Visitation Protocol and Ground Rules for the Little Fish Lake Gather

Opportunities for public viewing (i.e. media, interested public) of gather operations will be made available to the extent possible; however, the primary considerations will be to protect the health, safety and welfare of the animals being gathered and the personnel involved. The public must adhere to guidance from the on-site BLM representative. It is BLM policy that the public will not be allowed to come into direct contact with wild horses or burros being held in BLM facilities. Only authorized BLM personnel or contractors may enter the corrals or directly handle the animals. The general public may not enter the corrals or directly handle the animals at any time or for any reason during BLM operations.

BLM recognizes and respects the right of interested members of the public and the press to observe the Little Fish Lake wild horse gather. At the same time, BLM must ensure the health and safety of the public, BLM's employees and contractors, and America's wild horses. Accordingly, BLM developed these rules to maximize the opportunity for reasonable public access to the gather while ensuring that BLM's health and safety responsibilities are fulfilled. Failure to maintain safe distances from operations at the gather and temporary holding sites could result in members of the public inadvertently getting in the path of the wild horses or gather personnel, thereby placing themselves and others at risk, or causing stress and potential injury to the wild horses and burros.

The BLM and the contractor’s helicopter pilot must comply with 14 CFR Part 91 of the Federal Aviation Regulations, which determines the minimum safe altitudes and distance people must be from the aircraft. To be in compliance with these regulations, the viewing location at the gather site and holding corrals must be approximately 500 feet from the operating location of the helicopter at all times. The viewing locations may vary depending on topography, terrain and other factors.

General Daily Protocol

A Wild Horse Gather Info Phone Line will be set up prior to the gather so the public can call for daily updates on gather information and statistics. Visitors are strongly encouraged to check the phone line the evening before they plan to attend the gather to confirm the gather and their tour of it is indeed taking place the next day as scheduled (weather, mechanical issues or other things may affect this) and to confirm the meeting location.

Visitors must direct their questions/comments to either their designated BLM representative or the BLM spokesperson on site, and not engage other BLM/contractor staff and disrupt their gather duties/responsibilities - professional and respectful behavior is expected of all. BLM may make the BLM staff available during down times for a Q&A session on guided pubic-observation days. However, the contractor and its staff will not be available to answer questions or interact with visitors.

Observers must provide their own 4-wheel drive high clearance vehicle, appropriate shoes, winter clothing, food and water. Observers are prohibited from riding in government and contractor vehicles and equipment.

Gather operations may be suspended if bad weather conditions create unsafe flying conditions.
BLM will establish one or more observation areas, in the immediate area of the gather and holding sites, to which individuals will be directed. These areas will be placed so as to maximize the opportunity for public observation while providing for a safe and effective horse gather. The utilization of such observation areas is necessary due to the use and presence of heavy equipment and aircraft in the gather operation and the critical need to allow BLM personnel and contractors to fully focus on attending to the needs of the wild horses while maintaining a safe environment for all involved. In addition, observation areas will be sited so as to protect the wild horses from being spooked, startled or impacted in a manner that results in increased stress.

BLM will delineate observation areas with yellow caution tape (or a similar type of tape or ribbon). Visitors will be assigned to a specific BLM representative on guided-observation days and must stay with that person at all times.

Visitors are NOT permitted to walk around the gather site or temporary holding facility unaccompanied by their BLM representative.

Observers are prohibited from climbing/trespassing onto or in the trucks, equipment or corrals, which is the private property of the contractor.

When BLM is using a helicopter or other heavy equipment in close proximity to a designated observation area, members of the public may be asked to stay by their vehicle for some time before being directed to an observation area once the use of the helicopter or the heavy machinery is complete.
When given the signal that the helicopter is close to the gather site bringing horses in, visitors must sit down in areas specified by BLM representatives and must not move or talk as the horses are guided into the corral.

Individuals attempting to move outside a designated observation area will be requested to move back to the designated area or to leave the site. Failure to do so may result in citation or arrest. It is important to stay within the designated observation area to safely observe the wild horse gather.

Observers will be polite, professional and respectful to BLM managers and staff and the contractor/employees. Visitors who do not cooperate and follow the rules will be escorted off the gather site by BLM law enforcement personnel, and will be prohibited from participating in any subsequent observation days.

BLM reserves the right to alter these rules based on changes in circumstances that may pose a risk to health, public safety or the safety of wild horses (such as weather, lightening, wildfire, etc.).

Public Outreach and Education Day-Specific Protocol (Optional)

A public outreach and education day provides a more structured mechanism for interested members of the public to see the wild horse gather activities at a given site. On this day, BLM attempts to allow the public to get an overall sense of the gather process and has available staff who can answer questions that the public may have. The public rendezvous at a designated place and are escorted by BLM representatives to and from the gather site.

Opportunities for public viewing (i.e. media, interested public) of gather operations would be made available to the extent possible; however, the primary considerations would be to protect the health, safety and welfare of the animals being gathered and the personnel involved. The public must adhere to guidance from the on-site BLM representative. It is BLM policy that the public would not be allowed to come into direct contact with wild horses being held in BLM facilities. Only authorized BLM personnel or contractors may enter the corrals or directly handle the animals. The general public may not enter the corrals or directly handle the animals at any time or for any reason during BLM operations.