

White River Field Office

Wild Horse Management

August 25, 2010

CURRENT STATUS

The White River Field Office in Meeker currently manages the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area (HMA) for wild horses. The area contains a healthy, growing wild horse population that needs to be reduced to appropriate management levels (AML) through a wild horse gather. A small population of wild horses is located in the West Douglas Herd Area (HA). Because the West Douglas area is not as suitable for wild horses as the Piceance-East Douglas, the BLM plans to completely remove wild horses in the West Douglas HA.

Gathers are planned Oct. 4-22. The majority of gathered horses will be available for adoption through the BLM's wild horse and burro program. Wild horses not adopted will be placed in long-term pastures, or will be sold if the horse is more than 10 years old. The last time these horses were gathered was in 2006.

BACKGROUND

Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area

The 190,130-acre Piceance-East Douglas HMA was designated in 1980 and is southwest of Meeker and east of State Highway 139. The BLM considers this HMA as a more suitable area to manage wild horses because of its balance of winter and summer ranges and capacity to support horses at a genetically viable level. In 1997, the Piceance-East Douglas HMA expanded by 30,000 acres and increased the AML by more than 65 percent to manage for a wild horse herd of 135-235 animals.

The gather is currently scheduled for Oct. 11-22. The BLM plans to remove 183 of the estimated 318 wild horses to keep this growing wild horse herd healthy and in balance with other uses. A fertility control inoculation will be applied to up to 54 mares that will then be released back into the HMA. The BLM will also adjust the ratio of males to females in this herd to favor males to curb population growth. An additional 138 wild horses found outside the HMA will be gathered as well.

West Douglas Herd Area

The 123,000-acre West Douglas HA is located southwest of Rangely and west of State Highway 139 near Douglas Pass. These wild horses became isolated from the larger herd in the Piceance-East Douglas HMA in 1983, when construction of the State Highway 139 right-of-way blocked the herds.

The West Douglas gather is scheduled Oct.4-10. BLM will attempt to gather and remove all of the estimated 103 wild horses in this area. However, it may take several gathers in the next few years to remove every wild horse from West Douglas.

Since 1975, the BLM determined through various planning efforts including the current 1997 Resource Management Plan (RMP) and a 2005 RMP amendment, that the objective for the West Douglas HA would be to remove all wild horses from this area. The West Douglas area does not have a good balance of winter and summer range and would not support a genetically viable herd in balance with other uses.

BLM

Colorado State Office

