

Nellis

12-5-07



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Nevada State Office
P.O. Box 12000 (1340 Financial Blvd.)
Reno, Nevada 89520-0006
<http://www.blm.gov/nv/>

In Reply Refer to:
4700 (NV-930)

DEC - 5 2007

Nellis

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

Dear Ms. Barcomb:

I have been asked by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Nevada State Director, Ron Wenker, to reply to your letter which was received in this office on November 16, 2007, concerning the status of water developments on the Nevada Wild Horse Range.

The BLM Las Vegas Field Office (LVFO) plans to install 6 flattop boss storage tanks (with troughs attached) at Cedar Well during December 10-15, 2007. This will create approximately 13,200 gallons of storage. Floats will be installed in the trough and inlet to the first tank to regulate flow. BLM may also redevelop the head box at a later date depending on engineer recommendations.

An additional 6 flattop boss storage tanks have been purchased and delivered for installation at Cactus Spring. This project will require site-specific environmental analysis which is currently underway. A final decision is tentatively expected in March 2008, with implementation of the selected alternative after that. Some additional engineering design will also be needed to maintain this development as a gravity flow system.

The Silverbow pipeline is an older development involving at least 3 miles of pipeline and a storage tank. The existing storage tank needs to be replaced and additional storage may be helpful. The pipeline may require complete reconstruction, which would require a design, drawings, specifications, materials list and cost estimates. Site specific environmental analysis may be required and once complete, necessary funding would need to be obtained and materials would need to be ordered. Because of the potential complexity (and cost) involved in reconstructing this water development, the LVFO plans to begin the initial planning and design for this development over the next few months. However, it could take some time to complete this work. As a result, the LVFO will be working with the military to develop an interagency agreement which would provide for supplementing water if necessary for wild horses until the area can be gathered in December 2008.

The Rose Spring head box was redeveloped in June-July 2005 and minor maintenance work was completed in 2006. The development is currently functioning adequately and no additional work (other than routine maintenance) is planned until the above priority work can be completed.

BLM recognizes the importance of these key water developments to wild horses on the Nevada Wild Horse Range. Maintenance of the Cedar Well development was completed in 2006, however the source dried up in 2007 due to drought conditions. The Silverbow development was maintained in 2004 and again in 2006, but requires reconstruction, because of the age of the development, particularly with respect to providing adequate storage. The Rose Spring head box was redeveloped in 2005 with additional maintenance work completed in 2006. Over the longer term, we may also want to consider extending this pipeline and relocating the trough to avoid concentrating wild horses along the road way.

I hope the above information is helpful.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Holbert
Deputy State Director,
Natural Resources, Lands and Planning

cc:

Allen Biaggi
NV Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources
123 W. Nye Lane, Room 230
Carson City, NV 89706-0818

Roger T. Schofield
98th RANW/XPL
3770 Duffer Drive
Nellis AFB, NV 89191-7001

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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
**COMMISSION FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF WILD HORSES**

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November 14, 2007

Juan Palma, Field Manager
Las Vegas Field Office
4701 Torrey Pine Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130

RE: Water Issues Affecting Wild Horses at Nellis

Dear Mr. Palma,

The Nevada Wild Horse Commission has been working with the military and the Bureau for as many years as I have been here, which are 19, on water issues for the Nellis wild horse herd. From lack of water, contaminated waters, horse deaths, lack of range improvements, and empty promises made all these years of "we're working on it." Dates have come and gone of promised start dates, excuses stating we can't get designs going, buying parts in piecemeal and never installing them, etc etc

Many managers for the Las Vegas District have come and gone in those years and we still are waiting for improvements to the HMA and assurances the horses have sustained water necessary to prevent death. This problem keeps getting passed on. There has always been a water "situation" on Nellis, and can count on it to blow up every summer and fall. The BLM relies on the military to haul water, which is not their mandate. It compromises their actions in that they are using their man hours and equipment for operations other than what has been designated under their work programs. All this is due to the fact that the BLM in Nevada hasn't initiated water developments, improvement, and maintenance in an area that is chronically in trouble. BLM's lack of planning and disregard for your responsibilities should not put pressure on other entities such as the Air Force.

The Nellis gather scheduled for December 2007 has been postponed until summer of 2008, potentially. To date there is no funding allocated to this gather. The gather may or may not occur. Pre-planning for a potential emergency should be accomplished now, not when summer is on us. BLM is aware that if you don't gather, or even if you do, that potentially water will be an issue next summer. As of now, BLM has not paid the military for the water hauled over the last months, the bill is outstanding.

Juan Palma, Field Manager

November 14, 2007

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For many years at Commission meetings repair was promised, more recently at the JMAC meeting Aug 22, Mr. Patrick Putnam explained the BLM was working on it and repair and developments would be shortcoming. At the deaths of the horses when the water on the playa dried up, a BLM engineer was taken on a full tour by the military of all the water sites on Nellis. Not a word has been heard since then.

We have a Commission meeting scheduled for Monday, November 26th in Reno. We would like to invite you to attend as we will be discussing the water situation on Nellis at that State meeting.

What we would like to know is:

- 1) what schedule have you developed for long term solutions for water on Nellis;
- 2) what exactly is the plan to fix the water situation for the herds, location, design, etc;
- 3) it is our understanding you had tanks ordered, they are in Tonopah, but there are no designs to implement installation. What are you doing about that;
- 4) and, the two water sources being scheduled for work are Cedar and Cactus. Cedar has only approximately 12 horses remaining in that area, Cactus has minimal horses and never has gone completely dry. The priorities should focus on the majority of the horse populations and should be Silver Bow and Rose, in that order. Please explain the thought process here as to why you have picked the less necessary waters to focus on.

What we would like to ask is that you or your representative attend the Commission meeting and show us a commitment to getting the designs done and a schedule of starting on these projects. Historically there are known areas of concern, planning should be implemented now, to avert emergencies and water hauling next summer.

We thank you for your attention to our concerns, it has just been too many years and the State needs accountability for the Bureau following through. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



CATHY BARCOMB

Administrator

CC: Ron Wenker, BLM Nevada State Director
Michael R. Holbert, Deputy State Director
Roger Schofield, Nellis AFB
Wild Horse Commissioners



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CATHY BARCOMB

Administrator

CC: Ron Wenker, BLM Nevada State Director
Michael R. Holbert, Deputy State Director
Roger Schofield, Nellis AFB
Wild Horse Commissioners

Cathy Barcomb

From: Susie_Stokke@nv.blm.gov
Sent: Tuesday, September 11, 2007 4:36 PM
To: Cathy Barcomb
Subject: Update on Nellis Water

I was able to catch Patrick Putnam by telephone today. Here is what he updated me with regarding Nellis water:

Cedar Well -- procurement is pending for the tanks and other materials needed to reconstruct this development.

A tour of Nellis with Mike Holbert, the new Nevada State Engineer and the LVFO engineer to begin development of a plan (design, specifications, materials list, drawings and cost estimates) is planned for September 18th. After that, we will hopefully have a better timeline for you as to when all this will happen.

We do not anticipate being able to reconstruct all the developments concurrently due to lack of funding, so part of the development plan will be prioritizing the developments for reconstruction.

Military is continuing to provide off-site water through December.

Let me know if you have any additional questions. I can do a powerpoint presentation for your Commissioners at your next meeting with all this stuff if that would be helpful. Just let me know. TX!

Nevada Wild Horse Range Update
BLM-Las Vegas Field Office
November 2007

Status of Water Developments

Cedar Well

- Tanks will be installed December 10-15, 2007
- 6 flattop boss storage tanks with trough attached at end
- Creates approximately 13,200 gallons of storage
- "t" post smooth wire fence around tanks
- Head box was dug deeper in 1994
- Flows continue to be monitored
- Redevelopment of the head box may be completed at a later date depending on engineer's recommendations
- Floats will be installed in the trough and inlet to the first tank
- Maintenance work was done in 2006/source dried up in 2007

Cactus Spring

- Storage tanks have been purchased and are delivered
- Requires NEPA, EA currently being developed
- Requires 30 day staff review, proposed and final decisions need prepared
- March will be the soonest for final decision
- Depending on public comment, BLM will request access
- Must have engineers develop a design to account for fall

Silverbow

- This is an older development (1994) with a minimum of 3 miles of pipeline and a storage tank. Maintenance work was done in 2004, 2006. The source dried up in midsummer but is currently flowing. The existing storage tank needs replaced and additional storage may be helpful.
- Pipeline may require complete reconstruction, which would require a design, drawings, specifications and cost estimates. Additionally, NEPA may be required.
- Storage tanks and other materials would need to be purchased.
- How much water to store needs determined.

Rose

- Headbox was redeveloped in June/July 2005
- Minor maintenance work completed 2006

Cedar and Cactus will be two of the easier developments to complete, and require the least amount of additional materials. Silverbow and Rose may require extensive digging with a backhoe or trencher.

In FY2000, all the wild horses that could be found in the Kawich Valley were gathered and removed due to drought conditions. Wild horses were again gathered from this area in December 2003/January 2004 and also in July 2007 due to drought. BLM feels that it is critical to have Cedar Well functional to provide water to any wild horses that return to the area and those that may have been missed during the gather this past summer.

The Las Vegas Field Office has spent \$50,000 last FY to purchase the storage tanks.

The \$40,000 that was set aside for the 12/07 gather which was postponed has been earmarked for the work on the springs. The Las Vegas Office will continue to watch the budget and any available 1060 funds will be used on purchase more storage tanks, and complete the necessary work.