

5/15/91 G

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Las Vegas District Office  
4765 Vegas Drive  
P.O. Box 26569  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

In reply refer to:  
4700  
(NV-053)

May 15, 1991

MEMORANDUM

To: State Director, Nevada (NV-910)  
From: District Manager, Las Vegas  
Subject: Pre-Capture Evaluation Summary for Nellis Air Force Range Wild Horse Removal

The Nellis Air Force Range Wild Horse Removal is scheduled to begin on May 20, 1991. The pre-work conference was completed with the contractor and Nellis personnel on May 15, 1991. Dave Cattoor and all his crew, Joe Altavilla representing Department of Defence, Dan Finigan and Mike Zimmerman representing Sandia, and Bob Stager and Julie Durfee representing BLM were present.

One holding facility and three initial capture locations were selected and corral panels situated at the well near the O & M compound, Lower Rose pipeline, and Breen Creek (see attached capture and water locations map). Water will be hauled to Breen Creek, Cedar Well, a location with troughs near the north entrance to the Tonopah Test Range (TTR), and the Silver Bow corral. All contract and capture plan stipulations and specifications were discussed with Mr. Cattoor.

The existing contract allows for 2,001 horses ( $\pm 20\%$ ) to be captured and 1,400 ( $\pm 20\%$ ) to be shipped to Palomino. Based on herd data from previous captures and the criteria in the removal plan, we expect to ship from 1,200 to 1,680 wild horses to Palomino. Nellis is very concerned that this will not be sufficient to allay continued damage to the rangeland and the corresponding impacts to the wild horses and military operations.

There is a concern with respect to National Security due to the number of non-security cleared individuals we requested to tour, work, and view the capture area. Nellis will limit access for the individuals not directly involved and essential to the capture. Nellis will try and facilitate access to non-essential individuals on the weekends. This would facilitate us in conducting the tours by reducing the possibility of cancellation or rescheduling due to a conflict with Nellis activities.

or rescheduling due to a conflict with Nellis activities.

The preliminary schedule developed with Nellis for non-capture activities is as follows:

1. June 1 and 2. Fred Wyatts training session in selective capture techniques given at the wild horse holding facility on the Nellis capture area for Nevada Wild Horse and Burro Specialists. NV-930 may want to coordinate this with Fred and the respective specialists. When a list of participants is developed, please give it to Bob Stager so he can arrange security clearances. Bob can be reached during the capture at (702) 652-~~4800~~ or ~~4804~~.  
3 3
2. Jun 8 and 9. The Las Vegas District will build three one acre exclosures and establish precipitation, trend, condition, and utilization studies to offer better data for the vegetative conditions and trends.
3. June 15 or 16. I will give the Las Vegas District Multiple Use advisory Council a tour of the Nellis Capture Area.
4. June 22 and 23. Curtis Tucker will conduct a tour of the Nellis Capture Area for the wild horse and burro interest groups. Nellis requested that we limit participation to one representative from each interest group. The following individuals are anticipated to be present:

- a. Any state office personnel you may select.
- b. Myself, Gary Ryan, Curtis Tucker, Pete Christensen, Bob Stager and Julie Durfee from the Las Vegas District.
- c. The contractor Dave Cattoor and his wild horse capture crew.
- d. Harley Dickensheets and Joe Altavilla representing the Department of Defence.
- e. The following individuals have indicated their interest and have been informed they will be invited.

<u>Individuals Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Catherine Barcomb	Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
Dawn Lappin	Wild Horse Organized Assistance (WHOA)
Barbara Bell	American Mustang and Burro Association
George Condon	National Wild Horse Association
June Sewing	National Mustang Association

Karen Sussman                    International Society for the Protection of  
Mustangs and Burros  
Bob Hillman                     Animal Protection Institute of America

On February 9, 10, and 21, March 3 and 13, April 12, 13, 14, 26, 27, and 28, 1991 my staff used helicopters, pick ups, and horses to monitor and collect data in preparation for the Nellis Air Force Range Wild Horse Removal. Reports were written and distributed on February 14, March 5 and 18. On May 7 my staff presented a summary of the Nellis conditions in Reno at the Wild Horse and Burro Forum.

The overall condition of the rangeland, the naturally available water, and the wild horses is extremely poor. If Nellis was not hauling water, the negative impacts on the horses would be greater.

The data collected are summarized as follows:

I. Wild horse herd data:

Band size:

Range in band sizes were from 1 to 20 horses with a mean of 8 horses to a band in areas 71N, 71S, 76, and 75E.

Research on wild horses show that mean band sizes of 7+ are often characteristic of large horse populations while mean band sizes of 4 are characteristic of smaller herds.

Relative wild horse concentrations:

Data collected on February 9 and 10, 1991 by BLM and Nellis personnel.

<u>Nellis AFB Range Chart Designations</u>	<u>Relative Population Percentage of Sample</u>	<u>Population Sampled</u>
71N	14.6	473
71S	7.2	232
76	7	225
75E	0.2	8
R-4809A	17.1	554
EC WEST	33.3	1078
EC EAST	5.6	181
74B	15	485
75W	0	0
TPECR	0	0
EC SOUTH	0	0
PAHUTE	0	0
74A	0	0
76A	0	0
TOTALS	100	3236 (not to be considered a total population census)

Overall horse condition:

The horses are beginning to show signs of stress. Mares with foals have ribs and hip bones showing. A number of the mares are abandoning their foals apparently due to water and forage limitations. We have observed 5 to 10 horses at a time mill around and smell Nellis water trucks parked along roads and working sites.

Wild horses at Breen Creek were fighting for the little water puddled there. Stud horses actually chased us away from the puddles to allow their bands to drink. The front hooves of the horses are worn on the front edge from digging for water.

II. Water availability and general quality status:

The perennial and ephemeral water sources under average climatic conditions would be expected to flow good at this time. Natural water is in short supply and often 5 to 10 miles from an available forage source adding stress to the horses trying to use them.

SPRING  
SOURCE & LOCATION

RATE OF FLOW (gal/min - gal/day)  
Measured in April 1991

74B

1. Cliff Spring	0/0	(water present in cave only/no measurable horse use)
2. Indian Spring	0/0	(water present in cave only/no horse use)
3. Blondie Spring	0/0	(small puddle only-unmeasurable/no horse use)
Sub Total	0/0	(most of the available water is ephemeral on lake beds)

EC EAST

4. Cedar Well	.02/34	(Nellis hauling water now)
5. Sumner Spring	1.5/2160	(Water rights owned by Fallini. He built trough and reservoir for wild horses to use on his own/not much forage available).
6. Cedar Spring	1/1440	(Estimated flow/Fallini has supplied a pit reservoir for wild horse use on his own/not much forage available)
7. Cedar Pass Springs	0/0	(two 4 ft. X 5 ft. puddles-unmeasurable/not much horse use)
8. Upper Rose Spring	2.2/3168	(Not much horse use present/not much forage)
9. Lower Rose Spring	1.3/1872	(heavy horse use area)
10. Tunnel Spring	0/0	(not much horse use)
11. Corral Spring	.76/1094	(upper-.20 and lower-.56)
12. Harleys Spring	.08/115	(some horse use noted)
13. Joe Pass Spr.	0/0	(small puddle only)
Sub Total	6.86/9878	

EC WEST & R-4809A

14. Silver Bow source	0/0	
15. Silver Bow corral	.03/43	(horses observed sucking water from inlet pipe)
Nellis water haul (near O & M compound)	0/0	(hauled until after capture)
16. Small Spring	0/0	(dry/recess collects runoff and rainwater only)
17. Cactus Spring I	.83/1195	(heavy horse use)
18. Cactus Spring II	.94/1354	(heavy horse use)
19. Antelope Spring	.03/45	(heavy horse use)
20. Urania Spring	1.0/1440	(estimated flow/horse use)
21. Clapper Spring	0/0	(small puddles only)
Sub Total	2.83/4077	

SPRING  
SOURCE & LOCATION

RATE OF FLOW (gal/min - gal/day)  
Measured in April 1991

71N

22. Whistle Spring	1.4/2016	(heavy horse use)
23. Big Boy Spring	0/0	(not flow/water in inlet pipe/no horse use)
24. Wild Horse Spring	1.4/2016	(flow an estimate/broad ground flow/cave fu of water)

Sub Total 2.8/4032

71S

25. <sup>Ci E</sup> Shevit Cat Canyon Spring	0/0	(puddle only)
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Sub Total 0/0

76

26. Stonewall Spring	3/4320	(estimated flow/no development/horse & wildlife use)
27. Welch Spring	3/4320	(estimated flow/no development/horse & wildlife use)

Sub Total 6/8640

Totals 18.49 gal/min or 26,627 gal/day

III. Vegetation Status and Conditions:

The area in severe use has increased from 236 square miles (151,315 acres) in 1987 to 691.6 square miles (442,755 acres) in 1990. This equates to about a 200 percent increase in severely grazed rangeland from 1987. The last major capture occurred in 1987. There are about three (3) times as many acres severely grazed since the last major capture. The attached table shows the percent of the expanded use area severely grazed since 1985 by location within the Nellis Air Force Range.

Vegetation growth for the shrubs and grasses varies from 1 to 6 inches. The vigor of the plants is poor with sparse growth. The growth is in response to good spring rains and snow. The lack of vigor is a reflection of repeated severe use weakening the plants root reserves.

Use levels on bud sage, winterfat and other palatable shrubs are in excess of 100 percent. Bark, stems, and growth from 1990 are grazed. Grass species such as indian ricegrass,

needle and thread, three awn, galletta grass, squirreltail, and bluegrass are grazed to the ground with 1991's growth often only on the edges of the parent plant.

1990 USE LEVELS IN THE SEVERE  
(81 TO 100 % OF CURRENT YEARS GROWTH)

Nellis AFB Range Chart Designations	Vegetative use status estimated		
	in Square Miles	Acres	
71N	46.7	29,879	SEVERE
71S	48.3	30,968	SEVERE
76	3.9	2,480	SEVERE
75W	7	4,539	SEVERE
75E	14	8,957	SEVERE
R-4809A	115.5	73,898	SEVERE
EC WEST	296.5	189,816	SEVERE
EC EAST	41.3	26,454	SEVERE
74B	118.4	75,764	SEVERE
Estimated Totals	691.6 Square miles	442,755 acres	SEVERE USE LEVELS

IV. Wildlife Status:

The antelope and mule deer populations are conspicuous by their absence. The shadscale-budsage vegetative communities cover over 300 square miles and are usually excellent antelope habitat. Only 39 antelope were censused in February. Mule deer habitat in the Kawich, Belted, and Stonewall mountains has been considered good in the past. Only 43 mule deer were censused in February.

Nellis is concerned with the decreased visibility of large wildlife species. They have contracted with Mike Pontrelli to survey the populations and report on the status. They will make this available to us.

Mountain lions are being attracted to the lower valley floors where the horses are. Numerous sightings have been reported. The sparse wildlife populations at higher elevations and large horse numbers in the

valleys appears to be influencing the lions movements.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS:

ISSUES:

1. Water supply vs animal demand is not adequate.
2. Vegetation use levels are excessive over large areas and ecological conditions and trend are estimated to be poor to fair and downward, respectively. With vegetation removed, wind blown soil is more common from the silty and sandy loam range sites. There is not adequate forage to maintain existing wild horse herd levels.
3. Wild horse health is deteriorating rapidly as spring is replaced by summer.
4. The extent of the large wild horse populations impact on military and other national security activities has not been fully measured for security reasons. However, fugitive dust from horse movements and wind caused soil erosion due to degraded range conditions and excessive

vegetative use levels adversely impacts military operations. Wild horses are killed regularly on the numerous roads around the Tonopah Test Range posing a safety hazard to humans, as well as, the horses. Current numbers of wild horses exacerbate the situation.

These are not new issues. We only corroborated earlier findings, confirmed the critical nature of the resource conditions, and the absence of a "THRIVING NATURAL ECOLOGICAL BALANCE".

The following table showing relative horse levels, vegetative utilization, and water status clarifies and supports these issues.



<u>Nellis AFB Range Chart Area Designations</u>	<u>Relative WH Population Percentage and Sample</u>		<u>Acres Severe Use</u>	<u>Available Water Quantity 1/</u>
71N	14.6	473	29,879	Fair/4032 gal-day
71S	7.2	232	30,968	Poor/0 gal-day
76	7	225	2,480	Good/8640 gal-day
75W	0	0	4,539	Poor/0 gal-day
75E	0.2	8	8,957	Poor/0 gal-day
R-4809A	17.1	554	73,898	Fair/3989 gal-day
EC WEST	33.3	1,078	189,816	Poor/88 gal-day (6249 gal-day from EC EAST used)
EC EAST	5.6	181	26,454	Good/9878 gal-day (3529 gal-day usec)
74B	15	485	75,764	Poor/0 gal-day

1/ The real management problem is that the water is often located where an adequate forage supply does not naturally exist and much of the non-degraded range is where there is no dependable water. The horses leave areas like 74B when the ephemeral waters dry up and increase the pressure on the northern locations. EC WEST horse populations make use of 6249 gallons/day of water on the west side of EC EAST and water hauled by Nellis. There are simply too many horses within the area they naturally elect to use. It is estimated that each horse requires 10 gallons per day to survive.

I have included additional use pattern maps from 1985 to 1990 and bar graphs to clarify the seriousness of the conditions within the expanded use area of the wild horses.

The Nellis personnel helping us should be commended for their sincere resource management concerns and invaluable assistance to us in assessing the situation. Thank you.

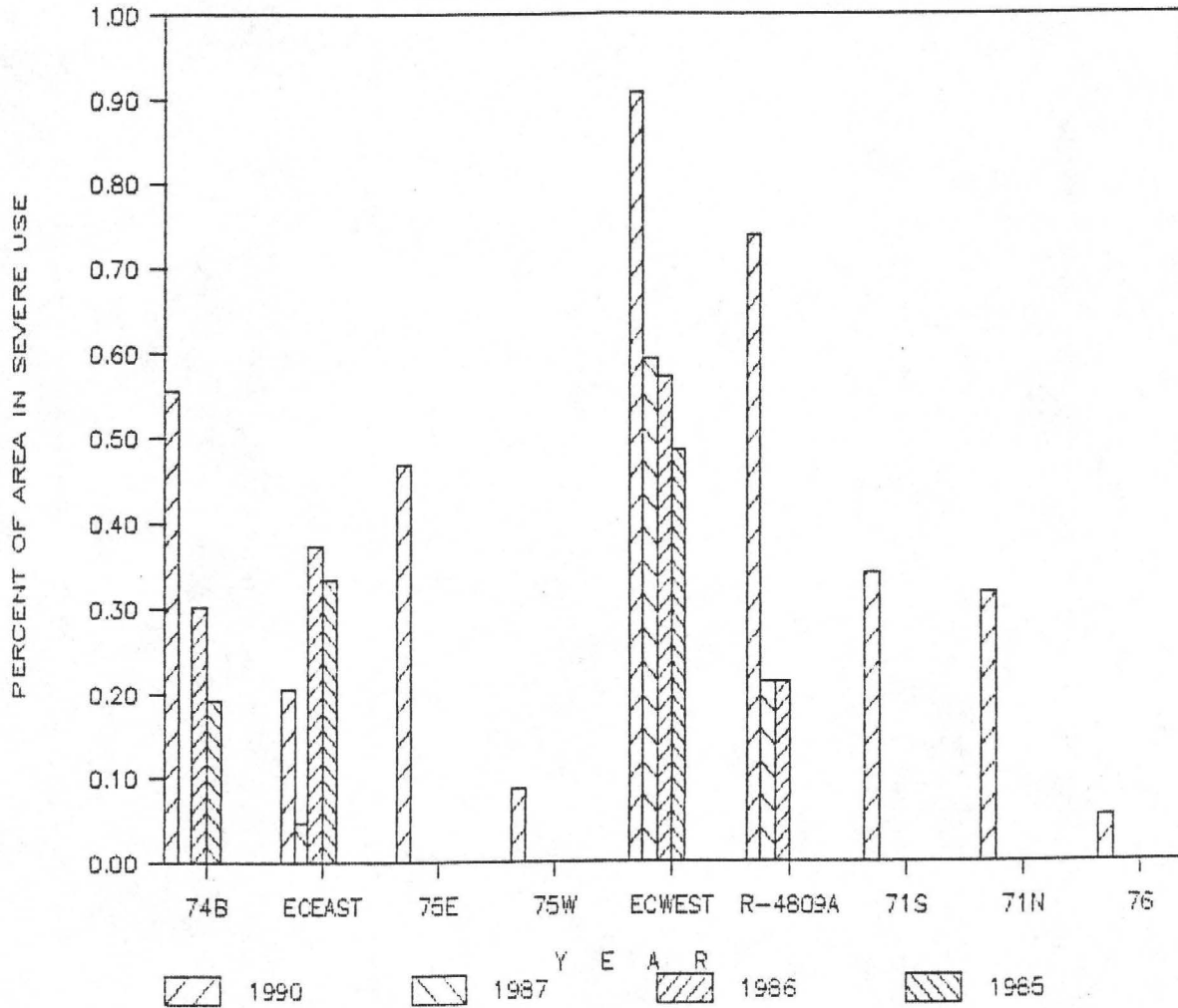
enclosures:

- 4 use pattern maps
- 1 use level table
- 2 use level bar graphs

cc. NV-053  
CRA

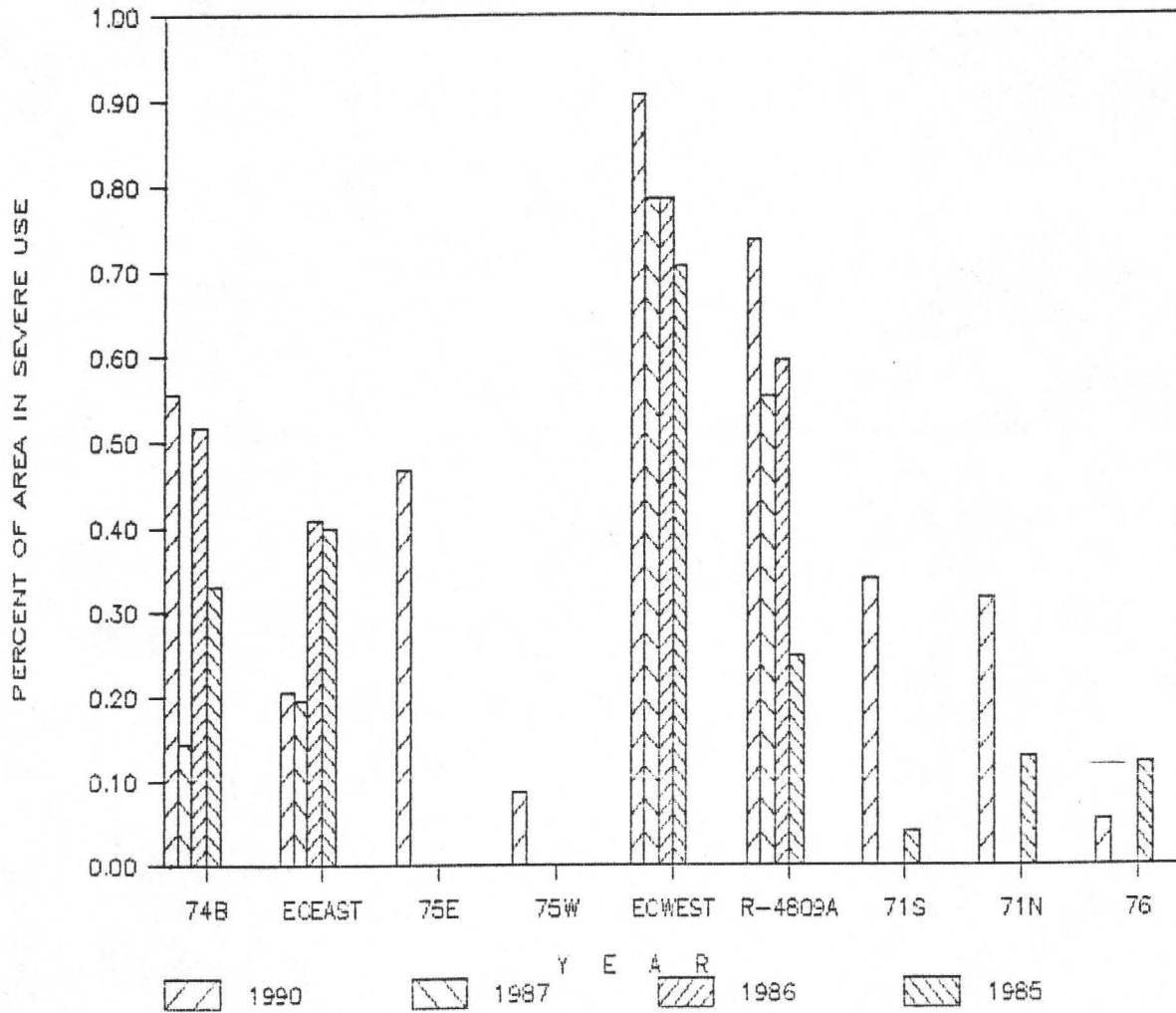
# NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE WILD HORSE AREA

1985, 86, 87, & 90 PERCENT SEVERE USE



# NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE WILD HORSE AREA

1985,86,87,& 90 PERCENT HEAVY & SEVERE



10-May-91

USE PATTERN MAP ACCELAGES BY USE ZONE  
 WILD HORSE EXPANDED USE AREA

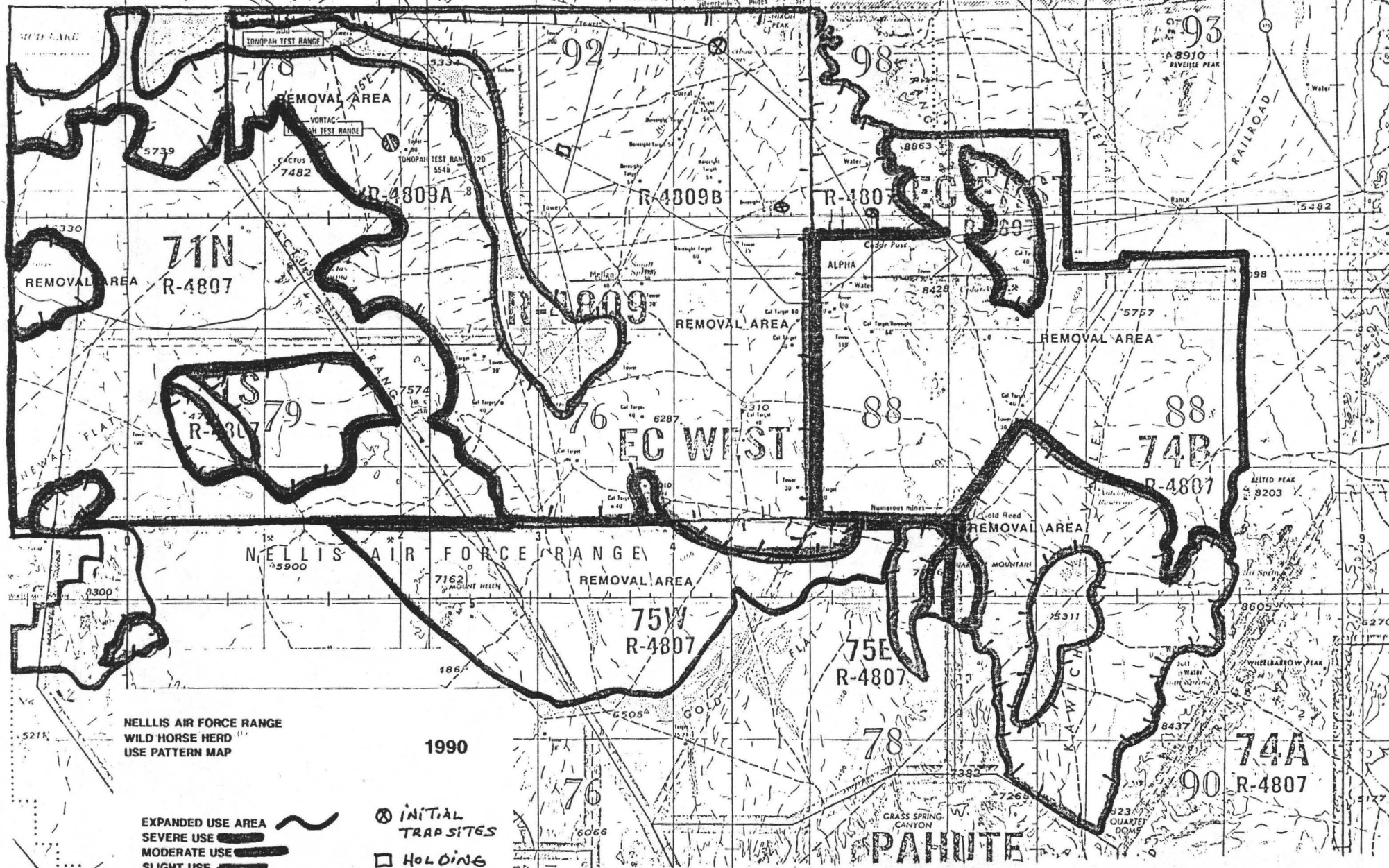
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YEAR	PASTURE OR USE AREA	YIELD INDEX	UNUSEABLE OR USEABLE		ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	PERCENT OF USEABLE ACREAGE FOR EXPANDED USE
			UNUSUITABLE ACRES	ACRES AT NO USE									
1990	TOTAL	1	55015	0	58238	0	376426	0	442755	877419	0.50		
1990	74B	1	9118	0	0	0	60293	0	75764	136047	0.56		
1990	ECEAST	1	0	0	0	0	102395	0	26454	128849	0.21		
1990	75E	1	0	0	10157	0	0	0	8957	19124	0.47		
1990	75W	1	0	0	45071	0	0	0	4536	52610	0.09		
1990	ECWEST	1	8860	0	0	0	19567	0	129816	209383	0.91		
1990	B-48C9A	1	18668	0	0	0	26053	0	73896	99981	0.74		
1990	71S	1	2053	0	0	0	60489	0	30968	91457	0.34		
1990	71N	1	16298	0	0	0	64379	0	25579	94258	0.32		
1990	76	1	0	0	0	0	43230	0	2480	45710	0.05		

YEAR	PASTURE OR USE AREA	YIELD INDEX	UNUSEABLE OR USEABLE		ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	PERCENT OF USEABLE ACREAGE FOR EXPANDED USE
			UNUSUITABLE ACRES	ACRES AT NO USE								
1987	TOTAL	1	55015	159739	282293	87511	63796	113765	151315	877419	0.17	
1987	74B	1	9116	597	63924	28659	22969	19048	0	136047	0.01	
1987	ECEAST	1	0	62115	10010	4064	27361	19353	6006	128849	0.05	
1987	75E	1	0	2340	12588	4196	0	0	0	19124	0.09	
1987	75W	1	0	0	40510	15150	0	0	0	52610	0.01	
1987	ECWEST	1	8860	6123	4055	12195	22359	40652	123358	209383	0.59	
1987	B-48C9A	1	18668	14700	11087	7675	11687	34112	51220	99981	0.21	
1987	71S	1	2053	51009	25482	14966	0	0	0	91457	0.00	
1987	71N	1	16298	13560	7904	1614	0	0	0	94258	0.00	
1987	76	1	0	8275	35583	1872	0	0	0	45710	0.00	

YEAR	PASTURE OR USE AREA	YIELD INDEX	UNUSEABLE OR USEABLE		ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	PERCENT OF USEABLE ACREAGE FOR EXPANDED USE
			UNUSUITABLE ACRES	ACRES AT NO USE								
1986	TOTAL	1	55015	168627	191788	74415	74754	117239	230298	877419	0.26	
1986	74B	1	9116	7903	11532	24348	21784	29474	41005	136047	0.20	
1986	ECEAST	1	0	62115	687	6006	7341	4671	48049	128849	0.37	
1986	75E	1	0	2340	2518	3950	10406	0	0	19124	0.09	
1986	75W	1	0	0	38931	10342	3157	0	0	52610	0.00	
1986	ECWEST	1	8860	6123	4055	10164	24391	44717	119923	209383	0.57	
1986	B-48C9A	1	18668	14700	7675	10254	7675	38377	21230	99981	0.21	
1986	71S	1	2053	59599	20669	7859	0	0	0	91457	0.00	
1986	71N	1	16298	25172	68958	591	0	0	0	94258	0.00	
1986	76	1	0	10668	34341	701	0	0	0	45710	0.00	

YEAR	PASTURE OR USE AREA	YIELD INDEX	UNUSEABLE OR USEABLE		ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	ACRES	PERCENT OF USEABLE ACREAGE FOR EXPANDED USE
			UNUSUITABLE ACRES	ACRES AT NO USE								
1985	TOTAL	1	55015	125745	84963	180056	155969	120372	170041	877419	0.19	
1985	74B	1	9116	17859	39002	17729	16145	18210	26301	136047	0.11	
1985	ECEAST	1	0	62115	0	6008	7341	8675	42710	128849	0.20	
1985	75E	1	0	2340	3358	11749	1578	0	0	19124	0.00	
1985	75W	1	0	0	8418	31546	1505	0	0	52610	0.00	
1985	ECWEST	1	8860	6123	0	0	54850	45750	101530	209383	0.19	
1985	B-48C9A	1	18668	14700	4274	11939	44246	24722	0	99981	0.00	
1985	71S	1	2053	391	24938	49173	12360	3443	0	91457	0.00	
1985	71N	1	16298	10580	8075	24652	25817	12101	0	94258	0.00	
1985	76	1	0	5242	7055	15199	9045	5561	0	45710	0.00	

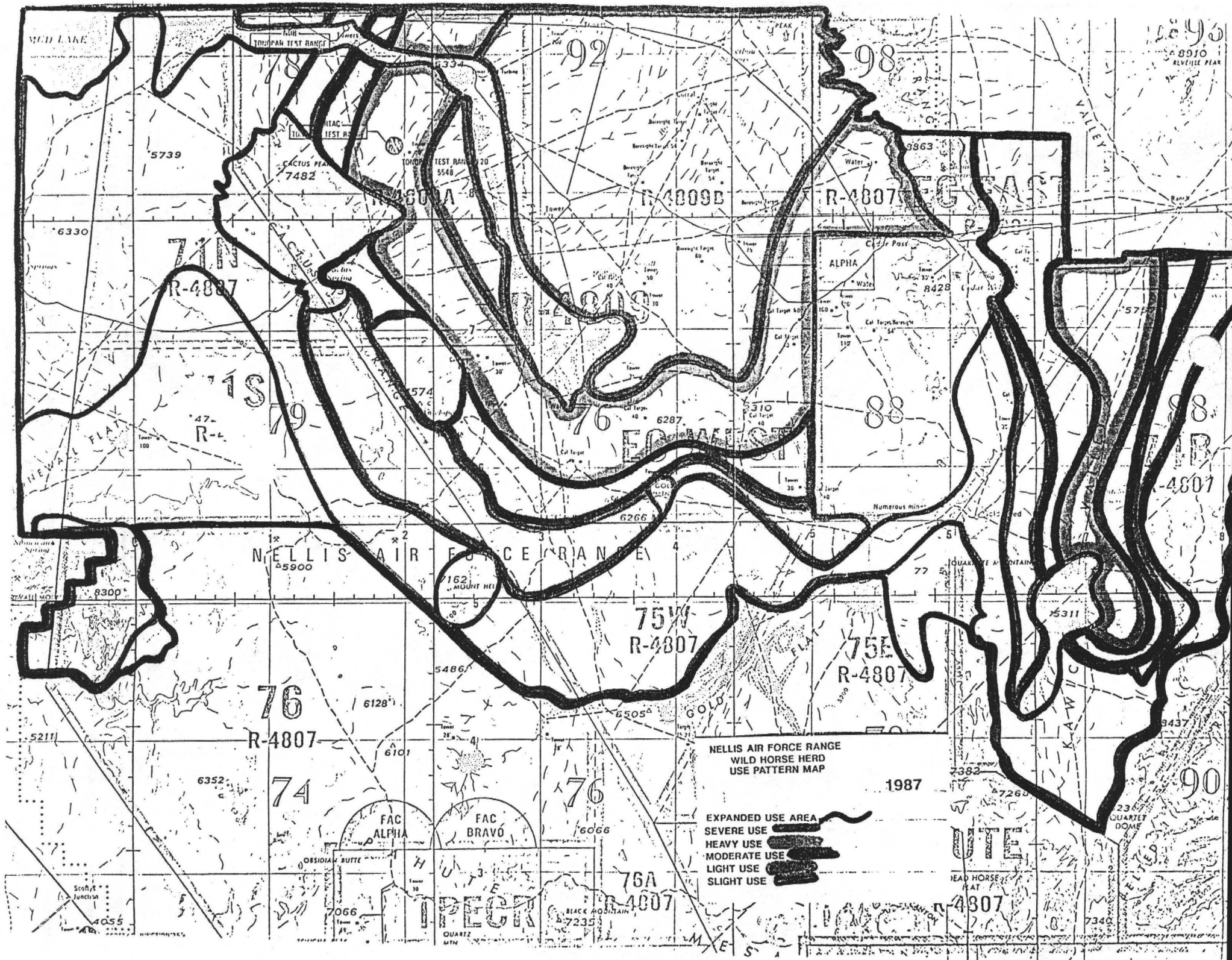


NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
WILD HORSE HERD  
USE PATTERN MAP

1990

EXPANDED USE AREA ~~~~~  
SEVERE USE [thick line]  
MODERATE USE [medium line]  
SLIGHT USE [thin line]

⊗ INITIAL TRAP SITES  
□ HOLDING FACILITY



NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE

NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
WILD HORSE HERD  
USE PATTERN MAP

- EXPANDED USE AREA
- SEVERE USE
- HEAVY USE
- MODERATE USE
- LIGHT USE
- SLIGHT USE

1987

76  
R-4807

75W  
R-4807

75E  
R-4807

75R  
R-4807

75E  
R-4807

FAC ALPHA

FAC BRAVO

76A  
R-4807

90

23 QUARTZ DOME

75E  
R-4807

8910  
REVELLE PEAK

MED LAKE

5739

CACTUS PEAK  
7482

5548

92

98

9863

R-4809B

R-4807

6330

R-4807

71S  
R-4807

574

76

EDWARDS PEAK  
6287

6267

88

88

6266

6310

8300

5900

162  
MOUNT HELL

75W  
R-4807

75E  
R-4807

5311

76  
R-4807

6128

6505

GOLD

75E  
R-4807

5211

6352

74

6101

76

6066

7382

7260

8437

90

23 QUARTZ DOME

75E  
R-4807

75E  
R-4807

7340

Scott's Junction

4055

7066

QUARTZ Mtn

7235

76A  
R-4807

7235

75E  
R-4807

7340

23 QUARTZ DOME

8437

88

5785

8428

8428

8910

8910  
REVELLE PEAK

8910

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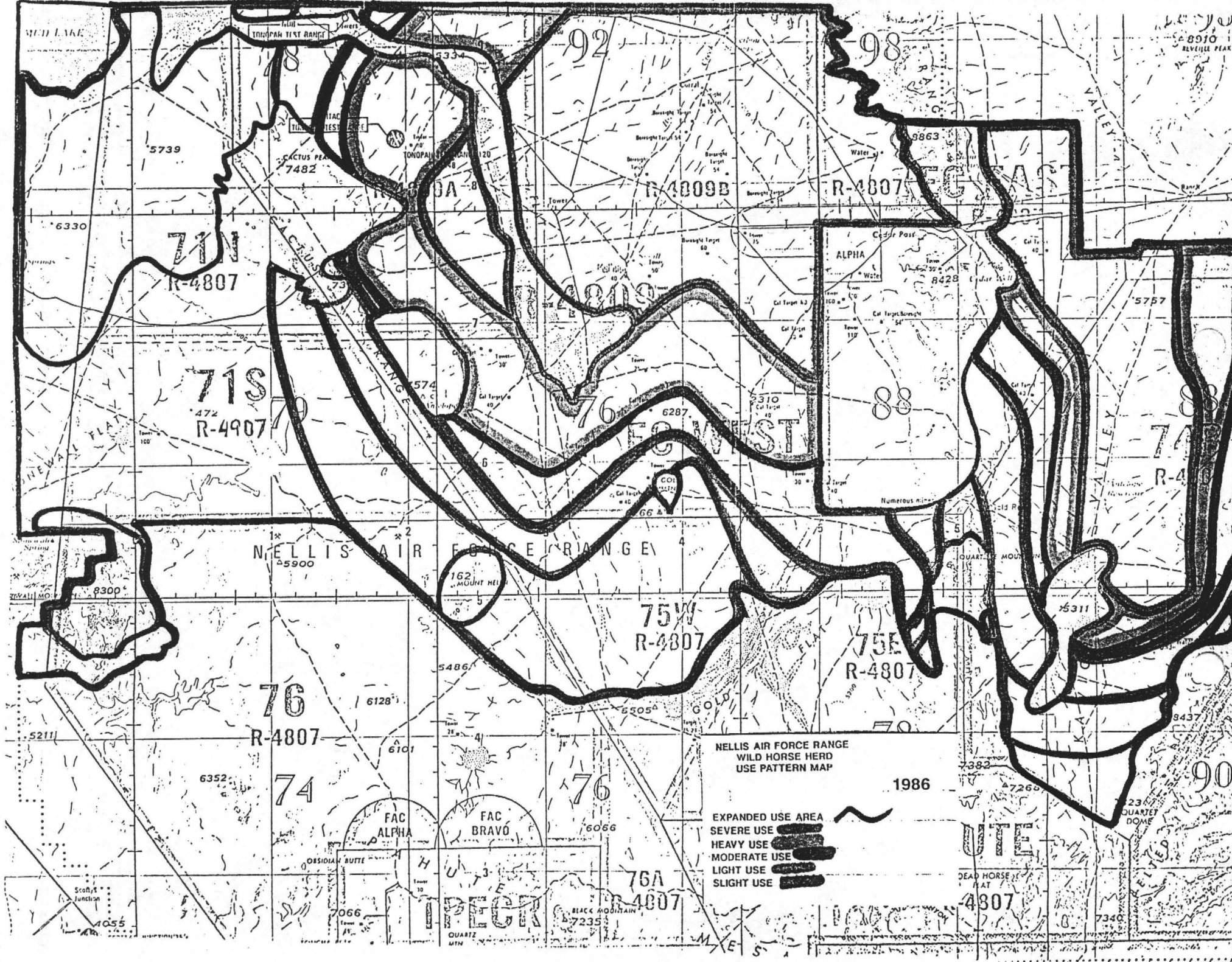
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NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
WILD HORSE HERD  
USE PATTERN MAP

1986

- EXPANDED USE AREA ~~~~~
- SEVERE USE [thick black line]
  - HEAVY USE [medium black line]
  - MODERATE USE [light grey line]
  - LIGHT USE [dotted line]
  - SLIGHT USE [white line]

NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE

71W  
R-4807

71S  
R-4907

75W  
R-4807

76  
R-4807

75E  
R-4807

74

76

FAC ALPHA

FAC BRAVO

76A  
R-4807

UTE

DEAD HORSE  
R-4807

QUARTZ MOUNTAIN

VALLEY

MED LAKE

TONOPAH TEST RANGE

CACTUS PEAK

ALPHA

MOUNT HILL

QUARTZ MOUNTAIN

QUARTZ DOME

DEAD HORSE

92

98

8910  
ALVILLA PEAK

5757

74

90

2377

7340

5739

6330

472

574

6287

5310

8300

5900

162

6311

5211

6352

6128

6101

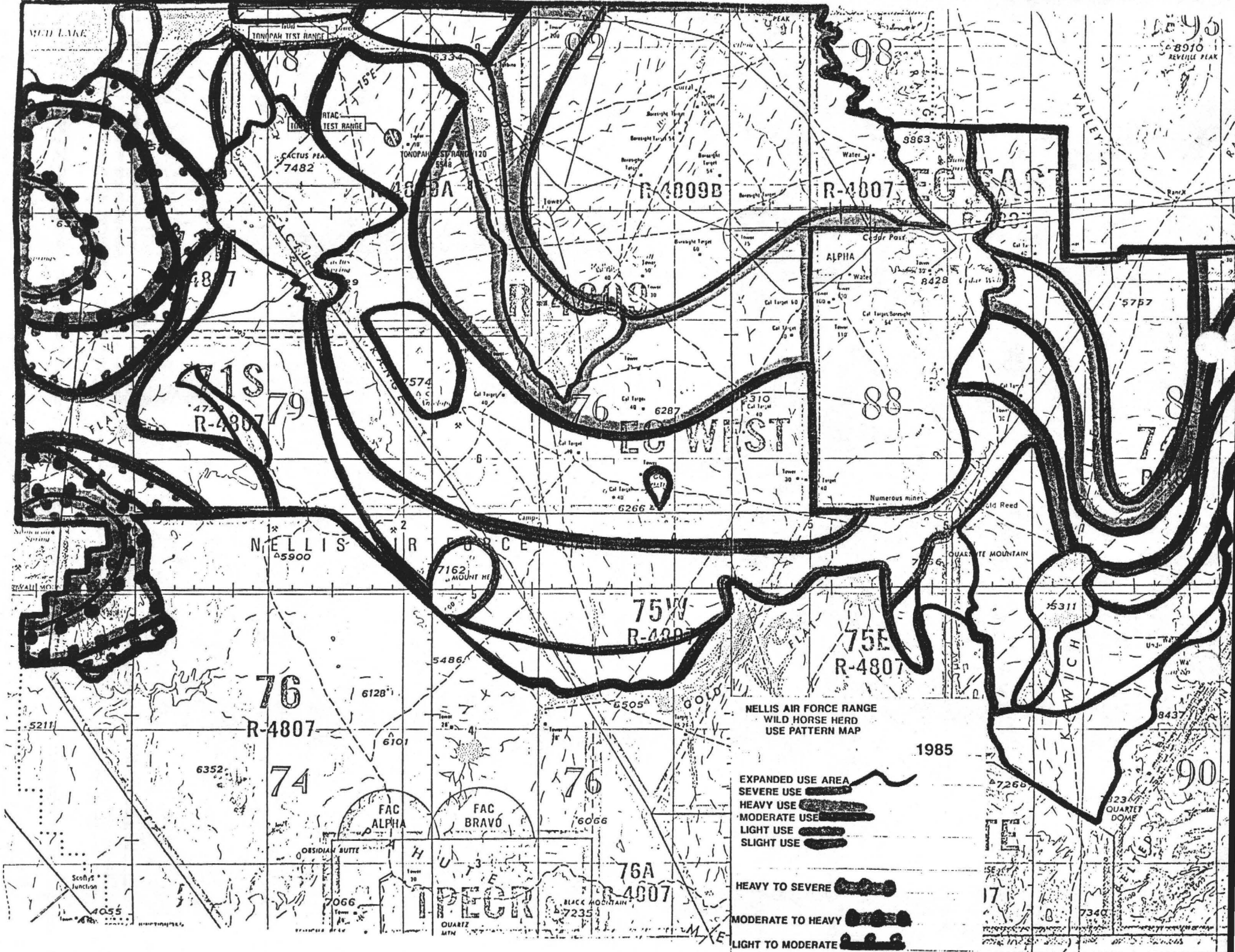
5505

6066

7066










7235

7340



NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
WILD HORSE HERD  
USE PATTERN MAP

1985

- EXPANDED USE AREA 
- SEVERE USE 
- HEAVY USE 
- MODERATE USE 
- LIGHT USE 
- SLIGHT USE 
  
- HEAVY TO SEVERE 
- MODERATE TO HEAVY 
- LIGHT TO MODERATE 



DR/FONSI  
for  
REMOVAL PLAN FOR NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE  
EA No. NV-055-00-22

Decision: I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment for the Nellis Air Force Range Wild Horse Removal Plan and concur with my staff's assessment. I approve of the proposed action to conduct a water trapping and helicopter removal of no more than 2000 excess wild horses from the proposed areas with the mitigation as proposed:

1. Wherever possible, gathering will avoid areas of high concentrations of mule deer, antelope and big horn sheep to avoid stressing these animals.
2. The contractor will provide grass hay in order to reduce the possibility of any adverse digestive system reaction to the hay by the horses.

The removal of wild horses will leave more than 2302 wild horses in the Nellis removal area. The capture will result in reducing the number of wild horses in the heavy and severe use areas under the proposed action. The non-selected alternatives consist of trapping them by running them on horseback, supplemental feed and water, range seeding, and no action.

Rationale: The proposed action should be undertaken to take the first step to effectively manage the wild horses in the removal area for a thriving natural ecological balance. The 691.6 square miles of severe use levels within the removal area emphasizes the need to manage the horse population levels. The identified stipulations will ensure humane treatment of the captured horses. The proposal is in conformance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (P.L. 92-195), as amended.

FONSI: There will not be a significant impact to the quality of the human environment resulting from the implementation of the proposed action. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required for this action.

Rationale: Analysis of impacts did not identify any unique or unknown risks. The stipulations and specifications and mitigating measures will minimize the negative impacts. Direct and indirect environmental benefits are anticipated for wild horses, wildlife, and their habitat with the adoption of the proposed action. The removal will result in an improvement of the rangeland resources through decreased utilization of the forage in the removal area, thus taking the first step towards restoring the range to a thriving natural ecological balance.

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Ben F. Collins  
District Manager,  
Las Vegas District Office

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Date

DR/FONSI  
for  
REMOVAL PLAN FOR NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE  
EA No. NV-055-00-22

Decision: I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment for the Nellis Air Force Range Wild Horse Removal Plan and concur with my staff's assessment. I approve of the proposed action to conduct a water trapping and helicopter removal of approximately 2000 excess wild horses from the proposed areas with the mitigation as proposed:

1. Wherever possible, gathering will avoid areas of high concentrations of mule deer, antelope and big horn sheep to avoid stressing these animals.
2. The contractor will provide grass hay in order to reduce the possibility of any adverse digestive system reaction to the hay by the horses.

The removal of wild horses will leave a minimum population of 2302 animals in the Nellis removal area. The capture will remove animals from the heavy to severe use areas under the proposed action. The non-selected alternatives consist of trapping them by running them on horseback, supplemental feed and water, range seeding, and no action.

Rationale: The proposed action should be undertaken to take the first step to effectively manage the wild horses in the removal area for a thriving natural ecological balance. The 691.6 square miles of severe use levels within the removal area emphasizes the need to manage the horse population levels. The identified stipulations will ensure humane treatment of the captured horses. The proposal is in conformance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (P.L. 92-195), as amended.

FONSI: There will not be a significant impact to the quality of the human environment resulting from the implementation of the proposed action. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required for this action.

Rationale: Analysis of impacts did not identify any unique or unknown risks. The stipulations and specifications and mitigating measures will minimize the negative impacts. Direct and indirect environmental benefits are anticipated for wild horses, wildlife, and their habitat with the adoption of the proposed action. The removal will result in an improvement of the rangeland resources through decreased utilization of the forage in the removal area, thus taking the first step towards restoring the range to a thriving natural ecological balance.

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David C. O'Neal  
Assistant Secretary, Land and  
Mineral Management

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
for the  
NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE WILD  
HORSE REMOVAL

EA No. NV-055-00-22

Prepared by Jule Durfee  
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist

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

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
for the  
NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE WILD  
HORSE REMOVAL

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Las Vegas District, Caliente Resource Area, proposes to remove excess wild horses from the Nellis Air Force Range. The proposed removal area is within the Nellis Air Force Range military withdrawal lands, located in Clark, Lincoln and Nye counties of southern Nevada (see attached Location Maps).

B. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action is to restore the range to a thriving natural ecological balance and to prevent further deterioration of the rangeland resources currently threatened by an excess of wild horses in the removal area.

C. RELATIONSHIP TO PLANNING

The Nellis Air Force Range Resource Plan/Final EIS (U.S. DOI, BLM 1990) is currently under protest. The Bureau recognizes the protest to this plan, specifically the points of protest addressing the Nevada Wild Horse Range (NWHR) boundary and the 1971 use area. These issues will be decided through the protests. Final determination of these protests will not alter the data which demonstrate that insufficient water and forage are available to support the existing wild horse population. The proposal is in conformance with the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195), as amended.

D. MAJOR ISSUES

This proposal addresses four major issues:

1. What is the impact of reducing the wild horse population on the vegetative resources?
2. Is the water that is available for wild horses sufficient for their needs?
3. What is the impact on the wild horse herd if 2000 animals are removed?
4. What is the impact on wild horses during removal?

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### ALTERNATIVE 1 - THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to remove excess wild horses from the Nellis Air Force Range. Implementation of the proposed action would remove no more than 2000 wild horses contingent upon available funding.

#### A. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GATHER

The proposed action will be the first step to bring the population of wild horses to a level approaching a balance with available water and forage in the removal area. The population adjustment is based solely on analysis of monitoring data.

Water trapping will be used to capture wild horses that graze the heavy and severe utilization zones within the removal area (see attached map). No more than 2000 wild horses will be removed beginning approximately April 29 and continuing through July 1, 1991 or until completed. If necessary a helicopter may be used to supplement operations after July 1. The entire operation is not expected to exceed approximately 12 weeks.

This removal will be conducted through the Nevada East Wild Horse/Burro Removal Requirements Contract (N651-C1-3018) or through the FY91 equivalent requirements contract. The removal will be supervised by a Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) and a Project Inspector (PI). Sorting and aging operations will be conducted by the Contractor and supervised by COR/PI. All stipulations contained in this removal plan and the contract will apply. Through either it's own personnel or the contractor the BLM will be responsible for the capture, care, sorting, temporary holding and transportation from the removal area of all wild horses .

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

The evaluation will also conclude whether the level of activity associated with the removal 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 removal can proceed with a veterinarian present, the services of a veterinarian will be obtained before the removal proceeds.

It is estimated that no more than seven trap locations will be required to accomplish the work. Potential trap sites include but are not limited to Rose Spring Pipeline, Silver Bow Spring, Corral Spring, Tunnel Spring, Cactus Spring and Cedar Well. Potential trap sites occur on or near existing roads. Trap sites will be selected in the removal area to reduce concentrations of animals in the heavy and severe utilization zones.

Prior to setting up traps and support facilities, cultural resource and biological assessment of these sites will be conducted by qualified BLM specialists. Trap locations exhibiting significant cultural resources or sensitive biological values will be shifted or eliminated from consideration or alternate locations selected where mitigation is possible.

## B. CAPTURE

### 1. Time and Method

The removal will commence after April 29, 1991, when weather and wild horse conditions permit. Once the removal operation begins, it is anticipated they will last approximately twelve weeks.

Water trapping, possibly supplemented with helicopter herding after July 1, will be used to remove wild horses. If water trapping is unsuccessful, a helicopter will be used to move wild horses to trap sites, where they will be encouraged into traps. A second helicopter may be used to monitor the activities of the Contractor's helicopter. All removal and helicopter activities will be subject to Nellis security requirements.

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 COR/PI.

### 2. Number of Animals to be Removed

The number of wild horses to be removed during this removal is no more than 2000, contingent upon available funding.

### 3. Number of Animals Remaining

Current population estimates indicate that there will be more than 2302 wild horses remaining in the removal area.

## C. SORTING

At each holding site, animals will be sorted into the following four categories using the criteria listed:

1. ANIMALS TO BE REMOVED FROM THE RANGE generally will meet the following criteria:

a. ten years of age and under which are determined not to have recognizable defects. Animals over six years of age should exhibit positive qualities.

b. that are feasibly determined in sufficient health to be shipped from processing center within a reasonable period of time following arrival.

2. Any LAME, OLD, OR SICK ANIMALS will meet the following criteria:

a. Lame means an animal with one or more malfunctioning limbs that permanently impair freedom of movement.

b. Old means an animal characterized because of age by its physical deterioration and inability to fend for itself, suffering or closeness to death.

c. Sick means an animal with failing health, infirmity or disease from which there is little chance of recovery.

3. ANIMALS TO BE RELEASED BACK ON TO THE RANGE may be selected using the following criteria:

a. Obviously near term pregnant mares.

b. Mares with foals too young be shipped.

c. Animals exceeding ten years of age and animals over six years of age not exhibiting positive qualities.

d. Animals without identifiable hereditary defects not meeting other criteria for destruction. An example is an animal blinded in one eye due to injury.

4. BRANDED AND CLAIMED ANIMALS will be identified using the following criteria:

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.).

5. Process

a. Removal. Animals meeting the removal criteria will be returned to the Contractor for transport to a processing center. BLM may hold selected animals and transport them separately.

b. Destruction. The COR/PI will have the primary responsibility for determining when an animal will be destroyed in accordance with 43 CFR Subpart 4730.1. 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 COR/PI will insure that destruction methodology is known to personnel involved in this aspect. In addition, the COR/PI will provide training to ASI personnel to insure that destruction is accomplished in the most humane manner possible. Only appropriate firearms will be used by ASI personnel. When the need for destruction is

questionable, a veterinarian may be called to assist in making a final determination.

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 other wild horses which must be destroyed 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 drainage regardless of drainage size or downstream destination.

c. Release. Animals selected for release back on the range will be retained until the trap site in which they were captured is relocated and their recapture is unlikely or marked so if they are recaptured they are easily identified. BLM may hold selected animals and transport them separately.

d. Branded and Claimed. A Notice of Intent to Impound and 28-day Notice to Gather Wild Horses will be issued concurrently by the BLM, prior to any removal operations in this area. The Nevada Department of Agriculture and the District Brand Inspector will receive copies of these notices. The COR/PI 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 and the District Brand Inspector will jointly inspect all animals at the holding facility in the removal area. The COR/PI, 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 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.



#### D. HOLDING

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 COR/PI, who will then forward the request to the USAF. The USAF 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 (Reno) Nevada or the Kingman facility in Kingman Arizona. 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.

#### E. TRANSPORTATION

##### 1. Wild Horses

After sorting, wild horses will be transported to PVC or possibly to the Bureau's processing center in Kingman, AZ. Transportation will be in accordance with standards in the stipulations and specifications section in this plan.

##### 2. Branded and Claimed Horses

Branded and claimed horses will be transported off of the Range by the BLM or the Brand Inspector depending on the final disposition of the individual animals.

#### F. RESPONSIBILITIES

##### 1. District Manager

The District Manager is responsible for maintaining and protecting the health and welfare of the wild horses. The District Manager, directly and through his subordinates, has ultimate responsibility and line authority for supervision of assigned personnel in all aspects of the removal. All publicity and initial contacts with the media will be coordinated by the wild horse and burro specialist through the District Public Affairs Officer.

##### 2. Area Manager

Formal public contact (other than for access) and general inquiries will be handled through the Caliente Resource Area Manager. The Area Manager is responsible for dissemination of information to the District Manager, the State Director's representative, and interested publics. As a minimum the Area Manager will provide removal statistics (number removed, number released, number

destroyed) on a weekly basis. Accidents and incidents will be reported immediately. The Area Manager, directly and through his subordinates, has responsibility and line authority for supervision of assigned personnel to insure safe and humane practices relative to the health and welfare of the wild horses.

### 3. Other BLM Personnel

Prior to performance of duties, attached/detailed BLM personnel will tour the removal area and look at potential trap sites. In addition they will be briefed on results of the pre-capture evaluation, the objectives and standards of their tasks and the removal plan stipulations and specifications.

### 4. Contracting Officer's Representative and Project Inspector

The COR/PI will be directly responsible for conducting the removal including supervision other attached/detailed BLM personnel and the Contractor. The COR supervises the PI. All public access to the capture area will be requested by the individual(s) through the COR and the COR will request and coordinate the access with Nellis. The COR/PI, through on-site observation, will evaluate the contractor's ability to perform the required work in accordance with the contract stipulations and specifications. 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. 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.

The COR/PI will coordinate contacts with Palomino Valley Center (PVC) or other handling facilities, to assure space is available, horses are handled humanely and efficiently, and are arriving from the capture site in good condition.

If, after July 1, a helicopter is used to assist removal operations, the project helicopter actions may be observed by a Government-controlled helicopter. All actions of the Government helicopter will be coordinated with the Contractor to prevent interference with the project helicopter and Contractor operations. The COR/PI will direct the use of this observation helicopter to monitor the operation of the Contractor. All use of helicopters will be coordinated with Nellis AFB.

The COR/PI will maintain a daily log and furnish the Area Manager with copies of all written instructions to the Contractor and any stop work order on a weekly basis. Removal/release statistics will be furnished to the Area Manager on a weekly basis. Accidents and incidents will be reported to the Area Manager immediately. The COR/PI is also responsible for reporting proceedings to the Contracting Officer. The COR/PI is responsible for on-site coordination with Nellis Range personnel.

It is anticipated that the COR will be Robert D. Stager, Range Conservationist, Las Vegas District Office. PIs may include, but are not limited to Jule Durfee, Mike Fewell, Bruce Portwood, Roger Bryan, Bob Brown, and John Winnepenninx, all Range Conservationists with BLM in Nevada.

## 5. Contractor

The contractor shall be required to present for inspection by the COR all equipment that will be used in performance of the contract. The time and place of inspection shall be determined by the COR. Except for helicopters, any equipment that the COR determines to be inadequate shall be replaced or repaired by the contractor within 36 hours.

Work hours under this contract shall be limited to the time between one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset each day with the exception of bait trapping which may be conducted 24 hours per day. No work shall be done on Sunday or Federal holidays unless mutually agreeable between the COR and the contractor and authorized by the CO.

The Contractor will be briefed on his duties and responsibilities before the Notice to Proceed is issued. The contractor will be informed of the terrain involved, animal condition, road conditions, potential trap locations, water availability and the presence of fences and other dangerous barriers.

## G. STIPULATIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS

See Section III., Removal Plan for Nellis Air Force Range, BLM April 1991.

### ALTERNATIVE 1 - PROPOSED ACTION FOLLOW UP MONITORING

During and upon completion of removal, the BLM will continue to monitor the wild horse herd, the water sources and the vegetation to determine the degree to which objectives are being met. A use pattern map will be done every year until the herd is in balance with the habitat. Three exclosures will be constructed in 1991 with trend, condition, and utilization studies to monitor the effects of the removal(s) on the vegetation. A summary evaluation will be prepared in FY 92. Future actions will be based on the results of this monitoring information.

## ALTERNATIVE 2 - NO ACTION

Under the No Action alternative, no removal operations would be conducted and no wild horses would be removed. For the purpose of this analysis, this alternative does not include artificially providing water to wild horses.

### OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED

#### A. TRAPPING WILD HORSES BY RUNNING THEM ON HORSEBACK

Trapping 2000 wild horses by running them on horseback is not feasible as wild horses are easily lost after starting them towards the trap. Injuries to both people and wild horses are more common when this method is employed. The cost factor, as demonstrated by previous removals, would also be prohibitive. This alternative will, therefore, not be considered further.

#### B. SUPPLEMENTAL FEED AND WATER

Hauling feed and water is possible but not considered economical and is beyond the intent of the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act. Supplementing feed and water would not maintain the horses in a thriving natural ecological balance with their environment. Horse populations could climb to artificially high numbers, resulting in further habitat degradation. This alternative was eliminated from further analysis for these reasons.

Historically, all the spring sources were developed and maintained by grazing permittees in the area. Most of these springs fell into a state of disrepair after grazing was discontinued in the 1960s. The following springs have been developed by the BLM with help from the NAFR and the National Wild Horse Association: Rose Spring (1985), Corral Spring (1985), Tunnel Spring (1985) and Cedar Well (upper and lower) (1986 & 1987). In addition, REECO developed the following: Cliff Spring (1990) and Silver Bow (1990). Insufficient hydrological data are available at this time to ascertain if spring development and/or well drilling is feasible for other areas within the Nellis Air Force Range. It is also unknown how such development/drilling would affect the primary (military) use of the area. If determined feasible, water development projects could require a minimum of 3 years before implementation. Therefore, this was not considered as a viable alternative at this time because it would not resolve the resource issues in a timely manner.

#### C. RANGE SEEDING

The Conservation Plantings for Rangeland, Windbreaks, Wildlife, Soil, Conservation Cover (SCS,1978) recommends no species for planting in areas that receive less than 8 inches of precipitation. Average precipitation on the Nellis Air Force Range is 6 inches per year, making the probability of a successful seeding slight. Failed range seedings give undesirable plants (noxious weed and poisonous plants) an opportunity to establish. Once established, it is very difficult and costly to remove them. Because of the time required to establish seedings, the cost and the low probability of success, this is not considered to be a viable alternative.chance

### III. DESCRIPTION OF AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

#### A. LOCATION AND STATUS

The proposed removal area is in the Nellis Air Force Range located in Clark, Lincoln and Nye counties of southern Nevada. The removal area is covered under the 1986 Nellis Air Force Range Withdrawal Act, P.L. 99-606 dated November 6, 1986. The cooperative agreement between the BLM and Nellis AFB for management of the wild horses, dated February 12, 1974 details the specific roles and responsibilities. The proposed gather area is within the areas of heavy and severe utilization zones. This action is considered a part of long term management. The attached map identifies the proposed removal area.

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.

A more detailed description of the affected environment can be found in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Withdrawal of the Nellis Air Force Bombing Range, Nye, Clark, and Lincoln Counties, Nevada (U.S. DOI, BLM and USAF, 1981) and the Nellis Air Force Range Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (U.S. DOI, BLM, 1989). These documents are on file at the BLM Las Vegas District Office and Caliente Resource Area office. Certain elements of the affected environment, necessary for the understanding of the anticipated impacts, will be described in the Environmental Consequences analysis of this document.

No livestock grazing is authorized within the withdrawn lands. Pronghorn antelope and mule deer are the major big game species located within the proposed removal area.

#### B. WILD HORSE POPULATIONS

##### 1. Numbers and ratios

Large numbers of wild horses roam freely throughout the Nellis Air Force Range, often in close proximity to military and related activities. In 1988, BLM completed an investigation and report on the death of 61 horses. The animals died of ammonia toxicity when they accidentally ingested rinse water with a urea compound washed out of a truck during a time the natural water sources were apparently not meeting the horses demands. During 1989, eight horses are estimated to have been fatally injured in horse/vehicle accidents. A total of 683 wild horses were removed under an emergency removal in 1989. The August 1990 census counted 4,302 horses.

Based on the 1987 and 1989 removals the percent of young animals ranges from 16%-20%. The recruitment rate based upon the number of two year olds in the population ranges from 11%-16%. Based on removal data the sex ratio is 1.05:1.00 males to females or essentially a 1:1 ratio.

## 2. Relative wild horse concentrations

Data collected on February 9 and 10, 1991 by BLM and Nellis personnel.

<u>Nellis AFB Range Chart Designations</u>	<u>Relative Population Percentage of Sample</u>	<u>Population Sampled</u>
71N	14.6	473
71S	7.2	232
76	7	225
75E	0.2	8
R-4809A	17.1	554
EC WEST	33.3	1078
EC EAST	5.6	181
74B	15	485
75W	0	0
TPECR	0	0
EC SOUTH	0	0
PAHUTE	0	0
74A	0	0
76A	0	0
TOTALS	100	3236

(not to be considered as a total population census)

## 3. Overall horse condition

All the horses sampled in 71N, 71S, 76, 75E, EC WEST, EC EAST, R-4809A, and 74B were judged to be in good body condition and vigorous.

This is explained by the August/September late season rains stimulating warm season annual and perennial plant growth. This forage apparently carried the horses through the fall/winter and allowed them to regain body reserves and put on weight.

### C. WATER

An analysis of monitoring and rangeland data in the Nellis Air Force Range Evaluation (December 1990) indicates that sufficient perennial water exists to support between 1100 and 1200 wild horses in the removal area.

#### 1. Water availability and general quality status

Under average climatic conditions, water sources would be expected to have high flows at this time of year. Ephemeral water sources are found around the alkali flats where water naturally collects in the spring. These are considered to be unreliable sources because of their short term and unpredictable availability.

The following observations were made on between February 9 and March 3, 1991. Antelope and Willow springs had two 12 to 20 inch mud holes. Antelope springs had less water on 3/3 than on 2/10. The nearest known water is 7 to 10 miles away.

There was a standing mud hole near the fueling area in EC WEST. Soil moisture depth was measured to be 9 inches. This was from the March 1 and 2 rain/snow storm.

It should be noted that even though some of the water sources (ephemeral and perennial) may be considered satisfactory as of February 9 and 10, 1991, the existing wild horse population will probably far outstrip the supply as the temperature increases.

Nellis AFB Range Chart  
Designations

Relative Water Status  
POOR                      SATISFACTORY

71N	100%	0
71S	No Known Water. They use 71N and 76 waters.	
76	0	100%
75E	No Known Water Available	
R-4809A	0	100%
EC WEST	75%	25%
EC EAST	50%	50%
74B	67%	33%
SUMMARY	<u>62%</u>	<u>38%</u>

2. Other water observations

SPRING SOURCE	RATE OF FLOW (gal/min - gal/day) BY YEAR			2/21/91
	1989	1990	1/15/91	
Cliff	2.8/4032	2.0/2880		0/0
Cedar	.25/360	.19/274	.18/259	.18/259
Rose	2.5/3600	2.0/2880		1.9/2736
Silver Bow	1.0/1440	1.0/1440	.5/720	.5/720
Silver corral		1.0/1440	frozen	0/0
Tunnel	.125/180	.09/130		.05/72
Corral	.125/180	.47/678	.63/907	.63/907
Harleys	.125/180	1.0/1440		.125/180
Cedar Pass		125/180	frozen	.06/461
Cactus		1.5/2160	1.7/2448	1.7/2448
Antelope		.75/1080	Moist on 3/3/91	

Totals  
 1990=10.1 gal/min or 14,582 gal/day  
 1991= 5.1 gal/min or 7,783 gal/day

SPRING SOURCE RATE OF FLOW (gal/min - gal/day) BY YEAR  
March 13, 1991

Cliff Spring	0/0	not read use 2/21 reading
Cedar Well	.02/34	
Rose Spring	1.9/2736	not read use 2/21 reading
Silver Bow source	0/0	
Silver Bow corral	0/0	
Tunnel Spring	.05/72	not read use 2/21 reading
Corral Spring	.63/907	not read use 2/21 reading
Harleys Spring	.125/180	not read use 2/21 reading
Cedar Pass Spr.	.06/461	not read use 2/21 reading
Cactus Spg I & II	1.5/2160	(I =.75/1080 II =.75/1080)
Antelope Spring	.03/45	

Totals 4.3 gal/min or 6,595 gal/day

3. Additional springs read 3/13/91

Sumner Spring 1.5 - 2160 Water rights owned by Fallini. He built trough and reservoir for wild horses use on his own.

Cedar Spring Good water not read Fallini has supplied a pit reservoir for wild horse use on his own.

Total for 3/13/91 5.8 gal/day - 8755 gal/day



#### 4. Water table observations

Water table levels were measured at Cedar Wells and they have dropped six (6) feet. The water table for Silverbow Spring has dropped below the collection box for the spring and the creek (Breen) has no water flow and no water. The NWAHA members were there in the 60's, 70's, and 80's and stated that the creek and spring had running water. Photos BLM and the NWAHA have, show a healthy running creek in the 60's and 70's. This is a clear indication that the dry conditions and low ground water recharge potential under dry conditions may have resulted in a dropped water table.

Water at these spring sources in 1991 is only 45 % of what it was in 1990 or a 55 % natural reduction in available water at these springs due to drought. More recently collected data (which has not been compiled in a format for inclusion here) supports this declining trend. There is less perennial water available now to support wild horses in the removal area than when the 1100-1200 head calculation was made.

#### D. VEGETATION

##### 1. Vegetation Status and Conditions

Use pattern maps indicating significant areas of heavy and severe utilization have been prepared in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1990. These maps also indicate a trend of increasing size in the heavy and severe utilization zones.

A use pattern map was developed using data collected on February 9 & 10, March 3 & 13, and April 13 & 14, 1991. Photographs taken during these field examinations show the severe use and degraded condition of plants in the removal area. Little to no residual forage was available in significant portions of the removal area. Because of low plant vigor, vegetative response to rain received in March and April 1991 has not been significant. Any growth may provide temporary forage, however, the effects will be short term in nature. Range condition objectives can not be met under existing population levels.

USE LEVELS IN THE SEVERE  
(81 TO 100 % OF CURRENT YEARS GROWTH)

Nellis AFB Range Chart <u>Designations</u>	<u>Vegetative use status estimated</u>		
	<u>in Square Miles</u>	<u>in Acres</u>	
71N	46.7	29,879	SEVERE
71S	48.3	30,968	SEVERE
76	3.9	2,480	SEVERE
75W	7	4,539	SEVERE
75E	14	8,957	SEVERE
R-4809A	115.5	73,898	SEVERE
EC WEST	296.5	189,816	SEVERE
EAST	41.3	26,454	SEVERE
74B	118.4	75,764	SEVERE
Estimated Totals	691.6 Sq miles	442,755 acres	SEVERE USE

E. AIR QUALITY/VISIBILITY

Dust has reduced visibility within the range during the last decade, decreasing the effectiveness of certain optical testing conducted in the area. The increase in dust is attributable to the trailing of increased wild horse populations and to the reduced vegetative cover.

#### IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

##### A. MANDATORY ELEMENTS

There would be no impacts from the Proposed Action or Alternative I-No Action to threatened or endangered species (plants and animals); floodplains; wetlands; areas of critical environmental concern; wild and scenic rivers; visual resource management; prime or unique farmlands; wilderness; water quality; or cultural, paleontological and historical resource values.

The following programs would not be impacted by the Alternative 1-Proposed Action or Alternative 2-No Action: minerals, land uses, recreation, range (livestock), and forestry.

##### ALTERNATIVE 1-PROPOSED ACTION

##### A. WILD HORSE POPULATION

The removal of 2000 wild horses will reduce grazing pressure on the range by approximately 24,000 AUMs. Reduced competition between wild horses and wildlife for forage, water, cover, and living space would improve the physical condition and survival rates of the wild horses. Managing the wild horses at a level based on the available supply of forage and perennial water would help maintain the natural ecological balance of the area.

Sufficient numbers of wild horses will remain within the removal area to maintain viable herds and to provide for interaction between bands.

In summary, the removal of 2000 wild horses will improve the habitat for the remaining wild horses and leave a viable population.

##### B. WILD HORSES REMOVED FROM THE RANGE

Water trapping has proven to be the least stressful removal method. The possibility exists that wild horses could sustain injury during removal operations due to panic behavior. The use of helicopters to capture excess wild horses might result in leppy (abandoned) foals and split bands, as well as injured horses. Removal operations might also disrupt band structure either temporarily or permanently.

Prior capture experience using water trapping resulted in death loss of 1.9% (1987) and 4.7% (1989). The higher loss in 1989 was attributed to reduced horse vigor related to decreased availability of forage and water. Death loss is expected to be in this same range.

In summary, the standards applied in the proposed actions will insure humane treatment and safe handling of the wild horses during capture, care, temporary holding, and transportation to the BLM adoption preparation facility. Regardless of the capture method used, wild horses would experience some stress due to capture operations and some loss will occur.

### C. VEGETATION

Monitoring data shows an apparent downward trend and further indicates the vegetation in the area can not support the current wild horse population. Current estimates place the population at approximately 4302 wild horses within the proposed removal area. This plan will result in the removal of no more than 2000 wild horses. This will leave approximately 2302 wild horses.

The removal of 2000 wild horses will reduce utilization by 24,000 AUMs. This reduction will decrease the acreage which is currently measured in the severe use category. The downward trend of the different plant communities should be stopped. The ecological condition may improve after the removal operations, with reduced utilization on the more desirable grasses and shrubs. Over time, production of these species may increase, as might their percentage of composition within the community. However, ecological condition objectives still may not be met with the remaining wild horse population.

Vegetation at the trap sites and holding corrals would sustain a negative impact from trampling by wild horses concentrated at those locations. This would be a minor impact, totaling approximately 1-2 acres at each site, in relation to the large acreage removal area. Vegetative regeneration would be expected to occur.

In summary, removal of 2000 wild horses will cause an improvement in vegetative condition and provide additional forage for remaining animals. Although deterioration of the range should be eliminated, a thriving ecological balance may still not be met.

### D. WATER AVAILABILITY

Based on the data presented in the description of the affected environment, approximately 9000 gallons of water per day are currently available to the existing population of over 4000 wild horses. A 2000 head reduction of this population will nearly double available water to approximately 4 gallons per head from the sources identified. This amount still falls short of the desired minimum of 10 gallons per head per day (during the hotter times of the year horses may require up to 20 gallons per day).

### E. AIR QUALITY/VISIBILITY

Based on the analysis of vegetation and the reduction in the number of horses remaining on the range, dust in the air may be reduced. This is dependent upon whether an increase in plant density does, in fact, occur. In addition, the reduction in the number of animals remaining on the range should reduce trampling and trailing to some degree. This should reduce the impacts to visibility currently effecting military uses of the range.

## ALTERNATIVE 2-NO ACTION

### A. WILD HORSE POPULATION

The trend in vegetative condition would continue to decline and the degradation of wild horse habitat would continue. This would result in greater competition for available water and forage. Because of this decline, wild horse condition would be expected to deteriorate and death losses could increase until the population came into balance with available water and forage.

### B. WILD HORSES REMOVED FROM THE RANGE

No wild horses would be removed from the range under this alternative; no adverse impacts would occur from removal or adoption processes.

### C. VEGETATION

The acreage in the heavy and severe utilization category would increase. Heavy and severe utilization would continue on the desirable grasses and shrubs. These plants would eventually disappear from the community and be replaced by undesirable plants (noxious weeds, poisonous plants). Portions of the range are now invaded with halogeton and russian thistle. Such succession would reduce the amount of available forage for wild horses and most wildlife species.

### D. WATER AVAILABILITY

There would be no change in total available water. Water availability per head would decrease as wild horse populations increased.

### E. AIR QUALITY

As stated above, reduced plant density would occur and wild horse populations would increase in the short term. There would be an increase in the dust levels from the present. As a result, certain defense-related optical testing opportunities will be diminished within portions of the Nellis Range.

### V. IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

Under Alternative 1-Proposed Action, water and forage resources would be improved and a viable wild horse population will remain on the range.

No irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources is anticipated to occur under the Alternative 1-Proposed Action. This statement is based on the assumption that there is a homogenous distribution of traits, colors and characteristics of conformation among the existing population.

## VI. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

### A. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public notification was given prior to the preparation of the Environmental Assessment and the Removal Plan. Draft Environmental Assessments were circulated. All comments received were considered in this document. Comments on the most recent draft EA were received from the following:

1. The International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros.
2. The Wild Horse Organized Assistance.
3. The Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses.
4. The Animal Protection Institute.
5. The National Wild Horse Association.
6. Nellis Air Force Range.
7. The Horse Protection Association, Inc. and the Humane Society of the United States.
8. The Nevada Department of Wildlife.

### B. BUREAU REVIEW

Initial drafts of this document were prepared by Jule Durfee, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, Caliente Resource Area. The final document is the result of incorporating the various Bureau and public reviewer's comments.

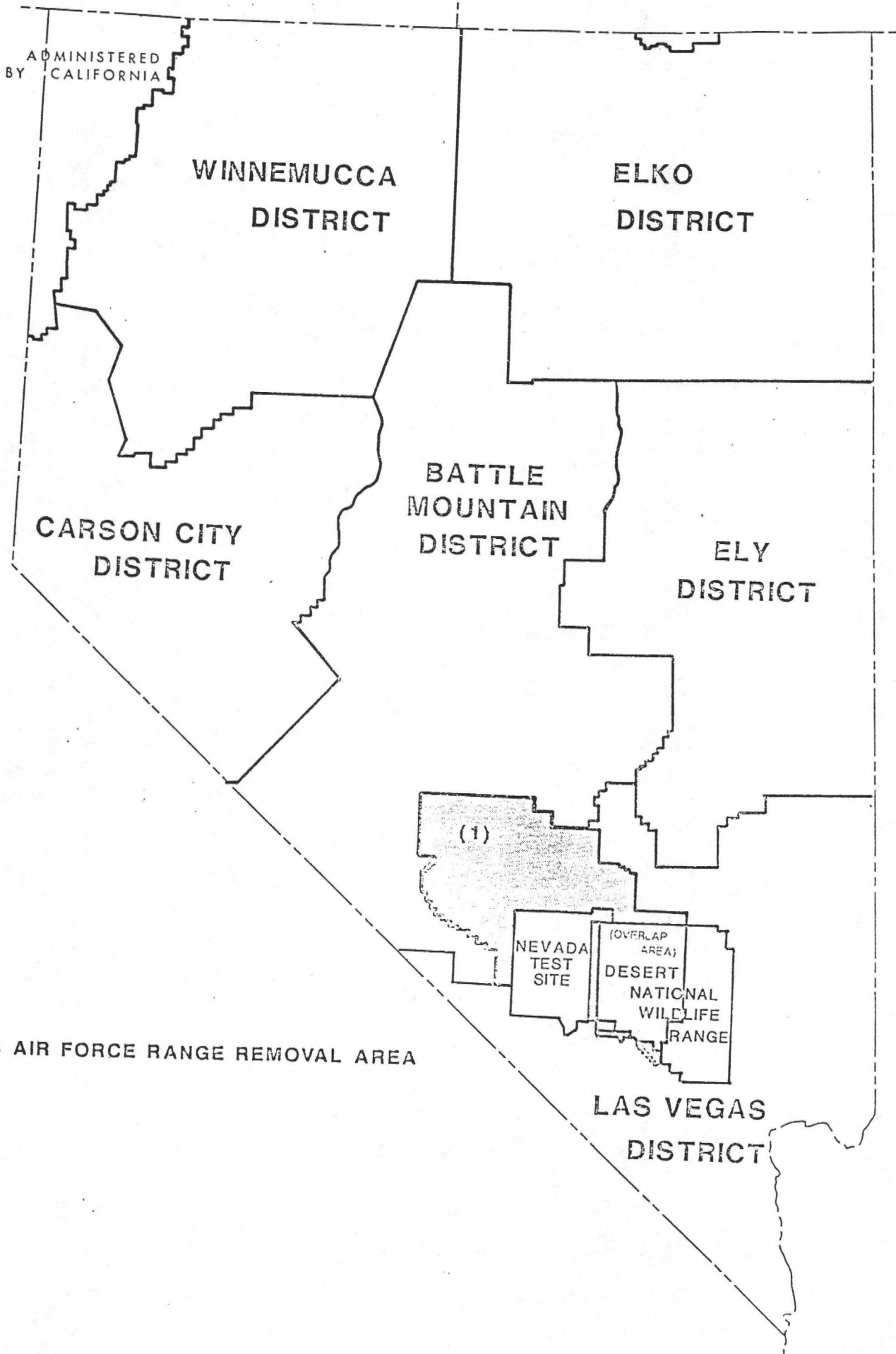
BLM Specialists involved in the draft review were as follows:

Dawna Ferris	Archeologist/Environmental Coordinator, Caliente Resource Area.
Jule Durfee	Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, Caliente Resource Area
Larry Lacey	Surface Protection Specialist, Caliente Resource Area
Cory Bodman	Soil Scientist, Caliente Resource Area
Marc Pierce	Forester, Caliente Resource Area
Tim Murphy	Supervisory Range Conservationist, Caliente Resource Area
Curtis Tucker	Caliente Resource Area Manager
Bob Stager	Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, Las Vegas District Office
Terry Woosely	Chief, Branch of Biological Resources, Nevada State Office
Dan Rathbun	DSD, Lands & Renewable Resources, Nevada State Office

SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ben F. Collins  
District Manager  
Las Vegas District Office

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Date



ADMINISTERED  
BY CALIFORNIA

WINNEMUCCA  
DISTRICT

ELKO  
DISTRICT

CARSON CITY  
DISTRICT

BATTLE  
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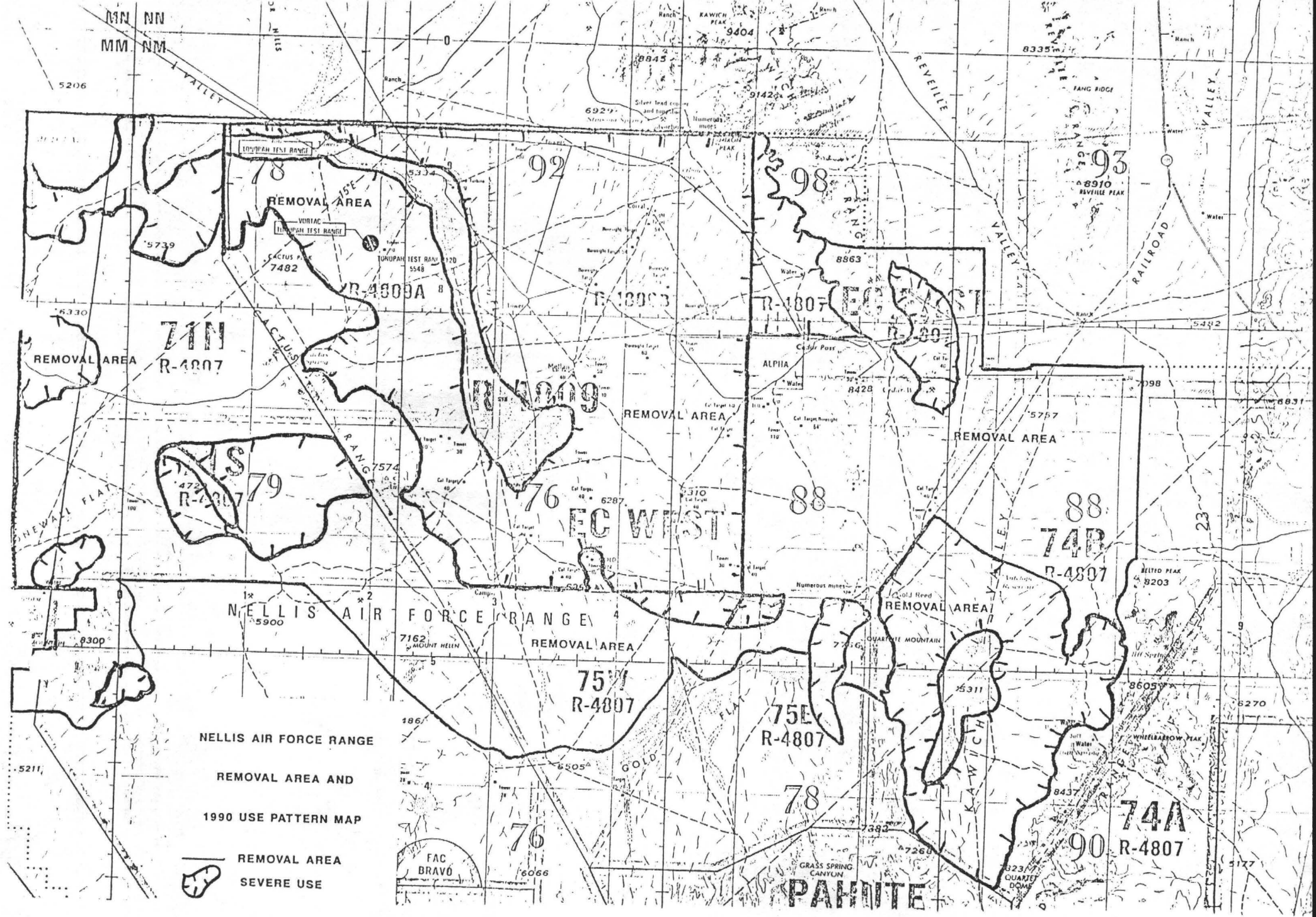
NEVADA  
TEST  
SITE

(OVERLAP  
AREA)  
DESERT  
NATIONAL  
WILDLIFE  
RANGE

LAS VEGAS  
DISTRICT

(1) NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE REMOVAL AREA





NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
 REMOVAL AREA AND  
 1990 USE PATTERN MAP


 REMOVAL AREA  
 SEVERE USE

FAC  
 BRAVO

PANHITE

DR/FONSI  
for  
REMOVAL PLAN FOR NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE  
EA No. NV-055-00-22

Decision: I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment for the Nellis Air Force Range Wild Horse Removal Plan and concur with my staff's assessment. I approve of the proposed action to conduct a water trapping and helicopter removal of approximately 2000 excess wild horses from the proposed areas with the mitigation as proposed:

1. Wherever possible, gathering will avoid areas of high concentrations of mule deer, antelope and big horn sheep to avoid stressing these animals.
2. The contractor will provide grass hay in order to reduce the possibility of any adverse digestive system reaction to the hay by the horses.

The removal of wild horses will leave a minimum population of 2302 animals in the Nellis removal area. The capture will remove animals from the heavy to severe use areas under the proposed action. The non-selected alternatives consist of trapping them by running them on horseback, supplemental feed and water, range seeding, and no action.

Rationale: The proposed action should be undertaken to take the first step to effectively manage the wild horses in the removal area for a thriving natural ecological balance. The 691.6 square miles of severe use levels within the removal area emphasizes the need to manage the horse population levels. The identified stipulations will ensure humane treatment of the captured horses. The proposal is in conformance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (P.L. 92-195), as amended.

FONSI: There will not be a significant impact to the quality of the human environment resulting from the implementation of the proposed action. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required for this action.

Rationale: Analysis of impacts did not identify any unique or unknown risks. The stipulations and specifications and mitigating measures will minimize the negative impacts. Direct and indirect environmental benefits are anticipated for wild horses, wildlife, and their habitat with the adoption of the proposed action. The removal will result in an improvement of the rangeland resources through decreased utilization of the forage in the removal area, thus taking the first step towards restoring the range to a thriving natural ecological balance.

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David C. O'Neal  
Assistant Secretary, Land and  
Mineral Management

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Date

REMOVAL PLAN FOR  
NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
WILD HORSE REMOVAL

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 Removal

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF REMOVAL

The purpose of the proposed action is to restore the range to a thriving natural ecological balance and to prevent further deterioration of the rangeland resources currently threatened by an excess of wild horses in the removal area. The boundary of the Nevada Wild Horse Range and the area used by wild horses in 1971 are not addressed in this plan. Since these topics are not addressed, the determination of an appropriate management level (AML) is not considered in this plan. These issues will be decided through the protest to the Nellis Air Force Range Resource Plan/Final EIS (U.S. DOI, BLM, 1990).

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

B. LOCATION

The proposed removal area is in the Nellis Air Force Range located in Clark, Lincoln and Nye counties of southern Nevada. The removal area is covered under the 1986 Nellis Air Force Range Withdrawal Act, P.L. 99-606 dated November 6, 1986. The cooperative agreement between the BLM and Nellis AFB for management of the wild horses, dated February 12, 1974 details the specific roles and responsibilities. The proposed gather area is within the areas of heavy and severe utilization zones. This action is considered a part of long term management. The attached maps identify the proposed removal area.

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.

C. BACKGROUND

1. Situation and Supporting Data

A wild horse census conducted in August 1990 counted 4,302 within the gather area. Current estimates place the population at approximately 4302 wild horses within the removal area. Based on the 1987 and 1989 removals the percent of young animals ranges from 16%-20%. The recruitment rate based upon the number of two year olds in the population ranges from 11%-16%. Based on removal data the sex ratio is 1.05:1.00 males to females or essentially a 1:1 ratio. The relative percent young in the population determined during the pre-capture helicopter survey in February 1991 showed half as many young in the severely grazed areas as in other locations.

An analysis of water monitoring data indicates that sufficient perennial water exists to support between 1100 and 1200 wild horses. Water tables measured in two locations indicates a significant drop in the water table.

Significant portions of the removal area are in deteriorated condition with approximately 442,755 acres or 691.6 square miles of severe utilization levels. An analysis of the forage monitoring data indicates approximately 442,755 acres of the removal area in the severe utilization category.

Increase in dust due to trailing and reduced vegetative cover has decreased visibility and the effectiveness of military uses including defense optical testing within the removal area.

The Nellis Evaluation addresses the resource conditions in detail to identify the need for this capture. It was sent out for review in 1989 and revised based on the comments in December 1990. Additional monitoring data collected and analyzed since that time was used to supplement the analysis supporting this removal. All of this information is available in the Las Vegas District office.

In summary, data indicates that existing water and forage within the removal area can not support the current population of wild horses, deterioration of the range is occurring and a thriving natural ecological balance does not exist. Although this plan will remove no more than 2000 wild horses and will leave more than 2000 wild horses, condition objectives may not be met. Collection of monitoring data will continue annually and a supplementary evaluation will be completed in FY92.

## 2. Objectives

a. To avoid or eliminate conflict with military use of the Nellis Range Complex in accordance with P.L. 99-606.

b. To achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance in accordance with P.L. 92-195 and consistent with other resource values.

c. To protect and manage wild free roaming horses in accordance with P.L. 92-195.

d. To prevent deterioration of the rangeland resources in accordance with various statutes.

e. To reduce the acreage in severe utilization category and improve rangeland conditions.

## II. REMOVAL PROCESS

### A. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GATHER

The proposed action will be the first step to bring the population of wild horses to a level approaching a balance with available water and forage in the removal area. The population adjustment is based solely on analysis of monitoring data.

Water trapping will be used to capture wild horses that graze the heavy and

severe utilization zones within the removal area (see attached map). No more than 2000 wild horses will be removed beginning approximately April 29 and continuing through July 1, 1991 or until completed. If necessary a helicopter may be used to supplement operations after July 1. The entire operation is not expected to exceed approximately 12 weeks.

This removal will be conducted through the Nevada East Wild Horse/Burro Removal Requirements Contract (N651-C1-3018) or through the FY91 equivalent requirements contract. The removal will be supervised by a Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) and a Project Inspector (PI). Sorting and aging operations will be conducted by the Contractor and supervised by COR/PI. All stipulations contained in this removal plan and the contract will apply. Through either it's own personnel or the contractor the BLM will be responsible for the capture, care, sorting, temporary holding and transportation from the removal area of all wild horses .

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

The evaluation will also conclude whether the level of activity associated with the removal 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 removal can proceed with a veterinarian present, the services of a veterinarian will be obtained before the removal proceeds.

It is estimated that no more than seven trap locations will be required to accomplish the work. Potential trap sites include but are not limited to Rose Spring Pipeline, Silver Bow Spring, Corral Spring, Tunnel Spring, Cactus Spring and Cedar Well. Potential trap sites occur on or near existing roads. Other trap sites will be selected throughout the removal area to reduce concentrations of animals in the heavy and severe utilization zones.

Prior to setting up traps and support facilities, cultural resource and biological assessment of these sites will be conducted by qualified BLM specialists. Trap locations exhibiting significant cultural resources or sensitive biological values will be shifted or eliminated from consideration or alternate locations selected where mitigation is possible.

## B. CAPTURE

### 1. Time and Method

The removal will commence after April 29, 1991, when weather and wild horse conditions permit. Once the removal operation begins, it is anticipated it will last approximately twelve weeks.

Water trapping, possibly supplemented with helicopter herding after July 1, will be used to remove wild horses. If water trapping is unsuccessful, a helicopter will be used to move wild horses to trap sites, where they will be encouraged into traps. A second helicopter will be used to monitor the activities of the Contractor's helicopter.

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 COR/PI.

## 2. Number of Animals to be Removed

The number of wild horses to be removed during this removal is no more than 2000, contingent upon available funding.

## 3. Number of Animals Remaining

Current population estimates indicate that there will be more than 2302 wild horses remaining in the removal area.

## C. SORTING

At each holding site, animals will be sorted into the following four categories using the criteria listed:

1. ANIMALS TO BE REMOVED FROM THE RANGE generally will meet the following criteria:

a. ten years of age and under which are determined not to have recognizable defects. Animals over six years of age should exhibit positive qualities.

b. in sufficient health to be shipped from processing center within a reasonable period of time following arrival.

2. Any LAME, OLD, OR SICK ANIMALS will meet the following criteria:

a. Lame means an animal with one or more malfunctioning limbs that permanently impair freedom of movement.

b. Old means an animal characterized because of age by its physical deterioration and inability to fend for itself, suffering or closeness to death.

c. Sick means an animal with failing health, infirmity or disease from which there is little chance of recovery.

3. ANIMALS TO BE RELEASED BACK ON TO THE RANGE may be selected using the following criteria:

- a. Obviously near term pregnant mares.
- b. Mares with foals too young be shipped.
- c. Animals exceeding ten years of age and animals over six years of age not exhibiting positive qualities.
- d. Animals without identifiable hereditary defects not meeting other criteria for destruction. An example is an animal blinded in one eye due to injury.

4. BRANDED AND CLAIMED ANIMALS will be identified using the following criteria:

- 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.).

5. Process

a. Removal. Animals meeting the removal criteria will be returned to the Contractor for transport to a processing center. BLM may hold selected animals and transport them separately.

b. Destruction. The COR/PI will have the primary responsibility for determining when an animal will be destroyed in accordance with 43 CFR Subpart 4730.1. 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 COR/PI will insure that destruction methodology is known to personnel involved in this aspect. In addition, the COR/PI will provide training to ASI personnel to insure that destruction is accomplished in the most humane manner possible. Only appropriate firearms will be used by ASI personnel. When the need for destruction questionable, a veterinarian will be called to assist in making a final determination.

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 other wild horses which must be destroyed 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 drainage regardless of drainage size or downstream destination.

c. Release. Animals selected for release back on the range will be retained until the trap site in which they were captured is relocated and their recapture is unlikely. BLM may hold selected animals and transport them separately.



d. Branded and Claimed. A Notice of Intent to Impound and 28-day Notice to Gather Wild Horses will be issued concurrently by the BLM, prior to any removal operations in this area. The Nevada Department of Agriculture and the District Brand Inspector will receive copies of these notices. The COR/PI 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 and the District Brand Inspector will jointly inspect all animals at the holding facility in the removal area. The COR/PI, 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 estray.

The District Brand Inspector will provide the COR/PI 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.

#### D. HOLDING

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 COR/PI, who will then forward the request to the USAF. The USAF 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 (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 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.

#### E. TRANSPORTATION

##### 1. Wild Horses

After sorting, wild horses will be transported to PVC or possibly to the Bureau's processing center in Kingman, AZ. Transportation will be in accordance with standards in the stipulations and specifications section in this plan.

##### 2. Branded and Claimed Horses

Branded and claimed horses will be transported off of the Range by the BLM or the Brand Inspector depending on the final disposition of the individual animals.

#### F. RESPONSIBILITIES

##### 1. District Manager

The District Manager is responsible for maintaining and protecting the health and welfare of the wild horses. The District Manager, directly and through his subordinates, has ultimate responsibility and line authority for supervision of assigned personnel in all aspects of the removal. All publicity and initial contacts with the media will be coordinated by the wild horse and burro specialist through the District Public Affairs Officer.

##### 2. Area Manager

Formal public contact (other than for access) and general inquiries will be handled through the Caliente Resource Area Manager. The Area Manager is responsible for dissemination of information to the District Manager, the State Director's representative, and interested publics. As a minimum the Area Manager will provide removal statistics (number removed, number released, number destroyed) on a weekly basis. Accidents and incidents will be reported immediately. The Area Manager, directly and through his subordinates, has responsibility and line authority for supervision of assigned personnel to insure safe and humane practices relative to the health and welfare of the wild horses.

##### 3. Other BLM Personnel

Prior to performance of duties, attached/detailed BLM personnel will tour the removal area and look at potential trap sites. In addition they will be briefed on results of the pre-capture evaluation, the objectives and standards of their tasks and the removal plan stipulations and specifications.

##### 4. Contracting Officer's Representative and Project Inspector

The COR/PI will be directly responsible for conducting the removal including supervision other attached/detailed BLM personnel and the Contractor. The COR supervises the PI. All public access to the capture area will be requested by

the individual(s) through the COR and the COR will request and coordinate the access with Nellis. The COR/PI, through on-site observation, will evaluate the contractor's ability to perform the required work in accordance with the contract stipulations and specifications. 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. 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.

The COR/PI will coordinate contacts with Palomino Valley Center (PVC) or other handling facilities, to assure space is available, horses are handled humanely and efficiently, and are arriving from the capture site in good condition.

If, after July 1, a helicopter is used to assist removal operations, the project helicopter actions may be observed by a Government-controlled helicopter. All actions of the Government helicopter will be coordinated with the Contractor to prevent interference with the project helicopter and Contractor operations. The COR/PI will direct the use of this observation helicopter to monitor the operation of the Contractor. All use of helicopters will be coordinated with Nellis AFB.

The COR/PI will maintain a daily log and furnish the Area Manager with copies of all written instructions to the Contractor and any stop work order on a weekly basis. Removal/release statistics will be furnished to the Area Manager on a weekly basis. Accidents and incidents will be reported to the Area Manager immediately. The COR/PI is also responsible for reporting proceedings to the Contracting Officer. The COR/PI is responsible for on-site coordination with Nellis Range personnel.

It is anticipated that the COR will be Robert D. Stager, Range Conservationist, Las Vegas District Office. PIs may include, but are not limited to Jule Durfee, Mike Fewell, Bruce Portwood, Roger Bryan, Bob Brown, and John Winnepenninkx, all Range Conservationists with BLM in Nevada.

#### 5. Contractor

The contractor shall be required to present for inspection by the COR all equipment that will be used in performance of the contract. The time and place of inspection shall be determined by the COR. Except for helicopters, any equipment that the COR determines to be inadequate shall be replaced or repaired by the contractor within 36 hours.

Work hours under this contract shall be limited to the time between one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset each day with the exception of bait trapping which may be conducted 24 hours per day. No work shall be done on Sunday or Federal holidays unless mutually agreeable between the COR and the contractor and authorized by the CO.

The Contractor will be briefed on his duties and responsibilities before the Notice to Proceed is issued. The contractor will be informed of the terrain

involved, animal condition, road conditions, potential trap locations, water availability and the presence of fences and other dangerous barriers.

### III. STIPULATIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF EXPLANATORY NOTES (SHOWN IN [BRACKETS]) THE FOLLOWING TEXT IS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM THE REQUIREMENTS CONTRACT (N651-C1-3018). THE EXACT TEXT COULD CAUSE REVIEWS TO BELIEVE THAT THE BLM PROPOSES TO EMPLOY A HELICOPTER-DRIVE TECHNIQUE. THIS IS NOT THE CASE. THE BLM PROPOSES TO USE THE BAIT (WATER) TRAPPING TECHNIQUE FROM APPROXIMATELY APRIL 29 TO JULY 1, 1991. AFTER JULY 1, IF NECESSARY, THE HELICOPTER-DRIVE AND HELICOPTER-ROPING TECHNIQUES MAY BE USED.

#### A. TRAPPING AND CARE

All capture attempts shall be accomplished utilizing either helicopter-drive trapping, helicopter-roping, or bait trapping techniques and shall incorporate the following:

1. All trap locations and holding facilities must be approved by the COR/PI prior to construction. The Contractor may also be required to change or move trap locations as determined by the COR/PI. All traps and holding facilities not located on public land must have prior written approval of the landowner.

2. The rate of movement and distance the animals travel shall not exceed limitations set by the COR/PI who will consider terrain, physical barriers, weather, condition of the animals and other factors.

[NOTE: BLM will not allow horses to be herded more than 10 miles nor faster than 20 miles per hour. The COR/PI 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.]

3. 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 for horses and 60 inches for burros, 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 (without holes) or like material. The loading chute shall also be a minimum of 6 feet high.

c. All runways shall be a minimum of 30 feet long and a minimum of 6 feet high for horses, and 5 feet high for burros, and shall be covered with plywood (without holes) or like material a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level for burros and 2 feet to 6 feet for horses.

d. Wings shall not be constructed out of barbed wire or other materials injurious to animals and must be approved by the COR/PI.

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 for burros and 2 feet to 6 feet for horses. 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.

4. No fence modification will be made without authorization from the COR/PI. The Contractor shall be responsible for restoration of any fence modification which he has made.

[NOTE: 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.]

5. When dust conditions occur within or adjacent to the trap or holding facility, the Contractor shall be required to wet down the ground with water.

6. Alternate pens, within the holding facility shall be furnished by the Contractor to separate mares or jennies with small foals, sick and injured animals, and estrays from the other animals. 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. Under certain conditions, the government may require that animals be restrained for the purpose of determining an animals age or other similar practice. In these instances, a portable restraining chute will be provided by the government. Alternate pens shall be furnished by the contractor to hold animals if the specific gathering requires that animals be released back into the capture area(s).

[NOTE: Animals held in excess of ten hours will be provided sufficient space to allow for movement and reduce the possibility of crowding.]

7. The Contractor 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 [grass] hay at the rate of not less than two pounds of hay per 100 pounds of estimated body weight per day.

8. It is the responsibility of the Contractor to provide security to prevent loss, injury or death of captured animals until delivery to final destination.

9. The Contractor shall restrain sick or injured animals if treatment by the Government is necessary. The COR will determine if injured animals must be destroyed and provide for destruction of such animals. The Contractor may be required to dispose of the carcasses as directed by the COR/PI.

10. Animals shall be transported to final destination from temporary holding facilities within 24 hours after capture unless prior approval is granted by the COR/PI for unusual circumstances. 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 COR/PI. The Contractor shall schedule shipments of animals to arrive at final destination between 6:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. No shipments shall be scheduled to arrive at final destination on Sunday and Federal holidays. Animals shall not be allowed to remain standing on trucks while not in transport for a combined period of greater than three (3) hours.

## B. CAPTURE METHODS

### 1. Helicopter-Drive Trapping

a. Capture attempts shall be accomplished by the utilization of a helicopter. A minimum of one saddle horse shall be immediately available at the trap site to accomplish roping if necessary. Roping shall be done as determined by the COR/PI. Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one hour.

b. The helicopter shall be used in such a manner that bands will remain together. Foals shall not be left behind.

### c. Helicopter, Pilot and Communications

(1) The Contractor must operate in compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 91. Pilots provided by the Contractor shall comply with the Contractor's 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 COR shall 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 Government will take steps as necessary to protect the welfare of the animals. The frequency(ies) used for this contract will be assigned by the COR when the radio is used. When a VHF/AM radio is used, the frequency will be 122.925 MHz.

(4) The Contractor shall 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 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/her representative.

(6) At time of contract completion, the contractor shall provide the COR the total flight time (in hours/tenths), including ferry time to and from the contractor's home base, spent in performance of the contract.

## 2. Helicopter-Roping

a. All capture attempts shall be accomplished by utilizing a helicopter to drive animals to ropers.

b. Under no circumstances shall horses or burros be tied down for more than one hour.

c. Roping shall be performed in such a manner that bands will remain together. Foals shall not be left behind.

## 3. Bait Trapping (water, feed)

a. All capture attempts shall be accomplished by utilizing water or feed as an attractant to lure animals into a trap.

b. Finger gates shall not be constructed of materials such as "T" posts, sharpened willows, etc., that may be injurious to animals.

c. All trigger and/or trip gate devices must be approved by the COR/PI prior to capture of animals.

d. Traps shall be checked a minimum of once every 10 hours.

[NOTE: The contractor will leave water traps around permanent water sources open at the completion of each day's capture operation to allow wildlife access to water.]

## C. 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 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 stock trailers shall be allowed for transporting animals from traps to temporary holding facilities. Only Bobtail trucks, stock trailers, or single deck trucks shall be used to haul animals from temporary holding facilities to final destination. Sides or stock racks 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, trailers, 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.

6. Animals to be loaded and transported in any vehicle or trailer shall be as directed by the COR and may include limitations on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament and animal condition. The following minimum linear feet per animal shall be allowed per standard 8-foot wide stock trailer/truck:

- 1.4 linear foot per adult horse
- 1.0 linear foot per adult burro
- .75 linear foot per horse foal
- .5 linear foot per burro foal

[NOTE: The COR/PI will supervise the loading of the wild horses to be transported from the trap to the temporary holding corral. The COR/PI 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 will consider the distance and condition of the road and animals in making this determination. Horses shipped from the temporary holding corral to the PVC 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 supervising the loading will exercise authority to off-load animals should there be too many horses on the trailer/truck.]



7. The COR 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 COR shall provide for any brand and/or inspection services required for the captured animals.

[NOTE: 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 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 determines that dust conditions are such that the animals could be endangered during transportation, the Contractor will be instructed to adjust speed.

[NOTE: The maximum distance over which animals may have to be transported on dirt roads is approximately 30 miles per load. The COR/PI may increase this distance if necessary. 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.]

#### D. CONTRACTOR-FURNISHED PROPERTY

1. All hay, water, vehicles, saddle horses, helicopters and other applicable equipment shall be provided by the Contractor. Other equipment includes but is not limited to, a minimum 2,000 linear feet of 72-inch high (minimum height) panels for horses or 60-inch high (minimum height) for burros for traps and holding facilities. Separate water troughs shall be provided at each pen where animals are being held. Water troughs shall be constructed of such material (e.g., rubber, rubber over metal) so as to avoid injury to the animals.

2. The Contractor shall furnish an avionics system that will allow communications between the Contractor's helicopter and his fuel truck.

3. The Contractor shall 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 shall provide programmable VHF/FM radio transceiver in accordance with the following and Illustration 1.

a. VHF/FM Transceiver. One VHF/FM (AUX-FM) Transceiver shall be installed, operating in the 150.000 to 174.000 MHz band on five kHz channel increments, with 32 channel CTCSS sub-audible tone encoder capabilities, and no less than five watts and no more than 10 watts carrier power output.

b. In lieu of the VHF/FM Transceiver, the Contractor may furnish the following portable radio, provisions for an auxiliary VHF/FM portable radio and adaptor.

(1) VHF/FM Portable Radio. One VHF/FM Two-Way Portable Radio, operating in the 150 MHz to 174 MHz frequency band, frequency synthesized, CTCSS 32 sub-audible tone capable, operator programmable, 5kHz channel spacing, minimum 5 watts carrier power (Example: King Model No. LPH Series).

(2) Provision for Auxiliary VHF/FM Portable Radio.

(a) The Contractor shall provide the necessary interface for installing and properly operating an Auxiliary VHF/FM Portable Radio through the aircraft's Audio Control Systems. The interface shall consist of the appropriate wiring from the Audio Control Systems which is terminated in a MS 3112E-12-10S type connector, mounted in a location convenient to the observer, and utilizing the following contact assignments:

<u>Contact Designation</u>	<u>Interface Functions</u>
A	Airframe Ground
B	Push-to-Talk (isolated contact closure)
C	Push-to-Talk (isolated contact closure)
D	Receiver audio low
E	Receiver audio high (Variable typically from 10mW to 500mW, 8 ohms to 75 ohms)
F	Transmitter Microphone Low
G	Transmitter Microphone High
H	+14 VDC from aircraft avionics bus, 5 amp Type A circuit breaker. For 14V aircraft only!
J	+24 VDC from aircraft avionics bus, 5 amp Type A circuit breaker. For 28V aircraft only!
K	Spare contact

(b) One weatherproof external broadband antenna covering the 150-174 MHz band, with associated RG-58A/U coaxial cable and connector, terminated in a bulkhead mounted BNC connector convenient to the observer (Comant type CI-177 or equal).

(c) Radio mounting facilities that comply with AC 43.13-2A, Chapters 1 and 2, shall be provided for the auxiliary radio for installation in the cockpit, with controls convenient to the pilot and observer. The auxiliary radio connector and antenna connector shall be so located that an 18 inch interconnecting cable may be utilized by the radio.

(d) The selector panel shall supply positive polarity microphone excitation voltage, from the aircraft DC power system through a suitable resistor network, to the aircraft microphone. A blocking capacitor shall be provided in the selector panel to prevent the portable microphone excitation voltage from entering the system.

(e) An auxiliary FM adapter shall be provided to interface the connector and circuits necessary to operate the radio, through the MS3112E-12-10S connector in the aircraft (FS/OAS Drawing A-15-1 is provided as a possible interface).

#### E. GOVERNMENT FURNISHED PROPERTY

The government will provide a portable "Fly" restraining chute at the pre-work conference, to be used by the contractor for the purpose of aging animals or other similar practices.

#### IV. FOLLOW UP MONITORING

During and upon completion of removal, the BLM will continue to monitor the wild horse herd, the water sources and the vegetation to determine the degree to which objectives are being met. Use pattern mapping will be completed annually until the herd is determined to be in balance. Three exclosures with trend, condition, and utilization data will be established in 1991 to monitor the effects of the removal(s) on the vegetation. A summary evaluation will be prepared in FY 92. Future actions will be based on the results of this monitoring information.

SIGNATURES

Recommended by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ben F. Collins  
District Manager  
Las Vegas District Office

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Recommended by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bill R. Templeton  
State Director, Nevada

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Recommended by:

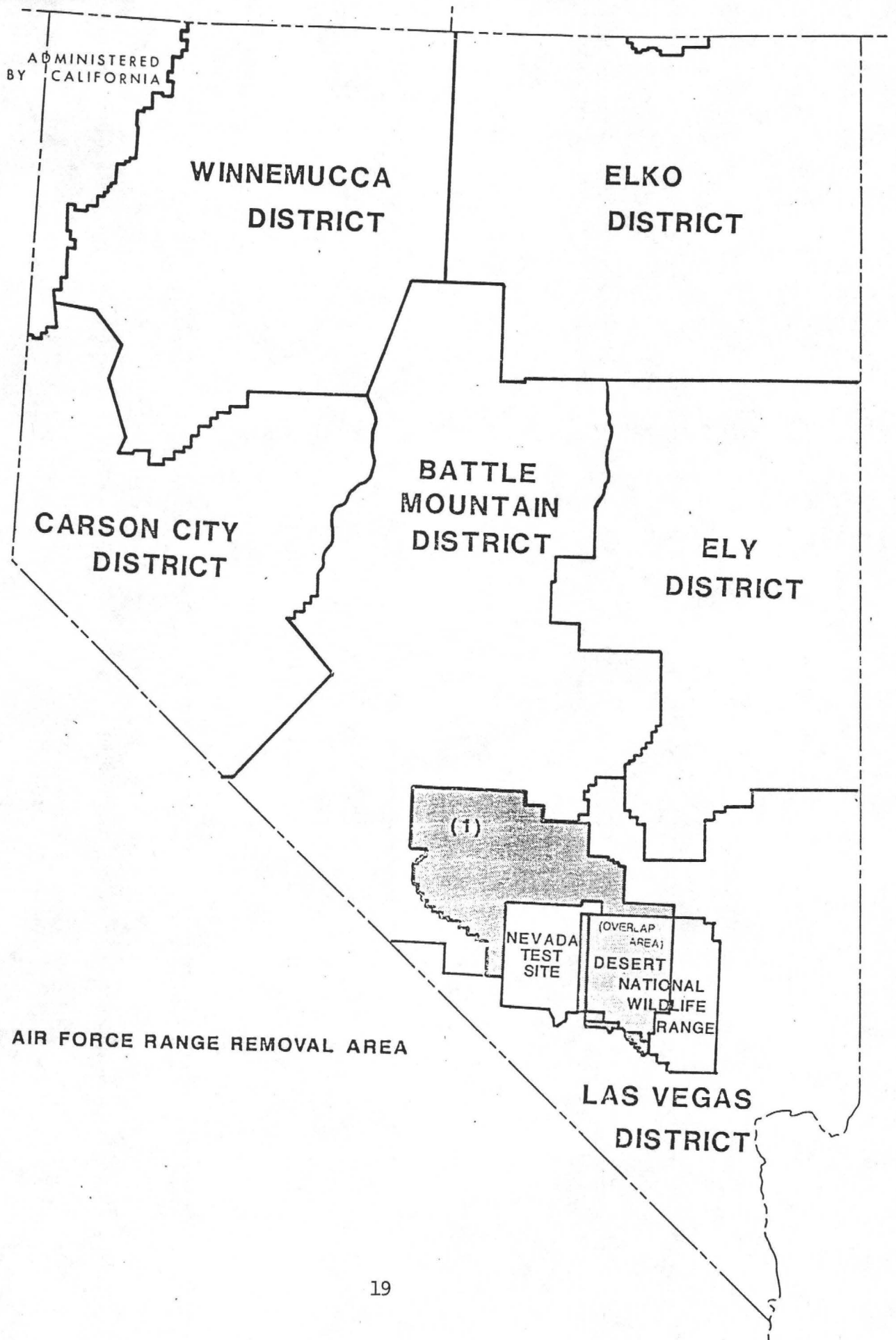
\_\_\_\_\_  
Cy Jamison  
Director, Bureau of Land Management

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

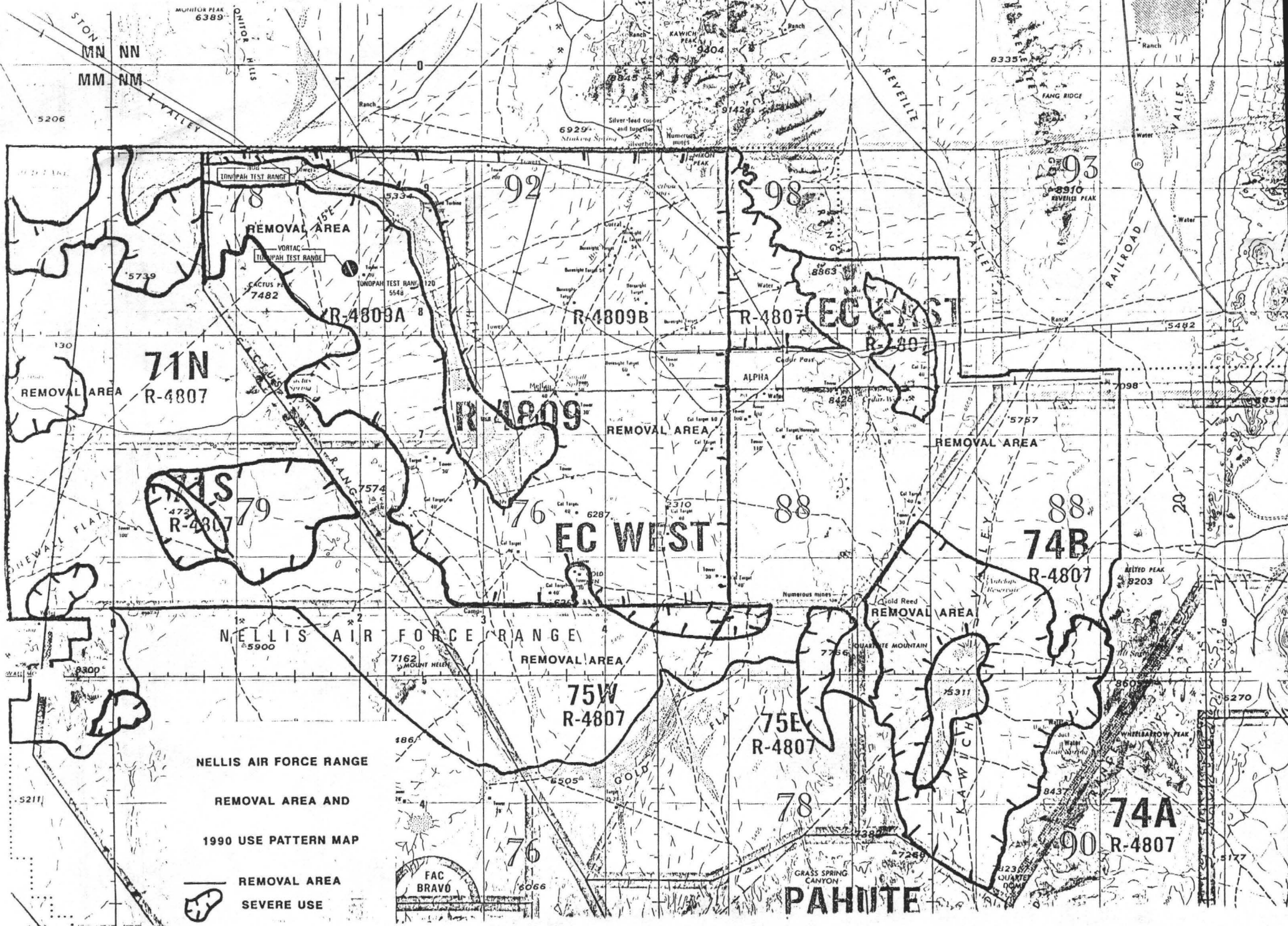
Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
David C. O'Neal  
Assistant Secretary, Land and  
Mineral Management

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



(1) NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE REMOVAL AREA



NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE

REMOVAL AREA AND

1990 USE PATTERN MAP

 REMOVAL AREA  
 SEVERE USE

FAC  
BRAVO

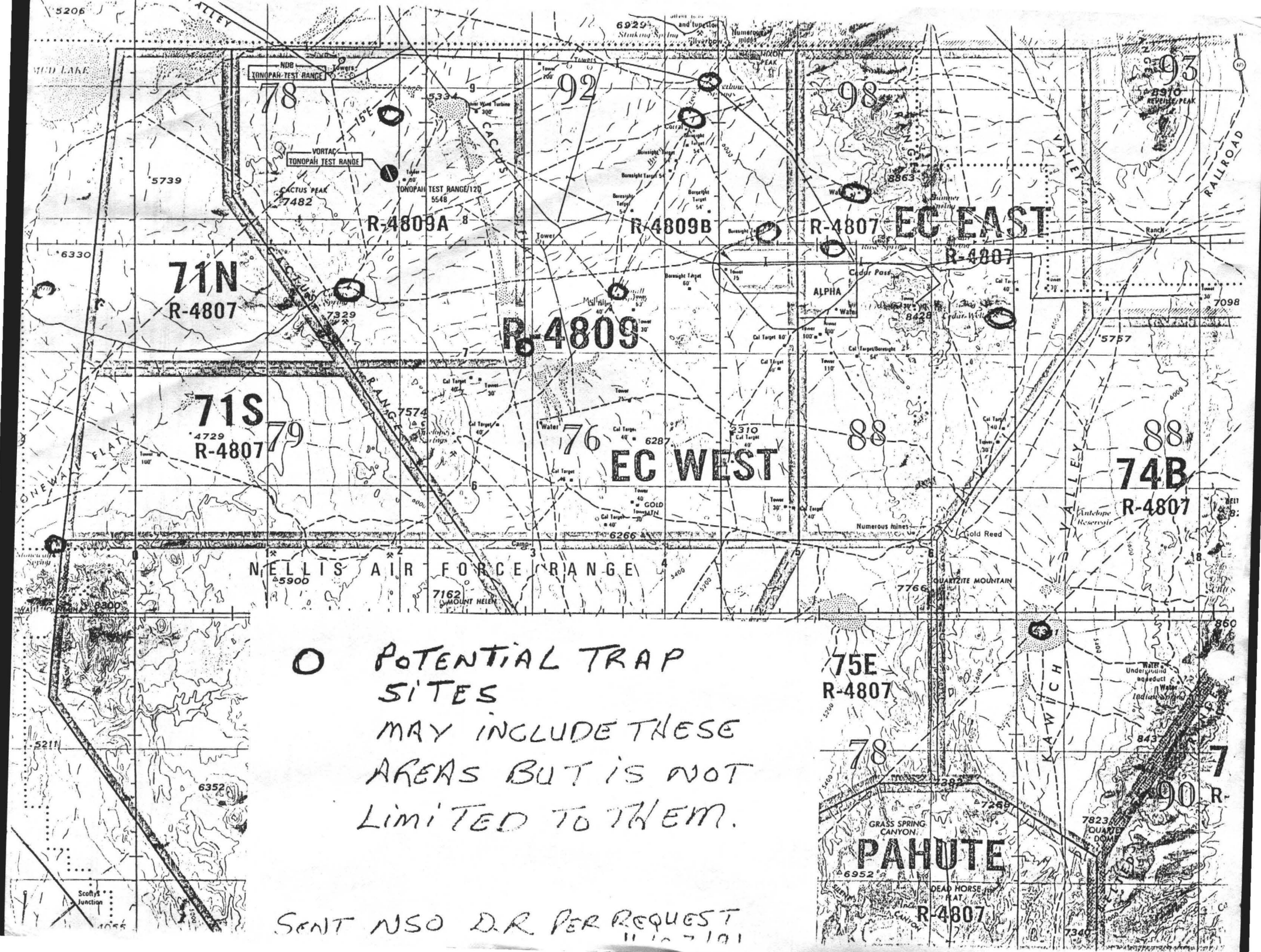
PAHUTE

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

FACSIMILE MESSAGE

DATE 4/23/91	MESSAGE NO.	NO. OF PAGES 2	AUTHORIZED BY	FILE CODE
TO (NAME, OFFICE) Dan Rathburn NSO		FROM (NAME, OFFICE) Bob Steg		
SUBJECT				

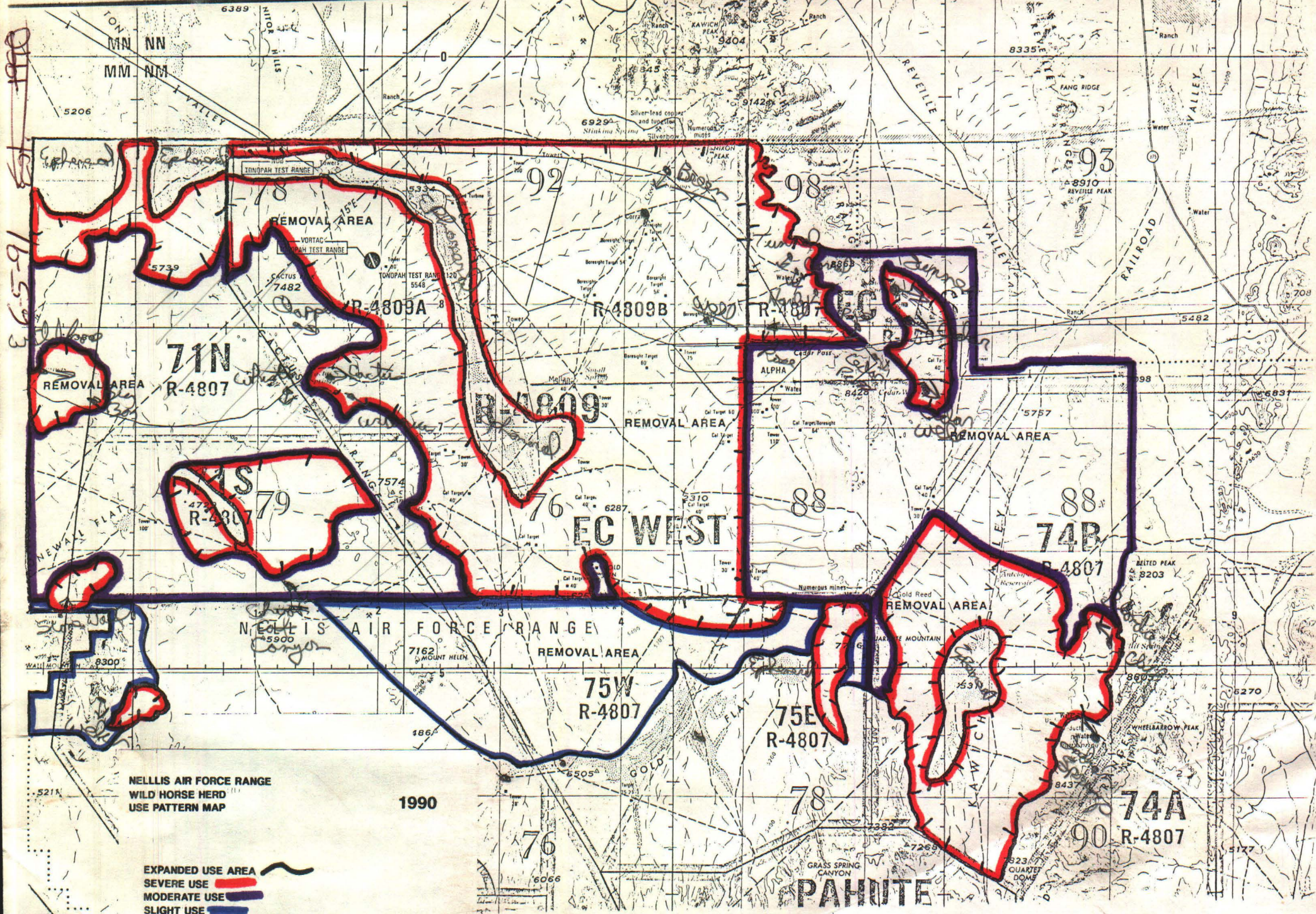
Planted trap sites. May vary  
as to actual house locations  
etc.



O POTENTIAL TRAP SITES MAY INCLUDE THESE AREAS BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO THEM.

SENT NSO D.R. PER REQUEST 11/27/01



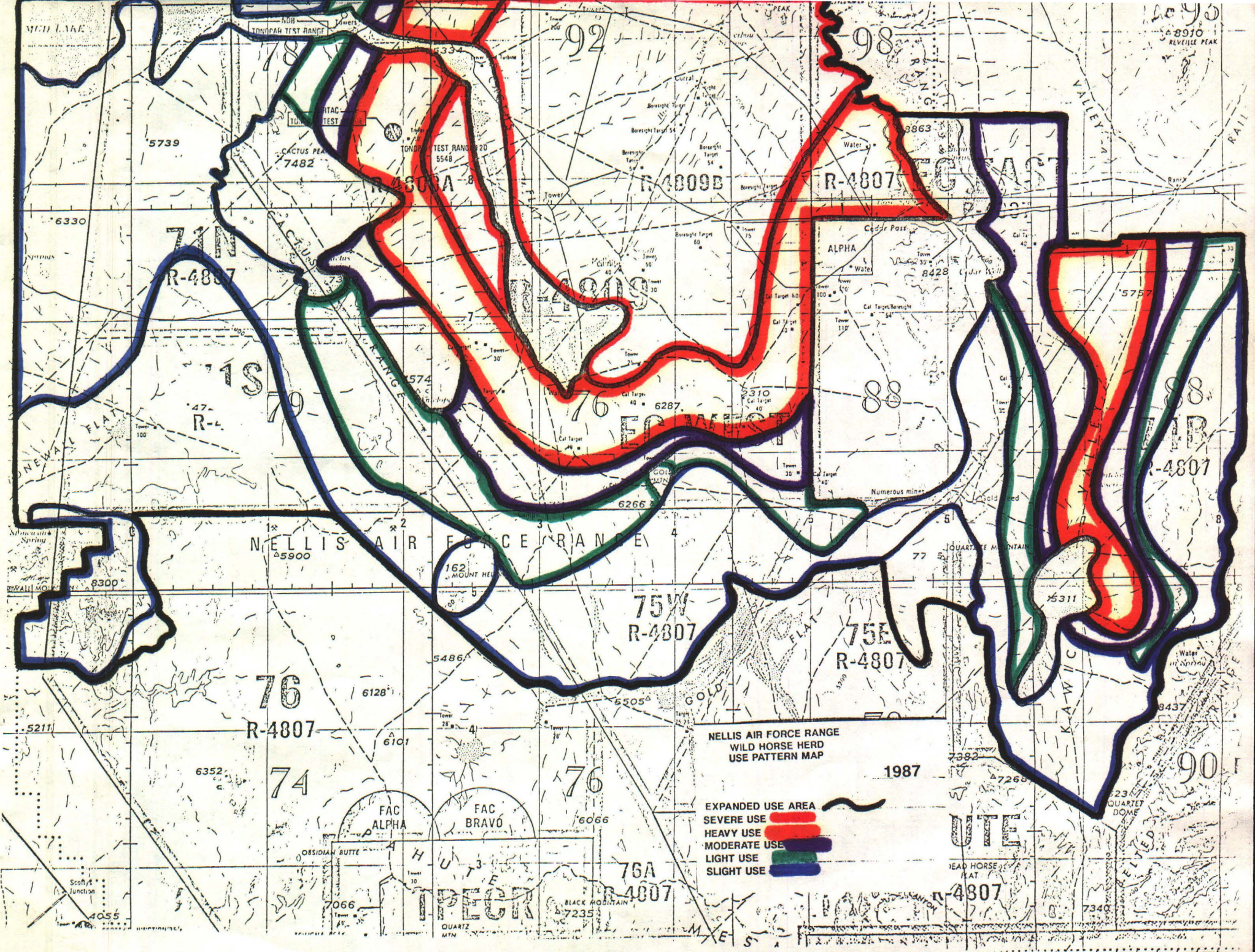


NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
WILD HORSE HERD  
USE PATTERN MAP

1990

EXPANDED USE AREA  
SEVERE USE  
MODERATE USE  
SLIGHT USE

waters



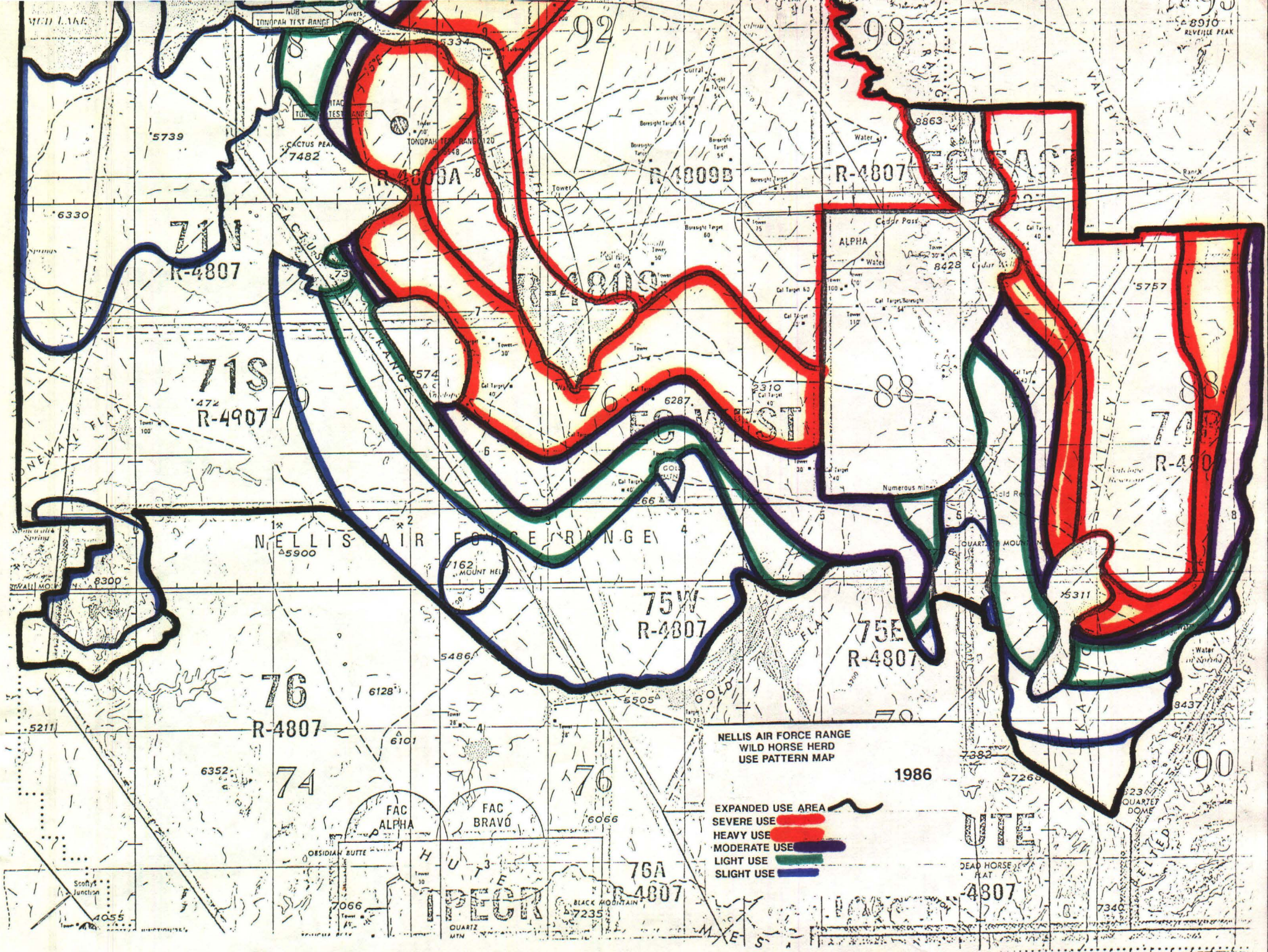
NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
WILD HORSE HERD  
USE PATTERN MAP

- EXPANDED USE AREA ~~~~~
- SEVERE USE [Red line]
- HEAVY USE [Orange line]
- MODERATE USE [Purple line]
- LIGHT USE [Green line]
- SLIGHT USE [Blue line]

UTE

HEAD HORSE  
FLAT

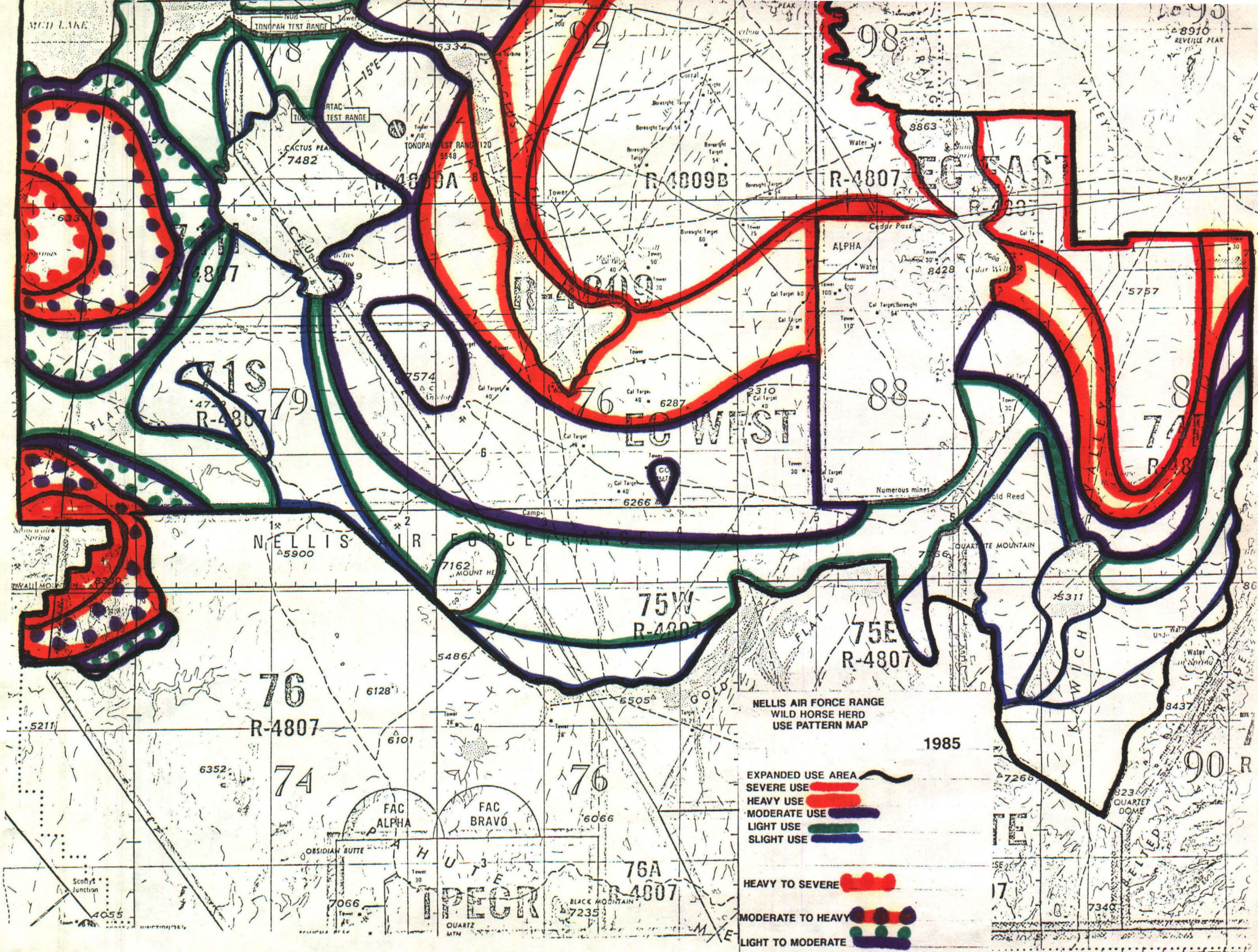
R-4807



NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
WILD HORSE HERD  
USE PATTERN MAP









1986

- EXPANDED USE AREA
- SEVERE USE
- HEAVY USE
- MODERATE USE
- LIGHT USE
- SLIGHT USE



**NELLIS AIR FORCE RANGE  
WILD HORSE HERD  
USE PATTERN MAP**

1985

- EXPANDED USE AREA 
- SEVERE USE 
- HEAVY USE 
- MODERATE USE 
- LIGHT USE 
- SLIGHT USE 
  
- HEAVY TO SEVERE 
- MODERATE TO HEAVY 
- LIGHT TO MODERATE 