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News Release

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Vale District BLM Plans Wild Horse Gather

Vale, Ore. – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vale District is announcing a plan to conduct a gather of wild horses in the Three Fingers Herd Management Area (HMA). The objective is to capture 100 wild horses from the Three Fingers HMA and return 50 horses (25 studs and 25 mares) to the range to re-establish the Appropriate Management Level (AML) following the gather. The herd population is currently estimated at 202—the Appropriate Management Level for the area is 75–150 wild horses.

The gather will likely last two to four days with an expected start date of August 23. The gather was originally planned for July 26, but was postponed to the current estimated date.

The Three Fingers HMA is approximately 25 miles south of Vale, OR. The HMA is bordered on the west by the Owyhee Reservoir, on the south by the Leslie Gulch Road, and on the north by the Owyhee Dam.

Extended drought conditions in the region and a horse population exceeding the AML have resulted in horses from the Three Fingers herd grazing well outside the HMA in search of water and forage. This grazing outside of the HMA has extended into areas affected by the 2015 Soda Fire which burned nearly 280,000 acres in Oregon and Idaho. Grazing in these areas is especially destructive as the fire rehabilitation efforts are vulnerable to activity of any kind in the affected area.

Protecting these fire rehabilitation areas is necessary to prevent the spread of exotic annual weed species, which can potentially convert a burned area to a weed-dominated community. Additionally, heavy grazing by horses from the Three Fingers herd outside the HMA jeopardizes the health of surrounding rangelands, wetlands, wildlife habitat and the health and well-being of the Three Fingers herd themselves.

Horses that are removed from the range will be transported to Oregon's Wild Horse Corral Facility in Hines, OR. The public can visit and view the horses once they arrive at the Corral Facility any time during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The horses gathered during this effort will be made available for adoption later this year.

The Vale District BLM will host public viewing days near the capture site as horses are gathered and sorted. Viewing may be scheduled on short notice but can accommodate a maximum of fifteen people each day. Those interested in viewing should contact Larry Moore at L2moore@blm.gov or (541) 473-6218 for more information. Viewing opportunities and gather reports will be shared at: <http://stg.or.blm.gov/or/resources/whb/fingers2016.php>.

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The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Fiscal Year 2015, the BLM generated \$4.1 billion in receipts from activities occurring on public lands.