

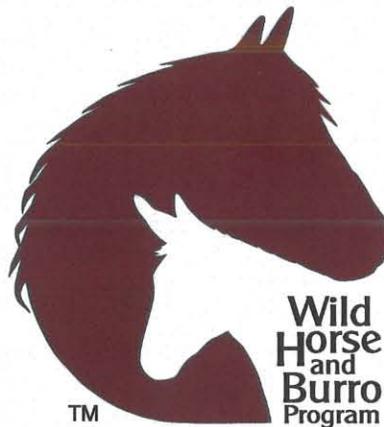
U. S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# National Wild Horse & Burro Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

---

Radisson Hotel Salt Lake City Downtown

October 29 - 30, 2012



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

## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3
<b>Monday, October 29, 2012</b> .....	5
Welcome.....	5
Call to Order.....	5
BLM Leadership’s Remarks .....	5
Welcome to Utah.....	6
Utah Wild Horse & Burro Program Overview.....	7
April 23 – 24, 2012 Meeting Minutes Approval.....	7
BLM Response to Advisory Board Recommendations.....	7
Review of Charter and Draft Standard Operating Procedures .....	8
Nationwide Drought Situation and Impacts on Range .....	8
Wild Horse & Burro Program Update.....	9
Overview .....	9
Budget Report .....	10
FY2013 Fall/Winter Gather/Treat/Remove Plan.....	12
Off the Range Space.....	13
Long-Term Holding Video.....	13
Research Advisory Team .....	14
BLM-Formed Working Groups Updates .....	16
Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program .....	16
Increasing Adoptions.....	17
Eco-Sanctuaries.....	18
National Wild Horse & Burro Gather Guidance .....	18
Public Comment Period .....	19
<b>Tuesday, October 30, 2012</b> .....	19
Advisory Board-Formed Working Groups Updates.....	19
Population Growth Suppression.....	19
Ecotourism .....	20
Herd Area Repopulation.....	21
Board Member’s Concerns and Issues .....	21
Board Recommendations .....	22

Board Recommendation Discussions Which Were Dropped From Further Consideration .....22

Next Board Meeting .....23

Closing Remarks .....23

Meeting Adjournment .....24

Acronyms .....25

Attachments.....26

    Attachment 1 – Population Growth Suppression Alternative and Ovariectomy .....26

## 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 on matters pertaining to the management and protection of wild, free-roaming horses and burros on the Nation's public lands.

During its October 29 - 30, 2012, meeting held in Salt Lake City, Utah, the Board received updates from the BLM on a number of different areas pertaining to the management of wild horses and burros including the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Fall/Winter Gather/Treat/Remove Plan, which calls for the removal of 3,500 animals. After release of the fall/winter gather plan, declining resource and animal body conditions resulting from wildfires and drought resulted in requests to remove an additional 2,000 animals, which will require the FY2013 Fall/Winter gather plan to be re-evaluated.

Currently, there are 46,500 horses and 1,361 burros in short- and long-term holding facilities, respectively, which represent 92% of the agency's overall holding capacity and limits the agency's ability to address the requests for emergency removals.

From a financial standpoint, during FY2012, BLM expended \$72.4 million in implementation of the wild horse and burro program, which represented 95 percent of the program's total available FY2012 funding. Of particular interest, \$545,000 was spent for research and \$410,000 for fertility control vaccine. BLM's FY2013 President's budget request for the wild horse and burro program is \$77 million. The projected total funding level available to the program, which includes reimbursable funds and carryover, totals approximately \$78.8 million.

Jan Curtis, staff Meteorologist and Applied Climatologist at the Natural Resource Conservation Service's National Water & Climate Center in Portland, Oregon, provided a summary of current drought conditions and forecasts for the United States. Important points emphasized in this presentation included:

- Drought will become more common, especially over the desert southwest (Great Basin) in the coming years;
- The western United States should expect to experience more of a "La Nina" weather pattern, which tends to have more moisture in the northern latitudes. Recovery of rangeland conditions over the next couple of years in the southern portion of the United States will be a challenge; and,
- Additional tools such as the PRISM software designed to assist resource professionals to better understand the risks associated with managing land resources, especially under drought conditions, are being developed.

Dr. Jeff Manning, BLM's Research Advisory Team Leader, provided an overview of the agency's research efforts. BLM's *Strategic Research Plan for Wild Horse and Burro Management*, developed in 2003 and updated in 2005, addresses five research issues – fertility control, population estimation, genetics, health and handling, and habitat assessment. Updates were provided on fertility control, population estimation, and genetics as well as potential future research interests.

Updates were heard from three BLM-formed and three Board-formed working groups.

Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program ..... BLM-Formed

Increasing Adoptions.....	BLM-Formed
Eco-sanctuaries.....	BLM-Formed
Population Growth Suppression.....	Board-Formed
Ecotourism .....	Board-Formed
Herd Area Repopulation.....	Board-Formed

The most significant recommendation surfacing from the Board-formed working groups was the recommendation to use spaying of mares (ovariectomy) as a tool for reducing the population growth rate. It was stressed that spaying of mares (if approved) should supplement, not replace, the existing tools available to BLM for reducing population growth.

In addition to the agency and working group updates, the Board heard from 21 speakers during the public comment period.

On the second day of the meeting, the Board identified five recommendations to be made to the BLM addressing the following major topic areas:

Formation of three Board-formed working groups focused on (1) understanding BLM’s budget process, (2) considering public comments received by the Board, and (3) nurturing efforts that support volunteer resources;

(4) Including ovariectomy (spaying of mares) as an additional tool for suppressing population growth; and,

(5) Eco-sanctuaries should not be considered on public HMA lands where wild horses currently exist.

## Monday, October 29, 2012

### Welcome

#### Call to Order

Dr. Boyd Spratling, Co-Chair of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board (Board), opened the meeting precisely at 8 AM in the Wasatch 4 conference room of the Radisson Hotel Downtown in Salt Lake City, Utah, by asking each member of the Board to introduce themselves.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Joan Guilfoyle, Chief of BLM's Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B) Program, introduced the Division's staff present at the meeting as well as those on the phone.

Board Member	Representing
Timothy Harvey	Humane Advocacy
Paul Durbin	Wildlife Management
Gary Zakotnik	Livestock Grazing
Julie Gleason	Public Interest
Dr. Boyd Spratling	Veterinary Medicine
June Sewing	Wild Horse & Burro Advocacy
Callie Hendrickson	Public Interest
James Stephenson	Natural Resource Management

Kathie Libby, a BLM employee serving as the meeting's facilitator, introduced herself and welcomed those attending the meeting in person and those participating via online streaming technology. She stressed the importance of being respectful of others and completed a review of the agenda for the 1½ day meeting.

#### BLM Leadership's Remarks



In his opening remarks, Ed Roberson, BLM's Assistant Director for Renewable Resources and Planning and BLM's Designated Federal Official for the Board, thanked the Board for their efforts since the April 2012, meeting which included the establishment of and participation on working groups, visiting different field locations, and reviewing the Board's draft by-laws and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Over the past year, BLM has experienced leadership changes that have had and will have an impact on the WH&B Program as well as the Bureau as a whole. Such changes include Joan Guilfoyle assuming the Chief position of the Wild Horse and Burro Division, BLM Director Bob Abbey's retirement in May 2012, and the pending retirement of Acting Director Mike Pool. Likewise, the appointment of Dr. Spratling and Julie Gleason at the April 2012 meeting as co-Chairs signals a change in the Board's leadership.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Robert Bray representing Wild Horse and Burro Research was unable to attend the meeting.

Progress continues to be made on implementation of all elements of BLM's Wild Horse & Burro Strategy; some of which will be addressed in more detail later in the meeting. In 2010, Congress requested BLM provide a report addressing changes that will be made to the program over time. The report is currently located in the Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals office.

As discussed at the Board's April 2012 meeting, changes to strengthen the language in the Bill of Sale document and the questionnaire used in the sales process have been made. Following the April meeting, BLM received accusations regarding practices of a specific buyer of wild horses. Due to those accusations and the uncertainty of the facts surrounding the situation, BLM immediately stopped selling animals to that individual and is working with the Department's Office of the Inspector General in an investigation of the allegations. The ongoing investigation will include a review of BLM's interview, vetting, and sale documentation processes and, if necessary, appropriate action(s) will be taken. The BLM encourages the public to report instances of suspected violations of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act so that subsequent investigations can serve to strengthen the program and ensure animals find healthy and humane homes and environments in which to live.

The combination of drought and wild fires in the West has created significant challenges within the WH&B program. Significant acreages have burned within Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in Nevada and eastern Oregon. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, BLM's Emergency Stabilization and Restoration (ES&R) budget was \$24.5 million, which has been focused toward restoring sage brush steppe habitat. Unfortunately, there isn't sufficient funding to accomplish everything which needs to be done. Often removal of wild horses and livestock from the burned areas is a necessary action that must be taken. Horses removed from the range are either temporarily placed in holding facilities (until the range is restored), into BLM's adoption program, or permanently placed in long-term holding facilities.

As discussed at the April 2012 meeting, BLM is currently amending 98 Land Use Plans to incorporate appropriate mitigation measures to, hopefully, avoid the listing of sage grouse as a threatened or endangered species in 2015. Some of those mitigation measures will affect management of wild horses and burros.

In addition to political and fiscal challenges, BLM's WH&B program is also facing significant ecological issues. BLM appreciates having an Advisory Board willing to work with the agency in addressing these critical issues and challenges.

## Welcome to Utah

BLM Utah State Director, Juan Palma, welcomed the Board by referencing his early childhood and the fact that he has lived in Utah at different times since 1975.

As Utah BLM's senior leader, Mr.

Palma has been focused on implementing two key Obama Administration initiatives: Protecting America's Great Outdoors and Empowering America's Future.

## *Utah's Contribution to the "Protecting America's Great Outdoors" and "Empowering America's Future" Initiatives*

Energy Production Activities.....	\$10.2 billion
Timber, Grazing, Recreation .....	\$27 to \$59 million
Recreation Visitation .....	6 million annually

Mr. Palma stressed the importance of (1) listening to the public concerning management of public land resources and (2) bringing younger people into BLM's organization which has improved the agency's use of social media technology.

### **Utah Wild Horse & Burro Program Overview**

BLM Utah's State Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, Gus Warr, provided an overview of the State's wild horse and burro program. In summary, Utah has 29 Herd Areas (HAs) and 19 HMAs<sup>2</sup> which currently contain the third largest wild horse and burro population within BLM. There are approximately 3,500 wild horses and burros within the State, which is 1,500 animals above the State's Appropriate Management Level (AML) of approximately 2,000 animals.

Similar to other Western states, Utah has and continues to experience drought conditions, which have significantly affected management of wild horses and burros. Fortunately, recent summer rains have lessened the impact of drought in some areas; however, throughout the summer it has been necessary to haul water to several HMAs in the western and central part of the State.

The State has experienced several significant wild fires involving HMAs and ES&R funding has been approved for the fires, including wild horse removal requests; however, these efforts have not been acted upon due to high priority gathers needed in neighboring states. The HMAs are being closely monitored to ensure the animals will have adequate water and forage for the winter. Other program challenges occurring in the State include the 10 wild horse Herd Areas (HA), many of which contain wild horses but are not actively managed by BLM due to land ownership issues, lack of available resources (forage & water), and presence of Tribal or stray animals.

BLM Utah also plays an important role in the national wild horse facility management program, by managing two short-term holding facilities<sup>3</sup> and the Gunnison prison program and facility.

In response to a question, Mr. Warr explained that there are approximately 600 wild horses that are located within HAs or outside of HMAs which are not included in the statewide population figure provided above.

### **April 23 – 24, 2012 Meeting Minutes Approval**

The minutes from the April 23 – 24, 2012, Board meeting were approved without modification.

### **BLM Response to Advisory Board Recommendations**

Joan Guilfoyle provided a summary of the BLM's response to 10 recommendations<sup>4</sup> made by the Board during its April 2012, meeting. BLM's responses to Recommendations #1 through #8 were provided to the Board in early May 2012, to facilitate formation of the Board- and BLM-formed working groups, which will provide reports later in the meeting.

Recommendation #9 addressed the need to identify an avenue to connect District resource needs with potential public/non-profit organizations that have a desire and interest to assist BLM. BLM has established good relationships with many organizations across the West and welcomes new opportunities.

---

<sup>2</sup> 17 wild horse HMAs and 2 burro HMAs.

<sup>3</sup> Salt Lake (Butterfield) and Delta holding facilities.

<sup>4</sup> Provided under Tab 3 of the Board's notebook.

It was suggested that local groups interested in assisting BLM or the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) should contact the local BLM or USFS office.

Recommendation #10 addressed the need to expedite BLM's delivery of the Program's Strategy and Report to Congress. Although the Report to Congress remains in the Department, BLM has moved forward in implementing several actions contained within the Strategy.

The Board commended BLM for the timeliness of its responses to Recommendations #1 through #8, which facilitated formation of the working groups.

### **Review of Charter and Draft SOPs**

Sally Spencer, BLM Washington Office's Supervisory Marketing Specialist, explained that the Board's Charter<sup>5</sup> follows a standard General Services Administration format which does not allow flexibility for modification. The Charter was filed and approved by the Department in July 2012, and is current until July 2014.

The Board's by-laws and SOPs<sup>6</sup> allow more flexibility in outlining how the Board will operate. Following a review of the draft SOPs, Dr. Spratling and Julie Gleason recommended the following statement be inserted into Section 5: Voting.

“Alternatively, approval of recommendations can be made by discussion and consensus at the discretion of the Chair.”

### **Nationwide Drought Situation and Impacts on Range**

Jan Curtis, staff Meteorologist and Applied Climatologist at the Natural Resource Conservation Service's National Water & Climate Center in Portland, Oregon, provided a summary of current drought conditions and forecasts for the United States. Although drought is currently widespread across much of the United States, current conditions pale in comparison to the droughts of the 1930s and 1950s.

Mr. Curtis emphasized that, unlike severe weather, drought is a difficult weather phenomena to measure as it develops slowly over vast regions and can impact remote locations due to the lack of water conveyance from mountain snow melt, depleted reservoirs, and low river flows. Drought, which is objectively measured using a number of weather-hydro networks and remote sensing from radar and satellite, only becomes important when ecosystems and water supplies begin to degrade. Drought is considered a permanent phenomenon in deserts and, while there are periods of moisture, drought can last as long as several decades. The expectation is that drought will become more common in coming years, especially over the desert southwest and the Great Basin.

Herbaceous vegetation in arid and semi-arid regions can recover from drought if rangelands are in good condition and properly grazed (appropriate number of animals, season of use, etc.) by large ungulates. With the aid of new PRISM (Spatial Climate) data, which will be accessible in near real-time within a year, high resolution maps will be available to better assess development of drought conditions in normally data sparse regions. This tool is envisioned to help resource professionals better understand the risks associated with managing land resources, especially under drought conditions.

---

<sup>5</sup> Provided under Tab 4 of the Board's notebook.

<sup>6</sup> Provided under Tab 4 of the Board's notebook.

During the question portion of the presentation, Mr. Curtis was asked to expand on a statement made that grazing is an external impact. In response, it was recognized that grazing, if managed properly, could occur without adversely impacting rangelands even during drought conditions. However, if plants are stressed by drought conditions, appropriate adjustments in grazing practices must be made.

Mr. Curtis was asked to provide his best scientific estimation of climate patterns over the next couple of years in relation to providing sufficient moisture for plants to recover from drought conditions. In response, Mr. Curtis indicated that his expectation is that the western United States will experience more of a “La Nina” weather pattern, which tends to have more moisture in the northern latitudes. If this occurs, recovery of rangeland conditions in the southern portion of the United States over the next couple of years will be a challenge. Later in the meeting, WH&B Deputy Division Chief Dean Bolstad explained the importance of spring moisture to herbaceous plant growth and recovery. Items which impact the plant’s capability to recover from drought include the frequency, timing, duration, and intensity of grazing. In times of drought, when water sources are limited, the impact of duration and intensity of grazing on plants is magnified.

## Wild Horse & Burro Program Update

### Overview

In her opening statements, Program Division Chief Guilfoyle thanked the Board for their efforts and feels they represent the diversity of the American public which is needed to address the complex issues associated with the wild horse and burro program. She also indicated that it was unfortunate that Dr. Bray was unable to attend the meeting due to the pending arrival of Hurricane Sandy on the east coast.

Chief Guilfoyle introduced Dr. Jeff Manning, BLM’s new Research Team Leader and coordinator of BLM’s population census program, by providing a brief biography of his experience and expertise. After receiving his PhD from the University of Idaho, he served as a graduate level instructor at the University of Idaho in advanced methods to estimate wildlife populations. Other experience includes involvement in the raising and release of the first California Condors into the wild in the 1990s. Dr. Manning most recently worked for the National Park Service.



During the April 2012, Board meeting, Chief Guilfoyle indicated that BLM was working to hire a full-time Outreach Coordinator position. Since that meeting, Lisa Reid from BLM’s West Desert District (Utah) completed a 4-month detail in this position, which helped to refine the duties and responsibilities of the full-time position.

In other employee development opportunities, John Neill, BLM’s Operations Manager at the Palomino Valley facility north of Reno, Nevada, is returning after a 4-month detail as an Assistant Field Manager in another BLM office in Nevada.

The Washington Office created a new web page titled “From the Public”, accessible from BLM’s Wild Horse and Burro web site, which is designed to increase the efficiency of responding to questions and messages from the public.

BLM hosted its second long-term holding pasture tour in Cassoday, Kansas in June 2012, where participants were able to tour both gelding and mare parts of the holding facility. BLM intends to conduct a similar tour in 2013.

Two training sessions (population survey methods and communications/media) were completed within the past six months. Chief Guilfoyle has also been engaged in discussions with BLM's National Training Center in Phoenix, Arizona concerning the need to update existing training curriculum as well as developing new curriculum.

The Washington Office is working to improve the Wild Horse and Burro Program System (WHBPS) software, which tracks animals from capture to title/sale. In addition, Chief Guilfoyle spoke at the Wild Horse Symposium, which was co-sponsored by BLM and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

In closing her remarks, Chief Guilfoyle provided an overview of the contents of Tabs 10, 11, and 14 of the Board's notebook. These tabs contain information previously requested by the Board and/or are new to the notebooks. Information presented in Tabs 8 (Adoptions and Sales Report), 9 (Litigation), and 13 (U. S. Forest Service Report) were not addressed during this meeting.

### **Budget Report**

Holle' Hooks, a Wild Horse and Burro Specialist in BLM's Washington office, provided an overview of the program's actual expenditures in FY2012 and the President's FY2013 Budget Request.

During FY2012, BLM expended \$72.4 million during implementation of the WH&B program, which represents 95 percent of the program's total available FY2012 funding of \$76 million.<sup>7</sup> Of particular interest to the Board, in FY2012, \$545,000 was spent to fund research and \$410,000 for the purchase of fertility control vaccine.

BLM's FY2013 President's budget request for the wild horse and burro program is \$77 million. The projected total funding level available to the program, which includes reimbursable funds and carryover, totals approximately \$78.8 million.

The WH&B program has two performance measures (see inset) that are used to validate the program's accomplishments during a fiscal year.

A question was asked about the significant increase in FY2013 funding allocated for program support/overhead as compared to FY2012.<sup>8</sup> Holle' explained that the FY2013 figure includes \$2 million for new research which was not included in the FY2012 budget and the FY2013 figure also includes funding for law enforcement and other administrative costs.

### **FY2013 Wild Horse & Burro Performance Measures**

**Percentage of HMAs at AML**

**Percentage of HMAs gathered where population growth suppression techniques were applied.**

<sup>7</sup> FY2012 appropriation of \$74,888,000 and FY2011 carryover funding of \$1,146,000.

<sup>8</sup> FY2013 - \$11.3 million as compared to \$5.4 million in FY2012.

A question was asked relating to FY2013 wild horse and burro funding for range improvement projects. In FY2012, \$230,000 was expended for shrub/grass projects and water developments; however, no funding has been identified in FY2013. In response, it was explained that there have been range improvement projects accomplished in FY2013; however, funding for those projects has been provided by other resource programs and special initiatives such as the Director's Challenge. A concern was raised as to the lack of funding within the wild horse and burro program identified for the maintenance of existing range improvement projects. BLM responded that range improvement maintenance continues to be completed but is funded through other resource programs. During the discussion, it was suggested that maintenance of range improvement projects is one area where volunteers have and could continue to assist BLM.

Over the past several years, the need for and costs of hauling water to animals has steadily increased. However, based on the information presented, it is unclear where such costs are identified in the budget program elements. In response, BLM indicated that there is not a program element specifically identified for tracking such costs and it is unclear as to where the States' are charging those costs.



A question was raised concerning the program elements<sup>9</sup> depicted in the pie chart slide with very low FY2012 expenditure percentages appearing to be the proactive activities associated with improving the health of the range and animal welfare. Were the low percentages reflective of the low cost for completing those activities or the priority given to those activities in light of the priority for holding animals in short- and long-term facilities, which places the agency in a

reactive position? In response, in FY2012, 59 percent of the program's budget was spent for holding animals in short- and long-term facilities, which directly impacts the amount of funding available for other activities. A second question was raised as to how to ensure that proactive activities receive a higher percentage of the FY2013 budget allocation. In response, there are points during the agency's budget process (such as the mid-year review)<sup>10</sup> where allocations for specific activities can be redirected. However, it is important to recognize that with the uncertainty of receiving the funding level in the FY2013 President's budget request, the flexibility to readjust funding will be severely limited. A suggestion was made that the BLM- and Board-formed working groups could be used to identify and explore alternative methods (such as volunteerism) to minimize the costs of certain activities. BLM committed to challenging itself to explore different alternatives for changing the herd population dynamics on the range, which is where change needs to occur. It is also important to recognize that treating animals with population growth suppression applications such as PZP is expensive, but not nearly as expensive as the alternative of holding animals in long-term facilities for the remainder of their life. The key is to utilize population growth suppression agents which have longer effective periods and other methods which reduce the number of animals born on the public rangelands.

A question was raised as to which program element(s) were used to fund the \$410,000 spent in FY2012 for vaccines. The assumption was made that it was included in the KF (Animals Gathered for Fertility

<sup>9</sup> Construction/Maintain Shrubs & Grass Projects (0%); Population Growth Suppression Efforts (1%); Plan for Herd Management (0%).

<sup>10</sup> Typically occurs in March of each year.

Control) and KG (Animals Treated to Reduce the Population) program elements. In response, the \$410,000 was funded in Program Element PC (Program Support/Overhead).

A question was asked as to the agency's ability to carryover monies from one fiscal year to the next as referenced in the carryover of \$1.1 million from FY2011 to FY2012. In response, it was stressed that the intent is to spend carryover monies from a previous year as soon as possible in the subsequent fiscal year. At the beginning of FY2013, there is approximately \$1 million of FY2012 carryover funding, which was identified after preparing the information displayed in the Board's notebook.

A final question was asked concerning reporting of the number of HMAs that are within AML. In response, one of the annual reporting requirements is the percentage of HMAs that are at AML, which, in FY2012, was 40% (72 HMAs).<sup>11</sup> The second annual reporting requirement is the percentage of HMAs gathered where population growth suppression techniques were applied, which was 76% (26 out of 34 HMAs gathered) in FY2012.

#### **FY2013 Fall/Winter Gather/Treat/Remove Plan**

In developing the FY2013 gather plan, BLM not only involved national and state program specialists but management from all levels of the organization to ensure a more corporate approach was taken.

The approach taken in developing the FY2103 fall/winter gather/treatment/removal plan emphasized the removal of animals from the highest priority areas and increasing the use of PZP treatments. Since May 2012, BLM field offices have been monitoring 65 HMAs and areas where horses are outside of HMAs which have or are experiencing issues such as wildfire, limited forage in terms of quantity and quality, or diminishing water sources. Due to these issues, animals have been moving to areas outside of HMAs and/or into winter ranges much earlier than expected. Animal body conditions are beginning or have begun to decline in some areas, which lead to concerns of the animal's ability to survive the pending winter. Given the state (current and possible future) of the rangelands and the number of emergency gather requests being received, it was prudent not to address the FY2013 summer gather schedule at this time.

Since July 2012, wildfires have burned 650,000 acres within 10 HMAs in Oregon, Utah, Nevada, and California, which have, in some cases, significantly affected wild horse summer and winter ranges resulting in the emergency removal of animals. The most serious conditions have been experienced in the Paisley HMA (Oregon) and the Jackson Mountains HMA (Nevada) where emergency removal efforts were necessary.<sup>12</sup> Other areas<sup>13</sup> in Nevada continue to be closely monitored.

After release of the FY2013 fall/winter gather schedule, requests to remove an additional 2,000 animals due to declining resource and animal body conditions have been received. With these requests, the gather schedule provided under Tab 5 of the Board's notebook will need to be reprioritized. BLM's priority will be to conduct gathers where the animals are most at risk.

During the question portion of the presentation, a question was asked as to the lack of a burro gather in Arizona in FY2013. In response, an overview of the process used to develop the gather schedule was

<sup>11</sup> 72 HMAs out of 179 HMAs were reported to be at or below AML.

<sup>12</sup> Bait trapping in the Paisley HMA and a helicopter effort in the Jackson Mountains HMA.

<sup>13</sup> Owyhee and Little Owyhee HMAs.

provided. It was also explained that, with limited funding available, the need to utilize a “corporate” approach to identify the highest gather priorities was emphasized.

### Off the Range Space

Zach Reichold, Senior Wild Horse and Burro Specialist from the Washington Office, provided an overview of the agency’s short- and long-term holding facilities, which include two 800-animal long-term holding pasture facilities recently acquired by BLM. In addition, the agency has been successful in establishing and delivering animals to a 300-animal eco-sanctuary near Centennial, Wyoming. BLM continues to work with the partner to develop the public tour component of the eco-sanctuary operation.

As of September 28, 2012, there was sufficient space in long- and short-term holding facilities for approximately 700 and 3,200 animals, respectively.

Tab 6 of the Board’s notebook contains a summary of the number of animals in short- and long-term holding (see table). In summary, there are 46,500 horses and 1,361 burros in short- and long-term holding facilities, respectively, which represent 92% of the agency’s overall capacity.

Wild Horses & Burros in Holding Facilities (September 28, 2012)					
Facilities		Animals			
Type	Capacity (# of Animals)	Horses	Burros	Total	
				Animals	% of Capacity
Short-Term	17,510	12,877	1,361	14,238	81%
Long-Term*	34,326	33,623	0	33,623	98%
Total	51,836	46,500	1,361	47,861	92%

\* Long-Term facilities do not include eco-sanctuaries.

In looking toward the future, BLM will be forming a Technical Proposal Evaluation Committee (TPEC) to evaluate eco-sanctuary proposals which have just been received. This review process is expected to require approximately six months. In addition, a solicitation for long-term holding pastures closed on October 1, 2012, which will be evaluated using the same type of process described for the eco-sanctuary solicitation. Also, BLM is continuing its analysis through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of the potential effects associated with a proposal from a non-profit organization for an eco-sanctuary in northeastern Nevada. During the question portion of the presentation, a question was asked concerning the projected population increase expected after removing 3,500 animals as outlined in the FY2013 fall/winter gather schedule. Previously, then-Director Abbey indicated that to maintain population levels at that time, approximately 7,600 animals must be removed annually. In response, based on a 20 percent per year population increase projection, removing 3,500 animals would result in a population increase of approximately 4,000 animals annually. It was noted that the 3,500 animals projected to be removed addressed only the fall/winter gathers and did not include FY2013 summer gathers.

A second question was asked concerning the number of applications received from the eco-sanctuary and long-term holding pasture solicitations. In response to the March 15, 2011, eco-sanctuary solicitation, there were 19 applications received. Of the 19 applications, 5 were determined to be viable for additional evaluation. Of the five viable applications, one was eventually awarded. Until the procurement process has been completed for the long-term holding pasture solicitation, BLM is prohibited from releasing the number of applications received.

### Long-Term Holding Video

Ultimately, BLM’s goal is to have proper numbers of healthy animals on healthy rangelands. However, until that is possible, placement of animals in long-term holding pasture facilities is necessary. A 2:08

minute video of the June 2012, long-term holding pasture facility tour was shown to provide the Board and members of the audience with a perspective of the animal's welfare and how those animals are cared for on long-term pasture facilities.

### Research Advisory Team



Dr. Jeff Manning, BLM's Research Advisory Team Leader, provided an overview of the agency's research efforts. BLM's *Strategic Research Plan for Wild Horse and Burro Management*, developed in 2003 and updated in 2005, addresses five research issues – fertility control, population estimation, genetics, health and handling, and habitat assessment.

#### Fertility Control

A major research emphasis has been placed on fertility control, which is a management goal for wild horses and a number of wildlife programs around the world. The research being conducted or under consideration includes several fertility control approaches and agents, including immunocontraception and altering herd composition (sex ratios) as a means to suppress population growth.

The first is the SpayVac® Field Study led by the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) in the North Lander Complex in Wyoming. This study is expected to be initiated in November 2012, and be completed by 2018. This study, which is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) in reducing the annual foaling rates and animal behavior, is proposed to involve 90 mares of which 60 would be injected with SpayVac®, a PZP agent. Thirty mares will serve as the control group.

The second study is a joint BLM/USGS effort to adjust the population sex ratio. A presentation on this study was given to the Board during their April 2012, meeting in Reno, Nevada. This approach involves essentially changing the composition of a herd by reducing the number of mares, and introducing geldings and non-reproductive stallions. Changing herd composition to reduce population growth has been in practice by wildlife managers for decades, and examples include Rocky Mountain elk and deer. Currently, this study is not being implemented but may be revisited depending upon interest, funding, and availability of suitable sites for testing.

The third study, a SpayVac® Pasture Trial, is led by the USGS at BLM's Pauls Valley Adoption Facility in Oklahoma. Similar to the North Lander Complex study, this study involves 90 mares of which 60 were injected with SpayVac® in March 2011. The animals were placed in three 30-acre pastures, where they are allowed to interact with stallions annually between May and October. To determine how the mares respond to SpayVac®, researchers measure annual pregnancy and foaling rates, PZP titers, and body condition of each mare. The study is proceeding as planned and blood samples will be drawn in December 2012, to test the second year's effect of the vaccine.

The University of Toledo, Ohio is conducting a 3 to 4-Year PZP Pen Trial at the Northern Nevada Corrections facility in Carson City, Nevada. This study is proceeding as planned, and involves 104 mares which are divided into two control and three PZP-treatment groups. One control group was untreated, while the second control group was a positive control treated with Zonastat-H. Treatments applied to the treatment groups included the level of time release (PZP-22 or PZP 3 to 4-year) and the pellet form (heat

extruded method or cold molded method). Treatments were applied in March 2012, with stallions introduced in the spring of each year. The study is currently in its second breeding season. To understand the effectiveness of the treatments, the researchers are measuring PZP antibody levels and pregnancy rates. The progress report for the second year of the trial was received the week of October 22, 2012, and is being reviewed.

The PZP Field Study, being conducted by the HSUS, was initiated in 2008 in the Sand Wash Basin (Colorado) and Cedar Mountain (Utah) HMAs. Although similar to the original study design, field implementation has deviated somewhat (summarized in the table below), which is attributed to some of the challenges associated with conducting field studies on free-ranging wild horses.

HMA	Date – Season	# of Mares	Treatment	Method
Cedar Mt	2008 – Dec	70	PZP-22 pellets	Hand inject
	2012 – Feb	143	PZP-22 pellets	Hand inject
Sand Wash	2008 – Oct	62	PZP-22 pellets	Hand inject
	2010 Summer / fall	51	Zonastat-H with or without PZP pellets	Remote dart

It is important to note that remote darting within the Cedar Mountain HMA was not feasible due to the inability of researchers to approach the animals. To evaluate how mares respond to these treatments, the researchers continue to monitor annual foaling rates, measure population size, attempt to determine population growth, and record animal body condition, general health, and group affiliation.

The Annenberg Foundation will continue to provide funding through 2012, which allows the HSUS to continue its monitoring efforts. The results of the study to date were presented at the Annenberg Foundation’s Wild Horse Symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming in August 2012.

Results indicate PZP-22 is less effective than reported for the Clan Alpine, Nevada. A report from the principle investigator in February 2012 postulates that “this failure was due both to the low proportion of Cedar Mountain mares gathered and treated in 2008 and the relatively low vaccine efficacy...”

#### Population Estimation

There are a series of steps involved in population estimating – survey design, implementation training, data collection, data organization, and model development. This approach is widely accepted and endorsed by the scientific community and embraced by BLM.

USGS has developed two population estimating techniques for BLM's wild horse and burro program – photographic mark-resight and simultaneous double-count. Both techniques are based on sampling and statistical theory, and are derived from methods utilized on numerous species worldwide.

Photographic mark-resight is more appropriately used in relatively small HMAs with rugged terrain, a diversity of vegetation, and a relatively small number of animals. In contrast, the simultaneous double-count method is more appropriate for larger HMAs with broader, smoother terrain, less vegetation diversity, and larger horse populations.

In September 2012, the USGS conducted training on the two methods for an additional eight BLM employees. To date, both methods have been implemented in selected HMAs in Utah, Nevada, and Oregon.

Implementation of the population estimation process across BLM's 179 HMAs is a daunting task which will require time.

### Genetics

Dr. Gus Cothrun, from Texas A&M University, continues to evaluate genetic diversity of wild horses for BLM. In September 2012, he gave a presentation at the International Conference on Wild Equids in Austria. In general terms, his research findings indicate that there is no apparent pattern of change in the genetic variation in horses and that the level of variability within herds sometimes increases due to a variety of reasons.

### Future Research

There is a continuing need for research in the areas identified in BLM's strategic research plan as well as for other wild horse and burro issues. The National Academy of Sciences is expected to provide BLM with information in June 2013, identifying additional research needs.

In summary, landscape-scale changes due to climate change and increased demands for water resources across the west offer researchers a daunting challenge to understand impacts on plant and animal populations. Dr. Manning recommended the wild horse and burro program arms itself with the best biological and scientific information available including high quality research (field research, observational studies, and adaptive management strategies) from across disciplines that are grounded in the principles of experimental design. BLM will also need to engage other fields of biology such as landscape genetics, systems modeling, space use and resource selection estimation, remote sensing, and GPS collar technology to bring in new approaches and technologies.



“Population estimation is a quantitative approach, mathematical, and exciting.”

Dr. Jeff Manning



## **BLM-Formed Working Groups Updates**

### **Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program**

The vision of the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program (CAWP) is to develop SOPs for each phase of the wild horse and burro program including on-the-ground management, gather and capture operations,

short- and long-term holding facilities, adoptions, and transportation of animals. In addition to developing the SOPs, the CAWP will include training and audit components.

Detailed SOPs have been developed for gather operations, which were shared with the Board's working group. These SOPs can't be implemented in their entirety at this time because they exceed the specifications and scope of the existing gather contracts. Full implementation will require a new request for proposal and rebidding. In the near future, the Washington Office will issue guidance to the Contracting Officer's Authorized Representatives, who are responsible for representing the government during gather operations on-the-ground, and continue working to negotiate some modifications to the existing contracts. In addition, BLM is working with Dr. Carolyn Stull, an Animal Welfare expert at the University of California, Davis, to correlate an assessment tool with the gather operation SOPs. Dr. Stull will also be working in consultation with other Animal Welfare experts to refine the gather operation SOPs.

After January 1, 2013, the Washington Office anticipates initiating efforts to develop SOPs for short-term holding and other aspects of the program.

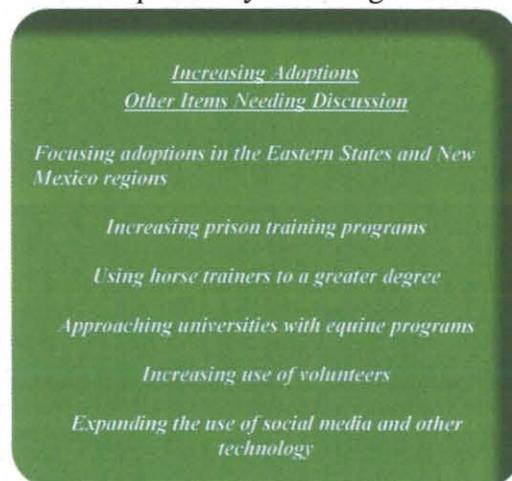
The CAWP will be dynamic and likely change over time based on the analysis of audit results. Data from audits may lead to changes in operational procedures, SOPs, and/or required training to better ensure humane handling and care of wild horses and burros. The CAWP program in ten years will likely be different than the program being developed today.

During the question portion of the presentation, a question was raised as to how realistic is it to expect the existing gather contracts to be modified to implement the SOPs. BLM responded by indicating that it is optimistic that the contracts will be modified. To date, contractors have been receptive to implementing parts of the SOPs even though the SOPs are not required in the contracts as currently written. The Board member who asked the question was pleased that changes are being phased in and that action is being taken now. The Board member also expressed his appreciation for BLM's willingness to utilize outside expertise, such as Dr. Stull, which adds credibility to the effort.

### **Increasing Adoptions**

During development of the Secretary's Initiative, placing excess animals in private care was explored. The BLM-formed working group<sup>14</sup> is an extension of that effort. Although the team did not present specific recommendations to the Advisory Board at this meeting, they have identified a number of topics (see inset) for further discussion.

During the question portion of the presentation, a suggestion was made to consider a "pre-adoption assessment tool" to ensure an animal is right for adoption. Not all animals are suitable for adoption. In



<sup>14</sup> Sally Spencer representing BLM, Julie Gleason and June Sewing who serve as external experts.

response, it was mentioned that a similar effort is used in the prison training system to ensure animals are suitable for gentling.

### **Eco-Sanctuaries**

The eco-sanctuary team<sup>15</sup> has identified several focus areas to explore for increasing public involvement in the eco-sanctuary program. One focus area is development of different requirements for eco-sanctuaries in the East where the amount of land owned by an individual is relatively small as compared to areas in the West.

A second focus area is to expand the involvement of local volunteer organizations in assisting BLM in completing compliance inspections of eco-sanctuaries, especially in the eastern United States where there is a limited BLM presence.

A third focus area is to revise the marketing strategy to more effectively transmit BLM's message concerning the importance of the wild horse and burro program, increasing the American public's understanding of the program, and reducing or deferring the costs associated with operating the program.

A fourth focus area is the identification of groups or organizations that can be contacted to assist in promoting eco-sanctuaries.

During the question portion of the presentation, a lengthy discussion took place concerning the benefit(s) received by establishing public/private eco-sanctuaries in areas with existing HMAs. Several different points were raised during the discussion including (1) a concern that eco-sanctuaries established in areas with existing wild horse populations could possibly replace the natural population dynamic with an artificial dynamic; (2) difficulty in understanding the benefit(s) of establishing a public/private eco-sanctuary when the animal population of the area (HMA and the eco-sanctuary) is not allowed to exceed the AML of the HMA; (3) the concept of public/private eco-sanctuaries is in its infancy and the benefits to be received are not yet clearly understood; (4) a major goal of establishing eco-sanctuaries should be to provide habitat for animals which have been removed from an area to protect rangeland health; and (5) proposals for public/private eco-sanctuaries should be carefully reviewed by BLM through its land use planning process.

In summary, as a result of the discussion, philosophical differences of opinion remain as to the value of public/private eco-sanctuaries, which are just beginning to be addressed. As time progresses, new and different public/private eco-sanctuary proposals will continue to surface, adding complexity to the evaluation of the program.

### **National Wild Horse & Burro Gather Guidance**

The BLM is committed to developing consistent national guidance which allows flexibility for the agency's State and Field Offices to adjust to local conditions. Currently, national guidance is being developed for three specific areas associated with gathers – use of the Incident Command System, public and media access, and internal reporting procedures. Utilizing input from a team involving over 50 people including state and field Wild Horse and Burro Specialists, BLM field management, BLM's

---

<sup>15</sup> Zach Reichold representing BLM, Julie Gleason, Callie Hendrickson, and Tim Harvey who serve as external experts.

Washington Office Division of Public Affairs, and Gary Zakotnik who served as an external expert, the Wild Horse and Burro Division has submitted the guidance to BLM's senior management for approval.

### **Public Comment Period**

A public comment period was conducted from 3:30 PM to 4:30 PM allowing 21 speakers opportunity to address the Board. Each speaker was asked to limit their presentation to three minutes to ensure all speakers had opportunity within the timeframe identified for public comment. Speakers were encouraged to submit their comments in a written format; therefore, no minutes were recorded during this portion of the meeting.

Following conclusion of the public meeting, Chair Spratling asked BLM if there were any clarifying statements they would like to make based on the public comments. Division Chief Guilfoyle indicated that her office will utilize the new "From the Public" web site to respond to questions that were asked or address facts may have been misrepresented during the public's comments.

After allowing each Board member opportunity to provide feedback concerning the day's meeting, Dr. Spratling adjourned the meeting at 4:52 PM.

### **Tuesday, October 30, 2012**

Kathie Libby opened the second day of the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board meeting at 8:05 AM by announcing the information provided in the Board's notebook had been posted on BLM's website. The power points shown during yesterday's presentations will also be available on BLM's website within the next week.

### **Advisory Board-Formed Working Groups Updates**

Dr. Boyd Spratling opened the discussion by explaining the two types of working groups – BLM-formed and Advisory Board-formed working groups. Yesterday, the Board heard from the BLM-formed working groups. Discussions today will focus on efforts of three Advisory Board-formed working groups – eco-tourism, herd area repopulation, and population growth suppression.

### **Population Growth Suppression**

Members of this working group are Dr. Boyd Spratling, Tim Harvey, Jim Stephenson, and Dean Bolstad (BLM's representative). Given the current number of horses being held in short-term holding facilities and the cost of holding animals in long-term facilities, which combined consume 59 percent of BLM's FY2012 wild horse and burro budget, the working group focused on former Director Abbey's recommendation to pursue measures which reduce the herd's population size expansion as opposed to more frequent gathering of animals.

The working group reviewed population growth suppression products currently available and/or being tested including immunocontraception (PZP, PZP-22), SpayVac<sup>®</sup>, and GonaCon. Issues or challenges with these various products include the duration of effectiveness, not being able to inject a booster in a timely manner, the length of time needed to test and obtain approval to use some products on a wide spread basis, and the costs associated with the products and their implementation.

An alternative approach to addressing the challenge of reducing the population growth is the spaying of mares (ovariectomy), which is considered, by the working group, to be viable, readily available, and less expensive. Dr. Spratling explained that spaying of a mare is a relatively simple procedure that removes the animal's ovaries thus preventing the mare from producing an egg for fertilization. In its deliberations, the working group developed a supporting document (Attachment 1) that would accompany the Board's recommendation (should one be made) to the BLM. It was stressed that spaying of mares (if approved) should supplement, not replace, the existing tools available to BLM for managing population growth. Different situations including the time of year, dynamics of the individual herd or HMA, etc., should dictate the appropriate tool to use.

In developing its recommendation, the working group recognized the critical on-the-ground issues, the agency's budget crisis, the implications of a lack of an injectable product with an effective duration, and the level of public controversy surrounding the spaying of wild horse mares but saw no better available opportunity.

In its deliberations, the entire Board recognized that something needs to be done to address the on-the-ground and fiscal issues. If spaying of mares becomes one of the tools available to BLM in its management of the wild horse populations and there is a corresponding reduction of costs spent for the holding of animals in short- and long-term facilities, Board members expressed a desire to have more funding focused on additional research, rangeland improvement efforts, etc.

One Board member expressed support for spaying of mares as long as the use of helicopters for gather operations was continued. Bait and/or water trapping is appropriate in certain situations and locations; however, it is not as effective as using helicopters in other situations and locations.

### **Ecotourism**

Members of this working group were Callie Hendrickson, Julie Gleason, and Tim Harvey. In its deliberations, the working group interacted with the BLM-formed eco-sanctuary working group; however, today's report only addressed ecotourism. Issues important to this working group included land health, animal health, financial benefit, and balanced education.

If existing HMAs are utilized for ecotourism opportunities, it will be important to identify HMAs which provide the best public viewing opportunities. Another consideration is the proximity of local groups engaged in the management of the HMA. Such groups typically know the area, understand the animals, and have a positive relationship with BLM's local office. Such groups should be utilized in developing protocols for observing animals, identifying other HMAs for ecotourism opportunities and serving as a liaison with local community tourism agencies and organizations.

Other suggestions or ideas identified by the working group included:

- Developing guidelines for identifying suitable partners;
- Developing an ecotourism education component that addresses rangeland health, multiple use management, history of the herd, wild horse and burro program information (population, program costs, fact sheets), appropriate actions when observing animals, children involvement, etc.;
- An annual review of compliance and established procedures; and,

### **Board Issues or Statements**

It is critical to keep animal numbers (livestock, wildlife, and wild horses) in balance with the carrying capacity of the rangeland.

If areas received a cold and snowy winter, as wished by many, animals in marginal or poor body condition may not survive.

Livestock producers and State wildlife agencies have more flexibility when addressing poor rangeland conditions as compared to BLM with the wild horse population.

In emergency conditions, hauling of water is appropriate; however, when it is necessary for an extended period of time, it should be a “red flag” that current management is not appropriate to sustaining proper rangeland condition.

It is critical that BLM meets its commitment to achieve AML in HMAs that contain critical sage grouse habitat. Failure to meet this commitment would send the wrong message to the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service as it makes its threatened/endangered listing determination.

The Board would like better access to the information distributed by BLM to the public (news releases, brochures, fact sheets, etc.).

- If the partnership results in a financial gain to the organization, it should be permitted through BLM’s Special Recreation Use process or a similar type of authorization.

### **Herd Area Repopulation**

The working group, consisting of Tim Harvey, June Sewing, and Paul Durbin, recognized that repopulating HAs, where wild horses had been removed (zeroed out) at some point in the past, would be a contentious issue. The working group did not have a specific proposal for presentation to the Board at this meeting but will continue discussions concerning an approach of establishing an eco-sanctuary within a recognized HA.

In its discussion, different thoughts offered by Board members included the need to establish rules governing the placement of animals in HAs (including not allowing the AML for the area (once established) to be exceeded and ensuring animals are not placed in sensitive areas (sage grouse habitat)); establishing a steering committee which should include members of the public;<sup>16</sup> establishing non-reproducing herds; and when identifying appropriate HAs, consider why the HMA originally was zeroed out.

The working group was not prepared to offer a recommendation to the Board at this meeting but will continue its discussions prior to the next Board meeting.

### **Board Member’s Concerns and Issues**

Prior to the meeting, the Board asked for an

opportunity to express concerns or identify issues which they have been made aware of, or observed personally.

A video was shown which documented animal welfare and rangeland (lack of adequate water and feed) issues in northeastern Nevada observed by four Board members in July 2012. The video displayed the challenges faced by local BLM offices and, more importantly, the challenges faced by animals on the ground. Issues included declining animal body condition, areas immediately surrounding water sources devoid of vegetation, animals travelling long distances to obtain sufficient feed and water, and differences in vegetation composition and density inside and outside of exclosures due to overgrazing. The primary

<sup>16</sup> The Board recognized the potential issues with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

intent of showing the video was to stress that in areas where range health adversely affects the animal's health, it is necessary to remove animals for their protection as well as the protection of the rangeland.

There were several questions raised regarding presentations made at the Board's April 2012, meeting. One addressed the appropriate mechanism for obtaining the status of projects approved under the Director's Challenge initiative. In response, the Washington Office is preparing a report on the status and accomplishments of the approved projects. Once completed, the report will be available on the BLM's web site.

A second question related to the status of issuing the National bait-trapping contract. The contract was awarded to six local contractors during the summer of 2012.

A third question addressed the status of achieving AML on HMAs which contain critical sage grouse habitat. BLM was not able to provide an immediate response and committed to providing a response at a later date.

In addition to the questions identified above, other issues and statements were made, which are summarized in the inset above.

### **Board Recommendations**

After considerable discussion, the Board prepared the following recommendations to the BLM.

Recommendation 1: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends the formation of a Board-formed financial working group, and that Callie Hendrickson and Paul Durbin serve as members. The purpose of the working group would be to understand how BLM's budget works and help Board members better understand where costs are accounted.

Recommendation 2: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that BLM add ovariectomy (refer to Attachment 1) as one additional tool for population growth suppression. The population growth suppression working group would continue to work with BLM to advance implementation, setting protocols, priorities and ensuring flexibility in implementation.

Recommendation 3: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that eco-sanctuaries should not be considered on public HMA lands where horses currently exist.

Recommendation 4: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends the formation of a Board-formed working group to consider public comment, and that Paul Durbin, June Sewing, and Tim Harvey serve as members.

Recommendation 5: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends the formation of a Board-formed working group/liaison with BLM to nurture Director's Challenge-type efforts that support volunteer resources, and that Paul Durbin, Julie Gleason, and June Sewing serve as members.

### **Board Recommendation Discussions Which Were Dropped From Further Consideration**

Sage Grouse/HMA Overlap Areas

A proposed recommendation was suggested to ensure the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro and Sage Grouse initiatives were working in concert to place a high priority on the attainment of the established AMLs within HMAs containing critical sage grouse habitat. After considerable discussion, the decision was made not to forward the recommendation to the BLM for consideration.

### **Next Board Meeting**

The next Board meeting was tentatively scheduled for either January 21, 2013, or April 22, 2013, in a mid-West location. Suggested locations were Kansas City, MO (or Kansas) or Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

### **Closing Remarks**

In her closing remarks, Division Chief Guilfoyle thanked the BLM employees who played an active role in preparing for and contributing to this meeting. In addition, she extended her appreciation of Kathie Libby's efforts as the meeting's facilitator.

Chief Guilfoyle expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to clarify the Board's recommendations, which ensures BLM clearly understands the Board's recommendation. This opportunity has not been afforded in the past.

During yesterday's BLM Leadership Remarks, Assistant Director Roberson made reference to accusations regarding the practices of a specific buyer of wild horses and BLM's subsequent and ongoing investigation. Chief Guilfoyle directed the Board and members of the public to the "From the Public" link on BLM's national web site for an updated summary of that situation.

Chief Guilfoyle expressed her appreciation for the thoughtfulness of the Board's discussions and, in particular, the sage grouse discussion associated with developing recommendations which aired the complexity and challenges of that issue. The Board continues to serve as a model of how people with different opinions, perspectives, and backgrounds can work together.

Chief Guilfoyle made reference to comments made by the public concerning the Board's "multiple use" orientation and the Board being "skewed" toward the BLM's positions. She believes BLM's multiple use mandate shapes the "multiple use" orientation of the Board and that the Board appropriately represents the diversity of the American people who use the public lands.

In response to another public comment referencing a "one size fits all" approach used by BLM in managing wild horses and burros on public lands, Chief Guilfoyle emphasized her role as a "change agent" within the program, focused on ensuring BLM uses all available tools in managing the Nation's wild horse and burro populations and their habitats. She also emphasized there is always room for improvement and that BLM is committed to finding healthy, humane homes for these animals, humane animal handling, and, most importantly, healthy animals on healthy rangelands.

She also greatly appreciated the video shown by Board members of their visit to HMAs in northeastern Nevada. BLM may have video to show at future meetings. A question was asked if BLM's footage could be made available on the Web. In response, the footage is in a raw format and it was unclear if it could be made available but a commitment was made to explore the suggestion.

Chief Guilfoyle mentioned the “Impact of the Horse” event that she will be attending on Friday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> and Saturday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Wasatch County Events Center in Heber City, Utah. One interesting event, sponsored by the local BLM office, is a competition between trained domestic and trained wild mustangs. She encouraged everyone to attend this event if they are in the local area.

Deputy Division Chief Dean Bolstad also expressed his thanks to the Board for their efforts indicating that it was clear that they understand the agency’s challenges in managing the program, they’re engaged with the public and working, often at their own expense, to understand and address the issues.

Board member, June Sewing, wished to thank the Utah BLM employees who were involved with this meeting as well as for all the work that they do for the wild horse and burro program.

### **Meeting Adjournment**

The meeting was formally adjourned at 12:14 PM.

## Acronyms

The following acronyms were used during the meeting and listed in alphabetical order.

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
AML.....	Appropriate Management Level
BLM.....	Bureau of Land Management
CAWP.....	Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program
ES&R.....	Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation
FY.....	Fiscal Year
HA.....	Herd Area
HMA.....	Herd Management Area
HSUS.....	Humane Society of the United States
PZP.....	Porcine Zona Pellucida
SOP.....	Standard Operating Procedure
TPEC.....	Technical Proposal Evaluation Committee
USFS.....	USDA, United State Forest Service
USGS.....	U. S. Geological Survey
WH&B.....	Wild Horse and Burro

## Attachments

### Attachment 1 – Population Growth Suppression Alternative

## Population Growth Suppression Alternative

Sept 10, 2012

## BLM Advisory Board Recommendation on Population Growth Suppression

**The Crisis:** The numbers of horses in holding has ballooned to the point it consumed 59% of the FY 2012 WHB budget and threatens the viability of the health and welfare of the horses and the entire program. This is economically unsustainable. The GAO Study highlighted the need for changes to reduce the number of horses in holding. An alternative to removing horses from the range is to reduce the population growth potential therefore stabilizing populations on the range. There is an immediate need for additional and effective tools for population control.

**Background:** The BLM has been tasked with managing wild horses and burros on public lands in approximately 178 designated Herd Management Areas throughout 11 western states. The overwhelming challenge facing the BLM in regard to managing the wild horse and burro populations on public land has been and will continue to be population growth suppression of the herds. This population growth control is necessary due to the delicate ecological balance required on many of the rangelands where these wild horses and burros roam. This has been done in the past by gathering wild equids using mostly helicopter gathers and removing the horses and burros from the rangelands. This is expensive and very stressful on the animals. It attracts a lot of criticism by horse advocates and is a very expensive technique. Herein lays the challenge. How to keep populations at a healthy genetic and social level for the horses and burros as well as healthy levels for the

rangelands and still allow the horses and burros to live as natural and undisturbed as possible? This challenge is compounded by several factors.

- The high costs associated with techniques used currently. Specifically:
  - Helicopter gathers to address AML
  - Administration of PZP and PZP-22 fertility control drugs
  - Housing and care of excess horses in STH facilities (35%)
  - Housing and care of horses in LTH facilities (24%)
  - Cost studying future fertility control products
- Products now under consideration are expensive and not readily available for widespread use due to slow approval processes by the regulatory agencies charged with oversight.
  - Widespread use of SpayVac could be delayed years into the future.
- Currently used products such as PZP22 do not fulfill the needs of the WHB program. With expected duration of effectiveness to be about two years, re-administration and related gather of horses would be expensive and result in additional stress to the horses.
- The need to repeatedly and regularly gather horses to administer fertility control drugs.
- The recurrent costs (planning, re-gather, & administration of Immunocontraception) in monetary terms as well as the resulting stress on the animals.
- Bands of horses are intermingled.
- The costs of removal of animals from their home rangelands in excess of AML.
- The resulting costs of housing the animals removed from HMA's
- The costs of staff, maintenance and operations associated with the planning documents, management of the overpopulated HMAs, and the costs of operating various holding facilities for the excess horses and burros.
- The negative press associated with gather activity from horse and burro advocates and the legal fees resultant from law suits filed to stop gather activity by the BLM.

- Conflicting multiple use of public land i.e. wildlife, mining, ranching, recreation, hunting, watershed values with the needs of the horses and burros.

With the above considerations, a long lasting, immediately available alternative would be of value. Therefore, this proposal will focus on a surgical procedure as a proposed population growth suppression method and explore the possible benefits it offers as well as the potential drawbacks. The procedure is called an Ovariectomy

## **Ovariectomy of Mares as a method of Population Growth Suppression in Wild horse and Burro herds**

An Ovariectomy is a relatively simple surgical procedure that removes the ovaries from a mare. Ovaries produce eggs for reproduction. They also produce the hormonal process that causes estrous and the subsequent stallion breeding stimulation that results from the stimulus of the estrous cycle. The ovariectomy procedure has been performed for many years and there are accepted protocols for its utilization and implementation. It has a proven track record with several potential beneficial results toward achieving AML and could work to alleviate over population as well as herd structure disruption in HMAs.

The procedure is simple and is safe to perform in the field. Its costs are comparable to a single dose of PZP with NO need to handle the mare again in her natural lifetime. Ovariectomy is a one-time procedure and unlike fertility control drugs, does NOT have to be repeated. It eliminates the need to repeatedly gather horses simply to implement fertility control measures to individual animals.

One criticism of a permanent procedure such as ovariectomy is the potential loss of genetic viability within the genetic pool of any given population. Allowing a mare to have 2, 3 even more foals before the Ovariectomy procedure is administered would address that issue. The use of Ovariectomy would be restricted to use in older mares that have had an opportunity to contribute their genetic uniqueness to the herd structure. The optimum age to apply this measure would have to be determined and may vary from HMA to HMA or from band to band. Priority

candidates could be identified by a scientific panel which would include geneticists, surgeons and others.

## **Benefits of Ovariectomy versus growth suppression drugs**

An Ovariectomy would stop estrous so that mares would no longer be fertile. They would also no longer come into an estrous cycle and attract breeding activity. This will dramatically reduce injury potential to the mare as well as the resultant injury risks to stallions. Stallions are commonly injured by mares while breeding as well as in battles with other stallions over mares in estrous. A major drawback of PZP is that while it disrupts fertility in mares, it does not stop the estrous cycle. The resultant constant breeding cycle creates havoc within the herd band and subjects the mare to repeated breeding and a higher risk of injury.

Allowing the younger mares to have foals will help keep herd structure intact and NOT disrupt the bands. The older mares would remain in the herd as valuable members of the herd. Their acquired knowledge base would stay intact with the herd health benefiting from their continued presence and guidance in day to day activities as well as knowledge of resources such as forage and water.

The herds would all still have a reproducing element but the overall reproduction rate of the herd band would be much lower and the need to have gathers would be greatly reduced.

The removal of a mare from the breeding cycle would also allow for the older mares to live a less stressful life. As mares age, they are increasingly drawn down physically by the repeated process of gestation and nursing. Taking them out of that process as they age will allow for a better quality of life for these mares.

## **Gather Changes**

In selected HMA's, water and or bait traps should be utilized to gather horses and burros. This method is much less stressful on horses and the gather activity can be done by in house staff rather than outside contractors. This gives a better level of quality control as well as lower costs to BLM. There are other benefits as well.

- Horses could be trapped in their individual bands

- This would allow band structure to be noted by staff and decisions on band size adjustment more easily made.
- Staff becomes familiar with individual and band dynamics. Understanding these aspects will make for better staff decisions in regard to herd management practices.
- Bands would not be mingled with other bands. Avoiding the resultant confusion and disruption of band continuity that result with gather techniques currently used.
- Band and individual records could be developed. This info could prove invaluable over time to develop Herd Management Plans that will benefit the range, the herds and individual animals.
- Much lower costs for management of populations than current methods.
  - Eventual elimination or downsizing of most holding facilities. Excess horse removal numbers would be much easier to match to adoption demand requiring far fewer resources.
  - Freeze brand on mares with ovariectomy would eliminate the need to handle them in the field.
  - Herds would only have to be handled by a few individuals rather than a large crew during management operations.
  - As the younger mares age, an occasional hands on operation to perform ovariectomies or remove a few horses would be done by in house staff at the trap site rather than by mass gather and transport to remote facility. This would be a much less expensive process and less stressful and disruptive to the animals.
  - Individual animals selected for specific study in the wild could be easily microchipped at these in house gathers for positive ID in future field studies.
- Other potential benefits of this proposed program
  - Water and bait traps can be built with assistance of concerned citizens and advocate volunteer corps
  - This volunteer process would allow these folks to participate in making a positive change for the horses and burros. Enhancing the image of BLM

- Observation points at trap areas could also be utilized by these same people or university groups for individual or group study of horses, burros and band dynamics.
- Using volunteers who are concerned about the health and welfare of wild equids, the BLM can create an opportunity to embrace the groups and people who have traditionally been at odds with the BLM and their policies.

## Concerns

There will always be concerns and drawbacks to any procedure that interferes with natural selection. Just by interfering with the natural selection process will be objectionable to some. But the mandate of the BLM requires the agency to maintain healthy rangelands for all users of public lands. Horses, burros, wildlife, ranching, recreational use, mining, etc., all have to be considered.

With any surgical procedure there is always some risk. Whether it is from sedation or complication from the surgical procedure itself, surgery is never 100% safe. However, the ovariectomy procedure has a long standing history of being an effective and relatively safe procedure that absolutely controls fertility and could be a valuable tool in population growth suppression in the management of wild horse and burro herds on public land. It has long been used in the race horse industry to control erratic estrous issues in athlete horses. The overall costs could be considerably less than with the administration of PZP and PZP 22 in both monetary terms and dramatically reduce stress and disruption of herd bands.

In evaluating the ovariectomy procedure as an alternative in population growth suppression, the possibility and feasibility of developing a laparoscopic ovariectomy procedure is currently being explored. The potential laparoscopic procedure has been discussed with a veterinary university program. They have expressed an interest in exploring the development of this approach. The possible benefits of simplifying the ovariectomy procedure would be reduction in recovery time and complications, easy implementation in the field by contract veterinarians, improvement in safety for the animals and staff as well as lower monetary costs

associated with the field application of this procedure. No specific procedure or approach would be identified as the standard.

Another potential issue would be aftercare and observation of mares after the procedure has been performed. In a water or bait trap gather, the animals could be easily monitored for an amount of time required to ensure a better recovery rate before release back to the rangelands.

Some will have objections to the permanence of a surgical procedure. One advantage of a permanent procedure would be to eliminate or greatly reduce the frequency and/or the necessity to gather and handle the horses and burros that have received the surgery. At the very least, using water and bait trapping, animals that have had the procedure would be clearly marked by freeze brand so handling at the trap site could be kept to a minimum. Genetic viability would be addressed through scientific prioritization of age class to be spayed.

## Summary

The potential to reduce the reproductive rate of the herds while allowing every mare to contribute her unique genetic material to the herds is a dynamic element in this proposal. Using ovariectomy as a population suppressant is a departure from the protocols currently in place. We believe that this change of direction is a viable alternative to practices currently in use with great potential to benefit the horses, BLM and the rangelands.

- It reduces costs.
- It is a one-time procedure.
- It reduces stress on individual animals, bands and HMAs.
- It allows for the preservation of a natural band structure with little interference by humans.
- When interaction with humans is required, due to the lower frequency needed, it will be considerably less invasive and disruptive to the herd bands. If gather is by water or bait trapping, this would be markedly less!
- It will allow easier study access so the protocols can be tweaked to suit individual band and range needs.

- It embraces horse advocates and concerned citizens who wish to participate in a positive process of change for the horses and burros under BLM jurisdiction.
- It may reduce gather injuries and deaths that occur in current gather activities.

#### BLM Wild Horse and Advisory Board

##### Co-chairs

Boyd M. Spratling DVM

Julie Gleason