



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# Gather Planning and Scheduling

**Scott Fluer**

Acting On-Range Branch Chief

National Wild Horse and Burro Program





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# Mission

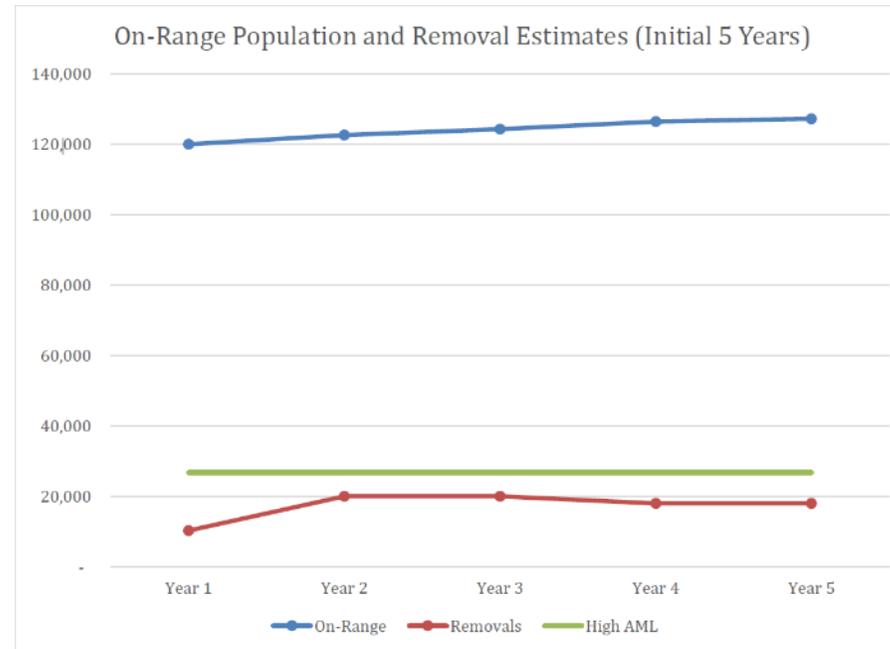
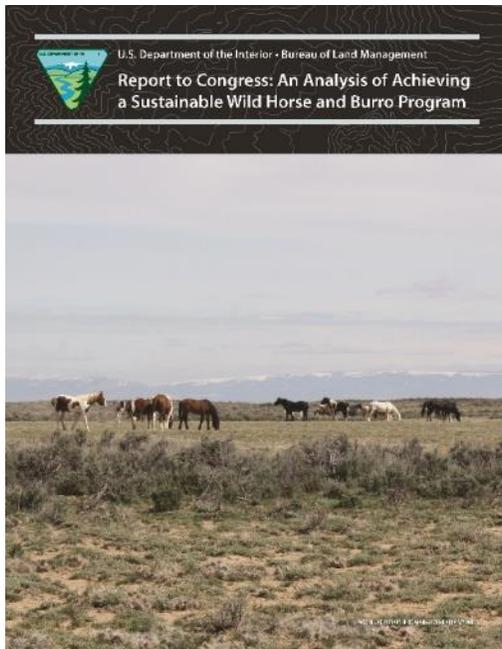
The Bureau of Land Management's mission is to sustain the **health, diversity, and productivity** of public lands for the **use** and enjoyment of **present** and **future generations**.





# May 2020 Report to Congress

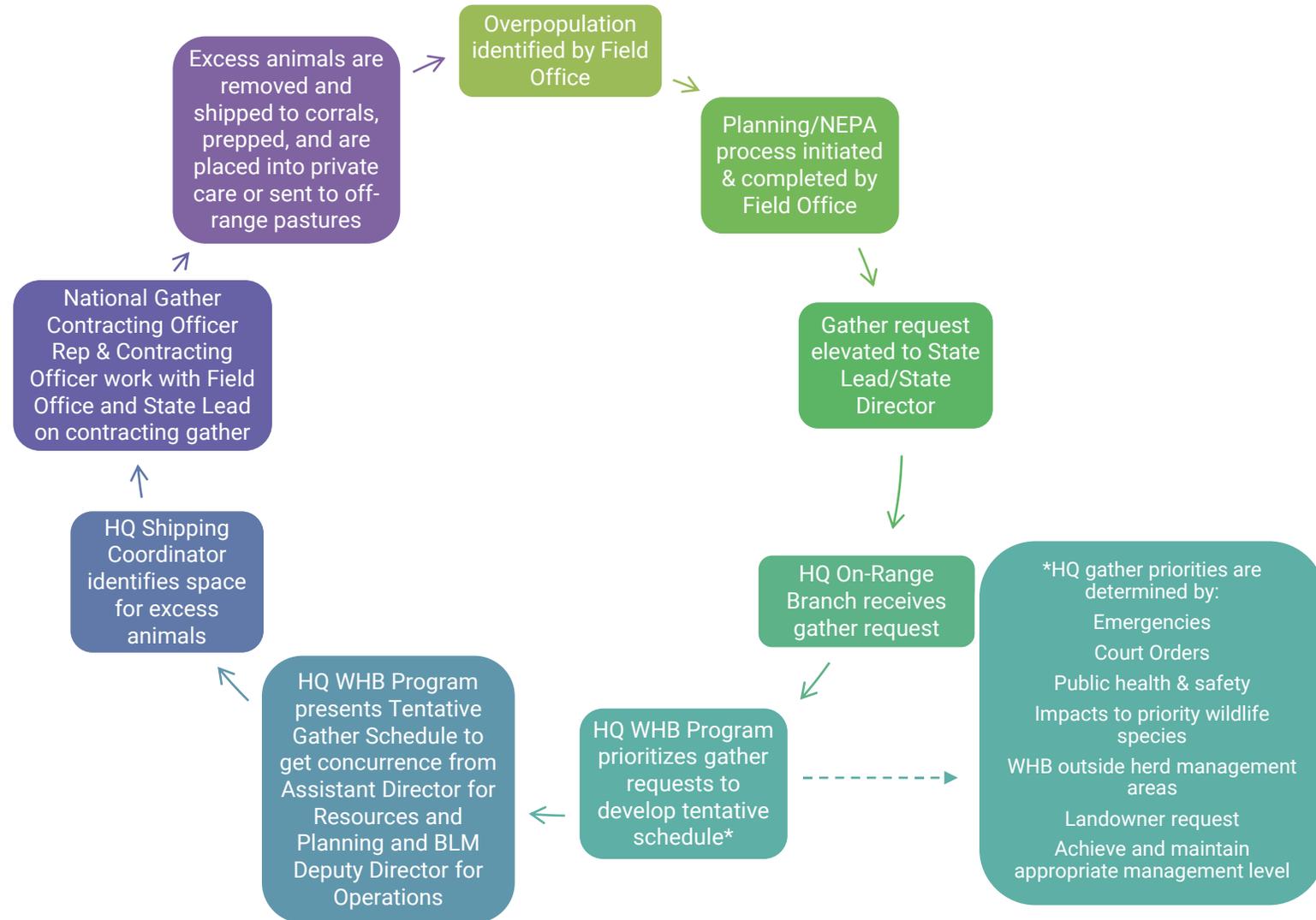
- Non-lethal strategy to achieve appropriate management level in 15-18 years through a combination of gathers, holding and population growth suppression methods.
- Annual goals for on-range management include ramping up to **18-20,000 removals** until AML is achieved, and **3,500-9,000 fertility control treatments**.





# WHB Gather Planning Process

- Planning process involves close coordination among field, district and state offices.
- WHB Handbook and Instructional Memorandum 2020-012 *Wild Horse and Burro Gather Planning, Scheduling and Approval* establishes formal process for gather planning and prioritization.
- Gather schedule is working, changing document
- Tentative schedule is publicly available on the BLM website: [blm.gov/whb/gathers](https://blm.gov/whb/gathers)





# Gather Planning Scenario

## “Healthy Horse” Herd Management Area

Location: remote area of public lands, managed by “Happy Valley Field Office”

Size: 750,000 acres

AML: 400-500 wild horses

- Wild horses share the range with limited livestock grazing, wildlife and recreationists
- Scarce water, especially during annual dry seasons
- Area experiences frequent droughts and spread of invasive weeds





## Healthy Horse Herd Management Area Gather Planning Scenario

# 1. Overpopulation identified

- A land-use plan developed at the local level identifies and sets appropriate management level for Healthy Horse HMA.
- Survey identifies above-AML population of 1,200 horses
- BLM field staff document impacts of overpopulation - depleted forage/water and encroachment onto private property





## Healthy Horse Herd Management Area Gather Planning Scenario

# 2. Planning process completed

- Using collected data and best available science, Happy Valley Field Office staff develops planning documents as required under the National Environmental Policy Act.
- In this case, staff developed and released for public comment a preliminary environmental assessment.
- A final EA was then released for the Healthy Horse HMA based on public comment, and the Field Office issued a Finding of No Significant Impact and a Decision Record.





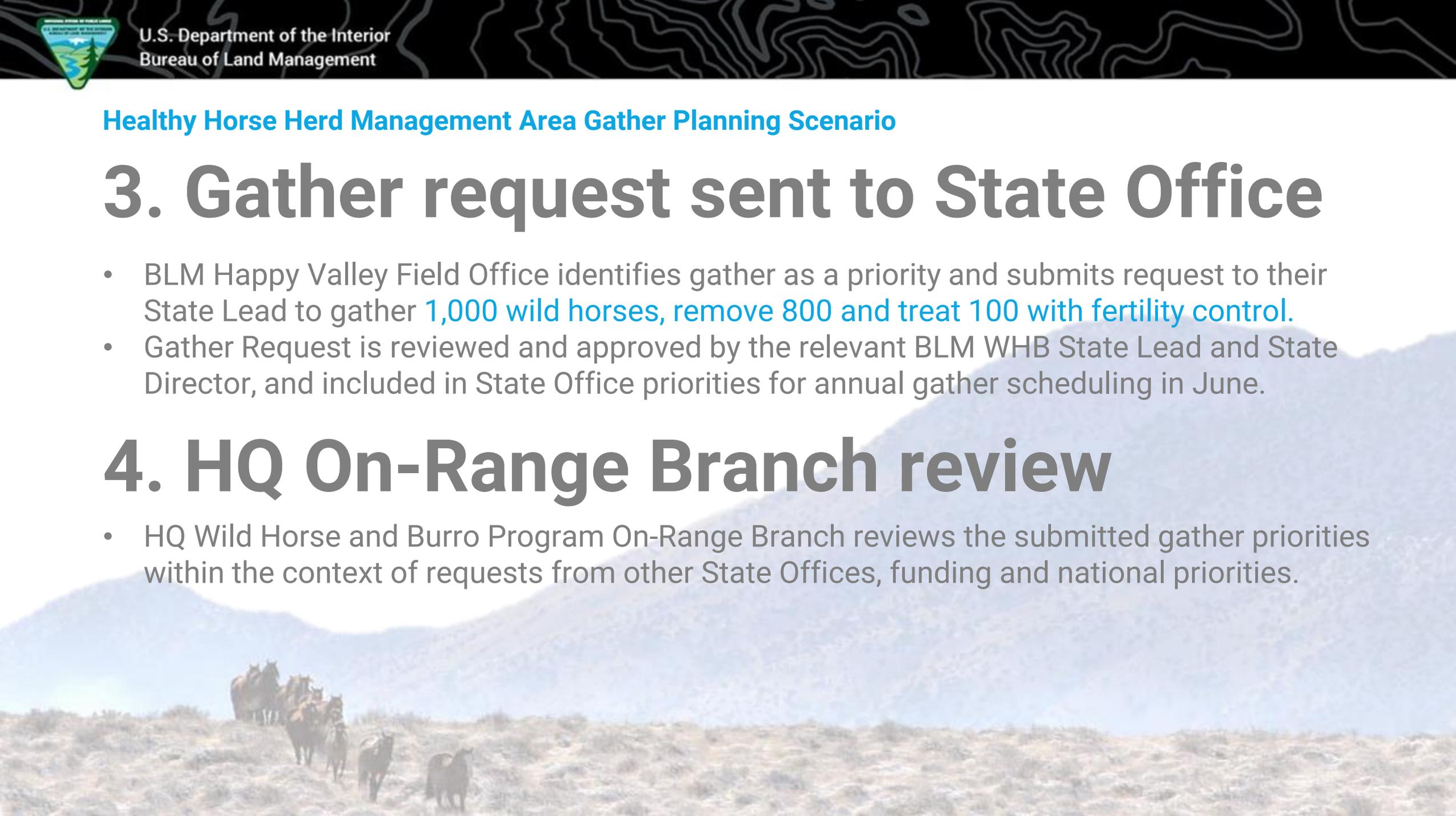
## Healthy Horse Herd Management Area Gather Planning Scenario

# 3. Gather request sent to State Office

- BLM Happy Valley Field Office identifies gather as a priority and submits request to their State Lead to gather **1,000 wild horses, remove 800 and treat 100 with fertility control**.
- Gather Request is reviewed and approved by the relevant BLM WHB State Lead and State Director, and included in State Office priorities for annual gather scheduling in June.

# 4. HQ On-Range Branch review

- HQ Wild Horse and Burro Program On-Range Branch reviews the submitted gather priorities within the context of requests from other State Offices, funding and national priorities.





## Healthy Horse Herd Management Area Gather Planning Scenario

# 5. HQ adds to National Schedule

- HQ Wild Horse and Burro Program develops gather schedule for fiscal year, which includes requested gather for Healthy Horse HMA at reduced removals – no more than 500 – and 100 fertility control treatments.

# 6. Schedule approved by leadership

- HQ Wild Horse and Burro Program submits proposed fiscal year gather schedule to Assistant Director for Resources and Planning and Deputy Director for Operations for concurrence.
- Tentative National Gather Schedule for Fiscal Year (Oct. – Sept.) is released; Healthy Horse HMA gather scheduled for August.





## Healthy Horse Herd Management Area Gather Planning Scenario

# 7. Off-range space identified

- Within months of the gather starting, the HQ Shipping Coordinator identifies and holds space at a nearby Off-Range Corral facility to receive and prep the animals.

**EMERGENCY!**





## Healthy Horse Herd Management Area Gather Planning Scenario

# Emergency

- A wildland fire has burned more than 75% of a neighboring HMA, and has severely degraded forage and water resources that the horses rely on.
- HQ reviews and approves an emergency gather request.
- HQ uses space at the facility to receive the horses.
- The removal number for the Healthy Horse HMA gather is reduced from 500 to 300 due to reduced space at the facility.





## Healthy Horse Herd Management Area Gather Planning Scenario

# 9. Gather initiates and concludes

- Over a period of 2 weeks, 490 wild horses are gathered.
- 290 are selected for removal to the facility, where they are prepared for adoption.
- 100 mares are treated with fertility control and released to HMA along with 100 stallions.
- HMA remains over AML by approximately 400. Resource impacts will continue, albeit at a reduced rate. Happy Valley Field Office plans to monitor herd and re-submit gather request for following year to remove remaining excess and re-treat animals.





# Conclusion

- Gather planning is an on-going, evolving process that must be adaptable for emergency and unforeseen situations.
- Successful gather planning efforts involve communication and close coordination across multiple BLM offices, over a timespan that can last more than a year.

## Questions?

