

**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
SURPRISE FIELD OFFICE  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Buckhorn/Coppersmith/Carter Reservoir Herd Management Area Capture and Removal Plan  
Environmental Assessment CA-N070-2009-011**

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**BACKGROUND**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared an environmental analysis CA-N070-2009-011 (EA) Buckhorn, Coppersmith and Carter Reservoir Herd Management Areas (HMA) Capture and Removal Plan. For planning purposes the three HMAs were included in the EA. The EA's Proposed Action would implement maintenance of current Appropriate Management Levels (AML) within the Herd Management Area by gathering and removal of excess wild horses. The underlying need for the proposal would be met while accomplishing the following objectives:

1. Restore herd numbers to levels consistent with the AML to maintain healthy self- sustaining wild horse populations,
2. Protect the range from deterioration associated with the overpopulation of wild horses,
3. Implement fertility control on mares returned to the HMAs, and
4. Gather and remove wild horses outside of an HMA, in the Crooks Lakes Allotment.

The current estimated population of wild horses and Appropriate Management Levels (AML) are shown in the following table.

Table 1.

HMA	Appropriate Management Range	Estimated July 2009 Population	Estimated Excess horses to Remove	Low AML Range: horses in HMA following removal
Buckhorn	59-85	496	437	59
Coppersmith	50-75	136	86	50
Carter Reservoir	25-35	150	125	25

The Proposed Action would gather and remove excess wild horses within the HMAs to reduce the population of wild horses to the lower level of the AML for each HMA as shown in table 1. During gather activities, and while horses are at BLM holding facilities, BLM personnel would record data for the captured horses including: sex, age and color; and assess herd health (pregnancy/parasite loading/physical condition/etc), and sort horses by age and sex. Selected animals would be returned to

the HMAs based on desired characteristics for each herd, and consistent with selection criteria of the BLM's *Gather Policy and Selective Removal Criteria for Wild Horses* - Washington Office Instruction Memorandum (WO.IM.) 2005-206: Surplus animals would be transported to BLM holding facilities. Also as part of the Proposed Action, BLM would implement immunocontraceptive fertility control, research and monitor results as stated in Wild Horse and Burro Program Policy (WO IM-2009-090). The immunocontraceptive vaccine, porcine zona pellucidae (PZP) either a 1 year or 22 month vaccine would be used on all release mares. The actual number of wild horses (mares and studs) would be released back to each individual HMA would be based on the effectiveness of the gather, and a post gather census.

### AML Background Information

#### Buckhorn and Coppersmith HMAs

The Buckhorn HMA Appropriate Management Level (AML) is 85 wild horses and with a minimum level of 59 wild horses. The Coppersmith HMA AML is 50-75 wild horses. The AML is based on monitoring data collected within the herd area and the impacts of wild horses on the natural resources, and was established by environmental assessment #CA-370-94-08, of November 1995.

#### Carter Reservoir HMA

The Carter Reservoir Herd Management Area AML is 25-35 wild horses and was established by environmental assessment #CA-370-03-19, of June, 2003. The AML for the Carter Reservoir HMA was based on resource monitoring data collected on the HMA from 1990 through 2003. The key limiting factors for wild horses within this HMA include: 1) the use of privately owned riparian areas by wild horses, 2) a limited supply of available public water to support wild horses, and 3) areas of upland heavy utilization. Another consideration was the egress of wild horses to an adjacent allotment.

### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

On the basis of the information contained in the EA # CA-N070-2009-011, "The Buckhorn, Coppersmith, and Carter Reservoir Wild Horse Herd Management Areas (HMAs) Wild Horse Capture and Removal Plan", and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the Proposed Action will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan, April 2008; (2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Resource Management Plan; and (3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

The EA's proposed action would implement Surprise RMP Goal to "Maintain and manage wild horse herds within established herd management areas, and at appropriate management levels, in order to support a thriving ecosystem in which healthy herds of wild horses can coexist with native plants and animals, as well as livestock, without degradation of the resource base or conflict with resource users."

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR '1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA or as articulated in the letters of comment.

## CONTEXT

The affected region is limited to the Surprise Field Office area which includes portions of Washoe County, Nevada; Lassen and Modoc Counties, California, where the three wild horse herds are located. Interested publics was notified of the proposed action through scoping letters, and comments were received from wild horse advocates, wilderness interests, state agencies, grazing permittees, and other users of public lands.

## INTENSITY

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from The Buckhorn, Coppersmith, and Carter Reservoir Wild Horse Herd Management Areas (HMAs) Wild Horse Capture and Removal Plan decision relative to each of the following ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ.

***1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.***

The proposed gather is expected to meet BLM's objective for wild horse management of maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance consistent with other resource needs. Although the gathering and removal of excess wild horses is expected to have short-term impacts on individual animals, it is expected to ensure the long-term sustainability of the wild horse herds and help to improve forage and habitat conditions in the herd management areas.

***2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.***

No aspects of the project have been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety.

***3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.***

The proposed action has no potential to affect unique characteristics such as historic or cultural resources or properties of concern to Native Americans. No adverse impacts to the Buffalo Hills Wilderness Study Area, Culture Resource Management areas are anticipated. There are no wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas present in the areas. Maintenance of appropriate numbers of wild horses is expected to help make progress in meeting objectives for improved riparian, wetland, aquatic and terrestrial habitat.

***4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.***

Effects of the gather are well known and understood. No unresolved issues were raised following notification of wild horse advocacy groups of the proposed gather.

***5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.***

The proposed gather includes measures for monitoring its effects on herd population dynamics and toward meeting multiple use objectives for rangeland health throughout the herd management areas. Use of the fertility treatment - PZP would reduce the frequency of gathers and associated impacts, is part of ongoing research identify methods to control wild horse populations. At this time there are no known risks or side effects from PZP to wild horses.

**6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

The action is compatible with future consideration of actions to improve wildlife habitat, and livestock management in conjunction with meeting objectives for rangeland health standards in the wild horse herd management areas. Future wild horse actions, outside the term of this EA, would be subject to the same environmental assessment standards as well as an independent decision making process.

**7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.**

The EA includes an analysis of cumulative effects when combined with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions for the HMAs that supports the conclusion that the proposed gather is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

**8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.**

The proposed gather has no potential to adversely affect significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Removal of excess wild horses is consistent with the preservation of cultural resources, by reducing potential impacts associated with forage utilization, trampling and compaction of soils.

**9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.**

The action is not likely to adversely affect any listed species, and the action area does not include any habitat determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act.

**10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.**

The proposed gather conforms to the approved Surprise Resource Management Plan, and is consistent with other Federal, State, local and tribal requirements for protection of the environment to the maximum extent possible.

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the Surprise RMP/ROD and Final Environmental Impact Statement.

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Shane DeForest, Field Manager  
Surprise Field Office

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Date