



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Rawlins Field Office
P.O. Box 2407 (1300 North Third Street)
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301-2407

In Reply Refer To:
4700 (WYD03)

Scoping Statement
For Gathering of Wild Horses in the Red Desert Complex
(Antelope Hills, Crooks Mountain, Green Mountain, Stewart Creek and Lost Creek
Wild Horse Herd Management Areas HMAs)
Population Management Action

Dear Interested Party:

Description of Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Rawlins and Lander Field Offices, propose to gather approximately 235 wild horses in the Lost Creek Herd Management Area (HMA), approximately 185 wild horses in the Stewart Creek HMA, approximately 125 wild horses in the Antelope Hills HMA, approximately 87 wild horses in the Crooks Mountain HMA, and approximately 316 wild horses in the Green Mountain HMA (see enclosed map). These HMAs are referred to as the Red Desert Complex of HMAs. Census data for these HMAs were collected April 30 to May 18, 2009, and wild horse populations are exceeding the appropriate management level (AML) for each HMA. The AML range for the Lost Creek HMA is 60 – 82; the AML range for the Stewart Creek HMA is 125 – 175; the AML range for the Antelope Hills HMA is 60 – 82; the AML range for the Crooks Mountain HMA is 65 – 85; and the AML range for the Green Mountain HMA is 170 - 300.

The gather operations would include Helicopter Drive Trapping. This capture method utilizes a helicopter to herd wild horses into a temporary trap. Gathering is scheduled to start on or about October 1, 2009, and the project may utilize a fertility control vaccine.

Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents

The proposed action is in conformance with the Rawlins Resource Management Plan approved on December 24, 2008; the Great Divide Resource Area Wild Horse Herd Management Area Evaluation; Lander Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved on June 9, 1987; and the Lander Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP).

Wild Horse management objectives provide for the protection of the rangeland resource, while maintaining a viable, healthy population of wild horses on the public land in those areas where horses existed at the time the Wild Horse and Burro Act was passed. Gathering and removal of excess wild horses from the Red Desert Complex of HMAs are in conformance with the Rawlins and Lander RMPs. Wild horse numbers, agreed upon with private land owners and wild horse advocacy groups, were addressed in developing the Appropriate Management Levels. Wild horse HMAs were established or confirmed through the Rawlins and Lander RMP planning processes.

The proposed management action is in conformance with the August 2003 Consent Decree, upheld by the United States District Court of Wyoming. The Consent Decree is an out of court 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 range of AML.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

To comply with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, which implements the NEPA, the BLM is required to prepare an environmental analysis. The environmental document 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 all practicable means 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. The document will be prepared by an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) of BLM resource specialists.

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

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

This scoping statement has been prepared to describe means by which governmental agencies, the general public, 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.

Timing Requirements

The public is encouraged to participate throughout the environmental analysis process to help in identifying the level of analysis needed, alternatives to the proposed action, other issues or concerns that should be analyzed, mitigation opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process.

Comments are due by **July 10, 2009**. Please submit your comments to:

Melanie Gilbert, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
BLM, Rawlins Field Office
P.O. Box 2407
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301
(307) 328-4200
Fax: (307) 328-4224
E-mail: melanie_gilbert@blm.gov

or you can also contact:

Roy Packer, Rangeland Management Specialist
BLM, Lander Field Office
P.O. Box 589
Lander, Wyoming 82520
(307) 332-8400
Fax: (307) 332-8444
E-mail: roy_packer@blm.gov

Please include "Red Desert Complex Scoping Comments" in the subject line.

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

<http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/rfodocs/red-desert.html>

The web-site can be accessed by the general public. The environmental assessment will be posted to this site after comments from the public are incorporated into it. The estimated time of posting of the EA is August 1, 2009. You may also obtain a paper copy of these documents by contacting the Rawlins or Lander Field Office at the addresses or phone numbers listed above. Your response is important and will be considered in the environmental analysis process. If you do respond, we will keep you informed of decisions resulting from the analysis. 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 above addresses during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name, e-mail address, or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this plainly at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law.

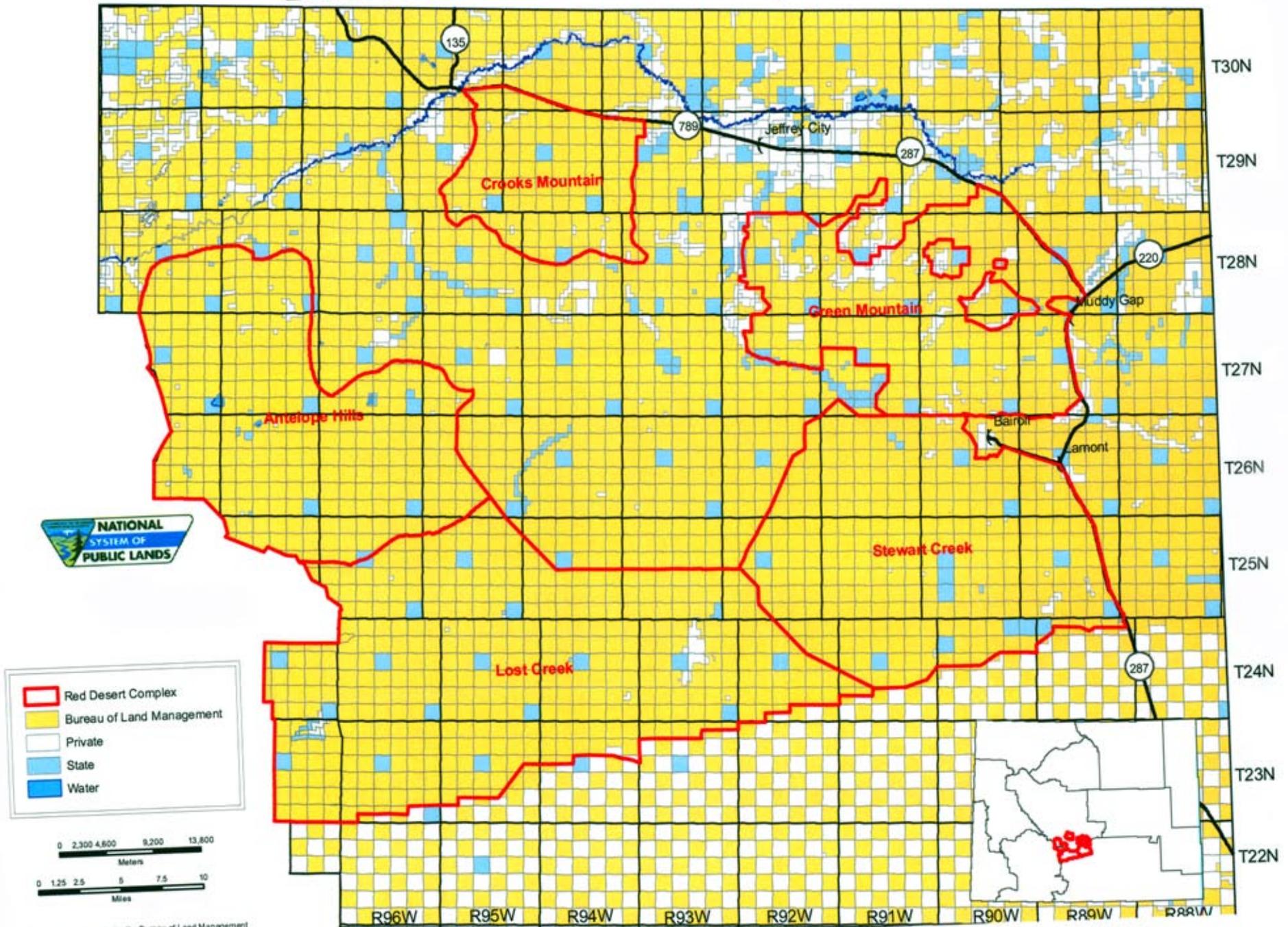
All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Sincerely,


Jim Cagney and Patrick Madigan
Field Managers

1 Enclosure:
1 - Map

Red Desert HMA Complex



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use.