



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field.html

In Reply Refer To:

4100/4700 (LLNVB0000)

JUN 22 2012

Dear Interested Public:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Battle Mountain District Office (BMDO) is pleased to announce the completion and availability of the *Battle Mountain District Drought Management Environmental Assessment* (EA). Please contact Casey Johnson, Rangeland Management Specialist, or Tessa Teems, Planning and Environmental Coordinator, at the above address or phone number to receive either a CD version or a hard copy of the EA, or visit the World Wide Web at the following address: www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field.html. Comments to the preliminary EA have been received and reviewed; BLM's responses to those comments are included as Attachment 4 of the EA. A drought response action (DRA) was added based on public comments received that involves moving wild horses and burros to other areas within an HMA that may have adequate forage and water resources capable of supporting the existing population of wild horses and/or burros.

According to the US Drought Monitor, as of June 19, 2012, approximately 73% of the state of Nevada is experiencing severe drought conditions. Field monitoring indicates that many areas within the Battle Mountain District (BMD) are experiencing drought impacts including substantial reductions in forage production and reduced spring and stream flows. It is likely that a continuation of these conditions will impair forage and water resources on many more areas within the BMD. The EA was prepared to analyze a range of DRAs that would be used to mitigate the effects of drought and to avoid emergency situations. These include temporary water hauls; temporary above ground pipelines; temporary changes in livestock season of use; temporary reductions in livestock grazing duration; temporary reductions in livestock animal unit months; temporary partial or complete closures of allotments; temporary changes in livestock management practices; temporary fencing; targeted grazing of invasive annual dominated plant communities; temporary changes in kind or class of livestock; and wild horse and burro relocations or removals. This EA will allow the BLM to quickly respond to drought conditions, thereby avoiding emergencies and ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of public lands within the BMD.

The EA describes the environmental impacts that implementing the DRAs would likely have on the environment. Impacts to wildlife, wild horse and burros, socio-economics, riparian and wetland zones, vegetation, soils concerns and other resources are fully analyzed in the EA.

On June 22, 2012, I approved the Finding of No Significant Impacts. *At this time, no decision record is being issued; however, if drought conditions worsen I will, as appropriate, implement DRAs. DRAs will be implemented through the issuance of full force and effect decisions pursuant to 43 CFR §§4110.3-3(b), 4770.3(c) and in accordance with 43 CFR §4120.3 after consultation with, or a reasonable attempt to consult with, affected permittees or lessees, the interested public, and the state having lands or responsible for managing resources within the area. Decisions will be implemented within all appropriate laws, regulations and policies. Voluntary reductions in livestock use or voluntary DRAs may offset the need to issue drought decisions.*

DRA decisions will be supported by site-specific monitoring data collected as outlined in the Drought Detection and Monitoring Plan (see Attachment 1 of the EA). Justification for wild horse and/or burro drought gathers will be thoroughly documented within a site-specific decision and drought gather plan (see Attachment 3 of the EA for a Drought Gather Plan Outline).

If you have any questions or comments regarding this EA, please contact Casey Johnson, Rangeland Management Specialist at (775) 635-4059, or Tessa Teems, Planning and Environmental Coordinator at (775) 635-4067, or at the above address.

Sincerely,



Douglas W. Furtado
District Manager