



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Billings Field Office

5001 Southgate Drive

Billings, Montana 59101-4669

www.blm.gov/mt

In Reply Refer To:

4700 (010.JB)

August 16, 2010

SCOPING NOTICE

For Application of Fertility Control Vaccine of 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 document. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is inviting the public to participate in the development of a new fertility control program for the wild horses of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR). The BLM is in the initial planning stages through scoping in order to develop a proposed action and alternatives, further identify issues, potential environmental consequences, mitigation opportunities, monitoring and development of an Environmental Assessment (EA).

Description of the Project

The BLM, Billings Field Office is proposing to initiate a new fertility control program of wild horses on the PMWHR. The program would occur starting fiscal year 2011 and last up to 5 years. The 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.

Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents

The use of fertility control is in conformance with Billings Resource Management Plan Final EIS (1984) Record of Decision (ROD) objectives to manage for a balance between a healthy population of wild horses and improvements in range condition, wildlife habitat, and watershed condition.

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." The HMAP was affirmed by the Interior Board of Land Appeals in January 2010 after ruling on an appeal.

The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195) as amended, Section 1333 (b) (1), states that the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture shall “determine appropriate management levels of wild free-roaming horses and burros on areas of public lands; and determine whether appropriate management levels should be achieved by the removal or destruction of excess animals, or other options (such as sterilization or natural controls on population levels).”

Background

Fertility control, in the form of Porca Zona Pellucida (PZP) vaccine, has been utilized on wild horse mares within the PMWHR through various treatments, prescriptions and intensities since 2001. The attached table is provided to show the amount of PZP use that has previously occurred along with the associated Environmental Assessments for each treatment to help the public better understand the context of fertility control use within the PMWHR.

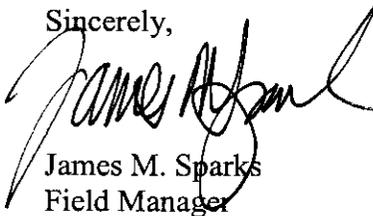
Participation

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, 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 by fax (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 starting August 18, 2010 and ending September 16, 2010.

Written comments in response to this scoping notice, including the names and addresses of commenter's, 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 with the Bureau of Land Management, at (406) 896-5223. Thank you for your interest in the PMWHR.

Sincerely,



James M. Sparks
Field Manager

Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Fertility Control Application Table

Year	Environmental Assessment	Number and Age of Mares Identified for Treatment	PZP Formulation	Total Treated	Total Pop.*** (as officially reported)
2001	Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range FY2001 Wild Horse Population Gather and Selective Removal EA Number MT-010-1-44	11 fillies of one and two year olds	One year liquid applied during a gather in the chute	11	160 post gather fall pop.
2002	FY2002 Humane-Use of Fertility Control on Select Young Wild Horse Mares EA Number MT-010-02-22	12 one year olds and 7 two year olds	One year liquid remote dart	19	170 fall pop.
2003	FY2003: Fertility Control on Select Wild Horse Mares FY2003: Selective Removal of Young Wild Horse Stallions EA #MT-010-03-14	7 yearlings, 9 two year olds, and 8 over fourteen	One year liquid remote dart	24	161 post gather fall pop.
2004	FY2004: Fertility Control on Age-Specific Wild Horse Mares EA #MT-010-04-18	5 yearlings, 4 two year olds, and 7 over fourteen	One year liquid remote dart	16	142 fall pop.
2005	FY2005: Use of Fertility Control on Mares 11 Years of Age and Older to Suppress Herd Growth Rates EA #BLM-MT-010-FY05-16	Mares over the age of 11	One year liquid remote dart	21	160 fall pop.
2006	Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Population Control 2006 EA #BLM-MT-010-FY06-19	Mares over 11	One year liquid remote dart	22	145 post gather fall pop.
2007	Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Population Control 2006 EA # BLM-MT-010-FY06-19	Mares over 11	One year liquid remote dart	27	154
2008	Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Population Control 2006 EA #BLM-MT-010-FY06-19	Mares over 11	No application	0	170
2009	Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range 2009 Gather Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) MT-C010-2009-35	42 mares over the age of one	22 month pellet applied during a gather in the chute	40*	195 (125 post gather)

2010	Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Population Control 2006 EA #BLM-MT-010-FY06-19	Mares over 11	One year liquid remote dart	12**	140-150 (outside HMA movement)
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*Two mares that were treated in 2009 were offered for adoption due to poor body condition and having small under-nourished foals.

**With 12 mares treated in 2010 there are currently 52 mares treated equivalent to 70% of the mare population.

***Prior to 2007, wild horse numbers were reported as of October 1 from the previous year for the current year's population and excluded animals less than 2 years old.

Currently, population numbers are reported as of March 1 of every year to include all wild horses excluding current-years foals.