

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

Gather Planning and Scheduling

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Mission

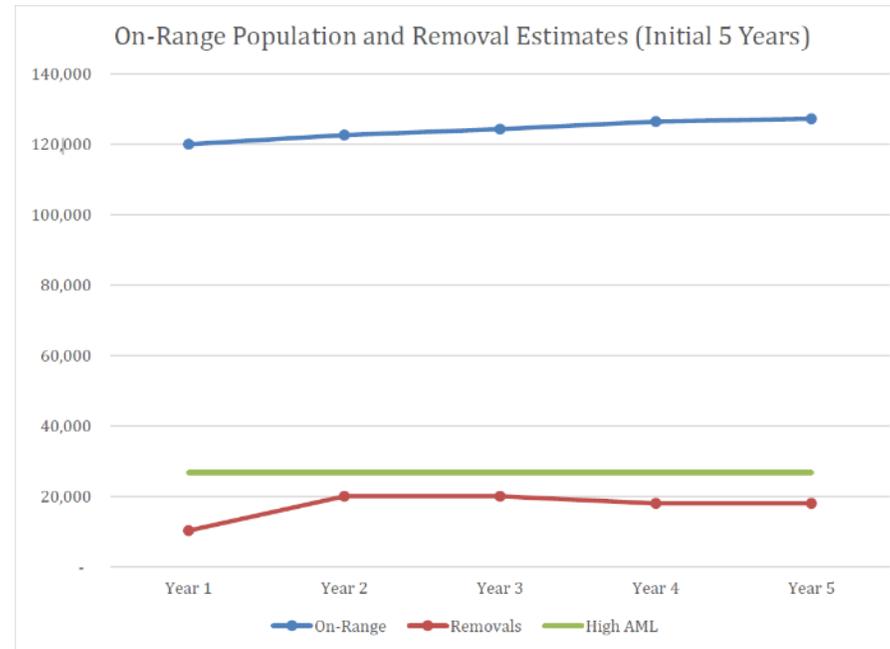
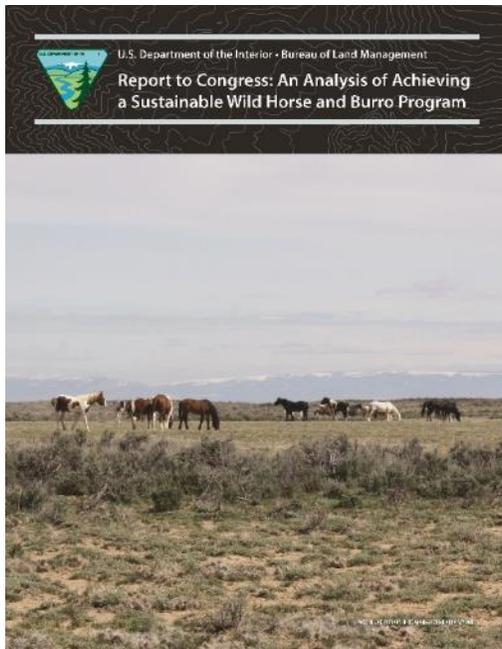
The Bureau of Land Management's mission is to sustain the **health, diversity, and productivity** of public lands for the **use** and enjoyment of **present** and **future generations**.





May 2020 Report to Congress

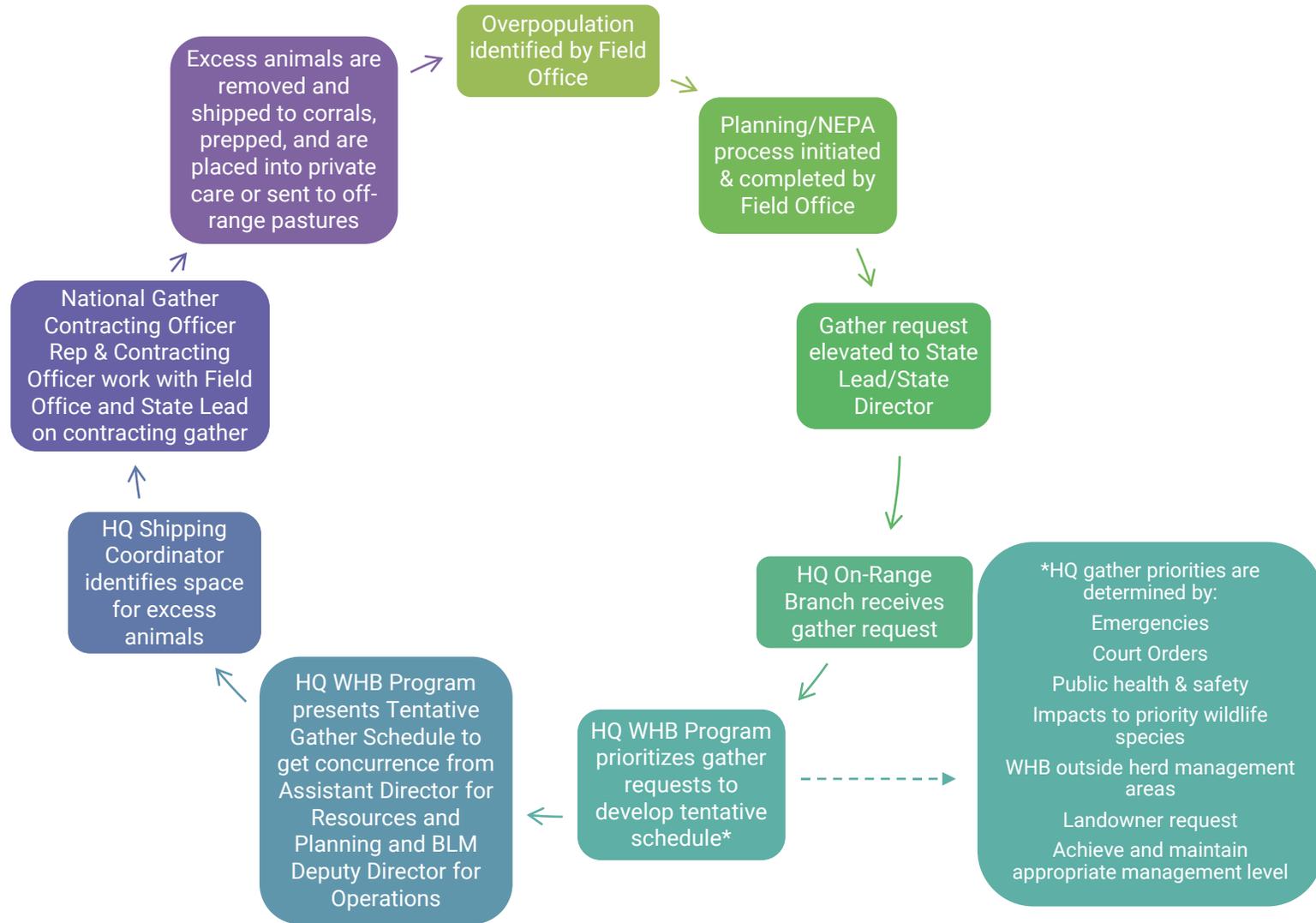
- Non-lethal strategy to achieve appropriate management level in 15-18 years through a combination of gathers, holding and population growth suppression methods.
- Annual goals for on-range management include ramping up to **18-20,000 removals** until AML is achieved, and **3,500-9,000 fertility control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





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.





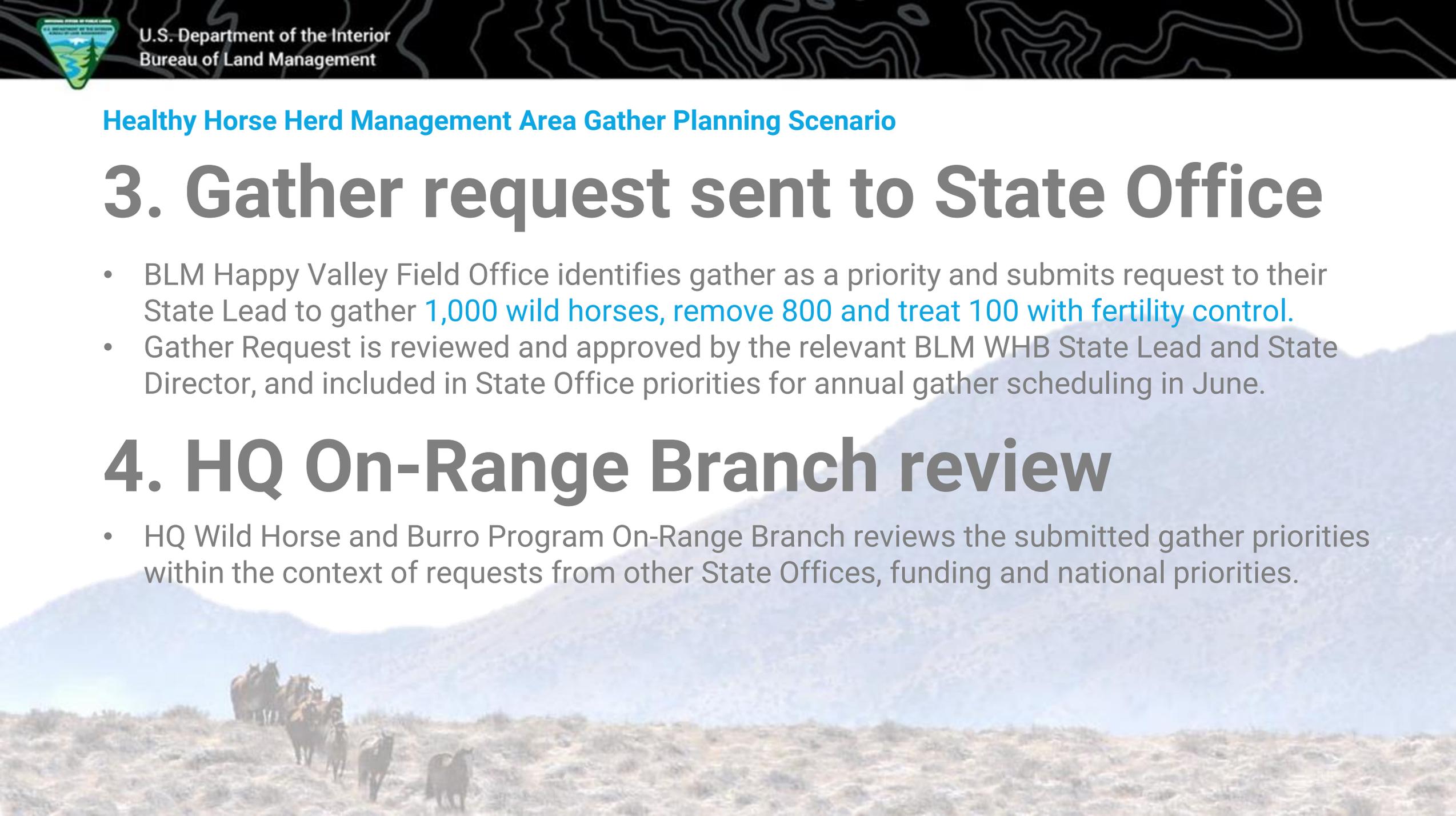
Healthy Horse Herd Management Area Gather Planning Scenario

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?

