



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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JAN 26 2011

In Reply Refer To:
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Memorandum

To: Assistant Inspector General for Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations

Through: Wilma A. Lewis *Wilma Lewis*
Assistant Secretary - Land and Minerals Management

From: Robert V. Abbey *Robert V. Abbey*
Director

Subject: Office of Inspector General Report, Bureau of Land Management Wild Horse and Burro Program Report (C-IS-BLM-0018-2010)

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) received the Office of Inspector General (OIG) Report No. C-IS-BLM-0018-2010, on December 13, 2010. The report documents the OIG's findings following its inspection of the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B) Program. I fully concur with the three recommendations for continuing the Secretary of the Interior's WH&B initiatives in three priority areas: (1) aggressive focus on research and testing of improved population control methods; (2) ambitious efforts to minimize the need for short- and long-term holding facilities; and (3) using best science for wild horse and burro management. The implementation of the three recommendations is contingent upon funding.

To advance the Secretary's initiative, the BLM developed a Strategy for the Future Management of America's Wild Horses and Burros, which was released in June 2010 for a 90-day public comment period. A revised Proposed Strategy will be released in February 2011 for another 30-day public comment period. Once final, the Strategy will guide the WH&B management over the next four years. The BLM will also initiate an information gathering process to continue discussions with stakeholders. At the conclusion of this information gathering process, the BLM will decide whether there is a need for a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) that would analyze the potential impacts of several longer-term management options.

The attachment provides a summary of the actions taken or planned by the BLM to comply with the recommendations, as well as the contact information for the responsible official and the target dates of implementation.

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If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact Karla Bird, Acting Chief, Division of Wild Horses and Burros, at 202-912-7260 or LaVanna Stevenson-Harris, BLM Audit Liaison Officer, at 202-912-7077.

Attachment

Cc:

ASLM (2) (6628-MIB)

WO-260 Reading Copy (314 LS)

WO-830 Official Copy (1000 LS)

WO-830 rf/hold (1000 LS)

WO-830:LStevenson-Harris:U:01/14/2011;912-7089:DOC.ID-v1_WH&Brespons-1.13.11

**Responses to the Recommendations included in the Office of Inspector General Report,
Wild Horse and Burro Program (C-IS-BLM-0018-2010)**

To address the issues outlined in this inspection, continue moving forward with the Secretary's initiative and the BLM's program improvements to the extent that:

Recommendation 1: There is urgent and aggressive focus on research and testing of improved population control methods to balance wild horse and burro population growth with adoption demand, thereby minimizing the need for additional long-term holding facilities and preserves.

Response: In fiscal year (FY) 2011, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will increase by approximately 400 the number of mares treated with Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) fertility control treatments. In addition to PZP treatments, the adjustment of a population's sex ratio to favor males is planned in some Herd Management Areas as an additional population suppression method.

The BLM is pursuing with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), industry and academia two on-going research studies designed to develop longer-lasting fertility control agents for reducing herd growth rates and a proposed research study for spaying mares. They are: (1) continuing research with the University of Toledo (Ohio) on the development of a three-year PZP vaccine; (2) working with USGS, Oregon State University, and Telamar Laboratories to conduct a five-year research project to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of SpayVac™ as a longer acting fertility control agent or potential chemical sterilant for mares; and (3) evaluation of a research proposal for the development of a safe, effective, and humane surgical method for spaying mares (ovariectomy).

Additionally, the BLM will consult with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to determine if there is credible scientific evidence to indicate vasectomies would be effective in controlling herd growth rates or if there are other methods for managing stallions that would tangibly suppress population growth. Lastly, the BLM will review earlier research recommendations from the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board to determine whether these were implemented, are no longer relevant, or need to be pursued.

Target Date: Ongoing

Responsible Official: Edwin Roberson, Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Recommendation 2: There is an ambitious effort to minimize and reduce over the long term the need for short- and long-term storage facilities.

Response: The BLM will seek to reduce the cost for care of unadopted wild horses by implementing partnership sanctuaries or Farm Service Agency pasture programs when it is equally or more cost-effective to do so. Furthermore, the BLM will increase the annual adoptions to 4,200 animals by offering more trained animals through the Mustang Heritage Foundation's adoption proposal, or other similar proposals, and continuing existing facility adoptions and prison, fostering, and other training programs.

BLM will increase the number of mares treated with fertility control to an annual goal of 1,250 beginning in 2012 by utilizing newly introduced "Catch, Treat and Release" (CTR) gathers. The goal of these gathers is capture for fertility control treatment with minimal animal removal. From FY2004 to FY2010 an average of 500 were treated annually and 900 are projected for treatment in FY2011.

Target Date: December 31, 2014

Responsible Official: Edwin Roberson, Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Recommendation 3: The best science for wild horse and burro management and needed new research is coordinated with and confirmed by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the results put into practice.

Response: The BLM will continue to use the best available science to manage wild horse and burro herds. As part of this commitment, the BLM has consulted with NAS to conduct an independent, technical evaluation of the science, methodology, and technical decision making approaches of the Wild Horse and Burro Program. The study is expected to begin in March 2011 and take approximately 24 months to complete. The BLM will continue to work with the Humane Society of the United States to examine the use of PZP and the most effective methods for use of PZP on the range.

The BLM will use the information gained from the NAS study to reevaluate current rangeland management strategies and practices that could lead to revisions in land use plans. The BLM will continue implementing a Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program.

Target Date: December 31, 2013

Responsible Official: Edwin Roberson, Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning