

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
White River Field Office  
73544 Hwy 64  
Meeker, CO 81641**

**AMENDMENT 1 TO EA AND FONSI/DR CO-110-2006-166-EA**

**EA AMENDMENT:**

Environmental Assessment CO-110-2006-166-EA is amended as follows:

Under the Affected Environment/Environmental Impacts/Mitigation Measures paragraph, following the Recreation heading, Mitigation, add:

*Mitigation:* Avoid if at all possible, gather operations on southern (Douglas/Baxter Pass/Oil Spring Mountain areas) portions of gather area at higher elevations due to increased concentrations of public land hunters on September 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, inform Colorado Division of Wildlife field going personnel and local landowners of gather operations, specifically; duration, reason for gather and mitigation measures.

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)/Decision Record (DR)**

The FONSI/DR for CO-110-2006-166-EA is amended by adding:

**FONSI:** The environmental assessment (CO-110-2006-166-EA), and Amendment 1, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

**DECISION/RATIONALE:** It is my decision to proceed with the Proposed Action analyzed in the 2006 West Douglas Wild Horse Environmental Assessment and Gather Plan to include the following:

- The reduction of the West Douglas wild horse herd to 50 wild horses, the high end of range for the herd.
- The total removal of wild horses from BLM administered allotments adjoining the West Douglas Herd Area with these animals placed into the BLM adoption program.

The herd will be reduced to 50 wild horses within the Herd Area. Approximately 89 wild horses will be removed from within the Herd Area and all horses that have drifted outside their Herd Area boundaries will be removed and placed into BLM's wild horse adoption program.

The planned action is in accord with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 43, part 4700 which addresses the management of wild, free-roaming horses and burros. Specifically applicable to this removal action is subpart 4700.0-6, Policy; subpart 4710, Management Considerations; and subpart 4720, Removal.

The proposed action has been placed in full force and effect status in keeping with 43 CFR 4770.3(c) which authorizes the Bureau of Land Management to issue a full force and effect decision to remove wild horses from public and private lands. The planned removal will adhere to the policies and specifications included in the 2006 EA, as well as, to the specifications included in the National Program Office Wild Horse Removal Contract #NAR050089. This Decision Record is considered in effect until the actions included in the Proposed Action have been completed.

Gather Method: The gather and removal of wild horses from the proposed locations will be completed using helicopter drive trapping, helicopter drive roping, water, or hay trapping. The work will be completed by a nationally awarded gather contractor.

Rationale for Approval of the Proposed Action: The decision to removal wild horses from the West Douglas Herd Area is based on vegetation monitoring studies which document that an ecological balance currently does not exist within the Herd Area. The proposed action will encourage restoration of a balance of use between wild horses, wildlife, and livestock.

The decision to removal wild horses determined in excess of what their range can support is in conformance with 43 CFR 4700.0-6 and 43 CFR 4720.1. The decision to removal wild horses from outside the Herd Area boundaries is in conformance with 43 CFR 4710.4. The decision to release animals in specified age groups back into the Herd Area is in conformance with current Wild Horse and Burro Program directives. The removal decision conforms with the 1971 Wild, Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, PL-92-195; with current regulations, policy, directives, and with the objectives contained in CO-110-2006-166-EA.

Rationale for Full Force and Effect: The rationale for placing the action into full force and effect is based on the following:

- The planned gather supports the management of wild horses in the West Douglas Herd Area identified in the 1997 White River Resource Area RMP.
- Reducing wild horse numbers, as identified in the 2006 EA, will encourage protection of key forage species from the overuse attributed to wild horses. The delay resulting from an appeal likely would result in direct, negative impacts on plant communities relied upon by the various range users. This situation, in turn, would negatively affect local watersheds and the habitat of animals dependant upon this vegetation.
- Limitation of wild horse distribution to inside the West Douglas Herd Area is in keeping with CFR 43 4710.4 regulations. A delay in the gather would increase the incidence of horses

relocating outside the Herd Area boundaries as competition between wild horses, wildlife, and livestock increase.

- Completion of the planned removal in a timely, cost efficient manner is an action which benefits the taxpaying public.

### **MITIGATION MEASURES:**

Cultural Resources: Horse trap locations and holding areas will need to be sited to avoid archaeological resources. In areas with acceptable levels of inventory no additional field work shall be necessary except to ensure that sites in the near vicinity can be adequately avoided by drive lines, wing fences and traps. In areas where inadequate inventory data exists an inventory will be necessary to ensure that any resources present are avoided.

Threatened and Endangered Plants/Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC): Facilities associated with removal actions will be allowed within the boundaries of a known ACEC following an inventory where any potential plant locations or potential habitat that is discovered to contain threatened and/or endangered plant species will become complete avoidance areas for any facilities proposed for use in this gather and removal action.

Wastes; Hazardous and Solid: All needles will be disposed of by the contract veterinarian. The liquid nitrogen will be handled only by experienced BLM personnel. The hazardous materials coordinator will be notified in the case of nitrogen spillage.

Noxious Weeds: Any hay fed at trap sites or holding facilities will be certified as weed free. Any noxious that establish as a result of the Proposed Action will be controlled by the BLM and their Certified Pesticide Applicators.

Wild Horses: Monitoring would continue for the wild horses living within the Herd Area. Refer to Appendix A, CO-110-2006-166-EA, Standard Operating Procedures of the Proposed Action.

Paleontology: Known reported fossil localities shall be avoided when locating trap sites and associated wing fences and holding facilities. Sites without adequate inventory data will need to be examined for the presence of fossils during trap site selection activities. Trap facilities may need to be modified to avoid impacting identified fossil resources.

Wildlife, Terrestrial: Surveys for raptors nesting activity will be conducted by WRFO staff on those trap sites proposed for use or developed prior to September 1, 2006. In the event an active raptor nest is found in the vicinity of trapping operations, these sites will be afforded a buffer adequate to effectively isolate nesting activity from disruptions generated from horse trapping operations.

Recreation: Avoid if at all possible, gather operations on southern (Douglas/Baxter Pass/Oil Spring Mountain areas) portions of gather area at higher elevations due to increased concentrations of public land hunters on September 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, inform Colorado

Division of Wildlife field going personnel and local landowners of gather operations, specifically; duration, reason for gather and mitigation measures.

**SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:** Melissa Kindall

**DATE SIGNED:** 8/08/06

**SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:** Caroline Hollowed

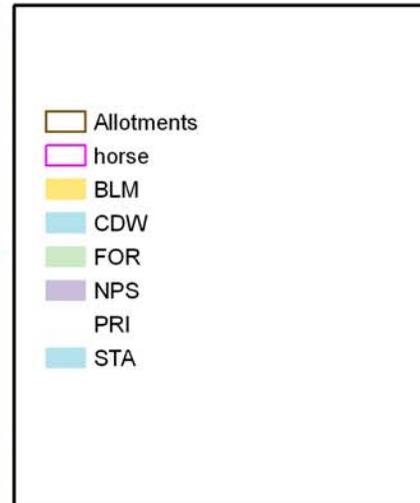
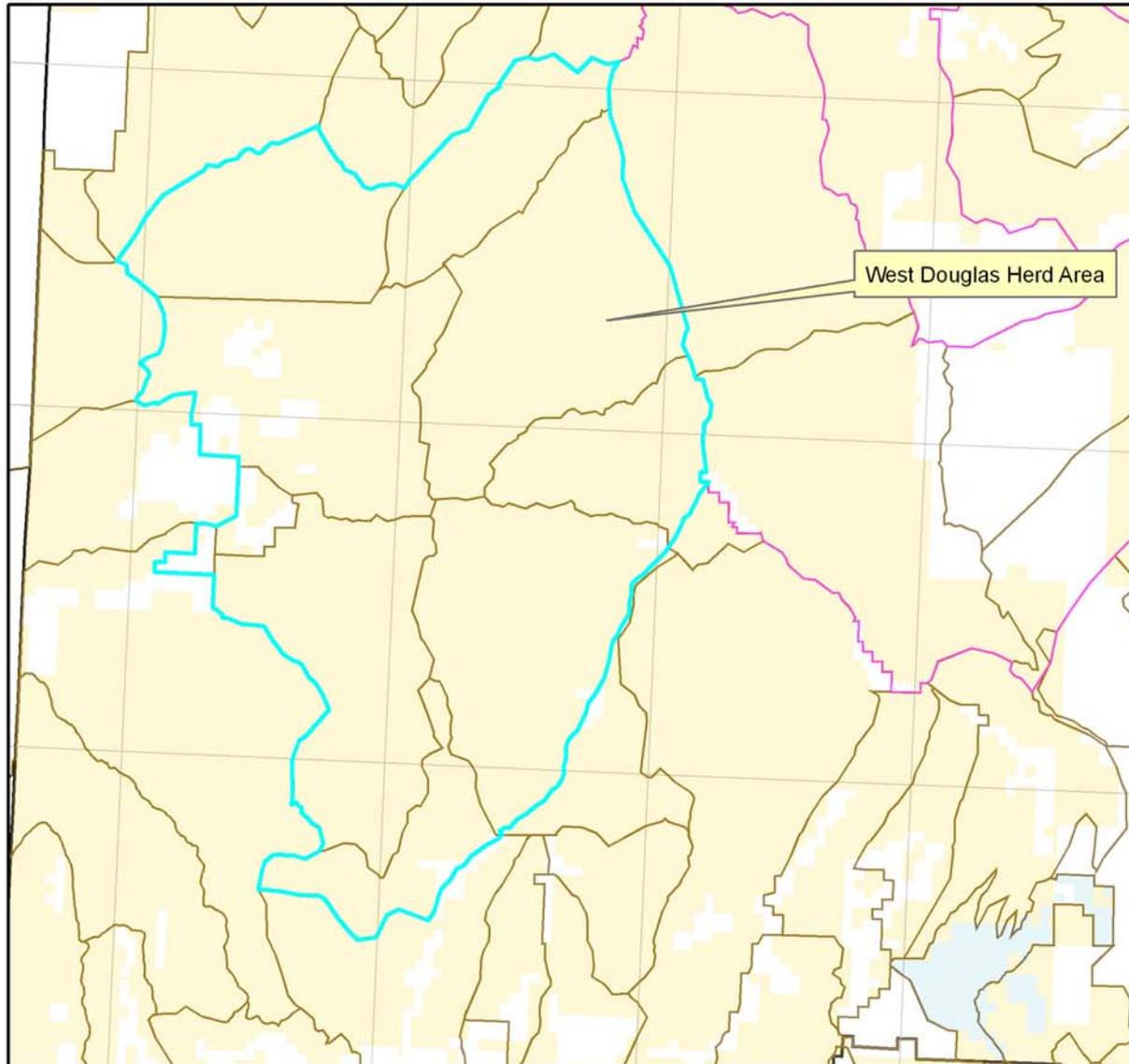
**DATE SIGNED:** 8/08/06

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:** *Ken H. Walter*

**DATE SIGNED:** *08/09/06*

**ATTACHEMENT:** General Location Map of the Proposed Action

CO-110-2006-166-EA



7/27/2006

