

U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

National Wild Horse & Burro Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Hyatt Regency Columbus
350 N. High Street
Columbus, Ohio

April 22 – 23, 2015



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Bureau of Land Management

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Executive Summary

The Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board (Board) advises the Secretary of the Interior, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Director, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Chief of the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) on matters pertaining to the management and protection of wild, free-roaming horses and burros on the Nation's public lands. The Advisory Board's Charter will expire in July 2016.

During its April 22-23, 2015, meeting held in Columbus, Ohio, the Board received updates from the BLM on a number of areas pertaining to the management of wild horses and burros, including the Eastern States' Wild Horse and Burro Program.

The BLM provided an update on Advisory Board Charter/SOPs, a Program Update, and a Budget Update which examined Fiscal Year 2014 and 2015 funding. In addition, the Board received an Overview of the Wild Horse and Burro Act, Off-Range and On-Range Updates, and a presentation on the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

Research presentations included U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) Technical Support of WH&B Aerial Surveys and the Status of USGS Research for Wild Horses and Burros. The BLM described the purpose and status of research being initiated or already underway. In addition, the USGS provided an update on the research they are currently conducting and planning to conduct in the near future.

The U. S. Forest Service Update was provided by Mr. Barry Imler, Forest Service Rangeland Program Manager. He described changes to wild horse and burro management within the U. S. Forest Service.

In addition, Mr. Kenneth Visser (BLM Rangeland Management Specialist, Forests, Rangeland, Riparian and Plant Conservation) provided a presentation on Rangeland Policy and Management. The presentation provided an overview of the Taylor Grazing Act.

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Fred Woehl, Chair, Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board

Mr. Woehl welcomed the attendees. He said the meeting is being live streamed and welcomed those on the Internet. Mr. Woehl recognized the veterans in the room and led all attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance. The new Board members introduced themselves – Jennifer Sall (Public Interest) and Julie Weikel (Veterinary Medicine). This was followed by a round of introductions from the other Board members. Mr. Woehl introduced Mike Tupper (Acting Designated Federal Officer, Deputy Assistant Director, Resources & Planning, BLM) and Mary D’Aversa (Acting Division Chief, Wild Horse and Burro Program, BLM).

National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Members

Board Member	Representing
Mr. Fred T. Woehl, Jr. (Chair)	Public Interest
Dr. Sue M. McDonnell, Ph. D. (Vice Chair)	Wild Horse and Burro Research
Ms. June Sewing	Wild Horse and Burro Advocacy
Mr. Timothy J. Harvey	Humane Advocacy
Dr. Robert E. Cope, DVM	Natural Resources Management
Dr. Julie Weikel, DVM	Veterinary Medicine
Ms. Jennifer Sall	Public Interest
Mr. John Falen	Livestock Management
Mr. Rick E. Danvir	Wildlife Management

Agenda Review

Kathie Libby, Facilitator, BLM

Ms. Libby introduced herself. She reviewed the meeting conduct protocols which would be observed during the meeting. Ms. Libby emphasized that the meeting is designed as a working meeting of the Board. She asked the media to check-in at the door.

Ms. Libby announced that the Public Comment Period will be held from 3:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. and noted that each person will have about five minutes to speak. She asked the speakers to sign in before 2:00 p.m. She asked any speakers who have handouts to provide them to the table at the back of the room. She said that the Board would not respond directly to the public comments. She added that those attending online have access to the agenda and meeting materials through the BLM website.

Ms. Libby reviewed the meeting logistics, the speakers for the meeting, and the meeting agenda.

Opening Remarks

Mike Tupper, Acting Designated Federal Officer, Deputy Assistant Director, Resources & Planning, BLM

Mr. Tupper said he was excited to attend the meeting and was there to listen and learn. He welcomed the attendees to the meeting. He noted that he is new to the job as the Acting Designated Federal Officer, Deputy Assistant Director, Resources and Planning, BLM, Washington, DC. He shares responsibility for the Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B) program.

Mr. Tupper discussed his background. He welcomed the new Board members. Mr. Tupper stated that Joan Guilfoyle has moved to another job and Mary D'Aversa is attending the meeting as the Acting Chief of the Wild Horses and Burro Division. Mr. Tupper discussed the challenges of the WH&B Program. He said BLM is trying to make the program more cost effective. As a part of the long-term strategy, BLM would like to better manage horse and burro population growth through contraception and adoptions.

Welcome/Introduction to Eastern States

Elena Fink, Deputy State Director, Eastern States, BLM

Ms. Fink welcomed the WH&B Board members to Columbus, Ohio, on behalf of BLM Eastern States. She noted that she was representing State Director John Ruhs who was in Nevada serving as the Acting State Director.

Ms. Fink introduced Mr. Randy Anderson and Mr. Steve Myers. She said the Eastern States administrative area encompasses 31 states along and east of the Mississippi River. The area includes 31 states with less than 10,000 acres of surface area; however, there is mineral estate totaling 40 million acres. Energy and minerals are one of the Eastern States' biggest programs. The WH&B program is their second largest program.

Ms. Fink said last year the Eastern States generated \$46.5 million for the U. S. Treasury and dispersed approximately \$12.3 million to the states. The Eastern States have 3,143 active oil and gas leases in 16 states. They also have solid minerals, which are scattered throughout the north and all through the south, hard rock coal, and various other minerals.

The Eastern States have two district offices and no field offices. There is a District Office in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (the Northeastern States District office) and an office in Jackson, Mississippi (the Southeastern States District Office).

The Eastern States is the largest land title record holder in the U. S. They inherited a lot of the original records from the general land office and have documents, land records, books, and leather bound books that the office maintains on behalf of the Secretary of Interior. The office receives about 4,000 requests for copies of original patents each year. About ten years ago, the office began scanning many of the original patents, some of which were signed by Thomas Jefferson. Many of the documents have been posted online on the General Land Office website (<http://www.blm.gov/es/st/en/prog/glo.html>). It receives about 1.9 million hits a year. Many of the requests are for ancestry searches or geology research.

Ms. Fink said the other Eastern States facilities include about 10,000 acres around the Jupiter Inlet in Florida, which receives about 70,000 visitors a year; the Meadow Woods special recreation area in Lorton, Virginia, with about 25,000 visitors each year; and other lands in Maryland. Eastern States also manages pockets of endangered species habitats, particularly along the Louisiana coast with habitat for turtles, hatching turtles, and other endangered species. In addition, Eastern States has a hot shot crew stationed in Jackson, Mississippi, which helps with fires in the west and also helped with Hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, and Rita. Ms. Fink ended her presentation by stating that the Eastern States are very much involved with the WH&B Program, through adoptions.

Eastern States Wild Horse and Burro Program

Randy Anderson, Acting State Lead, Eastern States, BLM

Mr. Anderson welcomed the Board members to Columbus, Ohio. He provided his background. He has been the Acting Eastern States Lead for the past 18 months. He said the Eastern States has a robust program and is staffed by a group of enthusiastic employees.

He provided an overview of the program. Mr. Anderson said the Eastern States' two district offices are located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with jurisdiction for the 20 northeastern states, and Jackson, Mississippi, with jurisdiction for 11 southeastern states. There is also a state office located in Washington, D.C. The district offices are mirror images of each other. Each has a crew of about six WH&B Specialists. The crews cover the 31 states. In Eastern States the focus is on adoptions and compliance.

Adoptions

Adoptions are held at satellite areas, which are temporary locations, such as private facilities, stock yards, or fairgrounds. The program conducts about 20 to 25 adoptions each year, which means that each district office conducts approximately 10 to 12 satellite adoptions. There is also a facility for animals, located north of Milwaukee, called Mequon. They have some small adoptions at that location. They also keep horses there that have been either returned or repossessed.

The Eastern States is looking for another facility, located north of Jackson. There is a facility available that has been closed for a number of years. It can hold about 200 horses and would be a place to rest the horses and hold adoptions. Some facilities are used as resting locations because of the distance for shipping animals from the west to east. Eastern States recently reopened a facility that was previously in operation in Ewing, in south central Illinois. It is a short-term corral and is used for conducting adoptions and holding animals. It also holds about 200 head and is a central resting location.

Eastern States also adopts horses through the Internet. This program is run out of the State Office in Washington, D.C. The Internet has accounted for about four percent of the adoptions, since that program began. Last year, the number jumped to 19 percent of the adoptions.

Because the Eastern States covers 31 states and only has about 12 WH&B employees when fully staffed, partnerships and volunteers are critical. Their partners include the Mustang Heritage Foundation, the U.S. Wild Horse and Burro Association, the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and other groups. In addition, there are a number of other state wild horse and burro clubs and groups which are scattered throughout eastern states who are very active and supportive of the program. Volunteers are critical to the program and help to get the work done and do the right thing for the animals.

Currently, the Eastern States averages over 600 adoptions each year. This number accounts for 30 percent of the animals adopted nationwide. The adoption trend is up over the last few years. Since the adoption program's inception, the Eastern States has had a total of 83,000 adoptions. This number accounts for approximately 35 percent of the animals adopted nationwide. About 3,500 horses have been adopted through the Internet program.

Compliance

BLM has a vigorous compliance program in the Eastern States, conducting over 900 inspections of adopted animals annually. Many of these inspections are performed by the Eastern States' partners, such as USDA veterinarians, as well as established, well-respected volunteers.

Other Support

Mr. Anderson said the Eastern States is looking into establishing inmate training programs. They have met with three states—Wisconsin, Ohio, and Kentucky, to see if there is a possibility of establishing programs. They may also establish a program at a federal prison in Coleman, Florida. He noted that these types of programs can reduce the recidivism rate of inmates and provide them with skills and learning while they are serving their sentences. Such programs provide BLM with trained animals for the adoption program. He added that the trend is that the public prefers to adopt trained animals. Mr. Anderson concluded his remarks by thanking the Board for their support.

Approval of the Minutes from the August 2014 Meeting

Fred Woehl, Board Chair

The minutes from the August 25, 2014 meeting were approved without modification.

Advisory Board Charter/SOPs

Sarah Bohl, Program Specialist, Wild Horse and Burro Program, BLM

Ms. Bohl said the Charter was approved in July 2014. It will expire in July 2016. BLM would like to include a statement in the Charter to clarify that a Board meeting quorum is six Board members. Ms. Bohl added that the Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) are the Board's documents. She recommended some simple edits to make them more consistent. She also suggested the addition of information about the role of the Vice Chair.

Mr. Woehl asked if the Board needed a motion to approve her recommendations. Ms. Bohl answered that for the Charter, no motion is needed, but there does need to be a motion for the SOPs. The Board approved the changes to the SOPs.

BLM Response to Advisory Board Recommendations

Mary D'Aversa, Acting Division Chief, Wild Horse and Burro Program, BLM

Ms. D'Aversa introduced herself and provided some background information. She provided BLM's response to recommendations made by the Board during its August 25, 2014 meeting in Riverton, Wyoming. (BLM's written response to the recommendations was provided to the Board as a part of their meeting materials.) Ms. D'Aversa read through each recommendation.

Recommendation #1: Mr. Woehl will join the Support Volunteer Resources Working Group. Mr. Harvey will no longer be in the group. Thus, the Working Group members will be Mr. Woehl, Ms. Sewing, and Dr. Cope.

Recommendation #2: Mr. Harvey will join the Population Growth Suppression Working Group. Thus, the Working Group members will be Dr. Spratling (Chair), Mr. Harvey, Dr. McDonnell, and Dr. Cope.

BLM Response: The BLM accepts recommendations 1 and 2.

Recommendation #3: The BLM should redouble their efforts to furnish tools that District Office specialists need to manage their herds.

BLM Response: The BLM accepts this recommendation. Providing more effective population growth suppression (PGS) tools for use in the field to manage population levels is one of the highest priorities for the program.

Current status of these efforts is as follows:

- The BLM is initiating new research, and continuing existing research, to develop PGS tools, as recommended by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in their 2013 review of the Program. This includes pen and field trials to develop and evaluate surgical procedures to spay mares and pursuing improved contraceptive vaccines. In FY 2015, the BLM commissioned the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) to carry out a suite of new research projects, and additional research is being launched with various academic institutions.
- The BLM is working with the Office of Science and Technology Policy and a variety of stakeholders to develop a Prize Challenge to find alternative ways to deliver a liquid vaccine (such as PZP) to wild horses and burros on western rangelands. The Challenge will be open to innovators and problem solvers throughout the nation. The Program is currently exploring options for raising private funds for the prizes.
- To enable new or improved PGS tools to be implemented in the field, the Program is considering a national Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) in FY 2015. The PEIS would analyze more aggressive use of new and traditional PGS methods and would amend resource management plans to provide a framework for implementation.

Recommendation #4: Regarding Advisory Board working groups, the BLM should:

- Clarify whether Board working groups can consult with outside experts in their deliberations.
- Provide a way for the public to communicate with the working groups on specific issues that the working groups are examining.

BLM Response: The BLM accepts this recommendation and has addressed this recommendation as follows:

- As per the working group guidelines issued April 4, 2012, membership of the Advisory Board-formed working groups is limited solely to Advisory Board members and cannot include people external to the Board. The BLM-formed working groups consist solely of BLM staff and Advisory Board members.
- Working groups may seek out information from external sources and communicate with any individual who would be helpful to the working group for the issues the working group is considering. Information obtained from external sources must be shared with the full Board at an official meeting. The working group should communicate with the Chair of the Board prior to seeking information from external sources and should seek the Chair's guidance on the best way to present the information at an official Board meeting.
- To provide the public an easy way to submit comments or other information to Board working groups, the BLM has created a dedicated e-mail account for Advisory Board comments. The e-mail address is blm_wo_advisory_board_comments@blm.gov. At the Board's request, the BLM will invite the public to e-mail comments to the Board working groups. The BLM will accomplish

this by posting an invitation for comments and the e-mail address on the program website and on Facebook. The BLM will then forward to the Board all comments received. The BLM has also updated its stakeholder list, and can issue e-mails to stakeholders inviting comments, if the Board requests this.

Recommendation #5: The BLM should provide an inventory of the Board's past recommendations, whether each recommendation was accepted, and the status of implementation.

BLM Response: The BLM accepts this recommendation and provided this information to the Board in November 2014. The BLM's response to key past recommendations will be discussed further at the Advisory Board meeting in April 2015.

Recommendation #6: The BLM should consult with the Board via the BLM-formed Eco-sanctuary Working Group prior to publishing a Request for Applications (RFA) for eco-sanctuaries.

BLM Response: The BLM accepts this recommendation and will consult with the Board prior to publishing future RFAs for eco-sanctuaries.

Mr. Harvey provided clarification on Recommendation #3 about furnishing tools to the district office specialists. He said he and Mr. Woehl took a trip at their own expense and spent time at one of the field offices. He said the field staff is looking for tools they can use now.

Mr. Harvey asked how BLM will forward public comments to the appropriate Board members. Ms. D'Aversa said BLM will forward the comments to Mr. Woehl. Ms. Sewing asked if BLM has reached out to other groups for help on water trapping. Mr. Woehl said no, because the field offices are not aware of who is available to help. Mr. Harvey said BLM could open the line of communication to the field offices to let them know there are groups that can help.

For Recommendation #5, Tim Harvey asked if the Board could receive a list of all of the recommendations that have been accepted. Ms. Bohl answered that in November the BLM provided the Board members with a spreadsheet that has about 200 recommendations and how they were handled. She added that Ms. D'Aversa will address some of these recommendations in her update. If the Board members have questions about others, BLM would be happy to discuss those recommendations as well.

Ms. Bohl added that the e-mail account is available for Board to use, but there have not been any requests for its use to date. She said the Board members can use the e-mail account to post items that the Working Groups are interested in collecting public comments on. Dr. Weikel noted that it was helpful to receive the spreadsheet of past recommendations and the updates on current status.

WHB Program Update

Mary D'Aversa, Acting Division Chief

Ms. D'Aversa welcomed the new Board members and thanked Ms. Sewing for accepting another term on the Board. She also thanked Eastern States for their support. Ms. D'Aversa introduced the BLM staff members who were in attendance, those providing presentations, and those providing logistical support.

Since the last meeting, the BLM has filled several positions including the On-Range and Off-Range Branch Chiefs (Bryn Fuell and Hollé Hooks) and the Research Coordinator position [Dr. Paul Griffin, who is moving to BLM from the U. S. Geological Service (USGS)]. There are a number of other vacancies that BLM is working to fill.

Program priorities continue to be research on more effective tools for managing population growth; moving more animals into private care; securing lower cost, high quality pasture space; and implementing BLM's animal welfare standards. BLM has also completed the first year of implementing improved population survey techniques as recommended by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). BLM is limiting the number of removals from the range, due to primarily cost and limited holding space, and is using PZP vaccines where possible. In addition, BLM is integrating a comprehensive animal welfare program for gathers. BLM incorporated those standards into a solicitation for helicopter gathers.

Population Surveys

Ms. D'Aversa reported that the NAS 2013 report found that BLM's wild horse and burro estimates may have been undercounted by as much as 20 to 30 percent. NAS recommended using USGS population survey techniques which account for undetected animals. BLM has implemented these methods and has completed new surveys in one third of Herd Management Areas (HMAs). She added that BLM is continuing to use these new methods on a rolling basis, covering one third of HMAs each year. Ms. Sewing asked about the new methods for counting. Ms. D'Aversa said BLM provides on-range population estimates annually. The population estimate published in 2014 was 49,209 animals. The information for 2015 is not available yet.

In response to a question from Mr. Harvey on whether animal welfare standards were reflected in the helicopter solicitation, there was discussion of the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program and Ms. D'Aversa indicated she would confirm her understanding that the CAWP has been incorporated into the helicopter contract.

Population Growth Suppression Research

Ms. D'Aversa noted that the Board would receive an in-depth research update later in the meeting. She said BLM does not have adequate tools to manage the population. In its 2013 report, the NAS found that BLM does not have any highly effective, easily delivered, long lasting, affordable fertility control methods. The NAS warned BLM that unchecked populations of wild horses and burros will die from disease and starvation. There will also be a degradation of the public lands. Ms. D'Aversa added that unchecked population growth touches a lot of areas, not just within the realm of horses and equine health and treatment, but it also affects rangeland conditions. Without healthy rangeland, there will be no high quality areas for the horses to roam.

Mr. Woehl asked if BLM is performing any PZP studies for burros. Ms. D'Aversa answered that the bulk of the studies have been on horses. She deferred the discussion to tomorrow during Mr. Fuell's presentation. Dr. Cope believed there had been a burro study. Ms. D'Aversa said the practice of removing horses from the range for adoption has been BLM's primary tool since 1973. Currently, BLM's corrals and pastures are fairly full and off-range space is a concern, in terms of availability and expenditure.

Ms. D'Aversa said research has shown that PZP, which is a contraceptive vaccine, is only effective for one year and this creates challenges. Administering PZP to tens of thousands of relatively unapproachable mares in HMAs covering over 32 million acres is not feasible. Some volunteers have been very effective and wonderful partners at using PZP on an annual basis, but there are limitations with using it.

Dr. Weikel said she was involved in a Fish and Wildlife project as a contractor to review and write a critical analysis with respect to welfare of the horses. In the course of the project, which was performed from 2008 to 2013, 110 mares from an original population of about 1,400 were spayed and 250 studs

were vasectomized. The result of these efforts was a decrease in the foaling rate from 18 percent in 2008 to 6 percent in 2013. She noted that the paper produced from the study is in internal review, but she did have permission to share a graph showing the reduction in the foaling rate over that time period. Dr. Weikel said that from 2008 to 2013, the refuge rewrote their comprehensive plan, and went from trying to manage the population, which was 800 head, to removing all the horses from the refuge. In order for the studs to be adopted, they needed to be gelded. That project led to another project where a researcher studied the effectiveness of chemical vasectomies. They failed in 100 percent of the cases. She continued her discussion, adding that the re-gather rate on the spayed mares was 87 percent and the spayed mares enjoyed better body condition, than if they were still reproducing. Dr. Weikel said she hopes the study will be published by the end of this calendar year.

Ms. D'Aversa said BLM is beginning to review proposals from several universities for population suppression research. Continuing to fund population suppression is important to BLM. These agreements with the universities, in addition to the research conducted by the USGS will result in a suite of studies for developing new or improving existing methods of temporary or permanent contraception at an estimated cost of \$9 million. The BLM is trying to get as many options as possible into the pipeline.

Mr. Harvey said he found a university study on intrauterine devices (IUDs) done in the 1990s. There were issues with the size of the IUD and with infection. Of the mares that retained the IUDs, the effective rate was about 100 percent. Mr. Harvey asked if the BLM can follow up on these studies. Ms. D'Aversa said that IUDs are part of a study. Dr. McDonnell said when they used appropriately sized IUDs in a study at Penn State, the IUDs worked well. In fact, one mare has had an IUD for about 10 years.

Prize Challenge

Ms. D'Aversa said BLM is continuing work on the Prize Challenge. Based on the input from stakeholders and the experts designing the challenge, BLM has determined that the Challenge will look at alternative ways to deliver liquid vaccines to wild horses and burros. BLM is looking for creative, innovative ideas. Ms. Sewing asked about the funding for the challenge. Ms. D'Aversa said the funding will be a part of the Off-Range update, but she would discuss this with Ms. Sewing later.

Ms. D'Aversa said the research projects and Prize Challenge are expected to deliver better tools for managing population growth. BLM is looking for the best ways to deploy tools in the field and is considering the development of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to do that. Ms. D'Aversa reported that in terms of socioeconomic research, BLM has a study underway to provide a better understanding of public perceptions, values, and management perceptions regarding wild horses and burros. Once BLM receives the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval to collect the information, they will conduct focus groups followed by a national survey. Another research project involves estimating the future demand for adoptions and sales and strategies for placing more animals into private care. This solicitation closed on March 30. The Technical Proposal Evaluation Committee (TPEC) will review the proposals and make a selection this spring.

Private Care and Holding Space

Ms. D'Aversa said BLM is continuing efforts to move more animals into private care and is looking for lower cost off-range pasture space. Hollé Hooks will provide more details on this during the Off-Range report. Ms. D'Aversa said BLM issued a new solicitation for pasture space in February. As of March 2015, BLM had roughly 48,000 animals in corrals and pastures. The cost of the off-range pasture totaled \$43 million in 2014, or roughly about 56 percent of BLM's enacted appropriations.

Because trained horses and burros are more likely to be adopted, BLM would like to increase number of training programs available either privately or through partnerships with state and federal prisons. BLM currently has six state prison programs that train and adopt roughly 300 animals annually.

Eco-sanctuaries

Ms. D'Aversa reported that with the addition of the Double D eco-sanctuary, there are now three eco-sanctuaries on private land with total capacity for 600 animals. The Double D is near Lander, Wyoming and will be able to accept horses later this summer. The other two eco-sanctuaries are Mowdy Ranch in Oklahoma and Deerwood Ranch in Wyoming.

Recommendations Spreadsheet

Since 1998, the Board has made a total of 247 recommendations to the BLM. BLM accepted 200 of these and has completed the implementation of 160 of them. Thirty-four of the recommendations were on the topic of population growth suppression (PGS). PGS is a priority for the Board and BLM. Although BLM is using PZP, BLM has concerns about its limitations as a management tool.

Mr. Woehl said for the past several years, the Board has pushed for more PZP treatments. He felt BLM is starting to move forward on this issue and asked Ms. D'Aversa about this. She answered that PZP is a tool that the agency has used, is committed to using, and is continuing to use. Since PZP is effective for only a year, the BLM is looking more broadly at other tools. Several Board members discussed their understanding of PZP's effectiveness, and feedback they have heard from BLM staff in the field.

Overview of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, Regulations, and Amendments

Mary D'Aversa, Acting Division Chief

Ms. D'Aversa reviewed the Act. It authorizes and directs the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Interior to manage and protect wild horses and burros on public lands, defined as lands administered by the BLM and USFS. Nothing in the act allows the Secretary to move the horses and burros to new areas (areas where they did not exist at the time the Act was passed).

The law tasks the Secretaries with managing wild horses and burros in a manner to achieve an ecological balance. Ms. D'Aversa walked the Board through how Thriving Natural Ecological Balance is defined in the Wild Horse and Burro Management Handbook and discussed the role of the handbook in management in the field.

The Act states that management activities will be carried out at the minimum feasible level and carried out in consultation with wildlife agencies to protect ecological balance of wildlife species, in particular, endangered wildlife species. The Handbook further defines Minimal Feasible Level of Management as "the minimum number of habitat or population management tools or actions necessary to attain the objectives identified in approved Land Use Plans (LUPs) and Herd Management Area Plans (HMAPs) for a Herd Management Area (HMA) or HMA complex." The Act states that the Secretaries are authorized "and directed to undertake those studies of the habits of wild and free roaming horses and burros that they may deem necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act."

The Act has been amended several times. The first time was in 1978, when the Public Range Improvement Act was passed. There are four key amendments. The first one states that the Secretary shall

maintain an inventory of wild horses and burros (population estimate). Ms. D'Aversa ran through the purposes of the inventory.

The second amendment requires BLM to determine if Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) are to be achieved by removal or destruction of excess animals or other means such as sterilization or natural controls. The amendment authorizes the use of helicopters for the capture of animals and motor vehicles for transport.

Ms. D'Aversa explained that the Act allows for excess animals to be made available for adoption. It also specifies destroying those animals which no adoption demand exists. In 2004, the act was amended to state that excess animals shall be made available for sale without limitation. This amendment applies to animals more than 10 years old that have been offered unsuccessfully for adoption at least three times. The Act enables healthy animals to be humanely destroyed or sold without limitation if no private homes can be found for them.

BLM has not allowed the destruction of healthy animals or sale without limitation. From 1998 to 2004, and from 2010 onward Congress has included language in Appropriations Acts stating that "appropriations for the Interior shall not be available for the destruction of healthy, unadopted wild horses or burros in the care of the Bureau or its contractors or for the sale of wild horses and burros that results in their destruction for processing into commercial products."

The Act allows the designation of specific ranges as public sanctuaries for the protection and preservation of wild horses. The Act defines range as the amount of land necessary to sustain a herd, which does not exceed their known territorial limits, which is devoted principally but not necessarily exclusively to the welfare in keeping with the multiple use management concept for public lands." Horse ranges that have been established include the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, the Nevada Wild Horse Range, and the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range. Ms. D'Aversa added that the Act also authorizes the Secretary to enter into cooperative agreements with landowners and with state and local governments. This allows BLM to pursue eco-sanctuaries.

She added the BLM Handbook defines the herd area (HA) as the geographic areas of public lands identified as habitat used by wild horse and burros at the time the Act was passed in 1971. HMAs were established within the herd areas. HMAs were identified through the land-use planning process as an area that is suitable for long-term management for wild horses and burros. Ms. D'Aversa explained that a HA is a body of geography where wild horse and burros were present when the Act was passed in 1971. The HMA is a subset of the area where BLM actively manages horses because the area contains the characteristics necessary to be able to sustain herds.

Ms. D'Aversa addressed definitions for the terms "wild," "feral," and "estrays" horses. Wild horse and burros are identified as unbranded, unclaimed horses and burros that use public lands as all or part of their habitat. Animals removed from the range retain their status as a wild horse or burro and all the protections available. Animals born to a wild horse and burros are also considered to be wild. Feral is used to describe an animal living in the wild that descended from domesticated animals. An estray is any domestic animal found wandering at large or lost. Feral and estray animals do not have the same protection as wild horses and burros under the Act.

Following Ms. D'Aversa's presentation there was discussion and questions from the Board about the meaning of "principally versus not-necessarily exclusively." There were different understandings of the meanings of these terms. Debbie Collins clarified that this topic is explained on the BLM WH&B web page under Myths and Facts. She read the information available on the website to the Board (see box).

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/whbprogram/history_and_facts/myths_and_facts.htm
1

Myth #14: Under the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, BLM-administered public lands where wild horses and burros were found roaming in 1971 are to be managed "principally but not necessarily exclusively" for the welfare of these animals.

Fact: The law's language stating that public lands where wild horses and burros were found roaming in 1971 are to be managed "principally but not necessarily exclusively" for the welfare of these animals relates to the Interior Secretary's power to "designate and maintain **specific ranges** on public lands as sanctuaries for their protection and preservation" -- which are, thus far, the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (in Montana and Wyoming), the Nevada Wild Horse Range (located within the north central portion of Nellis Air Force Range), the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range (in Colorado), and the Marietta Wild Burro Range (in Nevada). The "principally but not necessarily exclusively" language applies to **specific Wild Horse Ranges**, not to Herd Management Areas in general. The Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR, Subpart 4710.3-2) states: "Herd management areas **may also be designated as wild horse or burro ranges** to be managed principally, but not necessarily exclusively, for wild horse or burro herds."

In response to a question about multiple use, Kenneth Visser (Rangeland Management Specialist, Division of Forests, Rangeland, Riparian & Plant Conservation, BLM) offered that multiple-use is discussed in BLM's Organic Act of 1976. Land should be managed for a variety of uses, not necessarily that which provides the greatest economic output. Mr. Harvey requested a printed version of the language on the Myths and Fact web page. Ms. Collins said she will provide this information to the Board members.

Budget Update

Renee Fuhrman, Acting Budget Analyst, Wild Horse and Burro Program, BLM

Ms. Fuhrman reviewed the 2014 budget with the Board. BLM had an enacted budget of \$77,245,000 and spent within two percent of it with expenditures totaling \$67,922,540. She explained the breakdown of the expenditures and provided a table showing actual expenses.

Program Element	FY14 Units Accomplished	FY14 Expenditures
Plan for Herd Management	8	\$537,086
Monitor Herd Management Areas	166	\$2,024,837
Compliance Inspections	2,766	\$579,446
Off-Range Corral Holding	Avg. 15,835	\$26,564,283
Off-Range Pasture Holding	Avg. 33,205	\$16,671,302
Gather/Remove	2,158	\$1,211,995
Population Growth Suppression Efforts	387	\$199,861
Adoption Program	2,118	\$4,614,156
Conduct Census of WHB Areas	77	\$853,653
Construct/Maintain Shrub & Grass Projects	32	\$291,930
Program Support / Overhead / Uncontrollables	-	\$14,373,991
WHB Direct Program Element Costs		\$67,922,540

She also reviewed the expenditures for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 (as of April 13, 2015). BLM has the same enacted budget as for FY 2014 – \$77,245,000. She showed and explained the breakdown. She explained the actuals table. Ms. Fuhrman added that the FY 2016 the budget request is for the same amount enacted in 2014 and 2015 – \$77,245,000. BLM is working on their plans for FY 2016.

Mr. Woehl asked if Ms. Fuhrman has anticipated where the extra money will go as BLM moves more animals from corrals into pastures and suggested the money could be invested in population growth suppression. Ms. D’Aversa clarified that the savings is not anticipated until mid-2016.

Mr. Danvir asked how research money is reflected in the budget. Ms. Fuhrman said it comes from various budget areas rather than being a separate category. Mr. Danvir then asked if the construction and maintenance shrub grass projects are On-Range projects and Ms. Fuhrman said yes.

Dr. Cope asked about the range management category, noting three percent for monitoring HMAs. Dr. Cope added that the biggest difficulty is with finding what the desired conditions should be and monitoring the range to determine how far range conditions are from desired conditions. He added that sage grouse management will affect things. He asked Ms. Fuhrman to talk more about the herd management monitoring numbers. Ms. D’Aversa said generally speaking the money comes out of WH&B funding as well as other sources. Mr. Tupper said range condition and management is a big factor in decision-making for BLM.

Mr. Harvey asked about the low number for PGS treatments. He felt there is a disparity between 2014 and 2015. He asked if research money is included in the range management item in the budget and Ms. Fuhrman said yes.

U. S. Forest Service Update **Barry Imler, Rangeland Program Manager, USFS**

Mr. Imler thanked the Board for the opportunity to address the members and welcomed new Board members Ms. Sall and Dr. Weikel.

Mr. Imler is a National Program Manager with the USDA Forest Service (USFS) on the Rangelands Management and Vegetation Ecology staff. He said his focus is on appeals, litigation, planning, and wild horses and burros.

Unlike the BLM, the USFS does not have a separate budget line item or organizational structure for the management of wild horses and burros. The USFS believes wild horses and burros and their habitat should be managed as a part of the ecosystem in which they reside (primarily rangelands).

In 2014, the USFS entered into a new national interagency agreement with BLM. In that agreement the USFS agreed to reimburse BLM for care, treatment and adoption of horses and burros removed from National Forest System (NFS) lands before October 2013. In FY 2014, USFS transferred \$1.4 million to BLM to cover costs associated with the agreement. In 2015, the USFS will transfer \$1.5 million. The USFS is not funding any other actions for animal management out of the Washington Office. If there is a need to address an issue at the local level, the field level will work out how they are going to address those issues, what resources they need, and what actions need to occur. As of October 2013, the USFS stopped placing any more animals into BLM holding facilities.

Mr. Imler said the interagency cooperation between the agencies is changing. He is aware of some changes in the agency response in the joint management areas, where the horses and burros travel back and forth across both jurisdictions (USFS and BLM). He said the Dixie National Forest in Utah appears to be leading the evolution of how the agencies interact in jointly managed areas. There are also efforts underway in California, Nevada, and Oregon to address the changing relationship between the agencies at the field level.

The USFS refers to HMAs as territories. Approximately 25 percent of the territories are undergoing a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis. The field offices are trying to determine how to manage the horses and burros and their habitat in these areas. Because of changing management parameters, the NEPA process is slow. The USFS is trying to minimize any problems up-front during analysis and planning so implementation can move quickly and smoothly.

Although the Washington Office is not funding field operations anymore, there are some areas where they are providing assistance with the analysis and planning processes. The USFS has a separate agreement with USGS on survey protocols. Most of the Forest Service horses and burros are in different ecosystems than those managed by BLM and there may need to be some changes in protocols and data analysis. Also, the USFS is currently reviewing an agreement to become a partner with the University of Nevada on a study of environmental impacts from wild horses on greater sage grouse and their habitat.

Some of the laws and regulations governing the USFS differ from those governing the BLM. For example, the USFS operates under the National Forest Management Act and Title 36 CFR Part 222 (Parks, Forests, and Public Property) of the Code of Federal Regulations. The USFS identifies management areas within its land management plans (forest plans) and places emphasis on specific resources within those areas, such as recreation, livestock grazing wildlife habitat or timber production. Where there is a wild horse or burro territory, the USFS will emphasize horse or burro management, but that management will not be exclusive of everything else.

In response to earlier questions to Ms. D'Aversa regarding laws and regulation, Mr. Imler stated that laws are passed by Congress and regulations used to implement those laws are developed by agencies through a public process. Also, the agency developing the regulations has discretion regarding the interpretation of those regulations and how best to implement them.

Mr. Woehl asked if the USFS is planning any removals in 2015. Mr. Imler said at this point, only one forest has completed the NEPA process and is planning a gather and removal, The USFS will use PZP in New Mexico on the Carson National Forest. Another forest in Oregon may begin PZP treatments this year, if they complete the NEPA process.

Dr. Weikel asked if the USFS follows the same restrictions on the humane destruction of the horses that BLM follows. Mr. Imler said they follow the Act.

Mr. Danvir asked if the USFS definition of a wild horse was the same as BLM's. Mr. Imler said the USFS has additional language that talks about progeny and when or how animals have appeared in a territory may or may not affect their status for protection under the Act. He offered to provide the specific language.

Mr. Harvey asked what the USFS will do with excess horses. Mr. Imler said that it is one of the things that the various USFS units that are working on through the NEPA process. Mr. Harvey asked what Mr. Imler thought the units will do and Mr. Imler said they will do everything they can to avoid euthanasia of healthy horses and burros. He also stated that although the USFS units may attempt to screen potential

buyers as they seek good homes for the animals, they cannot control what the buyers do with the animals after title has been transferred. Mr. Imler has advised units to try to avoid being in a position where they have to sell excess animals without limitations. He has also advised them to get help from horse advocacy and other groups to make sure the horses are going to good homes.

Mr. Harvey said this would be a good opportunity for advocacy groups to get involved with USFS. It would also be a good opportunity for BLM to observe what happens, if the USFS does something different than BLM. It could be an opportunity for positive action. Mr. Imler added that because the USFS doesn't have the long-standing practices that exist for BLM, they have an opportunity to do some things differently, which is important. Mr. Imler added that the NEPA planning process provides planned public outreach and an objection process. The NEPA process allows the USFS to develop an action plan with alternatives. The objection process allows for working out the issues upfront, prior to issuance of a final decision. The USFS believes it will be better to work in this manner than to through an appeals process after decisions are finalized.

Ms. Sewing added that the USFS at Dixie National Forest is working on an implementation plan to address horses on private lands. They are planning to gather 20 horses. Ms. Sewing said she attended the meeting about the proposed gather and offered her association's help in taking some of the horses that are not adopted.

Prize Challenge

Jason Lutterman, Public Affairs Specialist, Wild Horse and Burro Program, BLM

Mr. Lutterman joined the meeting by phone to provide an update on the Prize Challenge. BLM is pursuing launching a Prize Challenge which would broaden the suite of tools for managing wild horse population growth rates on the range. It is an open-ended competition that seeks to incentivize new solutions to population growth challenges to help BLM increase the number of animals they can treat on the range without having to gather them.

The Prize Challenge differs from BLM's recent request for research proposals for new PGS tools, which was launched last year, in that the challenge is designed to find solutions that increase BLM's ability to treat horses on the range in the next three to five years, using current fertility control agents.

BLM intends to fund the prize through private donations and is working with some of the partners and organizations that helped with developing the Prize Challenge. These partners and organizations are helping BLM craft an effective fund-raising strategy and develop fund raising materials.

Ms. Sewing asked where BLM stands in the funding process. Mr. Lutterman said he is working with the Morris Foundation to develop materials. Once the strategy is fully developed, BLM will reach out to get the funding. Mr. Lutterman said BLM developed the Challenge to be a privately funded project.

Off-Range Update

Hollé Hooks, Off-Range Branch Chief; Debbie Collins, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, Wild Horse and Burro Program, BLM; and Kali Sublett, Executive Director Mustang Heritage Foundation

Ms. Hooks began her presentation by noting the Program now has an Off-Range and an On-Range Branch. The Off-Range Program focuses on management and oversight of acquisitions of additional pasture and corral space. Last year, BLM issued solicitations for providing off-range pastures and off-range corrals.

Ms. Hooks noted that the term *Off-Range Pastures* (ORP) is replacing what used to be called *long-term holding facilities* and the term *Off-Range Corrals* (ORC) is what used to be known as *short-term holding facilities*.

Ms. Hooks said BLM is looking at creating additional inmate training programs. The Off-Range Branch is also responsible for the National Information Center where Ms. Collins is the point of contact.

Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program (CAWP), Off-Range Corral (ORC)/Off-Range Pasture (ORP)

Ms. Hooks reported that the Off-Range Branch has an ORC in Elm Creek, Nebraska that holds about 200 animals. It is also a stopping point for animals when they are moved from the west to the east. Pastures also fall under this branch.

BLM has a contract with the University of California (UC), Davis for developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for ORC transportation and adoptions. UC, Davis is also developing transportation and adoption training modules. The SOPs and an assessment tool will be addressed at a later date.

WH&B Shade Research Study

Ms. Hooks reported that BLM is working with UC, Davis at the Palomino Valley Corrals in support of prior recommendations regarding shade concerns and continuous CAWP efforts. A research study is being conducted by Kathryn Holcomb, PhD and Carolyn Stull, PhD from the UC Davis to determine horses' shade preferences at Palomino Valley Corrals.



The overall objective of the study was to characterize the use of the shade during warm and sunny weather. The researchers built two shade structures, in two identical pens. A shade cloth blocked more than 95 percent of the ultraviolet radiation in one pen. The researchers fed the animals hay along fence line in sun, once each day at 7:30 a.m. The test ran from August 10 to October 1, 2014. The trial design was with four mares in each pen, for five days. The four trials used about 32 animals overall. The mares had dosimeters on their halters to see how much radiation was being absorbed. The total time spent in the shade was

between 9:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The researchers also reviewed the relationship between weather and shade use and the relationship between Ultraviolet (UV) radiation and shade use. The report will be completed in May. It contains more than 600 hours of data.

Mr. Woehl asked if the results of the study will impact adoptions. Ms. Hooks said BLM will take the results into consideration. Mr. Harvey asked if the Board can get a copy of the report as soon as it's available. Ms. Hooks said yes. She will recommend that it is briefed at the next Board meeting.

Mr. Harvey asked about the inmate programs. He wanted to know which programs BLM is targeting. Ms. Hooks said BLM had a workshop last year in Carson City, Nevada. Attendees were from the department of corrections at several different locations. Mr. Lutterman became the point of contact to help gain interest in the program and several states have stepped up. The Department of Corrections in Florida would like to have a program and BLM is in conversations with them. There has been other interest as well. BLM is in discussion with several prisons.

There was discussion among Board members about the shade study, state and local regulations, shelter requirements for adopters and shade at BLM corrals.

Off-Range Corrals (ORC)/Off-Range Pastures (ORP)

BLM released a solicitation for ORC and ORP space in the eastern and western U.S. in May and June 2014. BLM received four proposals for ORPs and 24 for ORCs. The TPEC reviewed and rated the proposals. Awards were made and approximately 2,800 new ORC spaces and 1,100 new ORP spaces are anticipated. On February 19, BLM offered a solicitation for new ORPs. It is closing today (April 22). The facilities must be able to accommodate a minimum of 100 head and be located in Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, or Wyoming. In order to reach new contractors, the Integrated Planning Team (IPT) did extensive outreach including radio ads, a press release, a dedicated webpage, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Ms. Sewing asked why BLM only targeted the states listed above. Mr. Tupper said BLM took the soil moisture, rainfall, fodder produced, endangered species and overlaid them in multiple data layers and looked at it in aggregate and identified in rough terms, high, medium low capacity to handle horses and then targeted the solicitation to the places that were high.

Dr. Weikel noted that the list does not include the states where the highest number of wild horses and burros live. Ms. Hooks said BLM offered a solicitation to those areas last May and June, but did not have any offers from the western states. This time BLM targeted peripheral states.

Mr. Woehl said last year this was a big topic for the Board, because one of the contractors terminated their contract, which left BLM scrambling to move the horses. He asked if changes have been made. Ms. Hooks explained that a relocation team was formed to determine what BLM needs to review when relocating animals from one facility to another. Mr. Harvey asked about the final mortality count for Scott City. Ms. Hooks said it has not been made public, but BLM will let them know when that information is available.

Ms. Hooks showed an example of an advertisement for the adoption program.

Next, Ms. Hooks introduced Ms. Debbie Collins and Ms. Kali Sublett, Executive Director Mustang Heritage Foundation (MHF), who was on the phone. Ms. Sublett is working on the *America's Mustang Campaign*. The campaign is focusing on making Americans aware of Mustangs both on- and off-range. Ms. Sublett said it is everyone's responsibility to maintain the health of the range land. The campaign is seeking to get people involved who may not have been involved in the past. To kick-off the campaign, Ms. Sublett and Ms. Collins showed the Board members a short video. Ms. Sublett thanked Ben Masters for some

Feel the Love
Adopt a wild horse
or burro, and experience
an amazing relationship.

Oct 25-26	Kaufman, TX
Oct 31-Nov 1	Nevada, MO
Nov 4-18	Internet,* blm.gov/adoptahorse
Nov 7-8	Ardmore, OK
Nov 9	Cañon City, CO*
Nov 14-15	Harrisonburg, VA
Nov 21	Cañon City, CO*
Dec 9	Pauls Valley, OK
Dec 19	Cañon City, CO*
Jan 16-17	Brandon, FL
Jan 22-24	Fort Worth, TX*
Feb 13-14	DeRidder, LA

* Trained animals available.
For schedules and directions to these events, and to learn about other, regularly available adoption opportunities at BLM facilities throughout the year, go to blm.gov.

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wild Horse and Burro Program
866-468-7826

Mary Miller Jordan and her adopted horse, Silver Lining. (photos: Sarah Woody)

footage from “*Unbranded*,” a documentary, and BLM’s Art Ferraro for additional images. Ms. Collins said BLM contracted with their partners at MHF to work on a marketing campaign. MHF has worked with BLM since 2007. They have focused on creating and implementing training and adoption programs, such as the Extreme Mustang Makeover and the Mustang Million. The partnership has successfully placed over 5,000 Mustangs into private care.

The campaign will focus on adoption and awareness events between June and July across the U. S. There will be an expo event from July 9 through 11, 2015 in St. Louis, Missouri. Campaign organizers will reach out to different Mustang groups and organizations to ask them to support the campaign. The campaign will provide advertising tools, including the logo, talking points, materials, Facebook, and website messages. The aim is to share the campaign with everyone and have everyone involved in getting the word out. All of the events will be posted on the website.

Mr. Woehl said he has worked with the group planning the campaign and has kept the Board apprised on what is going on with the campaign. He liked the emphasis on education.

Dr. Cope wondered if the campaign would address range management and natural resource management. Ms. Collins said this information is included in the campaign materials. Ms. Hooks said that when celebrating the American Mustang, it’s both an on- and off-range discussion. The overall goal is to educate people about what the challenges are, what is happening, and how they can get involved. Ms. Collins said she will send out campaign materials to the Board members when they are finished.

Mr. Harvey asked how BLM identifies individual foals that are born in captivity. He wanted to know how they are counted and accounted for until they are branded. Ms. Hooks said each facility tracks them at birth, within five days, through the brand on the mother. The deaths of unmarked foals are tracked like the death of a horse.

Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Update

Dr. Albert Kane, Senior Staff Veterinarian, APHIS/BLM WH&B Partnership

Dr. Kane introduced himself explaining he works full-time to support WH&B Program through a partnership between BLM and APHIS. In providing a review of the partnership he explained that he works for Veterinary Services, Surveillance Preparedness and Response Services, APHIS, USDA. They have about 200 veterinarians with 100 field veterinarians and currently have about 25 veterinarians who have WH&B gather experience. In the past, as many as 40 or 50 veterinarians have received training to do compliance work for the program.

APHIS and BLM have a reimbursable Interagency Agreement that began in 1999. BLM uses APHIS primarily for assistance and consultation in the health and handling of wild horses and burros. The initial emphasis was on local support for field activities, but today the work includes local field work as well as consultation to the Program through the Washington Office and On- and Off-Range Branches.

The APHIS/BLM partnership:

- offers BLM a national network of unbiased veterinary expertise; field work; and National Program activity
- offers APHIS a “one health” opportunity to be more active in horse industry and gets APHIS people into the field thinking horses and talking horses with people at the interface between feral or wild animals and domestic animals

- offers animals enhanced animal care and handling

Components of the Program include providing support for BLM in the following areas:

- Range
- Gathers
- Facilities – on- and off-range
- Adoptions and Sales–compliance, titling
- Policy and research

Dr. Kane said there are two parts to APHIS's involvement with BLM: national program office activities, including policy, procedures, and facilities; and field activities including BLM state offices, facilities, and WH&B specialists in the field. Examples of the APHIS Partnership include:

- animal health, policy, and communications
- regulatory guidance and regulatory support
- responding to animal welfare complaints
- gather support
- compliance work

Dr. Kane added that if there is a problem, he can get someone to check on a horse almost anywhere in the U.S. in relatively short order.

On the Range APHIS:

- assists with research projects
- provides expertise to evaluate animal and range conditions as part of BLM's interdisciplinary teams
- consults on the welfare of individual animals

At gathers, APHIS:

- observes and documents animal care and handling
- consults on emergency care, first-aid, and euthanasia if necessary
- facilitates compliance with animal health regulations
- assists in research data collection, such as blood sampling

APHIS also helps with animal health and welfare by:

- assisting with investigations of complaints
- responding to concerns such as disease situations (unexpected mortality events or outbreaks that occur occasionally in facilities)
- providing second opinions and consultations, such as on mortality, infectious disease, and TPEC committees to review contracts for private practitioners
- assisting with ORP visits
- helping with facility design and inspection of new facilities

APHIS helps with adoptions by providing educational programs for BLM, adopters, and the public.

APHIS assists with compliance by:

- checking adoptive homes in areas of the country where BLM has limited resources
- providing title inspections
- conducting compliance inspections, including education and rapid response investigation if needed

Today APHIS responds to changes in the WH&B program needs and requests. Initially the focus was on animal care and field activities. Dr. Kane said that in 2001, APHIS only went on high-profile or high-risk gathers. Today APHIS goes on every helicopter gather.

He added the following:

- In 2003, the emphasis was on research and Non-profit Organization support from the National WH&B Research Team.
- In 2009, there was increased APHIS support of gather activities through the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program.
- In 2014, APHIS provided more consultation at facilities.
- In the future, APHIS will continue to assist the program as requested and whenever possible.

Public Comment Period

A public comment period was conducted from 3:00 p.m. to 4:40 p.m. allowing all 18 speakers the opportunity to address the Board members. Each speaker was asked to limit their presentation to five minutes to ensure all speakers had an opportunity to speak. Speakers were encouraged to submit their comments in a written format; therefore, no minutes were recorded during this portion of the meeting.

Adjourn

Following the comment period, Mr. Woehl addressed the PZP issue, which was highlighted by many of those who provided comments. He noted many people think BLM needs to treat more mares with PZP. Although he agreed that PZP is a viable option, he felt gathering the horses for the treatments is one of the problems that BLM will face. Mr. Harvey added the Board has come full circle on PZP. He said areas where the water sources are confined would be a good place for water trapping and darting with PZP. Mr. Harvey added the he felt the relationship between BLM and the advocate groups is getting better. He also felt that stakeholders need the opportunity to participate in joint events with BLM. The challenge for BLM is understaffing.

Mr. Danvir added that he agreed that there are places where PZP can make a difference and where volunteers can help with adopting horses and applying PZP. He did not think BLM will solve the population growth problem with PZP alone.

Dr. Weikel thanked the contributors to the public comments. She added that there is a lot more that needs to be done. She felt there are huge constraints put on BLM especially when there are fires and emergency gathers must be conducted.

Ms. Sall said she was grateful to hear the comments and get the input from the public.

Mr. Woehl said some valid points were raised. He added that the Board made a recommendation last year to repopulate some HMAs. Mr. Harvey said he looked into zeroed-out HMAs, but the consensus at that time, was to put a non-reproducing herd on the HMAs. He looked at it as any movement is good movement. Mr. Tupper said he has reached out to several folks and will continue to do so. He appreciated the public's participation.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Thursday, April 23, 2015

Welcome

Fred Woehl, Chair

Mr. Woehl welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked former Board members Dr. Boyd Spratling and Callie Hendrickson for their service on the Board.

Ms. Libby reviewed the agenda.

On-Range Update

Bryan Fuell, On-Range Branch Chief, Wild Horse and Burro Program BLM

Mr. Fuell introduced himself. He is the new On-Range Branch Chief. He provided an overview of his background.

He provided the WH&B current Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 26,684 animals on 179 HMAs. Of this there are 23,764 horses and 2,920 burros. In 2014, there were 49,209 total animals on-range including 40,815 horses and 8,394 burros. This is 22,525 animals over AML. The 2015 population estimates should soon be available. The population growth rate is approximately 20 percent annually. Dr. Cope asked how consistent the growth rate is average is. Mr. Fuell said the level fluctuates, but the average is 20 percent overall. Mr. Harvey asked if the 20 percent includes foals on the ground and mortality. Mr. Fuell said the number is determined by inventory flights. Mr. Harvey said he recently read a report that said the mortality of horses between birth and one year of age has been increasing and a lot of it probably is due to the drought.

The FY 2015 gathers resulted in the following:

Helicopter Gathers:

- 12 HMAs were completed
 - 1,827 animals were removed
 - 179 animals received PZP treatments
- 3 HMAs had summer gathers
 - 277 animals were proposed for removal
 - 0 received PZP treatment

Water/Bait Trap:

- 87 animals were removed
- 0 received PZP treatments

Mr. Fuell said some of the numbers were lower than expected. In some cases, BLM cannot gather excess animals because of the range conditions and the animals' health. Mr. Fuell said in those cases, it is best not to stress the animals any more than necessary, including with PZP treatments. Sometimes BLM chooses not to treat the animals with PZP in areas where there is a high adoption rate, such as in Oregon.

During summer operations, BLM expects to have

- 269 removals
- 10 PZP treatments

BLM also expects to perform 402 dart PZP dart treatments with no gathers and no removals.

Mr. Woehl asked Mr. Fuell to discuss the HMAs where they do not treat because of the adoption rate. Mr. Fuell said he lets the field determine whether or not there is treatment. Some areas do not use the treatment, if they have a high adoption rate. Mr. Woehl said that seems inconsistent with the overall policy. He didn't think it is proper management to treat one herd differently from the others. Mr. Harvey had a different view. He felt some herds to deserve special attention because of their unique genetics.

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS)

Mr. Fuell began his discussion by stating that BLM has not officially decided to perform a program-wide Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), but they are working on a Statement of Work (SOW) to help move the PEIS forward, if needed. If the SOW is approved, BLM would like to move forward with a PEIS and the selection of a contractor.

When developing a PEIS, there is a large scoping process. BLM will visit 10 or more cities that could be used as a starting point for the scoping. A draft PEIS will take two to three years and will not be ready until at least spring 2017. Mr. Danvir asked if Mr. Fuell is looking for internal BLM approval and Mr. Fuell confirmed this. Mr. Danvir then asked if Mr. Fuell envisioned some discretion at the field level to use a variety of tools instead of being locked in to one set and Mr. Fuell confirmed this.

The PEIS could include the following:

- A wide array of PGS methods (spay/neuter and contraception).
- A method for establishing nationwide gather levels to facilitate achievement of AML.
- Management of WH&B herds as meta-populations rather than individual populations in each HMA, including a reconsideration of AMLs in targeted areas where necessary.
- Alternatives related to holding, adoption, and sale of gathered horses and burros.
- Amendments to the existing RMP to eliminate or modify decisions that are barriers to adopting a proposed strategy.

Anticipated Issues and Management Concerns for a PEIS include the following:

- WH&B health and welfare, reproductive physiology, genetic diversity, and population dynamics
- Threatened and endangered, sensitive, and other special status species conservation and recovery, including impacts to critical habitat
- Impacts to other wildlife populations and habitat
- Coordination with sage grouse conservation efforts
- Prevalence and expansion of non-native invasive and noxious species
- Impacts to livestock grazing and forage
- Impacts to nearby non-federally administered land
- Riparian and wetland conditions
- Soil conditions
- Watershed health and landscape-level restoration
- Socioeconomic impacts to nearby communities and public land users

The issues are examples of the types of discussions that may be included in the PEIS. Dr. Cope asked if BLM has done the research on the unique genetic characteristics from one HMA to another. Mr. Fuell said BLM has been collecting genetic information. The information will help with identifying animals even though they move from place-to-place. Dr. Cope asked if BLM is reaching out to counties to apply for cooperative agency status and Mr. Fuell said BLM has not done so yet, but will look for opportunities with cooperating agencies.

On the helicopter contract, Mr. Fuell confirmed that animal welfare standards are part of the contract. The solicitor is reviewing the contract. There has been a review by two Board members. Mr. Harvey said he would like to see the information. He wanted to talk with Dean Bolstad to make sure all of the elements are in place to follow animal welfare guidelines.

Research Update

USGS Technical Support of WH&B Aerial Surveys

Dr. Kate Schoenecker, Ecologist, USGS and Colorado State University

Dr. Schoenecker represented the USGS. She said she would be providing Paul Griffin’s presentation. He is an aerial inventory specialist and was unavailable to attend the meeting.



Dr. Schoenecker said there are two methods that are referred to as the “new methods” for counting and providing population estimates – the double observer method and the photo mark-resight method. Both of these methods have been tested and published in the peer reviewed literature. USGS has also tested the validity of those methods for wild horses.

In December 2013, USGS hired Dr. Griffin to lead the assistance and train staff from BLM. He led training, which included in-flight training and in-person training and webinar trainings where participants share a screen and a telephone line.

Aerial Survey Training for Double-observer Method

Number of BLM WH&B specialists* trained in-flight (*or lead WH&B range conservation officers, or BLM state leads)	20
Number of WH&B specialists* trained, meetings only	4
Number of WH&B specialists* trained, webinar only	5
USFS range specialists trained: 5 in flight, 5 in classroom or webinar	

* Here, “specialists” includes range conservation officers with lead duties for WH&B in their field office. - People are only counted once here, even if they did 2 trainings. - These numbers do not include 10 pilots, 32 other BLM staff and 6 other USFS staff that may help with surveys, aviation, or outreach.

At this point, only a BLM few specialists have not received some type of personal training in the new method. In addition, 10 USFS specialists, the 10 pilots, 32 other BLM staff, and six other USFS staff received the training.

USGS will finalize SOPs for conducting the aerial surveys. The SOPs will codify the methods and add reliability and consistency to the methods to ensure consistency in the surveys.

The counters used a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit to map the route. The routes were loaded into the pilot’s GPS before the flight and the pilot followed the route making the observer was free to count.

FY 2014 Aerial Survey Assistance

Number of HMAs surveyed with new methods (3 HMAs surveyed for horses were also repeated for burro surveys)	67
Number of USFS Wild Horse territories surveyed with new methods	15
Number of planning and analysis 'projects' all these surveys were grouped into	17
Number of these 'projects' for which USGS planned all flight paths in GIS	14
16 'projects' were analyzed, at least preliminarily; data are not yet received from the district for 1 'project.'	
Average time from receipt of data to results memo draft being sent to district	59 days Range = 4 - 196

Number of HMAs & HAs planned with new methods	78
Number of USFS Wild Horse Territories planned*	9
Number of planning and analysis 'projects' all these surveys will be grouped into	19
Number of these 'projects' with surveys completed, as of April 10, 2015	6

* The WHTs are Spring Mountain, Red Rock, Johnnie, Murderer's Creek, Heber, Jicarilla, Powell Mountain, Montgomery Pass, and White Mountain

In the past, data analyses could not be conducted quickly. The new process has enabled USGS to speed up the analysis time.

Dr. Schoenecker showed a map where surveys have been conducted and explained the key. The surveys planned for the rest of the fiscal year will include even more HMAs, and these robust population estimates will help USGS and BLM determine herd growth rates.

The outstanding aerial surveys tasks include the following:

- Finalize SOPs
- Design database – USGS is working with BLM staff at the National Operations Center in Denver to design a “GeoCortex” database for all survey data
- Automate analyses, using program R
- Test Stratified Sampling, to reduce air time

Status of USGS Research for Wild Horses and Burros

Bryan Fuell, On-Range Branch Chief and Dr. Kate Schoenecker, Ecologist, USGS and Colorado State University

BLM Research – Bryan Fuell

A Request for Applications (RFA) was released in 2014 for new or refined fertility control techniques:

- 24 proposals were received
- Proposals were reviewed by Nation Academy of Sciences (NAS)
- Proposals were recommended by NAS
- BLM working to award all or part of the proposals

Mr. Fuell said BLM is in the process of working to get in place the agreements for the eight research studies that were selected. Four of the recommended ones were surgical, three of them were some combination of chemical and pharmaceutical and one involved a combination of a membrane disruption

approach that was potentially applicable on both males and females. As soon as the agreements are finalized, BLM will share more information on the studies.

USGS Research – Dr. Kate Schoenecker

Dr. Schoenecker listed the USGS, BLM, other partners who are on the Research Team. She provided an overview of the ongoing research. USGS is currently working on four projects. She noted that each study was recommended by the NAS report, or identified as a need by BLM. She provided information about each project.

1. Population estimation using Fecal DNA (non-invasive genetic diversity, population estimation, invasive species spread)
2. Radio marking/collaring
3. Carrying Capacity Modeling
4. Efficacy of SpayVac™ immuno-contraceptive

Population estimation using fecal DNA

- This is a noninvasive method for studying wildlife using DNA from hair and feces.
- The method is increasingly being used by wildlife biologists.
- Noninvasive methods do not require handling animals. Other studies have demonstrated use with single sampling. The researchers can use volunteers. USGS did a project in Rocky Mountain National Park on big horn sheep that was recently published and 79 percent of the samples were collected by volunteers. The method is a way to engage the public and stakeholders by allowing them to help with solutions.
- Wilderness values and wilderness concerns have driven development of these new techniques.

USGS has proposed to test this method for wild horses to provide non-aerial options for counting horses. This method may be preferable to some wild horse specialists.

The DNA in feces is the “mark” that identifies individual horses. It can be used to estimate population size. A DNA population estimate can potentially provide managers with a new tool that is defensible and accurate. This method has been accepted and used in wildlife for more than 10 years. It is also less stressful to horses and is potentially less expensive than aerial surveys, although this is not yet the case.

The samples will also be used to determine genetic structure of the population (without needing to gather the animals and collect hair or blood). The NAS report recommended investigating horse contribution to spread of invasive plants. USGS will use micro-histology and plant DNA for this evaluation. Dr. Schoenecker said that some of the samples USGS is evaluating are up to six months old. Samples taken in the month of August were the best, because moisture and time of year affects the samples. USGS is also using the samples to determine the horses’ diet. They are germinating seeds as a control and are also germinating seeds from the dung. Mr. Harvey asked if USGS is accounting for both invasive and desirable plants and Dr. Schoenecker said yes. The study is still ongoing. The Research was conducted in a herd with known population size (Little Book Cliffs, Colorado).

Status:

- The field work is complete. USGS conducted three, 10-day sampling periods with five volunteers. About 600 samples were collected in each sampling period, for a total of 1800 samples.
- The dung aging study was conducted monthly from May to November 2014.
- All samples are currently at the USGS lab for genetic analysis.
- The initial results are very promising – even older samples are amplifying well.
- This is a promising technique for determining genetic structure of a population as well.

- The lab analyses for non-native plant species' DNA was initiated in March. USGS also initiated the germination study at that time. There is a one year wait-time for the micro-histology.
- Sampling is very feasible in a moderate-sized area with a less than five volunteers.
- After the lab analyses for genetics are completed, USGS will conduct population estimates with mark-resight models.
- The final results will be available in late 2015, with publication in early 2016.

Developing a Suitable Radio Collar for Wild Horses

Dr. Schoenecker reported that telemetry collars have been used for more than 30 years on ungulates (e.g., elk, bison, big horn sheep), but rarely on horses. She said the ability to mark and locate individual animals can be applied to studies on habitat selection, movement ecology, population estimation (mark-resight), locating treated individuals (e.g., contracepted), and other uses. Research on using radio collars on ungulates has greatly advanced the understanding of their habitat use and ecology, and improved capacity for conservation. A study was conducted at the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge and published in PLoS One. The collars were developed for mares but not stallions.

Objectives of the study are to

- Obtain a collar used in the Sheldon Wildlife Refuge study and test it against others.
- Develop a custom collar, with a focus on expansion and contraction. Design a collar suitable for stallions.
- Test alternatives to collars, such as radio tags in the mane and tail.
- Measure fit and wear of the device and animal behavior of collared versus control animals for one year.

The next step is field testing collars on free-roaming horses. USGS is not testing long-term efficacy (more than one year), and they are not testing the proportion of accidents or calamities due to collars, because this needs to be done in the wild. The study was done at the Pauls Valley, Oklahoma facility.

Status:

- USGS worked with six to seven vendors and selected four collar designs and three tags for testing.
- USGS pre-tested collars and tags on domestic animals from September through December 2014.
- USGS deployed the collars and tags at the Pauls Valley, Oklahoma adoption facility in February 2015 on 12 mares, 12 stallions, and four jennies.



Dr. Schoenecker said the horses have enough hair to allow the tags to be braided into the hair. USGS put a cord on both ends of the tag and braided both ends.

They used a mammal epoxy, which is a special epoxy used on marine mammals to seal the tag into the hair. The epoxy doesn't burn their skin or hurt the animal.

The study is a pen trial. USGS is collecting individual behavior data to compare with the controls and is monitoring the fit and wear of the collars and tags. Preliminary results will be available in early June 2015.

Mr. Harvey asked how the mane tag is working. Dr. Schoenecker said it is good so far. They put tags in the tails of the stallions also. Mr. Harvey asked if there is any radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology that could be applicable to the study. Dr. Schoenecker said they have talked with a company that does this work and the company is developing something. Dr. Schoenecker said USGS will try the units as soon as they get them.

Carrying Capacity Modeling for Adaption to Climate Change

This study was an outcome of the NAS report. Dr. Schoenecker said USGS proposed a coarse model for evaluating changes in carrying capacity in response to changes in vegetation production. The model can be done without detailed demographic information. It is a mechanistic forage-based model not a population model. It follows methods of Wockner et al. (2014).

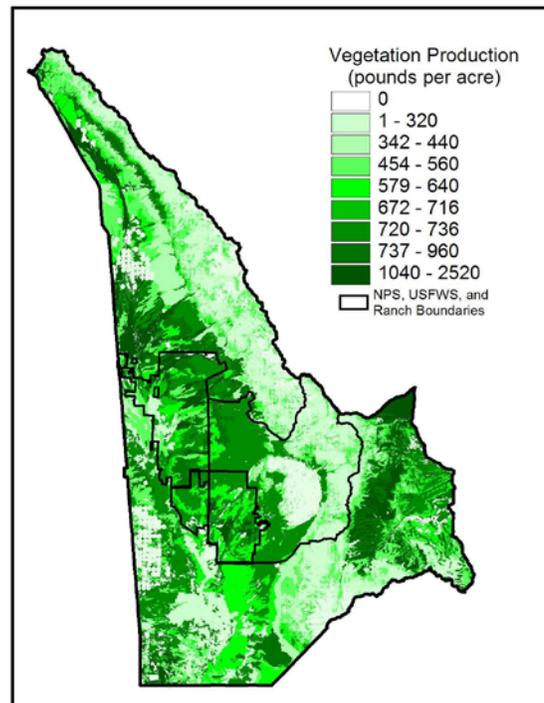
Methods:

One of the ways to determine carrying capacity is by looking at the population growth rate. Ecological carrying capacity is reached as the herd grows. The population begins to level off as carrying capacity is reached and the young of the year start to show reduced survival. This is one way to look at carrying capacity. The other way to look at it is more mechanistically where you measure the forage on the ground.

USGS will start with a base vegetation production map and calculate the amount of vegetation production that must not be grazed. They will calculate the utilization from livestock, and other wild ungulates – mule deer, pronghorn, (and bighorn sheep if present), as well as wild horses.

Status:

- The study is non-invasive. USGS met with their BLM and Colorado State University collaborators in March 2015
- The model building and testing will be done in 2015.



Mr. Danvir said he has been working at two groups on range conditions and trends. One of the things his group is reviewing is resilience and resistance to the change on landscapes and climate change. The group is Open Range Consulting. They are getting skilled at using ground-based plots, correlating them with aerial photos and tying it into the whole land set. He felt they could be tied in to the USGS study. He will provide Dr. Schoenecker with their contact information.

Spay Vac™

Status:

- 2015 will be the fourth foaling season for mares treated in 2011 and the first foaling season for mares treated in 2014.
- Both groups were tested for pregnancy in February.
- PZP treated mares have sometimes had false positive estrone sulfate pregnancy tests.
- USGS will verify status of both groups in April by palpation.
- USGS will make decisions about future monitoring based on palpation results.

Proposed Research

Dr. Schoenecker said USGS is developing the following proposals at the request of BLM:

1. Burro Population Estimation Techniques.
2. Sentinel Demography of Burros.
3. Efficacy of Intrauterine devices (IUDs) in mares.
4. Evaluating behavior of spayed free-roaming mares.
5. Evaluating behavior and ecology of geldings among a breeding herd.
6. Sentinel demography of free-roaming wild horses.
7. WinEquus II (Population Modeling)
8. Testing efficacy of contraceptives in female burros.

Dr. Schoenecker reviewed each proposal individually.

Burro Population Estimation Techniques – This was also recommended in the NAS report. USGS has tested these methods for counting wild horses but has not tested them on burros. The study will test a hybrid double-observer sight-ability model for burros across their range using radio collars and modern aerial infrared in burro surveys. The proposal has been completed and is in peer review. USGS proposes to start surveys in the fall of 2015. There are three to four potential study sites at burro HMAs in varied habitat types. USGS needs 25 to 30 radio collared burros for each HMA.

Sentinel Demography of Burros – The idea for this proposal is that more information is needed about the ecology of burros. This proposal is under development.

Efficacy of IUDs in Mares – USGS was asked to develop an IUD study in mares. USGS plans to study 30 mares (15 treated and 15 controls) through three breeding seasons and one post IUD breeding season, with stud exposure. The study will be pen trials and will probably use domestic horses. They plan to begin in April 2016.

Evaluating Behavior of Spayed Free-Roaming Mares – The study will focus on behavior, band interactions, body conditions, movements, and treatment related mortality of the spayed mares versus the control mares. USGS will evaluate population level effects. The mares will be tracked with radio collars. The proposal is under development.

Evaluating Behavior and Ecology of Geldings among a Breeding Herd – The focus of the study will be on individual behavior, movements, congregations, body condition, and habitat selection of gelded males. USGS is waiting for the radio collar study to be completed before doing these studies. The proposal is under development.

Ms. Sewing asked how long USGS will leave the collars on the horses. Dr. Schoenecker said the collars will have a release mechanism that is timed, but USGS would prefer to have a collar with a remote release. Ms. Sewing said that in the past they left the collars on the horses. Dr. Weikel added that she had seen collars worn for four years that were supposed to drop off. There were no rub marks.

Sentinel Demography of Free-Roaming Wild Horses – This study was recommended by NAS. It will measure fertility, fecundity, recruitment, age-specific mortality and survival, habitat selection, home range, and movement ecology. The proposal is under development.

WinEquus II – Dr. Schoenecker said BLM managers are seeking an improved tool to compare outcomes of wild horse population management scenarios. Currently, WinEquus can only evaluate one scenario at a time. The idea for WinEquus II came from the field offices. The new model will project costs and benefits

and population growth outcomes for various management alternatives including PZP, removals, spaying, gelding, and others. It will be best served with empirical data from the sentinel demography research. USGS developed the Statement of Work (SOW) with BLM input and is collaborating with Dr. Steve Jenkins (University of Nevada-Reno, Emeritus) and Rebecca Moore (BLM Economist). USGS is waiting for BLM approval of the SOW and will develop the proposal after receiving approval.

Mr. Harvey asked if the modeling would have the capability for someone at BLM to provide input on what they want to achieve and receive (output) as critical path options. Dr. Schoenecker thought this was a good suggestion.

Testing Efficacy of Contraceptives for Female Burros – This study was recommended by NAS. USGS is currently discussing ideas for the project. Dr. Schoenecker asked the Board to provide any ideas to her. She said the study will be a pen trial, followed by field study.

Mr. Harvey asked if USGS can go directly to a field trial without doing the pen trial. Dr. Schoenecker said it is safer to perform a pen trial first. Dr. Kane added that he felt the PZP contraceptives will work just as well in a burro as a horse; however, burros are harder to access because they don't tend to herd up. He added that for the PZP vaccines the issue of differences between horses and burros is not likely to be one of differences in reproductive physiology.

Mr. Harvey suggested that the Humane Society of the U. S. (HSUS) may have funds to use as a collaborative venture. Mr. Danvir suggested that a request could be extended to all interested groups. The research would be money well-spent. Dr. Schoenecker added that volunteers are also useful. Mr. Harvey added that he was trying to think of ways to fast-track some of the USGS ideas. He encouraged Dr. Schoenecker to get into the field with this study as soon as possible. She said USGS needs to make sure there is an ample pre-treatment sample data. Mr. Harvey asked if the pen trials and field study could be done concurrently and Dr. Schoenecker said that the collection of pretreatment data on behavior could be done concurrently, while contraception is tested in a pen trial; so in two to three years when/if there is a suitable contraception to test in the field, they could be ready to apply it because pretreatment data will have already been collected.

Mr. Woehl thanked Dr. Schoenecker for her presentation.

Ms. Sewing asked how USGS solicits volunteers. Dr. Schoenecker said USGS lists a study on an ecological website and has had applicants from the U. S., France, Spain, and other countries. Ms. Sewing asked about the volunteers' experience. Dr. Schoenecker said their experience is in the wildlife arena in some way. Ms. Sewing then asked how many volunteers are ordinarily used. Dr. Schoenecker said the volunteers are accessed through the USGS volunteer system. Mr. Woehl said BLM has a list of volunteers that can be used. Ms. Bohl said there is a clearinghouse available through volunteer.gov to enable volunteers to find natural resource volunteer opportunities. She added that BLM needs volunteers who have appropriate experience. Dr. Schoenecker added that USGS focuses on recruiting volunteers who are students in wildlife ecology. They had strong interest from prospective volunteers—far more were interested in volunteering than could be accommodated.

Dr. Cope asked Dr. Kane about the St. John's study on burros. Dr. Kane said it was only one study with about 12 burros and has not been repeated. Dr. Kane added that while the study had good results, with research, the results have to be repeated and in some cases they should be repeated several times before they are viewed as reliable. He said there have been numerous studies where the initial results are promising, but are not replicated by further research. Dr. Kane said this is particularly common when you move from controlled environments and trials into the field. That is because logistics begin to influence

efficacy, but even in a captive trial, as seen with PZP, where there are control groups sometimes the efficacy cannot be repeated in the next trial.

Mr. Danvir asked if the Board will receive research progress updates at each meeting and Ms. D'Aversa said yes.

Rangeland Policy and Management

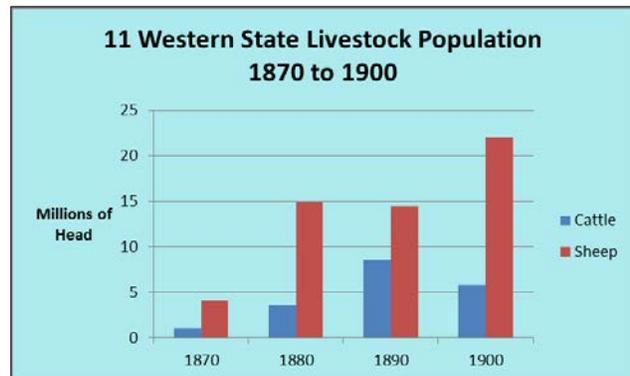
Kenneth Visser, Rangeland Management Specialist, Division of Forests, Rangeland, Riparian & Plant Conservation, BLM

Mr. Visser introduced himself and provided an overview of his presentation. He noted that his discussion does not apply to Forest Service land.

The unregulated grazing of public lands intensified right after the Civil War. Exploitation and abuse of the rangeland resource was due to a combination of opportunity, demand, ambition, ignorance, and greed. Following the Civil War there was a demand for livestock products in the east. The Civil War herds were decimated, but Texas had additional herds. The ranchers drove the herds north to shipping points in Kansas and discovered the open ranges in Montana and to the west. Livestock operations were backed from investments by eastern banks and foreign venture capitalists. They were profitable because there were minimal start-up costs and free forage land for use which was unchecked by regulation. The Ranchers used the Homestead Act laws to claim lands with waters that would allow them to dominate the practical use of the surrounding public domain lands for their herds.

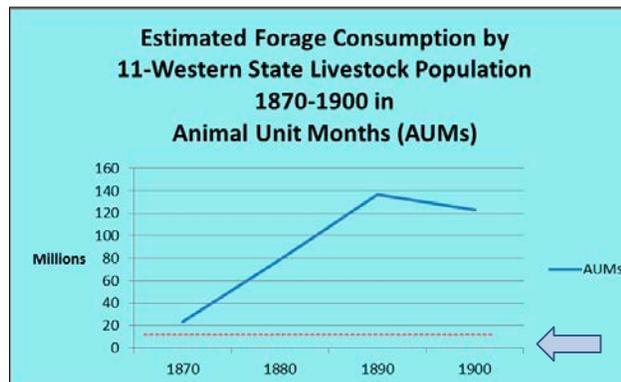
Livestock Expansion

Mr. Visser said the number of livestock (sheep and cattle) grazing numbered in the millions. He provided a graph (at right) showing all of the livestock in states based on tax or other historical economic records, not just on public domain land.



Land Exploitation

Mr. Visser also put numbers into AUM (Animal Unit Months) during that time frame 1870 through 1900. He included the amount of forage an animal consumes in a month and the current level of land use (blue line) versus the red line (live stock).



Range Problem

Over-time, the local controls established by cattle barons and livestock associations created the culture and sometimes violent customs of the industry for using the range. At the turn of the century, there was rampant speculation in raising livestock which continued unabated. The universal business strategy was to put as many cattle as possible on the range in order to get the most grass before it disappeared. The farmers' settlements continued to encroach on the "open range."

There were two different modes of operation for livestock operations in the west. The west was divided as north of the snow line and south of the snow line. However, in the late 1800s, first in Montana (1886 and 1887) there were massive blizzards and in 1887 and 1888, there are massive blizzards in the Great Basin. Up until that time, livestock was left on the range year-round. The ranchers would leave them in the higher elevations in the summer and bring them down to the lower elevations in the winter. The blizzards killed a lot of cattle and put a lot of people out of business. Carcasses littered the range. As a result, the ranchers began growing hay or forage on their privately-owned lands to feed the cattle that they kept as breeding stock over the winter.

By 1900, the widespread forage depletion resulted in reduced stock weights at market. This depletion was economically damaging to the western livestock industry. The speculation also created “boom and bust” livestock business cycles. Constituency concerns with the “deplorable wastage” of the rangeland and declining economics of the livestock industry attracted Congress’ attention. Congress introduced various bills to regulate and manage grazing on the public domain beginning in 1901, but those bills died due to a lack of support from the livestock industry.

Stewardship Beginnings

Stewardship began with Grover Cleveland’s and Teddy Roosevelt’s presidential administrations. In 1905, the newly created Forest Service began administering the Forest Reserves, which brought restrictions to grazing on the National Forests. In 1912, the Department of the Interior (DOI) began to set aside public water reserves on a site-by-site basis so water sources located on the public domain would remain available for use by the general public and could not be dominated by private parties.

The Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916 was enacted with the hope and intent that it would continue to promote the settlement and economic prosperity of the west and resolve overgrazing by putting the public lands into private ownership.

1916-1929

Before and during World War I, U. S. food production greatly expanded to feed European and U. S. troops. This caused a boom in western beef production, along with other agriculture. Soon after the war, agricultural prices collapsed, plunging many over-indebted farmers and ranchers into severe financial trouble. By 1923, it became clear that the 640 acres allowed by the Stock-Raising Act was not enough acreage for a livestock operation in the arid west. Public lands associated with the private land were needed in order to make an economic go of it. One technique used by ranchers was to patent or homestead on known water sources, which led to some of the land-use patterns in the west.

Rancher claiming, patenting, and restricting of access to important public land water continued, and Congress debated how to get control of the situation. Congressional inaction led to a Presidential Executive Order (EO) 107 – Public Water Reserves (1926) by President Woodrow Wilson’s administration to prevent the water from going into private hands.

Keeping certain stock waters in public ownership kept ranchers from claiming the sole use of the waters in an attempt to prevent domination of large tracts of adjacent federal lands. The idea was that all grazers should have a chance to use this water, and not just one or two ranchers. However, unchecked overgrazing of the public lands continued unabated. This led to Taylor Grazing Act of 1934.

Taylor Grazing Act of 1934

This Act was preceded by the Alaska Livestock Grazing Act (1927), Congress's creation of the Mizpah Pumpkin Creek Grazing District (1928), and the Owens Valley Grazing District Reservation (1931). During the Great Depression, severe drought and bad farming practices (i.e., the Dust Bowl) set the stage for Congress to finally assert control over use of the public lands. The Taylor Grazing Act (TGA) was enacted on June 28, 1934.

Orderly Range Administration

TGA authorizes and required the DOI Secretary to:

- Create rules for administering the range.
- Create grazing districts, which issue permits, make range improvements, and charge a fee.
- Cooperate with states and stock associations with leasing lands not included in grazing districts.
- Give priority for permits to landowners engaged in livestock business or water rights holders.
- Provide for a "preference right of renewal," once a permit is issued.
- Provide for appeals from decisions of the administering official.
- A later amendment authorized Grazing Advisory Boards

Mr. Visser showed a map from 1945 that listed the grazing districts. The general land office still administered the lands that were outside of grazing districts.

Adjudicate Permits

Section 3 of the TGA states, "Preference shall be given in the issuance of grazing permits to [applicants] as may be necessary to permit the proper use of lands, water or water rights owned, occupied or leased by them"

This joined public land grazing privilege with the properties of privately-owned base properties of the ranchers who had public land permits. It established a permit and a preference, which allows the new owner of a sold property to be eligible for a permit, if they otherwise qualify. BLM rules also allow preference and grazing privileges to be transferred from one property to another property.

1930s – 1940s: Initial Adjudication

The initial adjudication was a multi-step process, conducted by the Grazing Division's skeletal staff, as advised by the Grazing Advisory Board. Adjudication decisions were supported by information provided on the permit application and/or as recommended by the Grazing Advisory Board and/or through agreement between the BLM and the applicant, and were subject to protest/appeal. The adjudication was done on a district or unit-wide basis rather than on an "allotment-by-allotment" basis. The Board decided who, where, when, and how much to graze.

The "where" (i.e., the allotment) and "when" (i.e., season and period), were based almost entirely on the traditional and customary practices of the area. For the "who" (i.e., the grazing permittee) and "how much" (i.e., the livestock grazing capacity), ranchers obtained two basic outcomes following an adjudication of forage amounts by use areas:

- Base Property "Qualifications"
- Public Land "Grazing Privileges" for specified area

Once determined, the qualifications for public land grazing privileges were “attached” to the base property supporting the permit

1950s – 1960s: Second Adjudication

During World War II, the standards were relaxed because the focus was on food production, not conservation of the range. However, after World War II, it became apparent to BLM that the initial adjudications over-obligated the range, and that overgrazing was continuing.

BLM embarked on a multi-year program of completing all district or unit adjudications and changing previous the adjudications to make them conform to updated capacity estimates. Once a science-based forage estimate was determined, BLM issued ten-year term grazing permits based intending to meet ranchers’ “forage-demand,” which is the forage needed by the rancher to balance out a year round operation, as was done under the initial adjudication. The updated capacity estimates in most cases resulted in grazing reductions that were a source of conflict and stress between ranchers and the BLM.

Mr. Visser showed an example of an older adjudication decision as an illustration of what one looks like. The example was three pages long with a one-page attachment. It was sent to one party, the receiving rancher.

Evolution of Multiple Use

In 1964 the “Classification and Multiple Use Act” was enacted. It required BLM to classify lands for disposal or retention and to develop Land Use Plans (LUPs) to guide all activities conducted on public lands. These are some of the acts now used for range analysis. The land use plans included:

- 1964: the Wilderness Act.
- 1969: National Environmental and Policy Act (NEPA)
- 1971: Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act
- 1973: Endangered Species Act; Clean Water Act
- 1976: Federal Land Policy and Management Act
 - BLM Organic Act – required public lands to be retained and managed under the principals of sustained yield and multiple-use as articulated by land use plans.
- 1978: Public Rangelands Improvement Act
- 1979: Archeological Resources and Protection Act

Evolution of Rangeland Administration

Mr. Visser presented the timeline.

- 1978 – Significant grazing regulations overhaul.
- 1978 – 1988 – Completion of Grazing EISs and Resource Management Plans required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).
- Late 1970s – Vegetation Inventory to supply data to grazing EISs.
- Early 1980s – Abandonment of “one-point-in-time” inventory to support grazing decisions – replaced with program of rangeland monitoring.
- Late 1980s – early 90s – Several program initiatives were launched by the BLM and several rangeland program critiques were published by the General Accounting Office (GAO).

The various environmental and multiple use Acts resulted in a significant overhaul of the rangeland management program. A BLM attempt to satisfy NEPA for all of the rangeland with one EIS was

overturned in federal court and as a result the BLM agreed to complete the individual EISs on a BLM district or resource area basis. In addition, BLM implemented a system for monitoring over time.

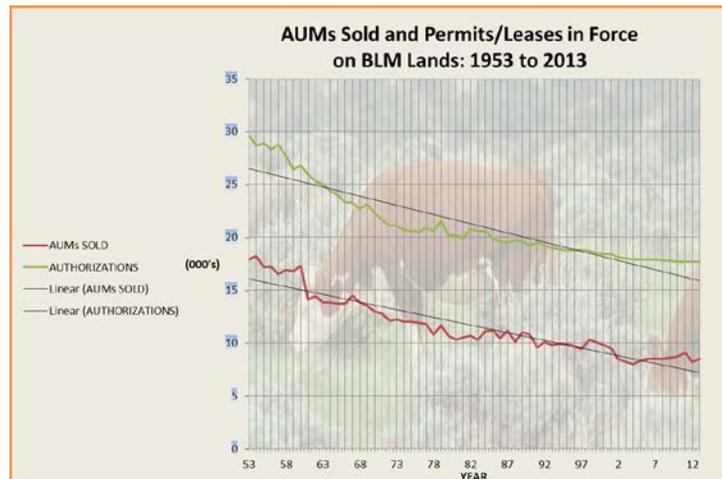
1995: Rangeland Reform

The 1995 Rangeland Reform caused changes to grazing regulations in several areas. It also introduced the requirement that all rangelands will be managed to achieve the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and that livestock use will be done under provisions that achieve standards for rangeland health and conform to the guidelines for livestock grazing. In 2006, in an attempt to amend the grazing regulations to change some of the technical aspects of the regulation, the implementation was struck down for procedural deficiencies in their promulgation.

The 1998 Comb Wash Decision from the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) began the “permit renewal Environmental Assessment (EA).” The IBLA ruled that BLM must have site-specific NEPA analysis when analyzing grazing authorization. The IBLA also ruled that relying on a regional EIS was insufficient unless the EIS contained a site-specific examination of the effects of the permit. Up until this time, BLM had been relying on regional EISs to satisfy NEPA and did not do more NEPA reviews before renewing permits. This changed the way BLM did business. It provides more analysis on a local level and a more complicated way to renew the grazing permit.

Actual Livestock Grazing use 1953-2013

Mr. Visser showed a graph depicting the actual livestock grazing use from 1953 to 2013. It showed the declining number of permits (from 30,000 to 17,600) and the number of actual AUMs, which declined to 9.6 million.



2013 Grazing Statistics

Mr. Visser also showed the 2013 grazing statistics. The levels went from 17,737 permits/leases, 12.4 million active AUMs, and two million suspended AUMs to 8.5 million AUMs billed or sold and 3.9 million AUMs in non-use. Mr. Visser thought that drought and fire may have had an impact on the numbers. He added that livestock markets also cause ranchers to take less use than potentially is authorized by their grazing permit.

Current BLM Grazing Regulations

Current BLM grazing regulations are listed in Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 43. The 2005 edition is used. BLM has not yet republished their regulations to reflect the 2006 revision. Title 43 has ten Subparts:

1. 4100 General Administration
2. 4110 Qualifications and Preference
3. 4120 Grazing Management
4. 4130 Authorizing Grazing Use
5. 4140 Prohibited Acts
6. 4150 Unauthorized Grazing Use

7. 4160 Administrative Remedies
8. 4170 Penalties
9. 4180 Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration
10. 4190 Effect of Wildfire Management Decisions

Grazing Permits (Sub-parts 4130.2 – 4130.3-2) specifies that with certain exceptions, the BLM issues a grazing permit for a ten-year term. It specifies the authorized number and kind of livestock, grazing use period, place of use (allotment) and amount of forage use in AUMs. It also specifies that AUMs are calculated by multiplying the number of animal units allowed times the number of days allowed times the percent of forage within the allotment that occurs on public lands, divided by 30.41666.

The permit also may include provisions that assist in achieving management objectives, provide for proper range management, or assist in the orderly administration of rangelands. The use authorized by a grazing permit must provide for the achievement of management and resource condition objectives and conform to standards and guidelines for rangeland health. Management and resource condition objectives are stated generally in regional land use plans and may be further refined in local activity plans. Resource and management conditions are not necessarily on the permit. They are generally listed on LUPs. Mr. Visser provided a sample grazing permit.

Grazing Permit Decision – Regulatory Framework

Analysis

BLM must periodically review the permitted use specified in a permit or lease and change, if needed, to manage, maintain, or improve rangeland productivity; to assist in restoring ecosystems to properly functioning condition; to conform with land use plans or activity plans; or to comply with standards and guidelines. These changes must be supported by monitoring, field observations, ecological site inventory, or other data acceptable to the authorized officer. (43 CFR 4110.3)

Coordination – BLM must

- Consult, cooperate, and coordinate with affected permittees, the state and the interested public before issuing or renewing a permit (43 CFR 4130.2(b)).
- Provide opportunity for public participation in the planning and environmental analysis of proposed plans affecting the administration of grazing and provide public notice concerning the availability of environmental documents prepared as part of the development of such plans (43 CFR 4120.2(c)).
- Provide opportunity to permittees, state, and interested public to review, comment and give input during the preparation of reports that evaluate monitoring and other data that are used as a basis for making decisions to increase/decrease grazing use or to change the terms and conditions of a permit (43 CFR 4130.3-3).

The interested public includes anyone who wants to be involved. BLM has to provide an opportunity for public participation.

Decision-making Framework: Gather and Analyze Relevant Data

Documents are published and made available to the public. BLM uses rangeland health assessment and resource monitoring data collected over time and consults relevant science literature to help inform its grazing decisions.

Grazing Permit Decision, Decision-making Framework: Comply with NEPA

This includes options put forward and analyzed in an EA. BLM uses the NEPA process to examine grazing management options to achieve management and resource condition objectives.

Grazing Permit Decision, Decision-making Framework: Satisfy Other Legal Processes

BLM complies with the requirements of other applicable laws, such as the Endangered Species and Archeological Resources Protection Acts, when analyzing the effects of use allowed by grazing permits.

BLM Grazing Decision

The decision documents are much longer than before. Mr. Visser showed an example that was 27 pages long, had an 18 page attachment, and was sent to 75 parties.

BLM Grazing Due Process

- Subpart 4160 requires that the BLM issue a formal decision before it implements any action or changes any provisions that relate to livestock permitting or modifying existing permitted grazing activities. A formal decision is required for BLM to issue or renew a grazing permit; change or affirm permit terms and conditions; cancel a permit or lease; authorize or require modification or removal of range improvements; adjudicate conflicting applications; and demand payment for trespass.
- For grazing, with certain exceptions, it is a two-step process: “Proposed Decision” then “Final Decision.” (Forestry is another BLM program that has a two-step process – but most BLM programs have a single-step process).
- Required by language in Section 9 the Taylor Grazing Act (43 U. S.C. 315h):
“The Secretary of the Interior shall provide by appropriate rules and regulations for local hearings on appeals from the decisions of the administrative officer in charge in a manner similar to the procedure in the land department.”
- Regulatory processes are in 43 CFR Subpart 4160 entitled “Administrative Remedies,” and in 43 CFR Part 4 entitled “Department Hearings and Appeals Procedures” – and specifically Subpart E Section 4.470 *et seq.* entitled “Grazing Procedures (Inside and Outside of Grazing Districts).”

Proposed grazing decisions may be protested to the BLM official who issued the decision and final grazing decisions may be appealed to the U. S. Department of Interior (USDI) Office of Hearings and Appeals – who is delegated by the Secretary to decide appeals of decisions made by Interior Officials, such as BLM field managers who have been delegated decision-making authority.

Office of Hearings and Appeals is organized into several functional areas: Indian Appeals Board, Land Appeals Board, and Departmental Cases Hearings Division. Grazing Decisions typically are assigned to an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) within the Hearings Division.

If the ALJ needs to determine facts on the record or otherwise has a need, he/she may schedule a formal hearing which is conducted in a manner similar to a civil hearing (lawyers, briefings, depositions, motions, orders, etc., etc.). Other options that do not involve a hearing include disposition by summary judgment, dismissal, etc.



Any party (e.g., the BLM or the appealing party) may appeal the ALJ’s decision to the IBLA. The IBLA “speaks for” the Secretary and thus the BLM does not appeal IBLA decisions. Aggrieved parties, however, may appeal IBLA decisions in the Federal Civil Court System.

Mr. Woehl thanked Mr. Visser for his discussion. He asked Mr. Visser what takes precedence, the Taylor Grazing Act or the Wild Horse Act. There was a general discussion about this question. Mr. Visser said BLM manages wild horses and burros using both the TGA framework and the framework of the LUPs which are intended to resolve conflicts among competing uses.

Mr. Fuell explained carrying capacity using water. He said that if it is well water, the public does not have any legal access to it without a water permit. Water is owned by landowner. Water that is on the surface is owned by the livestock operators, but there is state law that provides for wildlife use.

Mr. Woehl asked if an HMA can have several allotments and if each allotment has a separate AML. Mr. Fuell said yes. Mr. Woehl asked if the AML is based on actual, what was on the ground at this time. Mr. Fuell said BLM averages the monitoring data for years when there is a lot of precipitation with the years that have low precipitation to determine AML. There was more discussion about how AMLs are determined. Mr. Woehl clarified that depending on the HMA there could be an increase in cattle AUMs and one allotment in a decrease in cattle AUMs in another allotment. Mr. Fuell said yes.

Dr. Cope asked how all of that makes sense if the horses move from one allotment to another. Mr. Fuell explained that that is the way BLM has always done their calculations. Dr. Cope said it seems like it should be done within the HMA. Mr. Fuell said the number of AUMs is specific to the allotment.

There was more discussion on AML data. Mr. Fuell said some RMPs had initial data on the number of animals for the AML. BLM looks at the changes in use of the land and allows for flexibility. No HMA is the same and there is no one size fits all. Mr. Harvey asked how the determination is made, noting the law was in place to preserve the horses and help the horses thrive. He felt there was no consistency in a general approach. He asked if there is a process that BLM can use to establish a reasonable allocation. Mr. Fuell said the AMLs have been set. They have gone through public process.

Mr. Harvey said the NAS study critiqued how AML is derived. He felt the AML is not an accurate number. Ms. D'Aversa provided a different angle. She said all areas have an RMP and that is where the allocations are made. There is an opportunity to have the dialogue at the RMP level. Mr. Woehl felt that water availability has a big impact when setting the AMLs with public input. Ms. D'Aversa said the AMLs are established and reiterated at the land use level. Mr. Harvey said that there is a disparity between the range use from HMA to HMA and he would like to see more consistency. Mr. Harvey said in looking at the range management allocation, he felt more priority should be given to horses when possible. The intent of the Wild Horse and Burro Act was to help the horses thrive. Dr. Weikel said BLM also has management differences from state-to-state. Dr. Cope thought that the big issue is in the west. Ms. Sewing added that in Utah there are no water rights are available through the state. All of them are privately owned.

Working Group Reports

Mr. Woehl made some recommendations for changes to the Working Groups, primarily due to having two new Board members. The Working Group members are listed at the beginning of each report.

Resources Working Group – Robert Cope, Julie Weikel, Jennifer Sall

After today's discussion, Dr. Cope recommended that BLM do outreach with the PEISs to involve as many counties as possible to participate as cooperating agencies in the process of developing the programmatic EIS on population control.

Mr. Danvir added he likes photo monitoring, because photos provide quantitative data. Mr. Tupper said USGS has 41 years of geosynchronous and georeferenced photographic and infrared data and there are more uses for it. Ground cover is one of the things that BLM has started. He added that the committee can give BLM a recommendation, but BLM is already looking into it. Mr. Danvir added that he was concerned about population modeling, but he was impressed with the progress that has been made by having USGS work on population demographics. Mr. Danvir added that he sat in on a two-day meeting in Wyoming with Dr. John Tanaka, from the University of Wyoming. The meeting was hosted by the Sustainable Rangelands Round Table and centered on a definition for thriving natural ecological balance. Mr. Danvir thought this information might be useful to BLM and said he would provide Mr. Tupper with the information.

Dr. Weikel talked about the connection between monitoring and volunteerism. She observed a project in California where the Forest Service had erected posts with a bracket that holds a cell phone. There's a sign that asks visitors to take a picture at the site and upload it to a website. Dr. Weikel felt it was a good example of getting monitoring done by a huge array of members of the public.

Public Comment Working Group – Tim Harvey, Jennifer Sall, June Sewing

Both Mr. Harvey and Ms. Sewing reviewed the public comments before the meeting. Mr. Harvey said the comments were lively and he noticed a positive shift in the tone. There were also ideas on improving the adoption program, which targeted the states. There was a huge amount of support for PZP and a lot of requests to assist with it. He said there were also good letters from ranchers that asked to keep the number of horses from conflicting with their livelihood. There was also a positive letter from a Facebook group and some concern about moving horses to Scott City, which they said was a tragedy. In this case, the comment asked BLM to set up feed protocols to prevent what happened there. On the NAS study, there were comments on what is going on with the NAS' recommendations and a few asked about the comprehensive animal welfare program.

Ms. Sewing added that one concern she had during her review was that the public wanted to use PZP, but also wanted stop the gathers, which cannot be done. BLM can vaccinate more horses with a gather than with trapping. Mr. Harvey said some letters said the Board doesn't listen to the public, but the Board does listen. Ms. Sewing added that some people say the BLM is working on the extinction of horses and this is not true. Mr. Harvey said the comments reviewed were from the Riverton, Wyoming meeting (August 25, 2015).

Dr. McDonnell said that when she reads the comments, she's frustrated with repeated inaccuracies (e.g., PZP is a pesticide when it's not). Mr. Harvey said that although it is technically classified as a pesticide, that is not a true classification. He thought the Board may be able to put together a list of topics that need to be addressed on the Program's Myths and Facts page on the BLM website. Mr. Woehl said BLM could address this at the next meeting as an agenda item. Mr. Harvey said they also received a note about the Tom Davis issue. Mr. Woehl said OIG investigations are slow. Mr. Harvey said it is a simple case, as far as he knows and he would like an update. He added that the perception of an impropriety is just as bad as an impropriety. Dr. Cope added that posting the truth on the website won't necessarily change people's minds. Mr. Harvey clarified that he was only talking about the allegations against Tom Davis. The general public wants to know what's going on. Mr. Harvey noted that when he was first appointed to the Board, he was blown away by how much the BLM cares for the animals and the conditions they live in.

Support Volunteer Resources Working Group – Mr. Woehl, Ms. Sewing, Dr. Cope

Mr. Woehl said BLM is increasing the use of volunteers. He felt BLM also needs a training program. Dr. Cope agreed that a volunteer training program would be beneficial. Ms. Sewing said that people who want to volunteer need to establish a relationship at a field office. Mr. Woehl suggested allowing the field offices to take the lead on finding volunteers. Dr. Cope suggested that BLM follow the USFS model for determining what can be done and bring people together to work collaboratively. Ms. Sewing added that financial support is also helpful, if there is some way to let the organization know when something is needed for a project.

Population Growth Suppression Working Group – Julie Weikel, Sue McDonnell, Robert Cope, Tim Harvey

Dr. McDonnell said the group is waiting on the BLM response to the call for research proposals. Their general understanding is that things are coming along. Dr. Cope said BLM should concentrate on the mares rather than the stallions. Dr. McDonnell said the tools in the toolbox will include gathers and asked for the Board's thoughts on more modern capture methods (i.e., baiting, trapping, etc.). She would like to see positive gathering methods. Any tools that require sedation may be lessened if the horses are gathered in a calmer state. Mr. Harvey said BLM should be current with the other methods too. At Chincoteague the mangers provide clean water and good hay which helps to gather the horses during the roundup. Dr. McDonnell said BLM should think out the gathers carefully to avoid inadvertent triggers. It will be time and money well-spent. Mr. Harvey said BLM should be putting more emphasis on water and bait trapping. Mr. Woehl said one problem was personnel and the amount of time water and bait trapping takes. Mr. Harvey provided an example of trapping as did Mr. Woehl. Dr. McDonnell said positive behavior modification should enable faster trapping. Some behaviorists may like to take this on as a challenge.

Eco-tourism Working Group – Fred Woehl, Rick Danvir

Mr. Danvir discussed grouping Eco-tourism and Eco-sanctuary together. Dr. Weikel asked if they can work together even though one is a BLM-formed committee.

Herd Area Repopulation

Mr. Harvey said there has been some discussion on this topic. Ms. Sewing found there are three to four areas in Utah that could be used for this purpose, but it has to be reflected in a LUP and would create another job for the BLM. Ms. Sewing will make it as a recommendation to make the area a pilot partnership. Mr. Harvey asked BLM for permission to make inquiries into areas that would be appropriate for a partnership and also do some of the things Dr. McDonnell talked about. Ms. Sewing said she has already contacted her district BLM office. The Board will make a recommendation to look at putting non-reproducing herds in zeroed out HMAs. There was discussion of whether there were areas where this would be feasible.

CAWP – Julie Weikel, Tim Harvey

This is a BLM appointed subcommittee. It was confirmed by BLM for the Board that the CAWP is being incorporated into the BLM helicopter contract.

Increasing Adoptions and Sales Working Group- Jennifer Sall, Fred Woehl, John Fallon, June Sewing

Mr. Woehl said BLM is doing a great job with this and Ms. Collins is the lead. There is an adoption tomorrow in Springfield and he encouraged the public to attend. Adoption numbers are going up. He thanked Ms. Collins and Ms. Hooks.

Financial Working Group

Mr. Danvir recommended that this group be disbanded and the Board agreed.

Advisory Board Recommendations to the BLM

Recommendation #1: BLM should consider having the WH&B Division Chief position have an optional location in the west, based on the preference of the selectee and the program needs.

Recommendation #2: BLM should assess horses to predict adoption potential (by qualified horse trainers who may be volunteers) with the aim of moving horses expeditiously to long-term situations.

Recommendation #3: BLM should continue to develop and implement programs like America's Mustang which provide factual education and information to the American public.

Recommendation #4: BLM should increase dedicated funding for developing new methods of population growth suppression, and for methods currently available. All forms of population control should be considered for utilization.

Recommendation #5: BLM is encouraged to proceed with the current WH&B PEIS.

Recommendation #6: BLM should encourage state, county, and local governments and agencies to participate as cooperating agencies in all NEPA processes.

Recommendation #7: BLM should develop a training module or program to allow all qualified volunteers to be an asset to the BLM WH&B program. For example, BLM should consider training volunteers to assist in range monitoring through site-specific photography, which is also known as citizen science.

Recommendation #8: BLM, in conjunction with other federal agencies, should explore the possibility of establishing collaborative groups regarding the management of specific HMAs.

Recommendation #9: BLM should explore more modern behavior modification and least-stress methods, such as:

- a. Enticement and positive reinforcement methods of gathering; and
- b. Refinement and increased use of water and bait trapping methods where they can be effective.

Recommendation #10: BLM should pilot reintroducing a non-reproductive herd into a zeroed-out HMA. BLM should explore partnering with National Mustang Association or other recognized group for this pilot.

Recommendations concerning the WH&B National Advisory Board (NAB):

Recommendation #1: BLM should provide updates to NAB on the progress of USGS research activities for WH&B prior to each meeting.

Recommendation #2: BLM should provide funding to allow Board members to attend, assist in, and obtain first-hand knowledge of the various components of the WH&B program.

Recommendation #3: BLM should provide a detailed report at the next Board meeting on HMA population levels, their effects on Greater Sage Grouse (GSG), and the WH&B-related strategies being used to address these effects. BLM should prioritize HMAs in GSG priority habitat that are over AML for gathers.

Recommendation #4: NAB should meet a minimum of three times annually: April, August, and December, if possible.

Recommendation #5: BLM should arrange for regular Board meetings of three-days, the first of which will be dedicated to allowing working groups an opportunity for face-to-face interaction.

Adjourn

Mr. Woehl asked the Board members for their final comments.

Ms. Sewing made a comment about grazing permits. Her association owns four permits in Nevada and one in Utah. They also have a state permit. All permits are for horses.

Mr. Danvir stressed his concerns of quality over quantity of the horses. He's concerned about wildlife habitat. He would like to show that BLM can manage the numbers. Mr. Tupper said rather than talk about AMLs versus AUMs, the focus should be on-range health – managing for healthy animals on healthy range lands.

Mr. Harvey felt there needs to be on-range management and on-range population suppression. He said the Board had good meeting and he was encouraged.

Dr. Weikel thanked the Board for a powerful experience. She feels there are some challenges and it will be fun to do some real problem solving.

Dr. McDonnell said she was pleased to hear from USGS and learn about the comprehensive view they are taking with their research. She congratulated BLM for working with USGS.

Ms. Sall said she enjoyed taking in all of the information. She's focused on looking at the 10- and 30-year plan. She feels the Board has real challenges and she is looking to the long-term.

Dr. Cope said he was reminded that although they are in Ohio, most of the problems are western problems. The Taylor Grazing Act presentation reminded of him that. The animals graze in the summer and when you buy out the grazing permits, you put a family out of business and this affects all of those around them. This behavior is killing the western areas. Many ranchers are hanging in because of beef prices; however, the west has water problems that aren't issues in the east.

Ms. D'Aversa said this was her first Board meeting as Acting Division Chief and she appreciated the support of everyone. She noted that Dr. McDonnell is the Vice Chair of the Board and thanked her for her service. Ms. D'Aversa said she was impressed with the willingness of some of the advocacy groups to talk to the BLM and try to work with the BLM.

Mr. Woehl thanked those who put the meeting together and the members of the public who showed up. He's happy and proud to be here and is excited to work with the group. Mr. Woehl said this was his first meeting as the Board Chair. He noted that Vice Chair Dr. McDonnell is an asset to him and the Board. He was encouraged by this meeting. He was impressed with the willingness of the advocacy groups and their willingness to work with the Board. The people on the Board have the horses at heart. He was thankful to have Dr. Weikel and Ms. Sall on the Board. Mr. Woehl also thanked Ms. Libby. He encouraged all to attend the adoption tomorrow.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
ALJ.....	Administrative Law Judge
AML.....	Appropriate Management Levels
APHIS.....	Animal Plant Health Service
BLM.....	Bureau of Land Management
CAWP.....	Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program
CFR.....	Code of Federal Regulations
DOI.....	Department of Interior
EA.....	Environmental Assessment
EIS.....	Environmental Impact Statement
EO.....	Executive Order
EPA.....	U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
FAQ.....	Frequently Asked Questions
FLPMA.....	Federal Land Policy Management Act
FY.....	Fiscal Year
GAO.....	General Accounting Office
GPS.....	Global Positioning System
GS.....	Growth Suppression
GSG.....	Greater Sage Grouse
HA.....	Herd Area
HMA.....	Herd Management Area
HMAP.....	Herd Management Area Plan
HSUS.....	Humane Society of the US
IBLA.....	Interior Board of Land Appeals
IUD.....	Intrauterine Device
IPT.....	Integrated Planning Team
LUP.....	Land Use Plan
MHF.....	Mustang Heritage Foundation
MOU.....	Memorandum of Understanding
NAS.....	National Academy of Sciences
NEPA.....	National Environmental Policy Act
NPO.....	Nonprofit Organization
OIG.....	Office of Inspector General
OMB.....	Office of Management and Budget
ORC.....	On-Range Corral
ORP.....	On-Range Pasture
PEIS.....	Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
PGS.....	Population Growth Suppression
PZP.....	Porcine Zona Pellucida
RFA.....	Request for Applications
RFP.....	Request for Proposals
RFID.....	Radio-frequency Identification
RMP.....	Range Management Plan
SOP.....	Standard Operating Procedure
SOW.....	Statement of Work
TGA.....	Taylor Grazing Act
TNEB.....	Thriving Natural Ecological Balance

TPEC..... Technical Proposal Evaluation Committee
UC.....University of California
USDA..... U. S. Department of Agriculture
USDI..... U. S. Department of the Interior
USFS.....U. S. Forestry Service
USGS..... U. S. Geological Survey
UV.....Ultraviolet
WH&B..... Wild Horse and Burro

National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Members

<p>Wild Horse and Burro Advocacy Ms. June Sewing Executive Director National Mustang Association P.O. Box 1367 Cedar City, Utah 84720 mustangs@infowest.com Term expires: 03/30/2018</p>	<p>Public Interest Ms. Jennifer Sall 1745 Hillcrest Dr. Lander, Wyoming 8252 jen.sall@gmail.com Term expires: 03/30/2018</p>
<p>Public Interest Mr. Fred T. Woehl, Jr. 2151 Watkins Road Harrison, Arkansas 72601 prtfred@gmail.com Term expires: 04/03/2017</p>	<p>Wild Horse and Burro Research Dr. Sue M. McDonnell, Ph. D. 1814 Lenape Unionville Road West Chester, Pennsylvania 19382 suemcd@vet.upenn.edu 04/03/2017</p>
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Meeting Photos

