

Wild Horse and Burro Gather Observation Protocol

The Bureau of Land Management strives to offer safe and meaningful opportunities for the public to observe helicopter-assisted wild horse and burro gather operations. The BLM recognizes that members of the public hold strong views regarding wild horse and burro gathers and reminds the public that the public comment period during the NEPA process is the best place to share those views. General complaints, criticisms and suggestions should be directed to the Wild Horse and Burro National Information Center at wildhorse@blm.gov or 866-468-7826.

To ensure the safety of the public, gather personnel and the wild horses and burros, the BLM requires all attendees to observe the following protocols when observing wild horse and burro gathers:

- 1. Observation sites are final.** The BLM chooses the location of the public observation site prior to the arrival of the public - observers cannot negotiate a new location. The number one priority of the BLM when selecting public observation sites is to ensure the safety of the operation and those viewing it; the site is also selected so as not to disrupt gather operations or place undue pressure/stress on the animals or the operational personnel.
- 2. Observers are escorted.** BLM representatives will typically escort observers to and from the gather and/or temporary holding facility observation site during designated observation days.
- 3. Follow instructions.** For example, if a helicopter or wild horses/burros are nearby, observers may be asked to remain quiet, crouch on the ground, and/or remain by their vehicle before being escorted to an observation area.
- 4. Be respectful.** The BLM's goal is to provide a positive experience for all observers, which could include families with young children. Refrain from arguing, yelling, using inappropriate language or behaving in a disruptive or threatening manner. Any form of harassment causing a frightening situation for observers will not be tolerated.
- 5. Be professional.** Observers should not attempt to provoke others for any reason, this includes an aggressive use of cameras to intimidate BLM staff or fellow observers. Members of the media should request interviews with BLM staff in advance. The BLM will make every effort to accommodate interview requests depending on staff availability.
- 6. Don't be a distraction.** Observers may not display signs, placards, or other items that are likely to obscure the view of other observers or disrupt gather operations.
- 7. Keep hold of your belongings.** No observers, media or otherwise, will be allowed to place microphones, cameras or other devices outside the designated public observation site or on gather equipment (including gates, fences and helicopters).
- 8. Leave no trace.** Pack out all trash and properly dispose human waste.

Observers who violate the Gather Observation Protocol and who knowingly or willfully interfere with the operation, the wild horses and burros, or the opportunity for others to observe operations will be asked to leave or escorted off the gather observation site. The BLM will pursue all legal remedies to protect the physical safety of BLM staff.