



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Tonopah Field Office

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http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field.html

In Reply Refer To:
4700 (NVB0200)

Dear Reader:

The Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Bullfrog Herd Management Area (HMA Wild Burro Gather (DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2011-0106-EA) will be available for your review and comment on November 30, 2011. The document may be viewed on-line at http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field.html. Hard copies are available from the Mount Lewis and Tonopah Field Offices.

The EA analyzes the potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects to the human environment associated with completion of a gather and removal of excess wild burros from within and outside of the Bullfrog HMA. Should a determination be made that implementation of the Proposed Action or action alternatives would not result in “significant environmental impacts,” a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be prepared to document that determination, and a Decision Record issued providing the rationale for approving the chosen alternative.

The Tonopah Field Office (TFO) is proposing to conduct a wild burro gather to remove excess wild burros from within and outside of the Bullfrog HMA, with first priority for removal being animals residing outside HMA boundaries.

The post gather goal for the proposed action is to achieve a population of 58 – 70 wild burros in the Bullfrog HMA. Wild burros removed from the range during the gather would be transported to BLM facilities for preparation and inclusion into the Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Program.

The Bullfrog HMA is located in the southernmost portion of the TFO area, and is approximately 151,782 acres. The eastern edge of the HMA borders the Nevada Testing and Training Range (NTTR), where burros move easily between both areas. The southern and western borders are synonymous with the TFO area boundary. The southern border is adjacent the Southern Nevada District, and the western border neighbors Death Valley National Park. The town of Beatty, Nevada lies in the center of the HMA, and Highway 95 splits the HMA into eastern and western portions. Elevations within the HMA range from a high of 6,031 feet at Bare Mountain to a low

of 3,095 feet south of Beatty. The area receives little precipitation, typical of the Mojave Desert Ecosystem. The Bullfrog HMA contains habitat for the threatened desert tortoise and the sensitive Amargosa toad.

The gather area encompasses the Bullfrog HMA and areas adjacent to the HMA where wild burros currently reside. The majority of the area falls under the jurisdictional boundaries of the Tonopah Field Office, and a small portion of the gather area is managed by the BLM Southern Nevada District. Maps of the HMA and the proposed gather area are located with the Bullfrog HMA Wild Burro Gather EA on the website identified above.

The most recent helicopter population inventory flight of the Bullfrog HMA was conducted in February, 2010 which resulted in a direct count of 124 wild burros. The anticipated post-foaling population in 2011 is 144 wild burros. Due to the sightability of wild burros, it is expected that the current population estimate is lower than the actual number of wild burros within and outside of the HMA. An extensive inventory flight will take place in December 2011 in and outside the Bullfrog HMA to confirm population estimates and removal numbers. Gather and removal numbers are subject to change pending the results of this flight and will be reported in the Final Gather Plan EA.

The Bullfrog HMA wild burro gather is needed to:

- remove wild burros from areas outside HMA that are not designated for wild burro use,
- remove excess wild burros from within the HMA to achieve a population size consistent with the established low AML, allowing approximately 3 years of population growth before AML is again exceeded,
- to protect the wild burro populations from diminished health and body condition, and suffering emergency conditions due to a lack of forage and water,
- reduce hazards from human-burro encounters in Beatty and along the Highway 95 corridor that divides the HMA,
- protect threatened desert tortoise and sensitive Amargosa toad habitat,
- protect rangeland resources from deterioration associated with an overpopulation of wild burros, and
- restore and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship on the public lands consistent with the provisions of Section 3(b) (2) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WFRHBA).

By removing excess wild burros and maintaining a population consistent with the established AML, progress would be made towards achievement of Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Standards for Rangeland Health. Please refer to the EA for more detail about the Bullfrog HMA and the proposed wild burro gather.

This Preliminary EA is being provided to the interested public for review for 30 days. We welcome your comments and highly encourage you to submit comments, issues, alternatives, recommendations, or other input for inclusion into the Final EA. Comments will be accepted until December 30, 2011. In order to provide meaningful input, please submit comments that are

applicable to the proposed Bullfrog HMA wild burro gather, referencing the Preliminary EA where possible.

Interested individuals should mail written comments to the BLM Tonopah Field Office, P.O. Box 911 (1553 S. Main St.), Tonopah, NV 89049, attention Thomas J. Seley, Tonopah Field Manager. Comments may also be provided through e-mail to this address: BullfrogHMA@blm.gov. Be advised that only the comments received by postal mail or to this specific e-mail address will be considered in the completion of the final EA, FONSI and Decision.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. If you would rather not remain on the mailing list for the Bullfrog HMA wild burro gathers, and do not wish to receive subsequent documents, please submit your request in writing to the Tonopah Field Office.

The Tonopah Field Office may hold a small trap-site adoption event in conjunction with the Bullfrog HMA gather if enough interest is received from the public. If you are interested in adopting at such an event, contact the Tonopah Field Office at 775-482-7800, or e-mail to the Bullfrog HMA Gather address BullfrogHMA@blm.gov, using the subject line "ADOPTION".

All comments received (by postal mail or by e-mail to the above e-mail address) during the public comment period will be fully considered and evaluated for preparation of the Final EA. If you have any questions, please contact Dustin Hollowell, Tonopah Field Office Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, at (775) 482-7847.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Seley
Field Manager