

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Northeastern States Field Office
LLES003410

Categorical Exclusion/Decision Record
for
Ewing, Illinois Short-Term Wild Horse & Burro Holding Facility

NEPA #: DOI-BLM-ES-030-2015-0006-CX

Date: January 2015

Type of Action: Wild Horse & Burro

Serial Number: N/A

Location: Third Principal Meridian, Franklin County, Illinois
T. 5 S., R. 4 E.,
sec. 10, S1/2SE1/4, S1/2N1/2SE1/4, Pt. SE1/4SW1/4 lying E. of
Southern Illinois and Kentucky R.R., Pt. SE1/4NE1/4SW1/4 lying
E. of Southern Illinois and Kentucky R.R.;
sec. 15, NE1/4, Pt. NE1/4NW1/4 lying E. of Southern Illinois and
Kentucky R.R.

Project Acreage: 294 acres

Proponent Address: Ewing Wild Horse Facility, 22295 Sheep Farm Road, Ewing, IL 62864

Bureau of Land Management
Northeastern States Field Office
626 E. Wisconsin Ave., Suite 200
Milwaukee, WI 53202
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MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION/DECISION RECORD

1. **Proponent:** J.C. Ourada

NEPA #: DOI-BLM-ES-0030-2015-0006-CX

Project Name: Ewing, Illinois Wild Horse & Burro (WH&B) Short-Term Holding Facility

Case File Number: N/A

Location: Third Principal Meridian
Township 5 South, Range 4 East,
Section 10, S1/2SE1/4, S1/2N1/2SE1/4, Part SE1/4SW1/4 lying East
of Southern Illinois and Kentucky Railroad, Part
SE1/4NE1/4SW1/4 lying East of Southern Illinois and
Kentucky Railroad;
Section 15, NE1/4, Part NE1/4NW1/4 lying East of Southern Illinois
and Kentucky Railroad.

Containing 294 acres in Franklin County, Illinois

2. **BLM Field Office:** Eastern States, Northeastern States Field Office, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

3. **Project Description:** The proposed action is to re-open the Ewing, Illinois corral as an additional and critically needed BLM contracted short-term WH&B holding facility that would allow the BLM to meet the mandates of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (WFRHBA) of 1971. The WFRHBA requires the protection, management and control of wild free-roaming horses and burros on public lands at population levels that assure a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship, and avoids a deterioration of the range. BLM and the Forest Service are responsible for management of WH&B on public lands managed by each agency. The BLM manages WH&B in 180 separate herd management areas (HMAs) in ten western states.

The primary purpose of herd management is to protect both the animals and their habitat. WH&B herds increase at relatively high rates in North America due to lack of natural predators. When populations of wildlife, WH&B, or domestic livestock exceed the capabilities of their habitat, the environment begins to decline, and there is no longer a thriving ecological balance. If the decline in the environment is prolonged, it leads to poor rangeland condition and accelerates a decrease in the health of the animals. If animals are not removed from this declining range, the animals could be injured or die from starvation, dehydration, or succumb to the elements. When these conditions arise, the BLM may remove excess animals.

Excess WH&B removed from the public lands are placed in private maintenance through the BLM's Adopt-A-Horse program, made available for sale, or sent to a long-term holding facility. WH&B are prepared at BLM-operated short-term holding facilities. The facility at Ewing, Illinois would be a short-term holding facility for a

maximum of 200 WH&B. The Ewing facility is needed to provide additional short-term holding due to capacity issues at existing facilities, and to provide additional facility space to humanely and safely care for excess WH&B removed from the public lands.

WH&B newly arrived at the Ewing facility would be closely observed for sickness, injury, loss of appetite and other factors that may affect their health and welfare. WH&B would be fed grass and/or alfalfa hay and would also be freeze marked on the neck to facilitate identification. WH&B would also be sorted by sex, age and condition, tested for infectious diseases, given booster vaccinations and treated by a veterinarian. Sick or injured animals would be separated and quarantined from the general population. WH&B would remain at the corral for a minimum of 30 days after arrival.

4. **Authority:** The proposed action is in conformance with the objective of 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4700, which requires BLM to protect, manage and control wild horses and burros as an integral part of the natural public lands system. The proposed action also conforms to the direction given in the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, as amended (16 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 1331-1340); the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. § 1711, 1712 and 1734); and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. § 4321, 4331-4335, and 4341-4347).
5. **Plan Conformance Review:** The proposed action is not specifically addressed in the approved Illinois Planning Analysis and Record of Decision (September 1987) as the facility is on privately owned surface and the plan does not contain decisions for actions outside the jurisdiction of the BLM. The action does conform with the objective of 43 CFR Part 4700, to manage wild horses and burros as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands under the principle of multiple use; protection of wild horses and burros from unauthorized capture, branding, harassment or death; and humane care and treatment of wild horses and burros. The proposed action would continue the historic use of the Ewing facility for holding WH&B since its construction in 2003.
6. **Compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):** The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the NEPA in accordance with Department of Interior, Departmental Manual, 516 DM 11.9 D(5):

Processing (transporting, sorting, providing veterinary care, vaccinating, testing for communicable diseases, training, gelding, marketing, maintaining, feeding, and trimming of hooves of) excess wild horses and burros.
7. **Departmental Exceptions And Critical Resource Values Checklist:**
The proposed action generally does not require the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA), or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as the proposal has been found to not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect

on the human environment. The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action would provide an additional and critically needed holding facility that would allow the BLM to meet the mandates of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (WFRHBA) of 1971. This facility has been used as a short-term wild horse and burro facility in the past (from 2003-2008), is presently configured as a holding facility, and the proposed future activities are identical to past activities. No expansion to the facilities is planned at this time. All WH&B activities would take place within the existing footprint of the facility.

The proposed action has been reviewed to determine if any exceptions apply in accordance with 516 Department of Interior Manual and 43 CFR 46.15, and no exceptions were identified.

Have significant adverse impacts on public health or safety.

There will be no impact on public health or safety by authorizing the proposed action. There will be no increase or decrease in use of the facility by the public. The facility is currently being used for occasional WH&B adoption events. Use of the facility as a short-term corral is consistent with past use.

Have significant impact on such natural resources, and unique geographic characteristics such as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, national natural landmarks, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, national monuments, migratory birds, and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

The Ewing facility has previously held WH&B on a short-term basis for the BLM from 2003-2008 and has been used since 2003 to host WH&B adoption events. The proposed action would continue with these activities. There are no planned new facilities or expansion of current facilities. WH&B activities would not be significantly different from the agricultural uses of lands currently occurring in the Ewing area. There are no anticipated significant impacts to natural resources that would result from the short-term housing of WH&B at the Ewing corral.

If any cultural (historic/prehistoric site or object) and/or paleontological resource (fossil remains of plants or animals) were to be discovered during WH&B activities at the facility, it shall immediately be reported to the Field Manager or his designee. All operations in the immediate area of the discovery shall be suspended until written authorization to proceed is issued. An evaluation of the discovery shall be made by a qualified archaeologist or paleontologist to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientifically important paleontological values.

Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

The Ewing facility has previously held WH&B on a short-term basis for the BLM from 2003-2008 and has been used since 2003 to host WH&B adoption events. The proposed action would continue with these activities. There are no planned new facilities or expansion of current facilities. WH&B activities would not be significantly different from the agricultural uses of lands currently occurring in the Ewing area. There are no anticipated significant impacts to natural resources that would result from the short-term housing of WH&B at the Ewing corral.

Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

The proposed action to authorize the Ewing short-term holding facility would not result in uncertain or potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown risks because the activities that would be authorized are consistent with activities that have occurred at the Ewing facility since 2003.

Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

The proposed action to authorize the Ewing short-term holding facility does not establish any precedent for future action with potentially significant environmental effects because all future actions will be subject to the requirements and protections of the NEPA, National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, and all applicable regulations that govern public land activities.

Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

The proposed action to authorize the Ewing short-term holding facility would not have a direct relationship to other actions or result in significant environmental cumulative effects. Any future land use proposals, such as expansion of facilities, would be analyzed in site-specific environmental analysis processes.

Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.

There are no known historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places at the Ewing facility.

Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

The proposed action to authorize the Ewing short-term holding facility will not impact any threatened or endangered species or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species. The Ewing facility has previously held WH&B on a short-term basis for the BLM from 2003-2008 and has been used since 2003 to host WH&B adoption events. The proposed action would continue with these activities. There are no planned new facilities or expansion of current facilities. WH&B activities would not be significantly different from the agricultural uses of lands currently occurring in the Ewing area.

Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

The proposed action to authorize the Ewing short-term holding facility will not violate any Federal, State, tribal or local law or laws imposed for the protection of the environment. Activities authorized will be a continuation of BLM WH&B activities currently occurring at the facility.

Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.

Franklin County, Illinois is a predominantly agrarian rural area. BLM WH&B activities would be similar to other agricultural activities already occurring nearby. The population of Ewing, Illinois is 310 and is five miles west of the facility. There are very few inhabitants near the facility, so there will not be a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.

Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.

There are no known Indian sacred sites on the facility. If any Indian sacred sites are discovered during WH&B activities they shall immediately be reported to the Field Manager or his designee. All operations in the immediate area of the discovery shall be suspended until written authorization to proceed is issued. An evaluation of the discovery shall be made by a qualified archaeologist or paleontologist to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientifically important paleontological values.

Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species

The Ewing facility does not have known infestations of plants that are poisonous to livestock. However, ecologically invasive plants can be present in agricultural areas regularly disturbed by tilling, grazing, and vehicle use. There is potential for invasive weeds to be present at the Ewing facility. However, the potential risk for spread of invasive weeds because of improper grazing use by WH&B is extremely low. Animals would be rotated between pastures utilizing a short-duration grazing strategy, resulting in desirable plant species, and grazing use by WH&B would be unlikely to create areas of bare soil that would be conducive to invasive weed establishment.

8. I CERTIFY THAT NONE OF THE DEPARTMENTAL EXCEPTIONS LISTED IN PART 7 ABOVE APPLIES TO THIS ACTION.

Prepared by: Kurt J. Wadzinski
Kurt J. Wadzinski
Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Date: Jan. 22, 2015

Reviewed by: Randall C. Anderson
Randall C. Anderson
Associate Field Manager, Natural Resources

Date: 23 JAN 15

DECISION

This action is covered by one of the Bureau of Land Management's categorical exclusions developed pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. The proposed action has been screened against Department of the Interior exceptions to the use of categorical exclusions and none of the exceptions apply. Therefore, neither an environmental impact statement nor an environmental assessment is necessary. The proposed action is in conformance with the objective of 43 CFR Part 4700, which requires BLM to protect, manage and control wild horses and burros as an integral part of the natural public lands system., and will not involve any significant adverse environmental effects. The proposed action will have no effect on the President's Energy Policy and a Statement of Adverse Energy Impact is not required.

Approved by: Dean S. Gettings
Field Manager
Northeastern States Field Office

Date: 1/23/2015

Attachment: Aerial Photo of Ewing, IL Facility

Decision Appeal

The action is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) under 43 CFR Part 4. The decision is effective upon signing by the Authorized Officer and shall remain in effect pending an appeal.

Attachment: Aerial Photo of Ewing, Illinois Facility

