



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

High Desert District  
Rock Springs Field Office  
280 Highway 191 North  
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901



November 7, 2013

In Reply Refer To:  
4700  
(WYD03), (WYD04)

## **Scoping Statement Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek Herd Management Areas Population Management Action**

### **Description of Project**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rawlins and Rock Springs Field Offices propose to gather excess wild horses from the Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek Herd Management Areas (HMAs) (map attached). The two adjacent HMAs are managed as a complex due to wild horse movements. The Rock Springs Field Office also proposes the removal of wild horses that have strayed onto private lands. The project may utilize a fertility control vaccine and adjust sex ratios on both HMAs.

The most recent population surveys were conducted May 15-18, 2012. Approximately 433 wild horses were located in the Adobe Town HMA and approximately 572 wild horses were found within the Salt Wells Creek HMA. The wild horse population in the Salt Wells Creek HMA exceeds the appropriate management level (AML) of 251-365 wild horses. The wild horse population in the Adobe Town HMA does not currently exceed the AML of 610-800 wild horses.

Land owners have requested the removal of wild horses from private lands within the HMA boundaries. Wild horses that are on private lands or checkerboard lands within the Rock Springs Field Office portion of the HMA would be gathered and removed.

Wild horse populations are expected to increase by approximately 20 percent with the 2013 foaling season, bringing the population to an estimated 520 wild horses in the Adobe Town HMA and an estimated 686 wild horses in the Salt Wells Creek HMA by July 2013. Wild horse distribution flights would be conducted prior to the gather to assess the Adobe Town HMA and determine if gathering wild horses in this HMA is necessary to maintain the AML.

The gather operations would include helicopter drive trapping. This capture method utilizes a helicopter to herd wild horses into a temporary trap. Gathering is anticipated to start on or about July 15, 2013.

### **Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents**

The proposed action is in conformance with the Rawlins Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved on December 24, 2008; the Great Divide Resource Area Wild Horse Herd Management Area Evaluation, May 1994; and the Green River RMP approved on August 8, 1997. Management objectives for wild horses include providing for the protection of the rangeland resource, while maintaining a self-sustaining, healthy population of wild horses on the public land in those areas where horses existed at the time the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act was passed (1971). Wild horse HMAs were established and confirmed through the RMP planning process. The Green River RMP allowed for public participation in developing the AML for the Salt Wells Creek HMA. The AML for Adobe Town was established through the land use planning process in 1994 and is supported through the approved 2008 Rawlins RMP and the approved 1997 Green River RMP for the Rock Springs Field Office portion of the HMA.

The Adobe Town HMA is almost entirely public lands, including 6.1 percent Wyoming state land. Though privately controlled, these state lands are unfenced and are available for wild horse use year round. The Salt Wells Creek HMA contains mixed land ownership with public and unfenced private lands.

The proposed management action is also in conformance with the August 2003 Consent Decree upheld by the United States District Court of Wyoming. The Consent Decree is a settlement agreement between the State of Wyoming and the United States Department of the Interior, BLM. This agreement specifies that when information is gathered that indicates that an HMA within the State of Wyoming is determined to be over the established AML, the BLM has one year from discovery to remove wild horses to the low AML range.

### **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

To comply with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, the BLM is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed gather. The EA will serve several purposes. It will provide both the public and governmental agencies with information about the potential environmental consequences of the project and alternatives; identify measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the project and alternatives; and provide the responsible official with information upon which to make an informed decision regarding the project and whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or finding of no significant impact. The EA will be prepared by an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource specialists.

Scoping is an essential element of the NEPA process. Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to: identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the EA, identify environmental issues of concern related to the proposed project, determine the depth of analysis for issues addressed in the environmental document, and identify potential mitigation.

This scoping statement has been prepared to describe means by which the general public, governmental agencies, and other interested parties may participate in and contribute to the analysis process. Public input is important in establishing the scope of analysis for any NEPA document, and the BLM encourages public participation.

Known resource issues or potential conflicts include: recreational activities such as hunting, wildlife and wild horse viewing, special status plant species, special status animal species, wildlife, historic trails, oil and gas drilling, utility construction, livestock grazing and use of the fertility control vaccine.

### **Timing Requirements**

The public is encouraged to participate throughout the EA process. However, in order for your comments to be most useful, **scoping comments are due by December 7, 2012**. Please note that public comments submitted for this scoping review, including names, e-mail addresses, and street addresses of the respondents will be available for public review and disclosure at the address below during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Please submit your comments to:

Jay D'Ewart, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist  
BLM Rock Springs Field Office  
280 Highway 191 North  
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901  
Fax: (307) 352-0329

**Electronic comments must be sent to the following email address to be considered:**

**AdobeTown\_SaltWells\_HMA\_WY@blm.gov**  
(Please include “**ATSW Scoping Comment**” in the subject line.)

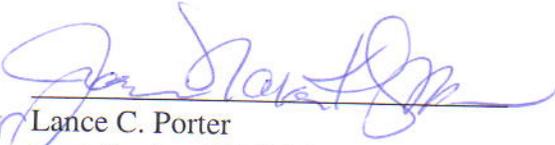
Public comments are most helpful if they are specific. The regulations (40 CFR 1503.3) state that comments on a proposed action “shall be as specific as possible and may address either the adequacy of the statement or the merits of the alternatives discussed or both.” The most valuable comments are those that cite specific actions or impacts in the document and offer informed analysis of what is presented.

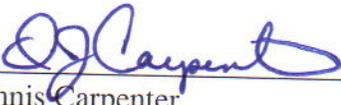
This scoping statement and all other future documents corresponding with this action will be posted on the BLM Wyoming website at:

**<http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/rfo/atw-gather.html>**

The website can be accessed by the general public. The EA will be posted to this site after comments from the public are incorporated. The EA is anticipated to be available in spring 2013. You may also obtain a paper copy of the EA by contacting either the Rock Springs or Rawlins Field Offices.

Sincerely,

*for*   
Lance C. Porter  
Rock Springs Field Manager

  
Dennis Carpenter  
Rawlins Field Manager

Enclosure: Map  
cc: Interested Public

# Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Areas

