

July 7, 2011

Contact: Tom Alvarez, Public Affairs Specialist, (970) 244-3097

Environmental Assessment for Piceance-East Douglas Wild Horse Gather Available for Public Comment

Meeker, Colo. — The Bureau of Land Management, Northwest District, White River Field Office (WRFO) is releasing a preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather Plan for public review and comment. The gather is needed to help balance wild horse populations with other resources, restrict wild horses from areas where they were not “presently found” at the passage of the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act and to manage wild horses within the area designated for long-term wild horse management.

The WRFO manages wild horses within the 190,130 acre Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area (HMA), located in Rio Blanco County, Colorado. The Appropriate Management Level (AML) in the HMA is 135-235 wild horses. The Proposed Action analyzes the impacts of gathering the current estimated population of 382 wild horses from inside and 78 wild horses from outside the HMA; to implement fertility control, sex ratio adjustments, and a selective removal of excess wild horses. If the Proposed Action is fully successful, the HMA will consist of approximately 135 wild horses; the lower range of the appropriate management level of 135 to 235 wild horses. The BLM would select the 135 wild horses to maintain a diverse age structure, herd character, body type (conformation) and implement a sex ratio adjustment of 60 percent studs to 40 percent mares. All mares, over two years of age, released back to the HMA would be treated with Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) immunocontraception (fertility) drugs. In addition, the BLM has fully analyzed three additional alternatives to the Proposed Action to address issues and concerns brought forward during the initial scoping process.

“The Bureau of Land Management is tasked with managing our rangelands for a variety of uses. Providing management for a healthy wild horse herd within the HMA so the thriving natural ecological balance is maintained for all plant and animal species on that range, in conjunction with all other resource uses, it is one of our most important responsibilities to the American public and public land users. The public’s participation in this analysis process is vital to the decision making process,” said Kent Walter, Field Manager for the White River Field Office.

The gather EA can be found on the BLM WRFO website at [http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/wrfo/piceance - east douglas.html](http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/wrfo/piceance_-_east_douglas.html), and selecting Preliminary Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-CO-110-2011-0058-EA. All comments must be submitted in writing and received by the WRFO by the close of business on August 8, 2011. Comments may be sent via e-mail to mkindall@blm.gov with "Wild Horse Removal Plan" in the subject line of the email. Comments can also be sent by regular mail to the Bureau of Land Management, White River Field Office: attention Melissa Kindall, 220 East Market Street, Meeker, CO. 81641. For additional questions or information please contact James Roberts at 970-878-3873 or Melissa Kindall at 970-878-3842.

- BLM -