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REMOVAL PLAN FOR
NEVADA WILD HORSE RANGE
WILD HORSE GATHER

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Las Vegas District
Caliente Resource Area
Caliente, Nevada

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Removal Plan for Nellis Air Force Range
Wild Horse Gather

Purpose

The proposed action is to restore the range to a thriving natural ecological balance and prevent further deterioration of the range threatened by an overpopulation of wild horses in and around the Nevada Wild Horse Range (NWHR) on the Nellis Air Force Range. The proposed action will begin to bring the population of wild horses to a level in balance with available forage and water within the NWHR. The population adjustment is based on analysis of monitoring data. Helicopters and/or water trapping will be used to capture the wild horses.

no helicopters

This document outlines the process and the events involved with the wild horse roundup for the Nevada Wild Horse Range (NWHR) Gather. Included are the numbers of horses to be gathered, the time and method of capture, and the handling and disposition of captured horses. Also outlined are the BLM personnel involved with the roundup.

Area of Concern

The Nellis Air Force Range (Nevada Wild Horse Range and adjacent withdrawn lands) is located in south central Nevada in Clark, Lincoln and Nye counties. The proposed gather area is located in the north central portion of the Nellis Air Force Range in the Nevada Wild Horse Range (NWHR). Maps are enclosed to help locate the proposed removal areas.

The gather area is covered by the Nevada Wild Horse Range Herd Management Area Plan (1985). This action is considered a part of long term management to facilitate achievement of resource objectives.

Number of Horses to be Gathered

Through analysis, interpretation and evaluation (AIE) of resource data a population level of 997 horses has been determined to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance between horses and their environment. The AIE recommends removal of wild horses in excess of 997. Two thousand five hundred and seventeen horses exist within the NWHR (July 1989). The proposed number of horses to be gathered is 500-700 horses consistent with available funding.

*census in January
3000 total*

Time and Method of Capture

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why isn't not going out for bid?

The gather is expected to take place during FY90, and last approximately 2-4 weeks. The Rock Springs Wyoming BLM Wild Horse Gather Crew will perform the gather. The approximate start date for the gather is July 24, 1990.

The method of capture to be used will be a water and/or helicopter NO trapping. If water trapping proves unsuccessful, a helicopter will be used to move the 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 temporary holding corral will be constructed in the area to hold horses after capture. 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 nonharmful 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 Wild Horse and Burro Specialist.

Other methods of capture are not being considered for various reasons. Trapping horses by running them on horseback is not feasible because it is too easy to lose the horses after starting them towards the trap; injuries to both people and horses are more likely and the cost factor shown from previous roundups using this method indicates that the costs are prohibitive.

It is estimated that 1 or possibly 2 trap locations will be required to accomplish the work. One trap site will be the lower trough on the Rose Spring Pipeline and alternate trap locations at Tunnel and Corral Springs. Sites are located on or near existing roads and will receive cultural clearance prior to construction.

A water trap will be set up at lower trough on the Rose Spring Pipeline. Corral and Tunnel Springs are other potential water trap sites. The terrain in the removal area varies from flat valley bottoms to mountainous, and the horses could be located at all elevations during the time that the gather is scheduled. It is expected that they will be located in the valley bottoms since past utilization and distribution patterns indicate that this is the horses's preferred area. There are few physical barriers and fences in the area and the wranglers will be instructed to avoid them.

Administration of the Gather

BLM will be responsible for the capture, care, temporary holding of approximately 500-700 wild horses from the gather area, and their transportation to the adoption preparation facility (Palomino Valley Corrals (PVC)).

Within two weeks prior to the start of the gather, BLM will provide for 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 arrive at a conclusion as to whether the level of activity is likely to cause undue stress to the animals, and whether such stress would be acceptable to the animals if veterinarian expertise were present, or whether a delay in the capture activity is warranted. If it is determined that the capture can proceed with a veterinarian present, the services of a veterinarian will be obtained before the capture will proceed.

Other BLM personnel may be needed to help and include an archaeologist or a district archaeological technician to survey sites for cultural resources, and other Caliente Resource Area personnel as the need arises.

The Wild Horse and Burro Specialist (Caliente Resource Area) is directly responsible for the conduct of the gathering operation and for reporting the roundup proceedings to the Caliente Area Manager, Las Vegas District Manager, and the Nevada State Office.

The District Manager is responsible for maintaining and protecting the health and welfare of the wild horses. The Caliente Resource Area Manager and the Las Vegas District Manager are very involved with guidance and input into this removal plan. The health and welfare of the animals is the overriding concern of the District Manager, Area Manager, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and BLM gather crew.

All publicity, formal public contact, and inquiries will be handled through the Caliente Resource Area Manager. He will also coordinate the contract with Palomino Valley Corrals, the adoption preparation facility, to assure that there is space available in the corrals for the captured horses, that they can be handled humanely and efficiently, and that animals being transported from the capture site are arriving in good condition.

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.

The 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 Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, head wrangler 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., geldings, bobbed tails, photo documentation, saddle marks, etc.).
- c. Unbranded animals and offspring without obvious evidence of former private ownership.

The 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 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 relinquished to the custody of the Nevada Department of Agriculture (District Brand Inspector) pending notification of the owner or claimant.

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 Wild Horse and Burro Specialist a brand inspection certificate for the immediate shipment of wild horses to Palomino Valley (Reno).

Destruction of Injured or Sick Animals

Any severely injured or seriously sick animal shall be destroyed in accordance with 43 CFR Subpart 4730.1. Animals shall be destroyed only when a definite act of mercy is needed to alleviate pain and suffering. The 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 head wrangler of the BLM gather crew will also be permitted to determine when an animal will be destroyed when there is an immediate need to alleviate pain and suffering of a severely injured animal. When the Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and/or head wrangler are 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 as per Washington Office Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Program Guidance dated January 1983. A veterinarian can be called from Caliente, Nevada if necessary to care for any injured horses.

The carcasses of wild horses which 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 an 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 shall be on land withdrawn for military purposes. The USAF controls access to the area. All requests by the public for access to the holding facility shall 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.

BLM shall provide all feed, water, labor, and equipment to care for captured horses at the holding facility. BLM shall also provide transportation of captured horses from the temporary holding facility to the Nevada Distribution Center, Palomino Valley (Reno), 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 shall 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 BLM.

Stipulations and Specifications

- A. Motorized Equipment

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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. 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 shall not be allowed.

4. All vehicles used to transport animals to final destination shall 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 shall be covered and maintained with a non-skid surface such as sand, mineral soil or wood shavings, to prevent the animals from slipping. This will be confirmed by the Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and/or head wrangler prior to loading (every load).

6. Animals to be loaded and transported in any vehicle shall be as directed by the Wild Horse & Burro Specialist and the head wrangler 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 shall be allowed per standard 8 foot wide stocktrailer/truck.

The BLM employee supervising the loading of the wild horses to be transported from the trap to the temporary holding corral will require separation of small foals and/or weak horses from the rest should he/she feel that they may be injured during the trip. He/She will consider the distance and condition of the road and animals in making this determination. Horses shipped from the temporary holding corral to the BLM facility 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 BLM employee supervising the loading will exercise his/her authority to off-load animals should he/she feel there are too many horses on the trailer/truck.

⑦ The Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and head wrangler 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 BLM shall 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 facility. Communication lines have been established with the Palomino Valley personnel involved in off-loading the horses, to receive feedback 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 dust conditions are such that the animals could be endangered during transportation, the wranglers will be instructed to adjust speed. The maximum distance over which animals may have to be transported on dirt roads is approximately 4 miles per load.

B. Trapping and Care

1. All capture attempts shall be accomplished by water trapping and/or the utilization of a helicopter. A minimum of one saddlehorse shall be immediately available at the trapsite to accomplish roping if necessary. Roping shall be done as determined by the Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and head wrangler. Under no circumstances shall 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 shall be used in such a manner that bands or herds will remain together. Foals shall not be left behind.

3. The rate of movement and distance the animals travel shall not exceed limitations set by the 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 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 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 2 trap locations will be required to accomplish the work.

5. All traps, wings, and holding facilities shall 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 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.

b. 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.

c. 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.

d. Wings shall not be constructed out of barbed wire or other materials injurious to animals.

e. 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. Eight linear feet of this material shall 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 shall be connected with hinged self-locking gates.

6. No fence modification will be made without authorization from the Wild Horse and Burro Specialist. BLM shall be responsible for restoration of any fence modification made.

If the route the horses are herded passes through a fence, the BLM will 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 gather crew shall wet down the ground with water.

8. Alternate pens, within the holding facility shall be furnished to separate mares with small foals, sick and injured animals, and estray animals from the other horses. 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.

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

9. Animals shall be transported to final destination from temporary holding facilities within 24 hours after capture unless for unusual circumstances animals need to be held for a longer period. 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 Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and head wrangler. The BLM shall 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 shall be scheduled to arrive at final destination on Sunday.

10. BLM shall 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 shall 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. The BLM wranglers shall restrain sick or injured animals if treatment is necessary. The Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and head wrangler will determine if injured animals must be destroyed and provide for destruction of such animals.

C. Helicopter, Pilot, and Communications

1. Pilots 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 a 1,000 feet or more from animals, vehicles (other than fuel truck), and personnel not involved in refueling.

3. The Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and head wrangler 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 gather will be assigned.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
for the
NEVADA WILD HORSE RANGE WILD
HORSE GATHER

EA No. NV-055-00-22

Prepared by Jule Durfee
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist

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

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Las Vegas District, Caliente Resource Area, is proposing to remove excess wild horses from the Nevada Wild Horse Range (NWHR).

The proposed gather area is within the Nellis Air Force Range withdrawn lands located in south-central Nevada in Clark, Lincoln and Nye counties. The Nevada Wild Horse Range is located in the north central portion of the Nellis Air Force Range (see Appendix I - Location Maps).

Purpose and Need

The proposed action is to remove excess wild horses from the Nevada Wild Horse Range.

The removal of wild horses is necessary to restore the range to a thriving natural ecological balance and prevent further deterioration of the vegetation community threatened by an overpopulation of wild horses. The horses are over utilizing key forage species. The proposed action involves removals in order to correct resource degradation identified from analysis of rangeland monitoring data in the Nevada Wild Horse Range Evaluation. Wild horses will be removed from within the Nevada Wild Horse Range to reduce resource damage. Refer to Appendix II for allotment evaluation summaries.

Relationship to Planning

The proposed Nellis Air Force Range Resource Plan is currently under protest.

The proposal area is covered by the Nevada Wild Horse Range Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP) (1985). The proposal is in conformance with the NWHR HMAP as well as the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act (Public Law 92-195), as amended.

Major Issues

This proposal is concerned with ^{protested} two major issues. The first issue is to manage wild horses within the Nevada Wild Horse Range at a level established through the analysis of monitoring data that will provide a thriving natural ecological balance between horses and their environment. The second issue is the humane treatment and safe handling of the wild horses during capture, care, temporary holding, and transportation to the BLM adoption preparation facility.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

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Proposed Action

The proposed action consists of using water trapping and/or a helicopter to gather 500-700 wild horses.

The horses will be gathered using water trapping and/or a helicopter and portable wing traps. The gather is expected to take place by the BLM Rock Springs Wild Horse Gather Crew during FY90, and last approximately 2-4 weeks. The approximate start date for the removal is July 9, 1990. *protested by Catoor's*

Water trapping wild horses has been successful when employed on previous gathers of excess horses within the Nevada Wild Horse Range and the adjacent withdrawn lands. Water trapping is easier on the animal and is the preferred method. Perennial water sources are limited on the NWHR which creates an ideal situation for water trapping.

It is estimated that 2 temporary traps with deflector wings encompassing less than 1 acre each would be constructed on withdrawn lands in the herd area. Temporary trap and corral sites would be selected by the Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and head wrangler. Each facility would be constructed from portable pipe panels. These traps would be moved as needed during the gathering operation and completely removed from the area after the operation is completed. If water trapping proves to be unsuccessful due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances a helicopter will be used. A BLM contracted helicopter and experienced wranglers would be used to drive and direct horses to each trap site in an efficient and careful manner. Hazards such as cliffs, fences, and old mine shafts would be scouted in advance and avoided. Existing roads and trails would be used whenever possible. Horses would be truck hauled to temporary holding facilities in Palomino Valley, Nevada, for processing, then shipped to distribution centers for adoption. Horses that might be held at the trap site in excess of 10 hours would have food and water provided.

Branded horses would be treated under the Nevada State estray laws.

Applicable Standard Operating Procedures

These standard operating procedures (SOP's) are also part of the proposed action:

- (1) Horse handling will be kept to a minimum. Capture and transporting operations can be 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 during the foaling season, between March 1 and July 1, because of the potential stress to

pregnant and lactating mares and the possibility of induced abortions.

- (3) Horses will not be ^{5 miles} run more than 10 miles nor faster than 20 miles per hour during gathering operations and gathering will be done in the early morning and early evening to avoid overheating horses during hot weather.
- (4) A veterinarian will be on call during gathering operations.
- (5) Trap sites or holding corrals will not be placed in areas of any known listed or proposed threatened or endangered plant or animal species.
- (6) A cultural resources investigation by an archaeologist or a district archaeological technician will be conducted prior to any trap or holding corral construction. If cultural values are discovered, an alternate site will be selected.
- (7) Helicopters will be used with caution. The Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and head wrangler will be present during gathering attempts to ensure strict compliance with the above mileage limitations and 43 CFR Part 4700 regulations. He/she will make a careful determination of a boundary line to serve as an outer limit within which attempts will be made to herd horses to a given trap. Topography, distance, weather, and current conditions of the horses will be considered in setting the mileage limits so as to avoid undue stress on the horses while they are being herded. The Wild Horse and Burro Specialist and head wrangler will be present at the gathering site to ensure minimum injury and other traumatic effects that could occur to the horses.
- (8) Captured horses that are obviously lame, deformed, or sick will be humanely disposed of at the trap site. WHO WILL DETERMINE?
- (9) Every effort will be made to keep mares and their young foals together.
- (10) Temporary traps and corrals will be removed and sites will be left clean of all debris within 30 days following the gathering operation.

In addition to the standard operating procedures, the stipulations and specifications as listed in the Removal Plan for Nellis Air Force Range Wild Horse Gather will also be considered a part of the proposed action.

Alternatives

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Different methods of capturing wild horses are discussed in the removal plan and will be briefly discussed in the alternative section of this environmental assessment. Current economic and political constraints limit "technically feasible and reasonably available" alternatives which could be expected to attain the objectives of the proposed action.

Alternative I - Trapping Wild Horses by Running Them on Horseback

Trapping horses by running them on horseback is not feasible because it is too easy to lose the horses after starting them towards the trap. Injuries to both people and horses are more likely. The cost factor shown from previous roundups using this method indicates that the costs are prohibitive. This alternative will, therefore, not be considered further.

Alternative II - No Action

Under the No Action alternative no gathering operations would be conducted; no wild horses would be gathered. Number of wild horses would continue to increase. Herd numbers would not be held at the levels established through analysis of monitoring studies. Number of animals would continue to exceed available supply of water which would result in horses dying and degradation of horse habitat. Since this would be out of conformance with the herd area management plan, Bureau policy and public law, this alternative will not be considered further.

Other Alternatives Considered

Supplemental Feed and Water:

Hauling feed and water was considered uneconomical and beyond the intent of the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act. Supplemental feed and water would not maintain the horses in a thriving natural ecological balance with their environment. Therefore this alternative was considered and rejected.

Developing Water:

All known spring sources on the NWHR have been developed or are planned for development. Insufficient hydrological data exists at this time to ascertain if drilling wells is feasible. The Bureau requires three years to develop and implement range improvement projects. It is also unknown how drilling wells for stock water would affect the primary use of the NWHR. Therefore this alternative was considered and rejected.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A complete description of the affected environment can be found in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Public Land Withdrawal, Nellis Air Force Bombing Range, Nye, Clark, and Lincoln Counties, Nevada (1981). These documents are on file at the BLM Las Vegas District Office. Certain elements of the affected environment, which are necessary for the understanding of the anticipated impacts, will be described in the environmental consequences section for the proposed action.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

There would be no impacts from the proposed action to threatened or endangered species (plants or animals); floodplains; wetlands; areas of critical environmental concern; wild and scenic rivers; visual resource management; prime or unique farmlands; or wilderness resource values.

Threatened and Endangered Plants:

No federally listed threatened and endangered species are found on the NWHR.

Water and Riparian:

See evaluation summary ^{WHERE?} for discussion of water and riparian habitat. If horse number continue to grow unchecked damage to riparian and water sources will continue and increase in intensity (see Fig. 23 range evaluation summary). ^{WHERE?} Removal of 500 horses will neither positively or negatively impact water and riparian.

Social and Economic Values:

Positive management and maintenance of wild horse numbers through a thriving natural ecologic balance could bring vicarious pleasure to wild horse advocates. The removal of excess wild horses from the gather area would please Department of Energy, United States Air Force, Nevada Department of Wildlife and local residents who have opportunity to observe the condition of the horses. Proceeding with the gather would help public relations for the Las Vegas BLM District.

Air Quality:

Short-term increases in transient dust levels caused by operation of ground vehicles and running horses would occur. Short-term impacts to air quality would also occur during gathering operations and handling of horses, resulting from helicopter and vehicle exhaust emissions.

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Long term beneficial impacts would be a reduction in dust levels caused by fewer horses trailing to water. Fewer horses would also give vegetation an opportunity to increase in cover and frequency, this would expose less soil to the wind and further reduce dust levels.

Wild Horses:

The HMA location are shown in Appendix I (Location Maps). The July 1989 census counted 6,255 horses roaming the NWHR and AWL. Two thousand five hundred and seventeen horses were counted on the NWHR.

WHERE?
census Jan - 3000 one due in June?

From analysis of data it was determined that 997 wild horses are the maximum that the Nevada Wild Horse Range can support while maintaining a thriving ecological balance between horses and their environment (see evaluation summary). Removal of only 500-700 horses would not restore the range to a thriving ecological balance. The proposed action would only be a

beginning. Don't do it twice

A negative impact on wild horses would be expected during gathering and handling. This would result from traumatic effects of capturing, trapping, loading, and hauling the animals. The use of helicopters to capture excess wild horses may result in leppy (abandoned) foals and split bands, as well as injured horses. Incidents like these tend to be increased if the animals are pushed too hard. Death loss is not expected to exceed 2% of the horses captured at the trap site. The standard operating procedures will minimize the negative impacts from gathering, and help ensure humane treatment and safe handling of the wild horses during capture, care, temporary holding, and transportation to the BLM adoption preparation facility.

Removal operations may disrupt band structure either temporarily or permanently and cause some stress to individuals.

Enough horses would remain to maintain viable herds and provide for interaction between bands. Reduced competition among wildlife and horses for forage, water, cover, and living space would result in better condition animals, as well as higher survival and reproduction rates in each. Managing the wild horses within HMA boundaries at the established levels based on an analysis of monitoring studies will help maintain the ecological balance and multiple use relationship of the area also.

Much biological information can be obtained from the gathered animals (sex and age ratios, parasites, diseases, etc.). All

of this information would be useful in future wild horse management.

Soils:

Areas which presently exhibit soil erosion and compaction would be positively impacted because of the reduction of animals and decreased trampling effects. New trampling areas and resultant soil compaction would be created at the trap and holding corral sites by the large number of horses concentrated there. The impact would be minor since the impacted area would be small in relation to the gather area, and the time for gathering is short lived.

Vegetative cover has a direct influence on the erosion potential of soils. The reduction in horse numbers and the resultant reduction in vegetative utilization (especially in heavy use areas) would have both short and long-term beneficial impacts to the soils resource. These beneficial responses - less soil compaction and improved soil production potential - would be most important in heavy horse use areas.

Vegetation:

Studies data, as well as the herd management area evaluation summary for the Nevada Wild Horse Range provide a detailed analysis on which this removal proposal is based. The evaluation summary is attached. ?

There would be a short-term negative impact to the vegetation at the trap sites and holding corrals, which would be less than 1 acre each. The vegetation would be severely trampled by all the horses that would be concentrated at those locations. This would be a minor impact, though, because the impacted areas would be small in relation to the gather area. Vegetative regeneration would be expected within 2 to 3 years depending on climatic conditions.

The reduction in wild horses would have a positive long-term impact on the vegetative community of the area. The ecological condition of the different plant communities would improve after the gather. The more desirable grasses and shrubs would not be utilized as heavily. Production of these species would increase, as would their percentage of composition within the community.

Wildlife:

A minor impact to wildlife is expected during the gather. Some animals could be temporarily frightened or displaced by the increased activity during the removal operation. Helicopters

have been observed to produce negative impacts on wildlife species - running and panic behavior in big game species, flight response in waterfowl, and frantic escape behavior in eagles and other raptors. Although the precise overall impacts of low-flying aircraft on wildlife are not known at the present time caution will be exercised in using helicopters in wildlife concentration areas to minimize the impacts.

Any reduction in wild horse numbers should reduce competition for forage and result in a beneficial impact to the mule deer, and antelope herds. Reduced competition for the supply of forage should help the deer and antelope through hard winters and reduce winter losses. Reduction in wild horse numbers would reduce competition for water and result in a beneficial impact to the mule deer and antelope herds.

Reduced use and trampling on riparian areas should benefit a large number of wildlife species. It would greatly benefit sage grouse since they use riparian areas for brooding. It would benefit mule deer since these areas serve as fawning areas and provide much needed nutrition for lactating does.

PROPOSED MITIGATING MEASURES

1. Wherever possible, gathering will avoid areas of high concentrations of mule deer and antelope to avoid stressing these animals.
2. Horses will normally not be kept within the traps or corrals for more than 1 day to minimize stress to the animals and trampling effects and soil compaction, unless approved by the Authorized Officer. Number of horses to be held may vary depending on how many are caught in any one area. Horses may be held longer than 1 day, dependent upon shipping schedules, number of horses captured, or other unforeseen circumstances.

SUGGESTED MONITORING

The Wild Horse and Burro Specialist will continuously monitor the gather operation to ensure that all conditions and stipulations in this EA are complied with. The project area will be cleaned up (trash and debris) prior to release of the gather crew. The temporary traps and holding corrals will be removed by the gather crew within 30 days following completion.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Intensity of Public Interest

DRAFT

Nationally, the issue of wild horses on western public rangelands has been an intense controversy spanning many years and beginning prior to the passage of the Wild Horse and Burro Act in 1971. Wild horse preservationists are generally concerned with maintaining adequate habitat for optimum population levels of wild horses and viable herds.

Ranchers who graze livestock on public lands view excess wild horses as competitive with livestock for forage and water. However, some ranchers and others support a maintenance of reasonable numbers of wild horses.

Sportsmen and other wildlife interests also see excess horses as a competitive threat to wildlife populations and site competition for food, water, cover, and space as being detrimental.

Nevada, the state with the highest wild horse population, was also home state of the wild horse protection movement fostered by the late Velma Johnston ("Wild Horse Annie"). In Nevada, ranching is a mainstay business in rural counties. The levels of public interest in wild horses are high in Nevada, both from the protection and removal viewpoints. The Bureau of Land Management in Nevada has been and is involved in wild horse related court litigation. Litigations have been brought by protectionist groups seeking to stop what they view as unwarranted horse gathering. Recent litigations have been brought by private landowners, including livestock permittees, many of whom have requested removal of wild horses from their private lands.

Since public interest is high and the wild horse program is of a controversial nature, public notification of the project will be given and public comments are solicited for a period of 14 days (see Record of Persons, Groups, and Agencies Contacted). Comments received are considered for the final environmental assessment.

Record of Persons, Groups, and Agencies Contacted

- American Horse Protection Association
- National Mustang Association
- International Society for the Protection of Wild Horses and Burros
- Nevada State Department of Agriculture
- Animal Protection Institute of America
- American Humane Association
- National Wild Horse Association
- Wild Horse Organized Assistance
- Save the Mustangs
- American Bashkir Curly Register
- Humane Society of Southern Nevada
- Nevada Humane Society
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Nevada Federation of Animal Protection Organizations
- Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses and Burros

- Mr. Craig C. Downer
 - U.S. Humane Society
 - Ms. Deborah Allard
 - Ms. Nan Sherwood
 - Ms. Amanda Rush
 - Mr. John Walker, Nevada State Clearinghouse Coordinator
 - Nevada Cattlemen's Association
 - Nevada Department of Wildlife, Region III
 - Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Director
 - Bureau of Land Management, Las Vegas District Manager
 - Ms. Barbara Eustis-Cross, L.I.F.E. Foundation
 - Mr. Donald Molde
 - Ms. Tina Nappe
 - Ms. Jan Nachlinger, The Nature Conservancy
 - Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
 - Nevada Outdoor Recreation Association
 - Nevada Wildlife Federation
 - Sierra Club, c/o Ms. Rose Strickland
 - United States Wild Horse and Burro Foundation
 - United States Air Force
 - Department of Energy
-
- Frank and Rose Delmue
 - Francis Lytle
 - Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
 - Tom Williams
 - Dan Bowler
 - Kelton Hafen
 - Emery Conaway
 - Lincoln County Commissioners
 - James & Geroge Tennille
 - Kevin & Sandra Olson
 - Henry & Virginia Rice
 - J Bar P Cattle Co.
 - Kimner Jenson
 - Wendell Jones
 - Kellspin Trust
 - Edwin Larson
 - Kenneth Lee
 - Bruce Micheal
 - Gubler Trust
 - Brent Hunter
 - Rulon & Bruce Cox
 - Delamar Valley Cattle
 - Rachel Ballow
 - Marilee Tanner
 - Phil Seegmiller
 - Las Vegas Dist. Advisory Council
 - Carolyn Shawl
 - Lloyd Smith
 - Steven Fulstone
 - Wyoming Advocates for Animals

- Tom Brown, Lincoln County Game Board

Internal District Review

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Eddie Guerrero | Wildlife Biologist/Environmental Coordinator Caliente Resource Area |
| Terry Smith | Range Conservationist, Caliente Resource Area |
| Mike Neff | Range Conservationist, Caliente Resource Area |
| Larry Lacey | Surface Protection Specialist, Caliente Resource Area |
| Cory Bodman | Soils Scientist, Caliente Resource Area |
| Tim Murphy | Supervisory Range Conservationist, Caliente Resource Area |
| Bob Stager | Range Conservationist/Wild Horse and Burro Specialist Las Vegas District Office |
| Milton Frei | Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, Nevada State Office |
| Curtis G. Tucker | Area Manager, Caliente Resource Area |

SIGNATURES

Prepared by:

Jule Durfee
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
Caliente Resource Area

Date

Reviewed by:

Eddie Guerrero
Environmental Coordinator
Caliente Resource Area

Date

Curtis G. Tucker Area Manager
Caliente Resource Area
Las Vegas District

Date

DRAFT

6/7/90

MILLER
Acting Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

TERRI JAY
Executive Director



COMMISSIONERS

Deloyd Satterthwaite, Chairman
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Tuscarora, Nevada 89834

Dawn Lappin
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Reno, Nevada 89511

Michael Kirk, D.V.M.
P.O. Box 5896
Reno, Nevada 89513

COMMISSION FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF WILD HORSES

Stewart Facility
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710
(702) 885-5589

June 7, 1990

Curtis Tucker, Area Manager
Caliente Resource Area
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 237
Caliente, Nevada 89008

Dear Mr. Tucker,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft Nevada Wild Horse Range Evaluation and draft NWHR Gather Plan and EA.

While the aforementioned documents and plans have great inadequacies, I want to make it clear from the onset that the Commission fully supports the planned reduction of wild horses from the Nevada Wild Horse Range.

It is imperative that the planned use of helicopters be eliminated, the plan go out for bid and that an experienced Wild Horse and Burro Specialist be on hand for this capture.

My comments on the documents are as follows:

Removal Plan Comments

Purpose

Please delete "helicopters" as there is no need for the use of helicopters in this gather.

Number of Horses to be Gathered

No comment for this section is not to be construed as concurrence with the AIE determination.

Time and Method of Capture

Please provide the justification for not sending the capture out for bid.

This document lists the approximate start date as July 24, while the EA lists the approximate start date as July 9. Which is correct?

Please delete all references to use of helicopters as there is no need. The use of helicopters in this area could be used to remove horses outside of the NWHR by driving them into a trap on the NWHR. Since there is presently a protest lodged by this Commission regarding the boundary issue, the use of helicopters will only raise questions regarding where the horses were gathered.

use pattern mapping

however, the number of horses

① we insist that a COR from the district be assigned and we

Curtis Tucker
June 7, 1990
Page 2

Administration of the Gather

Since the WH & B Specialist is directly responsible for the conduct of the gathering operation, it is important for this individual to have extensive knowledge and experience with wild horses and capture operations. ~~Since the present WH & B specialist's experiences are limited, I would~~ recommend that you "borrow" a Specialist from another District for assistance.

Delete all references to "head wrangler."

Please refer to NSO policy regarding determination of status of wild horses. The ultimate responsibility for determining wild and free-roaming status lies SOLELY with the BLM. The Brand Inspector does not need to be consulted.

Destruction of Injured or Sick Animals

The primary responsibility for determining when an animal is to be destroyed should lie solely with a veterinarian.

Since ASI personnel will perform the destruction of horses when necessary, have they received instruction in humane euthanasia?

Since this capture must go out for bid, please delete all references to "head wrangler."

Stipulations and Specifications

5. Delete "head wrangler."
6. Delete "head wrangler."
7. Delete "head wrangler."

B. Trapping and Care

1. Delete "and/or the use of a helicopter."
Delete "head wrangler."
2. Delete this section since a helicopter is not necessary.
3. Delete this section also for the aforementioned reason.
7. Change "gather crew" to "contractor."
9. Delete "head wrangler."
10. Change "BLM" to "contractor."
11. Delete "BLM Wranglers" and change to "contractor."
Delete "head wrangler."

C. Helicopter, Pilot, and Communications

Delete this section entirely since a helicopter is not necessary.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT No. NV-055-00-22

Proposed Action

- Delete "and/or helicopter."
Delete BLM Rock Springs gather crew.
Note discrepancy in start date from gather plan.
Delete references to helicopter.
- (3) Delete this section since use of helicopter is not necessary.
 - (7) Delete this section for the same reason.

as well as Long-term

Other Alternatives Considered

Developing Water - This item should be included in ^{short} long-term solutions since the use of cooperative agreements and possible Commission funding would alleviate the problem of BLM's three year time constraints on range improvements.

Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action

Threatened and Endangered Plants

Your information on T & E species is incorrect. The Nellis Bombing and Gunnery Range, which contains the NWHR, contains the following species:

1. ASCLEPIAS EASTWOODIANA Barneby
2. CRYPANTHA HOFFMANNII I. M. Johnston
3. CORYPHANTHA VIVIPARA - Clokey Pincusion Cactus
4. SCLEROCACTUS POLYANCISTRUS - Mojave Fishhook Cactus
5. ASTRAGALUS FUNEREUS M. E. Jones - Funeral Milk-vetch
6. PHACELIA BEATLEYAE Reveal & Constance

Wild Horses

Why are you using the census from July 1989 when you have a more recent count from January 1990? Due to the serious inconsistencies between the counts, it is most likely that the July count was higher due to DOUBLE COUNTING. The snows in January helped to disburse the horses which probably eliminated the double counting. Until another census proves otherwise, you should use the most recent information.

Delete impacts from use of helicopters since they are not necessary in this gather.

You state that biological information can be obtained from the gathered animals which would be useful. Will the biological information be gathered, and compiled, and analyzed & when?

Wildlife

Please remove the impacts to wildlife from the helicopter since the helicopter should not be used.

SUGGESTED MONITORING

This section should be changed to reflect monitoring of the capture contractor.

NEVADA WILD HORSE RANGE EVALUATION SUMMARY

II. INITIAL STOCKING LEVEL:

B. 1. The recommendations of the C & C Committee have limited bearing on management decisions that affect wild horses on the Nellis area, since "committee" decisions do not allow for input by the **total affected interests** in public land decisions as required by Federal Law.

When the C & C Committee made the recommendation to manage horses ONLY on the NWHR, they may not have been aware that that decision was in violation of the W H & B Act which stipulates

Betty Burgess
D. T.?

that wild horses shall be managed where they occurred at passage of the Act.

IBLA ruled that appropriate management levels, or optimum numbers can only be set through analysis of monitoring data to determine a thriving natural ecological balance. This section should be changed to reflect how the AML or optimum number will be set.

POPULATION OBJECTIVES:

6. It should be noted that this item is under protest.

LONG TERM OBJECTIVES
QUANTIFICATION OF ACTIVITY PLAN OBJECTIVES

4. Threatened and Endangered - Please revise.

IV. MANAGEMENT EVALUATION:

B. 1. Actual Use Data Summary:

a. Livestock: Even though you state that there is no livestock use authorized on the NWHR and AWL, there has been incidence of trespass livestock even recently. How is the trespass use being monitored?

c. Wild Horses and Burros: In your last paragraph in this section, you state that "dry conditions reduced the availability of perennial water" at Breen Creek. This is not the whole truth. Damage from a flash flood blew out the improvements and they were not repaired in a timely manner.

Also in this section, you make excuses for your lower January census, when in fact, the previous year's census may have resulted in double counts. Horses that are disbursed would be much easier to count correctly.

7. Ecological Status/Desired Plant Community:

When will the ecological status inventories be completed?

8. Wildlife Habitat:

If mountain lions are present throughout the entire area, are you monitoring or planning on monitoring mountain lion predation on wild horses? Mountain lion predation is significantly impacting at least one wild horse herd in Nevada.

9. Riparian Areas/Fisheries Habitat:

In your comments regarding Breen Creek, you state that the reduced water flow was due to dry conditions. Part of the problem was due to the improvements being blown out by a flash flood and NOT REPAIRED in a timely manner. This section should be changed to reflect the whole story.

The necropsies were performed on a minute # of pop. which ^{would} ~~not necessarily~~ reflect conditions on remaining ^{herd} ~~population~~ of wh in the 1971 herd boundaries,

Curtis Tucker
June 7, 1990
Page 5

10. Wild Horse and Burro Habitat: *Where did you get your suitability criteria?*
Is your decision to use 6 miles from a water source based on what would be an ideal traveling radius for horses? Many of the horses we observed were ranging almost twice that distance.

What is your reasoning for including necropsy reports? *From previous emergency gather reports*
~~Are necropsy reports included in allotment evaluations where cattle have died?~~

You state that it is easier in semi-arid environments to prevent damage to water and vegetative resources than to repair it. Why wasn't Breen Creek riparian area fenced, with the water piped out to troughs? Why weren't the Breen Creek improvements fixed immediately following the damage from the flash floods?

In your discussion of the REECO accident, you seem to lay blame on the horses for being in the area. The fact is that REECO employees VIOLATED state environmental pollution laws and horses died. Period.

C. 1. A. Forage Resources:

How did you determine that the limiting factor to manage for a thriving ecological balance is 6 miles from water? If the horses are self-limiting to that distance, then your additional data on the AWL would not show the utilization that is occurring.

You also state that horses have expanded their use area to the AWL. If the 1971 area of use had been established, it would show that the AWL is historical use area anyway.

VI. TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A. 1) a) Vegetation: While it is appropriate to build an enclosure to protect a riparian area, it is not reasonable to cut horses off from water sources when they are so limited. The water at Breen Creek must be piped out to a trough if an enclosure is built.

A. 3) a) Wild Horses: It should be indicated that this point is under protest and may require an amendment to the HMAP.

4) FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS:

a) Construction of permanent water traps seems to be a waste of time and money when development of additional water TO AID distribution is far more important. Again, the question of expansion to the AWL is under protest.

e) The method used by the University of Minnesota should not be considered due to it's short term effect (maximum of 2 years) and the invasive procedure required. *(See attached letter)*

g) The idea of a video is another expensive idea that should not be considered. Rehabilitation of range (NWHR) that was desecrated by over 5000 trespass livestock until 1979 would be a much better use of limited funds.

C. T & E Section 7 Consultation - Given the aforementioned information regarding T & E species, a consultation might be necessary.

We will strongly object to any production ^{and distrib.} of a video, ~~that does not tell the~~ unless it ~~res~~ shows conditions on entire 1971 use area.

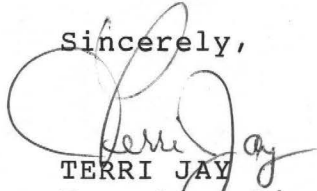
Curtis Tucker
June 7, 1990
Page 6

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on these documents.

If the Commission can provide assistance with funding for range improvements in this herd area, please let us know so we can help you initiate a grant proposal.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



TERRI JAY
Executive Director

Secondary Feb 2 1990

WNOA

6-90
22370

Thank you

In our June 1990 comments to the Draft Nevada Wild Horse Range Evaluation and draft NAWHR EA and Gopher Plan, WNOA supported comments made by the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses and asked that those comments be made a part of WNOA's comments. We added that WNOA will support the removal of excess wild horses from the NRC, down to that level, which will achieve proper utilization of the water and vegetative resource in the entire area currently occupied by wild horses.

~~We understand the Capture plan + EA are separate from the Aug. 1990 draft, and the (4720.1 (NV-055.10, dated Aug. We understand the Aug 1990 draft capture plan + EA was replaced with a final capture plan and EA dated Feb 1991, which has now become a draft capture plan, dated March 1991. (As a member of WNOA and the Commission, we were advised ^{by Mark and Julie} in Feb 1991, Las Vegas, that another, ^{complete} census was to occur the following week end; to determine how the original draft had a population level, after removals, of over ^{July 1989} 6000 horses.)~~ We understand

In Aug 1990 a census showed an actual count of 4302 wild horses. As a member of the Commission & Director Joe W HOA, ^{the Commission} ~~the~~ ^{was} ~~were~~ advised in Feb 1991 (Las Vegas Commission) by Harley Deekenhut & Julie Deurfee that another complete census to be done that following weekend, to explain how the ~~Aug 1990~~ July 1989 census the original draft had a population level, after removals, of over 6000 wild horses. ~~The final EA (now a draft)~~ We are advised now that Feb 1991 census was changed to determine relative density and location of wild horses. Our comments on the EA's capture plan (in that order) are as follows:

Receipt
of proposed
action

The purpose of the proposed action is to remove between 800-2000 excess wild horses from the Nellis Air Force Range." Page 3, (proposed action) states, "Implementation of the Proposed Action would gather between 800+ 2000 wild horses, contingent upon available funding, potential contract costs, and personnel constraints, during FY 1991." Page 2, para 4 clearly states that "sufficient perennial water is available within the gather area to support 1100-1200 wild horses."

Page 7, para. 5, clearly states "consistent monitoring of perennial water sources in 1990 indicated sufficient perennial water exists to support between 1100-1200 wild horses on the Tellis Air Force Range." Please explain 1) the difference in the gather area and the Tellis Air Force Range computations, when each is a different boundary, yet will support the same # of WH; 2) what happens to the wild horses in excess of available water that are not captured due to the constraints mentioned on page 3, para 15. What contingency plans to make water available for the remaining horses not captured.

Dakle #1 ^{pg 8} Insert July - Stage Spring Source + flow

Page 3, para 2, gives a start date of April 1, which is past, and lasting approx 4-12 weeks. Page 5, ^{page 7} however states "no helicopter gathering will be allowed during the foaling season between Mar 1 + Jul 1, then in the next para. #8 states "if" a helicopter is used."

4308
2000
2308x

258 gal.

This should be reworded to state "no helicopters will be used from Mar 1 to Jul 1 for capture purposes, gathering after Jul 1, helicopters may be used with these limitations.

Correct language page 3, para. 5 to read prohibition of helicopters during foaling period.

Page 4, para. 2, please indicate exactly which processing areas the BEM has assured access.

Page 5, para #9.

The Commission was advised in Feb 1991, Las Vegas, the capture was to be water trapping, and BEM employees were to be utilized. We understand that a contract for capture was initiated late February. When questioned about contract vs BEM, we were told it is cheaper. Please provide contract costs, as well as those ~~the~~ cost for BEM personnel to be present for ~~the~~ COR + PI.

Page 5, #11 correct to foaling period.

Page 5, ~~para~~ last para.

You state "monitoring of wild horse numbers + rangeland conditions would continue on NAR at regular intervals, as est by the HMAP, to evaluate impacts

Gather
Plan
Regul mont.

the proposed action." Continuing evaluations would be made of monitoring data in order to determine if the wild horse population is being "maintained" in a thriving ecological balance...."

First, we know that not all of the waters available within the NRC were surveyed, and analyzed. So you are basing the 1100 to ~~2000~~ 1200 on the presently surveyed ~~known~~ waters. Had the waters been maintained & the storage (as per BMP/EIS), and monitored, then the removal and future "maintenance" of thriving ecological balance ^{would be the follow.} Surely, BLM is not stating, with this capture, that the 1100-1200 wild horses is a thriving ecological balance.

Alternatives

Developing Water Sources.

Although all known water sources have been developed, they have not been rehabilitated or maintained. Below Creek, ~~to~~ Please a form table for each water source currently requiring rehabilitation.

At what point in time does the BLM estimate that it will have sufficient monitoring data to establish an AMU.

~~You if Monies are not available~~

Isn't the preferred use of perennial grasses for fall + winter use 60%? (RMP.)

Your ¹⁹⁸⁹ utilization studies show 65% on Indian ricegrass. How do you obtain allowable use levels at 50%.

Page 9, para 2. *You state "BLM has been involved in wild horse related litigation and protests since 1987. Gathering of WH during this period has been curtailed."

How do you explain the removal in 1987 of 1210, and 1989 of 683? if the Roundups were curtailed. Clarify that protests were due to improper delineation of 1971 boundary. Correct para 2, pg 9 to read "WFOA supports a removal of excess wild horses from the NRC, down to that level, which will achieve proper utilization of the water + vegetative resource in the entire area currently occupied by wild horses." Although WFOA is not opposing this capture based on available

waters, we do believe BLM has not surveyed all waters on NWA; ~~has not~~ and ~~has utilized~~ we do not believe BLM has adequately addressed or researched reasons for reduced water production, other than drought. (See Nevada Special Report # Pg. 2-113 (Sec. 2.9.4).

Delete page 9, ^{last} para, last sentence. You state the biological information obtained from the capture would be useful in future management, w/ the past removals, we see no inclusion of that data. ~~that~~ ~~has helped~~

Water trapping

WWSOA & the Commission were led to believe that water trapping during foal^{ing} was the only method to be used. We strongly reconfirm our support for water trapping, and upon cost comparison of ^{BLM} employees vs contractor, we support the most humane & economical method, in light that there is some question as to sufficient capture funds.

Alternative 1 - No Action pg 10

Remove first line as BEM has no data substantiating significant die-offs.
delete last sentence ~~and~~ "wild horse survival rates would continue to drop," when ~~the~~ BEM data shows a healthy 16-20% ~~increase~~ birth rate.

Vegetation pg 11

Proposed Action

How can you say the trap sites (remember we are water trapping) would sustain negative impacts, when your data states 0-5 miles from water is 100% utilized?

We agree with second paragraph under vegetation, but only so long as BEM continues ~~judiciously~~ judiciously monitor and manage wild horse #'s accordingly.

Cumulative Impacts pg 13

Proposed Action

Remove "maintaining a thriving ecological balance." The sentence stating "Ranging from one-quarter to one mile of perennial water...." Your data shows severe use now, one to five miles from water, with horses traveling from water to

Alternative
Proaction

sufficient veg is approx 15 miles. The last sentence of para 3 under Alternative 1 - "No Action State" "An equal # of WH deaths would occur as a result of increasing contacts with potentially hazardous or lethal substances." See Draft working copy 12/22/89, enclosed. Hydrological Resources Report.

(p913) Irreversible and Irrecoverable com of Res.

We don't agree that there are no irreversible commitments of resources with a Alternative 1 - no action.

~~Please explain how you can~~
When did Milton Fri, as WH+B ~~by~~ Specialist NSO provide this input.

Capture

Purpose p92

Remove first sentence and replace with
The proposed action will be the first step to bring the pop of WH to a level approaching a balance with ~~and~~ currently available water and forage within the ~~expanded~~ historical area of use in the NAFF.

The population adjustment is based solely on partial surveys of water and ^{analysis of} partial monitoring data.

Regarding the census data, capture numbers, and available funding see EA Comments.

Number of Horses to be Gathered

Remove paragraph & restate.
Captures are not the only alternative to obtain T&E B. ~~Correct~~ The last sentence pg 2, para 1 should be consistent with pg 3, para 1.

~~Para 5~~, Page 3, para 5 lists Tunnel Springs as ^{put} trap site, ~~the~~ the EA states Tunnel Springs is dried up.

Administration of Gather, pg 3

We support the most humane & economical capture since funds are the limiting factor; however we want either the BEM Supervisor or COP/PI to be identified in the Final.

Page 4, para 2 states BEM will provide precapture evaluation of existing condition in gather area, we request a copy of that precapture evaluation.

Contractors Briefing pg 5

→ On Feb 28th a Contract was signed despite assurances to the Com + WFOA for BEM employees water trapping, Before the draft comments were received. We were informed that a particular contractor could capture ^{these} Mullis horses for capture for \$4900. We would like to know what the bid finally was, as well as an accounting of why you have chosen this over any other.

Did the BEM advertise?

→ We request cc of certificates of safety standards.

Branded + Claimed

Please send a copy of all claimed / and unbranded horses.

(c) unbranded animals and offspring without obvious evidence of former private ownership — omit.

Page 5, Para 4, BEM alone determines wild
free roaming status of unbranded horses
~~will~~.

Destruction pg 6

Have the ASI been adequately
trained in humane dest. of horses. When &
where? by whom.

~~Page 7~~, Page 7 para 1 - feed should
be grass hay.

Stipulations pg 7

(1) see Contractor Briefing pg 5 -
capture plan.

(5) as rec by Palomino, only wood
shavings (no sand or soil materials)

Trapping & Care pg 9 -

Throughout this document you refer to
foals when by your own EA no helicopter
through foaling season.

~~Traps~~ Traps should be placed in
heavy & severe use areas.

pg 11 - change 24 to 48 hours since
horses will be trapped at water & some
may not have had an opport to drink.

D Contractor

Refer to comments on BEM employees & water trapping Feb-1991 Commission meeting - Las Vegas. However, all hay should be grass.