

Questions and Answers about the McGee Mountain Wild Burro Gather

Q. Why is the BLM gathering around the McGee Mountain HMA?

-BLM has determined that approximately 146 excess wild burros, excluding 2015 foals, are currently present in and around the McGee Mountain HMA need to be removed in order to reduce the impact they are having on private land. This is based on:

-A letter was received May 7, 2015 from the private land owner requesting the removal of the wild burros before they cause any more damage to the private land and water sources.

-An aerial population survey conducted in July, 2014, revealed approximately 101 wild burros in the McGee Mountain HMA and surrounding area. The predicted population based off of a May 5, 2015 report from USGS reports 146 wild burros excluding the 2015 foals.

-Water sources are on private lands and the BLM has no water rights in this area. Several reservoirs and seeps are found in the HMA, but water is unreliable and often unavailable as the water sources are affected by years of drought.

-The amount of burros estimated to be on and around the HMA exceeds the high AML by 356%. The lack of forage and water combined with the overpopulation creates a situation where burros compete with each other for forage and water and as a result, travel outside the HMA to seek forage and water.

-The proposed gather and associated management actions are anticipated to sustain healthy rangeland resources by managing the public rangelands for multiple use activities.

Q. What is BLM doing to prevent health problems with wild burros during the gather?

-The BLM is taking the following added measures during the gather to address the potential for pregnant jennies:

-Additional pen space will be provided for weaker animals to keep them separated from stronger ones for added care.

-Water will be available at the trap location in the event animals cannot be loaded immediately and taken to temporary holding corrals.

-A veterinarian will be on call to address unforeseen issues.

GATHER PROCESS QUESTIONS

Q. Where is the BLM gathering the wild burros?

-The McGee Mountain Wild Burro Gather Plan encompasses an area of 47,000 acres of which all are outside the HMA. The gather area is located on private, and BLM administered land. The priority of the gather area is located on private land and may be moved onto public land later in the gather process. The gather area is 20 miles west of Denio, NV. The HMA is encompassed by the Alder Creek Allotment, The Knott Creek, and Wilder-Quinn Allotments encompass a small portion of the McGee Mountain HA which is outside of the HMA.

-Actual locations for the trap site, temporary holding, and other gather operations will depend on the location of the wild burros when the gather process begins.

Q. When did BLM last gather in this area?

The last gather occurred in the summer of 2012 when 131 wild burros were gathered and removed using the helicopter drive method.

Q. How many wild burros will be removed during this gather?

The BLM has been approved to remove up to 125 burros from the gather area.

Q. What is a “public outreach and education day?”

-The pre-gather tour is a public outreach and education opportunity for those interested in learning more. The media and public are welcome to attend the tour on August 18, which will begin at the Winnemucca District Office at 7:45 a.m. On this day, BLM will have additional interpretive opportunities and staff available to answer questions. Interested observers can call the gather hotline number at **775-861-6700, option 2** for further information and to RSVP.

-The tour is expected to last 8 hours, including drive time to and from the site. Please read the “What to know before you go” and “Visitation Protocol and Ground Rules” documents before you come to the pre-gather tour.

Q. How does the BLM gather wild burros?

-The BLM uses a gather contractor to gather wild burros from HMAs and surrounding areas where the BLM has determined that excess animals exist. The contractor will set up water/bait traps and draw the animals in through that method, this is a slow and long term process, slowly herding via horseback may also be employed. Once the wild burros are captured, they will be sorted and loaded onto trailers for transport to Indian Lakes Off-Range Facility in Fallon, Nevada.

FERTILITY CONTROL QUESTIONS

Q. Will the BLM use fertility control on this gather?

-This is a capture and removal gather only with no release or fertility treated wild burros.

LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENT OF HMA QUESTIONS

Q. What is the environment like in the HMA?

-The McGee Mountain HMA is currently in an extreme drought condition. As of May 5, 2015, the area has received well below normal precipitation for the water year beginning October 1, 2015. On April 22-25, 2015 there was a rain event which supplied some water to these areas. However, with temperatures rising again, the catchment reservoirs in the HMA are beginning to dry out.

-The McGee Mountain HMA is located west of the town of Denio, NV and borders the Charles Sheldon National Antelope Refuge.

-The Appropriate Management Level (AML) is 25-41 wild burros.

Q. Does wild burro overpopulation impact wildlife and vegetation?

Yes. Wild burros often graze the same area repeatedly throughout the year. Forage plants in those areas receive little rest from grazing pressure, and continuous grazing does not allow plants sufficient time to recover from grazing impacts. Such overgrazing results in reduced plant health, vigor, reproduction, and ultimately to a loss of native forage species from natural plant communities. Over time, this greatly diminishes habitat quality as abundance and long-term production of desired plant communities is compromised. If wild burro populations are not controlled in this area, forage utilization will exceed the capacity of the range. A variety of wildlife species can be found on the HMA and associated gather area: mule deer, pronghorn antelope, coyote, black-tail jackrabbit, desert cottontail, bobcat, and numerous raptors, reptiles, and other small mammals. As part of its multiple-use mission, the BLM is mandated to protect habitat to support these wildlife species. BLM is also required to comply with the Endangered Species Act. Federally listed, proposed, or candidate species found within the HMA includes only the Greater sage-grouse.

Q. Why don't you just make more land available to the wild burros?

The BLM would need approval from Congress to expand herd areas for wild horses and burros. By law, wild horses and burros can only be managed on areas of public lands where they were known to exist in 1971, at the time of the passage of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971.

CONTRACTOR QUESTIONS

Q. How does the BLM select its gather contractors?

The BLM's national gather contracts were awarded in 2010 following an in-depth technical review of the proposals received from the prospective contractors. Among the key elements of the technical review was evaluation of the prospective contractor's knowledge, skill, and ability to gather and handle wild horses and burros in a safe, effective, and humane manner.

Q. What contractor will be conducting the McGee Mountain Wild Burro Gather?

Cattoor Livestock of Nephi, Utah.

POST GATHER QUESTIONS

Q. What happens to the wild burros after they are gathered?

They will be transported to Indian Lakes Off-Range Corral Facility in Fallon, NV, where they will be prepared for the BLM adoption program, or for long-term holding. The animals will be checked by a veterinarian, receive vaccinations and freeze marks, and will be made available for adoption within a few weeks of arriving at the facility. Per population estimates as of March 1, 2014, the BLM estimates that about 49,209 wild horses and burros (about 40,815 horses and 8,394 burros) are roaming on BLM-managed rangelands in 10 Western states and 25,035 in Nevada alone. Off the range, as of April 2014 there are 48,194 other wild horses and burros that are fed and cared for at short-term corrals and long-term pastures.

Q. Will any of the wild burros be sent to slaughter?

No. A December 2004 amendment to the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act authorizes the BLM to sell sale-eligible animals “without limitation,” however the BLM **has not** and **is not** selling any wild horses or burros to slaughterhouses or to “killer buyers.”

Q. Why is the BLM still removing wild burros when there are already 48,194 wild horses and burros in holding?

The BLM removes wild horses and burros from the range each year to protect public lands from the environmental impacts of herd overpopulation, such as soil erosion, sedimentation of streams, and damage to wildlife habitat. Although the BLM tries to place as many removed animals as possible into private care through adoption or sales, the public’s demand for adoptable wild horses and burros has declined sharply in recent years, leaving the agency in the position of gathering excess horses while its holding costs continue upward.

RANGE/GRAZING QUESTIONS

Q. Is there livestock grazing in this area?

Yes. Livestock grazing is authorized on the Alder Creek Allotment which encompasses the McGee Mountain HMA, and the Knott Creek Allotment which is outside the HMA.

Q. Has BLM issued decisions to remove livestock from allotments within the McGee Mountain HMA or surrounding areas?

No, not at this time. The permittees within the Alder Creek Allotment and Knott Creek Allotment have taken voluntary reductions.

ADOPTION QUESTIONS

Q. How can I adopt one of the wild burros?

-The excess wild burros removed from the range are offered for adoption to qualified people through the BLM's Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro Program. Potential adopters must have the proper facilities and financial means to care for an adopted animal, and we always hope that they have experience working with a wild horse or burro, which will help ensure the gentling process. During the first year, the government retains title to the animal(s), and will conduct compliance checks throughout the year in an effort to ensure as much as possible that the animal is properly being cared for and has gone to a good home. At the end of the first year, if the adopter has complied with all the adoption stipulations and has properly cared for their mustang or burro for one year, he or she is eligible to receive title, or ownership, from the Federal government.

-Since 1971, when Congress passed the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, the BLM has adopted out more than 230,000 horses and burros.

-To apply to adopt a wild horse or burro on-line, please go to the BLM's adoption website at: http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/wild_horse_and_burro/What_We_Do/wild_horse_and_burro0.html.

-If you are interested in adopting directly from one of the BLM's holding facilities, please visit the agency's facilities page.

-For more information about the BLM's Adopt-A-Horse or Burro program, please visit http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/wild_horse_and_burro.html, or you may call 1-800-4Mustangs with any questions about the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program.

