



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

CALIENTE RESOURCE AREA

P.O. Box 237

Caliente, Nevada 89008

4720
(NV-055.14)

(702) 726-3141

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

Dear Dawn,

Enclosed is a copy of the final Nellis Air Force Range Wild Horse Removal Plan. Thank you for your participation. Comments pertaining to the technical adequacy of the document were incorporated into the document.

If you have questions or comments please contact Jule Wadsworth at the above address.

Sincerely,

Curtis G. Tucker

Curtis G. Tucker
Area Manager

Enclosure: Removal Plan
Environmental Assessment

67 ~~Rec'd 3/6/92~~ *AJH*
2-24-92 IN REPLY REFER TO:
~~2-24-92~~

FEB 24 1992

new draft

REMOVAL PLAN FOR
NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE
WILD HORSE GATHER

Prepared by Jule Durfee
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist

Bureau of Land Management
Las Vegas District
Caliente Resource Area
Caliente, Nevada

Removal Plan for Nellis Air Force Range
Wild Horse Gather

Purpose

The proposed wild horse gather is to restore the wild horse population to a thriving natural ecological balance with available perennial water and forage resources and prevent further deterioration of the range due to an overpopulation of wild horses on the Nellis Air Force Range (Appendix I). Monitoring data of perennial water sources indicates the Nellis Air Force Range in south-central Nevada, can support a wild horse population of 1100-1200 animals. Current census data (August, 1990) counted 4,302 wild horses within the proposed gather area. Between 800 and 2000 wild horses must be removed in order to initiate population adjustments toward a thriving natural ecological balance. Subsequent gathers will occur over the long-term, contingent upon funding and personnel constraints, to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance between the wild horses and their environment. Helicopters and/or water trapping would be used to capture the wild horses during Fiscal Year 91, with gathering operations scheduled to last from 4-8 weeks.

This document outlines the process and the events involved with the wild horse gather operation for the Nellis Air Force Range. Included are the numbers of horses to be gathered, the time and method of capture, the handling and disposition of captured horses and the BLM personnel involved with the proposed gather.

Location and Status

The Nellis Air Force Range is located in Clark, Lincoln and Nye counties of southern Nevada. The proposed gather area is centered in the north-central portion of the Nellis Air Force Range. Appendix I identifies the proposed gather area.

A portion of the gather area is described in the Nevada Wild Horse Range Herd Management Area Plan (1985). This proposed gather is considered a part of long-term management to facilitate achievement of resource objectives.

Number of Horses to be Gathered

Analysis, interpretation, and evaluation (AIE) of resource data has determined that a wild horse population level of 1100-1200 can be sustained in a thriving natural ecological balance with the environment on the Nellis Air Force Range. During July 1989, 6,255 horses were counted within the Nellis Air Force Range. In December 1989, after three years of continuing drought during which an unknown number of wild horses died of thirst, the BLM conducted an emergency gather which removed 683 horses. Wild horse census conducted in August 1990 counted 4,302 within the range, leaving approximately 1200 horses uncounted. The number of horses to be gathered during this proposed gather is 800-2,000 contingent upon available funding and personnel. Subsequent long-term gather operations will achieve a thriving natural ecological balance between horses and their environment.

2.

Plan and Details of Gather

The gather will commence at any time during the period of April 1 through May 1, 1991 when weather and wild horse conditions permit. Once the gather operation begins, it is anticipated it will last four to twelve weeks in duration.

Water and/or helicopter trapping will be used to gather horses with water trapping being the primary method. If water trapping is unsuccessful, a helicopter will be used to move horses to trap sites, where horseback riders will guide the horses into the wings of portable traps.

The temporary traps and corrals will be constructed from portable pipe panels. A loading chute at the holding corral will be equipped with plywood sides or similar material so horses' legs will not get caught in the panels. Trap wings will be constructed of portable panels, jute netting, or other materials determined to be non-harmful to the horses. Barbed wire or other harmful materials will not be allowed for wing construction. All trap, corral, and wing construction will be approved by the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) or Project Inspector (PI).

Other capture methods have not been considered for the following reasons. Using horseback riders to trap wild horses is not feasible since wild horses scatter while being herded towards the trap. Injuries to both people and horses are more common and the cost factor, as demonstrated by previous gathers, is prohibitive for this method.

It is estimated that one or more trap locations (Appendix I) will be required to accomplish the work. Potential trap sites include Willow Spring, Rose Spring Pipeline, Silver Bow Spring, Corral Spring, Tunnel Spring, Cactus Spring and Cedar Well. These potential trap sites occur on or near existing roads. Cultural resource and biological inventories will be conducted by qualified BLM specialists prior to any surface disturbing activities. Trap locations exhibiting significant cultural resources or sensitive biological values will be eliminated from consideration and alternate locations selected and approved.

Topographically, the gather area ranges from flat valley bottoms to steep, mountainous terrain. Wild horses are anticipated to be found at all elevations during the gather period, although past utilization and distribution patterns indicate that they may be found congregated in the valley bottoms. There are few physical barriers and fences in the area and these areas will be avoided.

Administration of the Gather:

This gather may be conducted by issuance of a gather contract supervised by a COR/PI or by a trained BLM round-up crew supervised by a BLM wild horse and burro specialist. In either case, all stipulations contained in this gather plan will apply. Through-out the remainder of this document where appropriate the contractor or BLM round-up crew will be referred to simply as the

round-up crew. However, in some instances it will be necessary to identify items which specifically apply to a contractor. The BLM will be responsible for the capture, care, temporary holding of approximately 800 to 2,000 wild horses from the gather area, and transportation to the Palomino Valley Center (PVC).

Two weeks prior to the start of the gather, BLM will provide a precapture evaluation of existing conditions in the gather area. The evaluation will include animal condition, prevailing temperatures, soil conditions, topography, road conditions, locations of fences and other physical barriers, and animal distribution in relation to potential trap locations.

The evaluation will also conclude whether the level of activity associated with the gathering operation is likely to cause undue stress to the animals. A determination will be made as to whether such stress could be tolerated by the horses if a veterinarian is utilized or whether a delay in the capture activity is warranted. If it is determined the capture can proceed with a veterinarian present, the services of a veterinarian will be obtained before the capture proceeds.

The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will be directly responsible for conducting the gather and appointing other BLM personnel to assist as necessary (ie. an archeologist and biologist). The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist is also responsible for reporting the proceedings to the Caliente Resource Area Manager, Las Vegas District Manager, and Nevada State Office.

The District Manager is responsible for maintaining and protecting the health and welfare of the wild horses. A COR/PI will be on site during the capture activities to ensure contractor compliance with the contract stipulations and to protect the health and welfare of the animals. If a BLM round-up crew is utilized, a Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will be on site during the capture activities to ensure compliance with the gather plan stipulations.

The COR/PI, through on-site observation, will evaluate the contractor's ability to perform the required work in accordance with the contract stipulations. Compliance with the contract stipulations will be facilitated through issuance of written instruction to the contractor, stop work orders, and default procedures should the contractor not perform work according to stipulations.

All publicity, formal public contact, and inquiries will be handled through the Caliente Resource Area Manager. The Area Manager will coordinate contacts with Palomino Valley Center to assure space is available, horses are handled humanely and efficiently, and are arriving from the capture site in good condition.

B

Contractor's Briefing

A bidder's tour of the area will be conducted prior to contract award. Following award of the contract, the contractor will be briefed on his duties and responsibilities before the Notice to Proceed is issued. An inspection of the contractor's equipment at this time will be conducted to insure all items meet required specifications. Any equipment that does not meet specifications must be replaced within 36 hours. The contractor will be informed of the terrain involved, animal condition, road conditions, potential trap locations, and the presence of fences and other dangerous barriers.

BLM Round-Up Crew Briefing

Prior to the gather operation the head wrangler will tour the proposed gather area and look at potential trap sites. The head wrangler will be briefed on results of the precapture evaluation and the gather plan stipulations.

Branded and Claimed Animals

A Notice of Intent to Impound and 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. The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will contact the District Brand Inspector and make arrangements for dates and times when brand inspections will be needed.

When horses are captured, the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and the District Brand Inspector will jointly inspect all animals at the holding facility in the gather area. If the parties involved deem it necessary, horses will be sorted into the following categories at that time:

- 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., geldings, bobbed tails, photo documentation, saddle marks, etc.).
- c. Unbranded animals and offspring without obvious evidence of former private ownership.

The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, after consultation with the District Brand Inspector, will determine if unbranded animals are wild and free-roaming horses. The District Brand Inspector will identify 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 in a separate holding corral. Release of these animals to the owner or claimant will be upon settlement of impoundment and

or trespass charges. Appropriate charges will be determined by the Caliente Area Manager in accordance with 43 CFR Subpart 4710.6 and 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 stray.

The District Brand Inspector will provide the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist with a brand inspection certificate for the immediate shipment of wild horses to Palomino Valley Center (Reno). A similar certificate will be issued for the branded or claimed horses for whom impoundment and trespass charges have not been offered or received in order to ship them to public auction or another holding facility.

Destruction of Injured or Sick Animals

Any severely injured or seriously sick animal will be destroyed in accordance with 43 CFR Subpart 4730.1, only when a definite act of mercy is needed to alleviate pain and suffering. The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will have the primary responsibility for determining when an animal will be destroyed. Due to security restrictions involving personnel permitted to carry fire arms on the Nellis Air Force Range, Advanced Security Inc. (ASI) supervisory personnel will perform the actual destruction. The round-up crew will be permitted to determine when an animal will be destroyed only in the event the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist is not at the capture site or holding corrals and there is an immediate need to alleviate pain and suffering of a severely injured animal. When the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist is unsure as to the severity of an injury or sickness, a veterinarian will be called to make a final determination. Destruction shall be done in the most humane method available in accordance with Bureau policy. A veterinarian can be called from Caliente, Nevada as needed to care for injured horses.

The carcasses of wild horses that die or must be destroyed, as a result of any infectious, contagious or parasitic disease, will be disposed of by burial to a depth of at least 3 feet. The carcasses of wild horses which must be destroyed as a result of age, injury, lameness, or noncontagious disease or illness will be disposed of by removing them from the capture site or holding corral and placing them in a inconspicuous location to minimize the visual impacts. Carcasses will not be placed in drainages regardless of drainage size or downstream destination.

Temporary Holding Facility

The holding facility will be located on lands withdrawn for military purposes, with all access controlled by the United States Air Force (USAF). All requests for public access to the holding facility will be made to the Caliente Area Manager, who

will then forward the request to the USAF. The Air Force will evaluate the request and grant or deny access.

✓ The contractor will provide all feed, water, labor, and equipment to care for captured horses at the holding facility. The contractor will also provide transportation of captured horses from the temporary holding facility to the Palomino Valley Center (Seno) Nevada. BLM will provide transportation of unclaimed and claimed branded horses to an approved facility for release to the claimant or for handling under Nevada State estray laws. All work will be accomplished in a safe and humane manner and be in accordance with the provisions of 43 CFR Part 4700 and the following specifications, provisions, and attached work location maps. All labor, vehicles, helicopters, traps, troughs, feed, temporary holding facilities, and other supplies and equipment including, but not limited to the aforementioned, shall be furnished by the contractor. BLM will furnish contract supervision.

If BLM round-up crews are utilized, BLM will assume the responsibilities delegated to the contractor. The stipulations and specifications outlined below will apply.

Stipulations and Specifications

A. 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 will 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 will be allowed for transporting animals from traps to temporary holding facilities. Only Bobtail trucks, stocktrailers, or single deck trucks will be used to haul animals from temporary holding facilities to final destination. Sides or stockracks of transporting vehicles will be a minimum height of 6 feet 6 inches from vehicle floor. Single deck trucks with trailers 40 feet or longer will have two partition gates to separate animals. Trailers less than 40 feet will have at least one partition gate to separate the animals. Each partition shall be a minimum of 6 feet high and shall have a minimum 5 foot wide swinging gate. The use of double deck trailers is unacceptable and will not be allowed.
4. All vehicles used to transport animals to final destination will be equipped with at least one door at the rear end of the vehicle which is capable of sliding either horizontally or vertically.
5. Floors of vehicles and the loading chute will be covered and maintained with a non-skid surface such as

sand, sawdust, soil, or wood shavings, to prevent the animals from slipping. This will be confirmed by the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist prior to each loading.

6. Animals to be loaded and transported in any vehicle will be as directed by the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and may include limitations on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament, and animal condition. A minimum of 1.4 linear foot per adult animal and .75 linear foot per foal will be allowed per standard 8 foot wide stocktrailer/truck.

The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will supervise the loading of the wild horses to be transported from the trap to the temporary holding corral. The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will require separation of small foals and/or weak horses from the rest should there be a potential for injury during the trip. The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will consider the distance and condition of the road and animals in making this determination. Horses shipped from the temporary holding corral to the PVD will normally be separated by studs, mares and foals (including small yearlings). However, if the numbers of these classes of animals are too few in one compartment and too many in another, animals may be shifted between compartments to properly distribute the animals in the trailer. This may include placing a younger, lighter stud with the mares or a weak mare with the foals. Further separation may be required should condition of the animals warrant.

The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist supervising the loading will exercise authority to off-load animals should there be too many horses on the trailer/truck.

7. The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will 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/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will provide for any brand and/or inspection services required for the captured animals.

It is currently planned to ship all horses to the Palomino Valley Center. Palomino Valley Center personnel involved in off-loading the horses will provide feedback to the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist on the condition of shipped horses. Should problems arise, shipping methods, and/or separation of the horses will be changed in an attempt to alleviate the problems.

8. If the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist determines that dust conditions are such that the animals could be endangered during transportation, the round-up crew will be instructed to adjust speed. The

maintain a steady pace which allows the horses to be transported on dirt roads at approximately 10 miles per hour. Periodic checks by BLM employees will be made as the horses are transported along dirt roads. If speed restrictions are placed in effect, then BLM employees will, at times, follow and/or time trips to ensure compliance.

5. Trapping and Care

1. All capture attempts will be accomplished by water trapping and/or the utilization of a helicopter. A minimum of one saddle horse will be immediately available at the trap site to accomplish roping if necessary. Roping will be done as determined by the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and under no circumstances will animals be tied down for more than 1 hour. Roping will be allowed only to capture an orphaned foal or a suspected wet mare.
2. The helicopter will be used in such a manner to insure that bands or herds will remain together and that foals are not be left behind. The Las Vegas District will use an observation helicopter as the primary means in which to supervise the use of the project helicopter. In the absence of an observation helicopter, the project helicopter or saddle horses may be used to place a BLM observer on a point overlooking the area of the helicopter herding operations.
3. The rate of movement and distance the animals travel will not exceed limitations set by the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist who will consider terrain, physical barriers, weather, condition of the animals, and other factors.

BLM will not allow horses to be herded more than 10 miles nor faster than 20 miles per hour. The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist may decrease the rate of travel or distance moved should the route to the trap site pose a danger or cause avoidable stress (steep and/or rocky). Animal condition will also be considered in making distance and speed restrictions.

Temperature limitations on helicopter operations are 10 degrees F. as a minimum and 95 degrees F. as a maximum. Special attention will be given to avoiding physical hazards such as fences.

4. It is estimated that a minimum of two and a maximum of seven trap locations will be required to accomplish the work.
5. All traps, wings, and holding facilities will be constructed, maintained and operated to handle the animals in a safe and humane manner and be in accordance with the following:

- a. Traps and holding facilities will be constructed of portable panels, the top of which shall not be less than 72 inches high, and the bottom rail of which will not be more than 12 inches from ground level. All traps and holding facilities will be oval or round in design.
 - b. All loading chute sides will be fully covered with plywood or like material. The loading chute will also be a minimum of 6 feet high.
 - c. All runways will be a minimum of 20 feet long and a minimum of 6 feet high and will be covered with plywood or like material a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level.
 - d. Wings will not be constructed out of barbed wire or other materials injurious to animals and must be approved by the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist.
 - e. All crowding pens including the gates leading to the runways will be covered with a material which prevents the animals from seeing out (plywood, burlap, etc.) and will be covered a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level. Eight linear feet of this material will be capable of being removed or let down to provide a viewing window.
 - f. All pens and runways used for the movement and handling of animals will be connected with hinged self-locking gates.
6. No fence modification will be made without authorization from the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist. The round-up crew will be responsible for restoration of any fence modification which needs to be made.

If the route by which the contractor wishes to herd horses passes through a fence, the contractor will be required to roll up the fencing material and pull up the posts to provide at least one-eighth mile of gap. The standing fence on each side of the gap will be well-flagged for a distance of 300 yards from the gap on each side.

7. When dust conditions occur within or adjacent to the trap or holding facility, the contractor will be required to wet down the ground with water.
8. Alternate pens, within the holding facility will be furnished by the round-up crew to separate mares with small foals, sick and injured animals, and estray animals from the other horses. Animals will 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.

As a minimum, studs will be separated from the mares and foals when the animals are held overnight.

9. Animals will be transported to final destination from temporary holding facilities within 24 hours after capture unless prior approval is granted by the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist for unusual circumstances. Animals will 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/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist. The round-up crew will schedule shipments of animals to arrive at final destination between 6:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Every effort will be made to ensure that the time horses are standing on the trucks prior to off loading is minimized. No shipments will be scheduled to arrive at final destination on Sunday.
10. The round-up crew will provide animals held in the traps and/or holding facilities with a continuous supply of fresh clean water at a minimum rate of 10 gallons per animal per day. Animals held for 10 hours or more in the traps or holding facilities will be provided good quality hay at the rate of not less than 2 pounds of hay per 100 pounds of estimated body weight per day.
11. It is the responsibility of the round-up crew to provide security to prevent loss, injury or death of captured animals until delivery to final destination.
12. The round-up crew will restrain sick or injured animals if treatment by the BLM is necessary. The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will determine if injured animals must be destroyed and provide for destruction of such animals. The round-up crew may be required to dispose of the carcasses as directed by the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist.
13. The round-up crew will leave water traps open at the completion of each day's capture operation to allow wildlife access to water.

C. Helicopter, Pilot, and Communications

1. The contractor must operate in compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 91. Pilots provided by the contractor will comply with the Contractor's Federal Aviation Certificates, applicable regulations of the State of Nevada, and will follow what are recognized as safe flying practices.
2. When refueling, the helicopter will remain a distance of at least a 1,000 feet or more from animals, vehicles

(other than fuel truck), and personnel not involved in refueling.

3. The COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will have the means to communicate with the Contractor's pilot and be able to direct the use of the gather helicopter at all times. If communications cannot be established, the BLM will take steps as necessary to protect the welfare of the animals. The frequency(s) used for this contract will be assigned.
4. The contractor will 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/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, 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 representatives.

D. Contractor-Furnished Property

1. All hay, water, vehicles, saddle horses, helicopters and other equipment will be provided by the contractor. Other equipment includes, but is not limited to, a minimum of 1,500 linear feet of 72-inch high (minimum height) panels for traps and holding facilities. Separate water troughs will be provided at each pen where animals are being held.
2. The contractor will furnish an avionics system that will allow communications between the contractor's helicopter and his fuel truck.
3. The contractor will 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 will provide a programmable VHF/FM radio transceiver in the contractor's helicopter to accommodate the COR/PI/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist in monitoring the gather operation.

SIGNATURES

Prepared by:

Jule Durfee

Jule Durfee
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
Caliente Resource Area

2-15-91
Date

Reviewed by:

Curtis G. Tucker

Curtis G. Tucker
Area Manager
Caliente Resource Area

2-15-91
Date

Approved by:

Ben F. Collins

Ben F. Collins
District Manager
Las Vegas District Office

FEB 19 1991
Date

APPENDIX I

