



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office
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In Reply Refer To:
4700 (LLCAN0700) (P)

May 15, 2009

Notice of Proposed Action and Initiation of Public Scoping For Wild Horse Gather and Removal Plans

Dear Interested Party,

The Surprise Field Office is re-initiating public scoping for wild horse management activities within several herd management areas (HMA) managed by the Surprise Field Office. Wild horse management activities to be included in this environmental review process include population census prior to capture operations, capture and removal of horses and participation in field research trials for population-level fertility control. Census would be completed using a helicopter, and capture and removal could utilize a combination of helicopters, bait trapping, and horseback techniques. Trap sites would be selected and temporarily constructed. For one HMA (Massacre Lakes), in addition to the above management activities, the appropriate management level (AML) will be reviewed and updated. The Surprise Field Office will be preparing two environmental assessments (EA) discussing the impacts of wild horse management activities within the subject HMAs. The BLM expects to issue the EAs, and decision records this summer, and the proposed action could be implemented starting in September 2009, or FY 2010 (October 1, 2009) depending on funding or other constraints.

The purpose of the actions is to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance, and ensure that wild horse populations allow for attainment of Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for Northeast California and Northwestern Nevada.

The need for the action is to continue management of wild horse herds within the subject HMAs in accordance with the Surprise RMP Record of Decision.

Interested parties were first notified of this proposal through a scoping letter dated September 27, 2007. The herd management areas affected by the proposed action are Massacre Lakes, Carter Reservoir, Coppersmith, and Buckhorn. Coppersmith HMA was not included in the September 27, 2007 scoping letter.

Enclosed with this letter is summary information about the proposal for each herd management area. Previously submitted comments do not need to be resubmitted. These previous comments, along with any new comments will be used to determine issues to be considered and analyzed in the EAs. Your comments should be submitted by June 17, 2009 to insure consideration and sent to Steve Surian, at the above address.

If you are not interested in the proposals and wish to be removed from our wild horse program mailing list, please contact us at the above address or you may call Steve Surian (530) 279-2712.

Sincerely,

Shane DeForest
Field Manager

Enclosures:
Information summary
Herd Management Area Maps

Issue Scoping Information Wild Horse Management

Massacre Lakes Herd Management Area

The HMA is located 25 miles east of Cedarville CA, in north central Washoe County Nevada, and consist of approximately 39,890 acres. The HMA overlaps with the Massacre Lakes Allotment, Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area, Massacre Rim Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), and the Black Rock High Rock Emigrant Trail National Conservation Area.

The current Appropriate Management Level (AML) has been established at 25-35 wild horses in Surprise RMP (2008). In March 2008, a helicopter census of the HMA counted 108 horses. The Massacre Lakes HMA population is now estimated at 156 horses based on 20% estimated population increase since the March 2008 helicopter census.

Carter Reservoir, Buckhorn, and Coppersmith Herd Management Areas

The Appropriate Management Level for these HMAs is as follows: 35 wild horses for the Carter Reservoir HMA; 85 wild horses for the Buckhorn HMA, and 75 wild horses for the Coppersmith HMA. The AML for Carter Reservoir HMA was established in 2003. The AML for the Buckhorn and Coppersmith Herd Management Areas AML were established in 1995.

The Carter Reservoir HMA is Located 10 miles east of Cedarville CA, in northern Washoe County Nevada, and along the California Stateline, and consists of approximately 23,423 acres. In September 2007, 104 horses were counted in Carter Reservoir HMA (30 horses in Sand Creek Allotment, and 74 horses in Crooks Lake Allotment). The Carter Reservoir HMA population is estimated at 150 horses based on a 2007 helicopter census and 20% estimated population increase since the census. The HMA overlaps the North Hays Range Cultural Resource Management Area (CRMA) and the Sand Creek Allotment.

The Coppersmith HMA is located in Lassen County, California and Washoe County, Nevada on the slopes and tables from Duck Lake west to the Warner Mountains. The HMA consists of approximately 75,547 acres. This herd was last gathered in July 2005. Following the gather, 65 horses were counted in the Coppersmith HMA. The Coppersmith HMA current population is estimated at 136 horses based on the 2005 helicopter census and 20% estimated population increase since the census. The HMA overlaps the Tuledad/Duck Flat Cultural Resource Management Area (CRMA) and the Tuledad Allotment.

The Buckhorn HMA is located about 40 miles south of Cedarville CA, in northern Washoe County Nevada, and in Lassen County California, and consists of approximately 76,780 acres. The Buckhorn HMA population is estimated at 496 horses based on a 2005 helicopter

census and 20% estimated population increase since the census. The HMA overlaps with the Tuledad Allotment, Buffalo Hills Wilderness Study Area, and the Tuledad/Duck Flat CRMA.

The following table contains a summary of HMAs population information, and other management areas affected.

Herd Management Area Information

Herd Management Area	Acres Public/ other	AML		AML		Current population (estimated)	Year helicopter census	Other Management Areas Affected	
		low	high	Year established	Last gather			Grazing Allotments	Designated Boundaries
Buckhorn (CA-262)	76,780	59	85	1995	2003	496	July 2005	Tuledad	Buffalo Hills WSA, CRMA
Massacre Lakes (CA-268)	39,890	25	35	2008	1988	156	March 2008	Massacre Lakes	Massacre Rim WSA & ACEC, & NCA
Carter Reservoir (CA-269)	23,423	25	35	2003	2003	150	September 2007	Sand Creek; Crooks Lake	CRMA
Coppersmith (CA-261)	75,547	50	75	1995	2005	136	July 2005	Tuledad	CRMA