were written incorporating three (3) management approaches for three (3) herds in the Surprise Resource Area. These plans were signed on July 11, 1984.

THE THREE (3) ESP HERDS

The three (3) ESP herds are Coppersmith CA-261, Buckhorn CA-262, and Fox Hog CA-263. All three of these herds have a minimum planned management level of 50 horses and a maximum planned management level of 75 horses. Specific management approaches for each herd are as follows:

Coppersmith CA-261

The Coppersmith Base Herd consists of 35 females and 15 males. The herd for the present time is a closed herd, consisting of selected horses from the herd that had occupied the area for sometime. This is essentially an inbred herd. The plan is that for at least the immediate future to keep it that way. The herd was structured in the fall of 1986. Only young horses four years of age and under will be removed from the herd. The old will be left to die on the range. As the old die they will be replaced by young from the herd.

Buckhorn CA-262

The Buckhorn Herd is like the Coppersmith Herd except that the Base Herd horses are a mix of resident horses plus some horses from other wild horse herds. This gene pool is much broader than the Coppersmith Herd. Other management will be the same as the Buckhorn Herd.

Fox Hog CA-263

The Fox Hog Herd is the control herd. It is assumed that the Base Herd consists of about 25 males and 25 females. The herd will be gathered by gate cut, with horses of all ages being removed just as they came to the trap. (This has been the typical method of removal for many herds on the BLM.)

Gathering and selection done in Buckhorn in 1983 and in Coppersmith in 1985 yielded some data. However, the fall gather in 1986 was the first opportunity to gather all three herds and place them on the same gathering schedule. These herds will be gathered again in the fall of 1989. Data from this gather and following adoptions will give some very valid data about the program.

ATTACHMENT I

DRAFT

POSITION STATEMENT AND GUIDELINES FOR INTERIM MANAGEMENT OF WILD HORSES AND BURROS WITHIN MODOC/WASHOE EXPERIMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AREA

In response to the continuing controversy over existing wild horse and burro legislation and recently proposed amendments, the Modoc/Washoe Experimental Stewardship Steering Committee has developed the following position and operational guidelines for management pending final resolution of this important land use issue.

POSITION STATEMENT

The position of the Modoc/Washoe Experimental Stewardship Committee is one which neither supports nor rejects the existing Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act or the recently proposed amendments. Any direct involvement in the ongoing legislative controversy is considered to be well beyond the intent of Congressional mandates and the announced role of this Committee. However, it is also recognized that the mission of the Stewardship Program cannot be met unless the wild horse and burro issue is addressed from a purely functional point of view. In order to keep pace with the planning and implementation strategies contemplated and those already established for the Modoc/Washoe Stewardship Area, the following statements reflect the current position of this Steering Committee on the wild horse and burro issue.

1. More effort is needed to develop creative and effective ideas for on-the-ground wild horse and burro management in those allotments where such opportunities exist. Horse interest groups outside of Federal agencies should assume a stronger role in the joint development of plans which promote the welfare of these animals consistent with other legitimate uses of public land.
2. The present Adoption Program should not only be maintained but needs to be made more effective in terms of meeting expressed public demand. Regulation, legislative, or policy changes that facilitate the flow-through of animals or otherwise speed up the adoption process are useful to meeting our overall objectives for the responsible management of native ranges.
3. Funds collected from adoption fees or sale (if authorized) should be recycled back to the state and agency district where horses were gathered. These funds will be used in the wild horse and burro management program.
4. If sale authority is granted it should be implemented on an interim basis and limited to a five year period or until management levels are reached (whichever occurs first). Once acceptable management levels are attained, selective gathering should make future sale unnecessary.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

In order to move forward with the Modoc/Washoe Stewardship mission, the following management guidelines are recommended for implementation.

1. Herd Management Planning

The Technical Review Team process should be the primary vehicle for the development of wild horse and burro management plans on an allotment basis. It is essential that horse interest groups or pre-selected representatives participate in the process at this planning level. The TRT reports will document and address the following management components and any others that might be identified.

- a. Existing numbers, distribution and natural movement patterns will be identified.
- b. Determine acceptable management levels consistent with land use plans and explore feasible opportunities specific to enhancing habitat quality for these animals.
- c. Coordinate (a) and (b) into the overall allotment plan to minimize conflict and insure equitable consideration of all user groups.

2. Removal of Excess Animals

Once the populations of wild horses have been reduced to management levels, the Committee endorses removing the excess animals exclusively from the young animals and allowing the remainder to live out a natural life span and die a natural death.

The maximum age of the animals to be removed should be flexible. Factors to consider are cost effectiveness in gathering the excess as well as adoptability of the animals. The maximum age limit to consider for removal should be four years of age. In any event, all animals beyond a given age should live out their natural life and die a natural death rather than be subject to removal.

Excess is defined as the number of young animals beyond that which is necessary to offset natural death loss or, conversely, the number of young animals allowed to stay in the population will equal natural death loss so that replenishment offsets death loss and the number of animals in the population remains stable.

This approach to removal of excess has several important effects:

- a. Over time, a population will develop a more uniform age structure by minimizing gaps or surpluses in certain ages. A more uniformed age structured population will be more stable and more immune to catastrophic and life threatening forces.

b. The animals that are removed from the population will be exclusively young, highly adoptable animals. Once the populations are down to management level, the adoption program will be capable of taking care of all the excess.

b. Leaving the animals on the range to die a natural death will suppress the overall reproductivity of the herd because the last years of the animals life span are nonreproductive. This will reduce the number of animals to be removed and thus, reduce the expense of population management.

Attachment II

Final

POSITION STATEMENT AND GUIDELINES FOR INTERIM
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APPENDIX III

PROPOSAL

FROM: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
TO: STEERING COMMITTEE, MODOC/WASHOE EXPERIMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM (M/WESP)

NEED IDENTIFICATION:

The Susanville District has over 200 horses in the corrals at Litchfield. The staff projects one half of them will remain there because they are not suitable for adoption.

Management levels of horse herds have been established based on historical use, forage production, and multiple use objectives. Susanville horse management staff is and will continue to maintain those herds at levels appropriate to the land use objectives.

Susanville is operating an aggressive adoption program, including shipment to year-round adoption centers and satellite centers.

In fiscal year 82-83, Susanville maintained 100 excess unadoptable animals in the corral at a cost of \$100,000.

Congressional legislation currently under consideration does not contain a minimum national herd size which would ensure the continued support and management of healthy, viable wild horse herds. Wild Horse advocates cannot support sale authority legislation that does not contain this minimal guarantee.

PROPOSAL

We make two proposals to address the need for sale authority limited to excess unadoptable animals gathered under agency land use objectives, including full support of the Wild Horse management and adoption program. We propose to:

- 1) submit a request, through Nevada Governor Bryon, to the Hile Committee to reactivate and expanded Wild Horse Forum as a National (or Nevada) TRT on wild horse management.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this (these) proposal(s) is to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of limited sale authority to wild horses and to the public, provided wild horse advocates and public land users are actively involved in program planning and implementation.

Objective 1:

Demonstrate, on a small scale, using all or a portion of Nevada, the effectiveness of involving wild horse advocates, with other land users, at a technical level in wild horse management problem solving.

Action Item:

Develop and present a wild horse TRT proposal for Governor Bryan and the Hile Committee.

Responsible Party: Wild Horse Policy Sub-Committee

Objective 2

Involve wild horse advocates in inter-disciplinary team to find long-term solution(s) to land and herd management problems at a technical level.

Action Item:

Submit proposal for review to selected groups and recruit support and participation.

Responsible Party: Steering Committee

Objective 3

Address Stewardship Program need to move excess, unadoptable animals by demonstrating and evaluating sale program which may be appropriate for universal agency use.

Action Item

Develop and submit proposal and rationale for experimental sale program. Proposal shall be specific in detail as to administration, accounting, participation, limits of authority and evaluation.

Responsible party: Sub-Committee of the Steering Committee