

Cumulative impacts be continued degradation of rangeland resources due to the failure to manage wild horses in balance with available water and forage. Over-utilization of vegetation and other habitat resources would occur as wild horse populations continued to increase. Wild horse populations would be expected to eventually crash at some ecological threshold; however wild horse, livestock, and wildlife would all experience suffering and possible death of individual animals as rangeland resources continued to degrade. Attainment of RMP objectives and Standards for Rangeland Health and Wild Horse and Burro Populations would not be achieved.

Under the No Action Alternative, AML would not be achieved or sustained throughout the CESA and therefore the collection and analysis of scientific data necessary to evaluate AML levels, in relationship to rangeland health standards and whether a thriving natural ecological balance is being met or achieved, could not be undertaken.

Impacts to the human environment across the CESA would be compounded should the current population of horses be allowed to remain and expand.

The combination of the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, along with the proposed action and Alternative B, should result in more stable wild horse populations, healthier rangelands, healthier wild horses, and fewer multiple-use conflicts within the Silver King HMA.

6.0 Mitigation Measures and Suggested Monitoring

Proven measures to mitigate impacts of the gather on wild horses and on rangeland resources, along with monitoring are incorporated into the proposed action through standard operating procedures, which have been developed over time. These SOPs (Appendix II, III and IV) represent the "best methods" for reducing impacts associated with gathering, handling, and transporting wild horses and for collecting herd data. Hair samples to establish a genetic baseline for the Silver King HMA wild horses will be collected; additional samples will be collected during future gathers (in 10-15 years) to determine trend. Should monitoring indicate genetic diversity is not being adequately maintained, 2-10 mares and/or studs from HMAs in similar environments would be added every generation (every 8-10 years) to avoid inbreeding depression/maintain acceptable genetic diversity. Ongoing resource monitoring, including climate (weather), and forage utilization, population inventory, and distribution data will continue to be collected.

7.0 Consultation and Coordination

Public hearings are held annually on a state-wide basis regarding the use of motorized vehicles, including helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, in the management of wild horses (or burros). During these meetings, the public is given the opportunity to present new information and to voice any concerns regarding the use of the motorized vehicles.