

# Adobe Town/Salt Wells Creek Complex Fact Sheet

## KEY STATISTICS AND FACTS

The Adobe Town/Salt Wells Creek (ATSW) Complex encompasses 1,618,624 acres in the checkerboard pattern of mixed public, private, and state land in Carbon and Sweetwater counties in southwest Wyoming.

The BLM respects private land owner rights while managing wild horse populations. The ATSW Complex includes approximately 510,308 acres which are privately held. This gather would reduce landowner conflicts where the wild horses stray onto private lands.

The projected population for the ATSW Complex is approximately 1,447 wild horses based on May 2012 census flights, and adjusted for two years' foaling seasons.

The Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the ATSW Complex has an identified management range of between 861-1,165 wild horses.

Fertility control is an alternative being considered in the ATSW Wild Horse Gather Environmental Assessment (EA).

The BLM will use a contractor to remove sufficient animals to bring the population to the low end of the AML range.

Mustangs will be offered for adoption through the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Program, or placed in long-term holding pastures.

Interested members of the public and the news media will be afforded multiple opportunities to attend gather operations and to observe the animals prior to shipping to short-term holding.

The ATSW Complex contains 23 livestock grazing allotments with authorization to graze cattle and sheep each year. During the past five years, the average livestock use has been approximately 41 percent of the authorized use. The number of livestock authorized to graze varies year to year depending upon what the individual livestock operator applies for within their permits.

Wild horse AMLs were based on direct observation of range conditions completed by a multi-disciplinary team of rangeland management and wildlife experts. These populations are supported by the Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Approved Rawlins RMP which were developed with full public participation during the planning process.

The ATSW Complex supports wild horses, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, Greater Sage-grouse and numerous other wildlife species.

Not gathering the excess wild horses would result in an annual population increase of approximately 20 percent causing overpopulation and damage to the resources. It also would be non-compliant with the RMPs.



## **Consequences of Postponing/Not Removing Wild Horses**

Not removing excess wild horses would put the BLM at the risk of being non-compliant with the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, the 2003 Consent Decree with the State of Wyoming, the 2013 Consent Decree with private land owners, and applicable regulations and Bureau policy.

Removing the excess wild horses will help prevent deterioration of the range, achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship.

Leaving the excess wild horses in the ATSW Complex will strain the existing partnerships with other public land users.

## **No Action Not an Option**

Not gathering the excess wild horses would result in an annual population increase of approximately 20 percent causing increasing numbers of wild horses to move outside the ATSW Complex in search of food and water.

The No Action Alternative is not in conformance with the RMPs.

The No Action Alternative does not comply with the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, the 2003 Consent Decree with the State of Wyoming, the 2013 Consent Decree with private land owners, or with applicable regulations and Bureau policy.

## **Wild Horse Overpopulations Impact Wildlife and Plants**

There are a wide variety of wildlife species common to the ecosystem within the ATSW Complex, including pronghorn antelope, mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk. Other wildlife species common to the environment include moose, mountain lions, coyotes, red fox, bobcats, Wyoming ground squirrel, desert cotton-tailed rabbit, and black-tailed jackrabbits.

There is abundant habitat within the ATSW Complex for a variety of birds and raptors including: prairie falcon, American kestrel, red-tailed hawk, Swainson's hawk, northern harrier, golden eagle, horned lark, raven, magpie, common nighthawk, and great-horned owl.

BLM threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate animal and plant species potentially inhabiting the ATSW Complex include: Ute ladies'-tresses, black-footed ferret, Greater Sage-grouse, and mountain plover.

BLM sensitive species inhabiting the ATSW Complex include: Idaho pocket gopher, pygmy rabbit, swift fox, dwarf shrew, spotted bat, long-eared myotis, fringed myotis, Townsend's gig-eared bat, white-tailed prairie dog, Cedar Rim thistle, Ownbey's thistle, Gibbens' penstemon, ferruginous hawk, peregrine falcon, long-billed curlew, burrowing owl, sage thrasher, loggerhead shrike, brewer's sparrow, sage sparrow, baird's sparrow, yellow-billed cuckoo, bald eagle, Great Basin spadefoot toad, northern leopard frog, roundtail chub, bluehead sucker, flannelmouth sucker, and Colorado River cutthroat trout.

Because wild horses often repeatedly graze in the same area year-round, forage plants in the affected area receives little rest from grazing pressures. The result is a reduction in plant health, vigor, reproduction and loss of native forage species, which diminishes habitat quality.

## **Livestock Grazing Within the Project Area**

Livestock use is at approximately 59 percent below the level of permitted use. Livestock use is in compliance with the grazing systems outlined in the final multiple use decisions, agreements and term permit conditions providing for periodic rest and deferment of key range sites.

The proposed action is in conformance with the BLM Wyoming “Standards for Healthy Rangelands and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management” (1997). The proposed action will assist in maintaining the health of the public lands within the ATSW Complex.