



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Billings Field Office
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Billings, Montana 59101-4669
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In Reply Refer To:
4700 (MT010.JB)

April 1, 2013

SCOPING NOTICE

For increased use of Fertility Control on Wild Horses within the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range

Dear Interested Party:

This scoping notice has been prepared to describe means by which governmental agencies, the general public, and other interested parties may participate in and contribute to the analysis process. Public input is important to establish the scope of analysis for any National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is inviting the public to participate in order to determine if a revised fertility control prescription should be developed for the wild horses of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR).

Description of the Project

The Cloud Foundation has requested BLM to initiate more fertility control of wild horse mares on the PMWHR. Since 2011, approximately 60 mares are being treated annually (3 times the historic average). Any action would be designed to limit herd growth in order to more easily maintain the appropriate management level (AML), limit or reduce the need for gathers, and prevent deterioration of the range associated with an overpopulation, while maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationships.

Background

Fertility control, in the form of Porca Zona Pellucida (PZP) has been utilized on wild horse mares within the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) through various treatments, prescriptions, and intensities since 2001. In 2010, scoping was conducted in order to allow the public an opportunity to help develop a new fertility control program. An overwhelming number of participants informed the BLM that a prescription modeled after Assateague National Seashore's fertility control program was desirable. After development of a preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) was made available for public comment in November 2010, it came to the attention of the BLM that there was in fact limited support in favor of an Assateague model fertility control program for the PMWHR. There were also public concerns about the effects to mares from PZP. In order to address these concerns, the current fertility control program was established on January 2011. The current treatment is designed to last until 2015 with a prescription treatment for mares ages 2, 3, 4, 11 and older. Currently, five mares ages 7 and 8 have never had a treatment of any kind.

Since the January 2011 Fertility Control Decision Record was issued, PZP had been approved by the Food and Drug Administration as Zona Stat-H. Several members of the public have expressed a concern that too many foals are being born due to the number of mares in the 5-10

year class, 90% efficacy rate, difficulty in accessing the wild horses during late winter early spring to maximize effectiveness, and the natural number of mares that are non-responders to treatment. There are currently 24 mares identified in the 5-10 year old class, and the number is expected to remain similar over the next couple of years due to the herd demographics. There are also eight 1 year olds, for a total of 32 females that would not be treated under the current program. Numerous mares ages 2, 3 and 4 have been foaling, most likely due to timing of treatments, due to accessibility.

Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents

The 2009 Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP) and Environmental Assessment (MT-010-08-24) and Decision Record (May 2009) analyzed and documented the need to manage the wild horse population between 90-120 wild horses. The HMAP states “manage the herd within AML either through removals, fertility control, natural means, or a combination of methods.” The Decision Record states “The population will not be taken to the low range of AML when fertility control is utilized.”

Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Fertility Control Preliminary Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-MT-0010-2011-0004-EA and Decision Record dated January 2011, Tiered to the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Environmental Assessment MT-010-08-24, and Herd Management Area Plan in May 2009 has a treatment described as: a mare that is 2 years old would begin treatment in year one, then be given a booster in year two when she is 3 years old, then another booster in year three when she is 4 years old, then not treated as she moves into the 5-10 year old window. A mare that is currently 3 years old would begin treatment in 2011, given a booster in 2012 when she is 4, and then to go off treatment as she turns 5-10 years old. A mare that is 4 would be given one treatment. A mare whose age is from 11-20+ years would be treated over the course of 2011-2015. As a mare ages out of the 5-10 year old window and turns 11, she would be placed on the treatment. Mares that would turn one year old would be placed on treatment as they turn 2 years old, or in 2012, and treated in 2013 and 2014. Fillies born in 2011 would begin treatment in 2013 and would be treated again in 2014 and 2015. Fillies born in 2012 would be treated in 2014 and 2015. The last cohort to be treated would be fillies born in 2013, which would be treated in 2015.

Participation

The public is encouraged to participate throughout the environmental analysis process. If any interested party would like to provide input that would help BLM in development of a proposed action and alternatives for increased use of fertility control, further identify issues, potential environmental consequences, mitigation opportunities, monitoring or provide information, data, or analysis to be used in development of an Environmental Analysis please do so in writing submitted to:

Jim Sparks, Field Manager
BLM - Billings Field Office
5001 Southgate Drive
Billings, MT 59101

or fax to (406) 896-5281

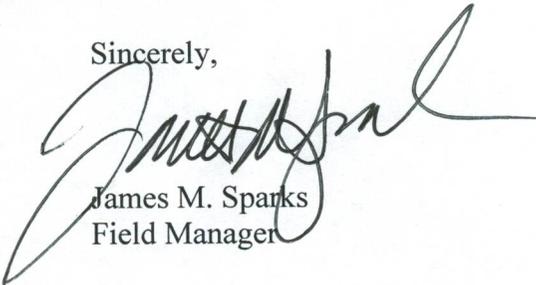
Office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered or faxed comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Public Scoping will be open for a 30 calendar day period beginning April 8, 2013 and ending May 7, 2013.

Written comments in response to this scoping notice, including the names and addresses of commenters, will be available for public review. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you have questions, please contact Jared Bybee, Montana/Dakotas State Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, at (406) 896-5223.

Thank you for your interest in the PMWHR.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James M. Sparks", written over the typed name and title.

James M. Sparks
Field Manager