

Original



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

High Desert District  
Rawlins Field Office  
1300 North Third Street  
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301



February 25, 2011

In Reply Refer To:  
4710 (WYD03) (WYD05)

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)  
Fertility Control Application and Removal of Horses Outside HMAs

Dear Interested Party:

Description of Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Rawlins and Lander Field Offices, propose to gather wild horses from the Red Desert Complex and surrounding area. The following is a list of the Herd Management Areas within the Red Desert Complex and the Appropriate Management Level (AML) range for each HMA: Lost Creek HMA 60-82, Stewart Creek HMA 125-175, Antelope Hills HMA 60-82, Crooks Mountain HMA 65-85, and Green Mountain HMA 170-300. The proposed operation would include gathering wild horses, treating all mares released with PZP-22 (Porcine Zona Pellucida) fertility control vaccine, and removing horses that have moved outside the HMAs. Mares will be treated with PZP-22 to slow population growth, maintain population size with the appropriate management level, and to extend the time period before another gather to remove excess wild horses. Population surveys conducted in August 2010, revealed a number of wild horses have moved outside the HMAs. The horses residing outside the HMAs would be gathered and removed from the range during this operation as well as the foals.

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 numbers that were 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.

This action is needed to slow population growth, maintain population size within the AMLs, manage wild horses within the management areas designated for management, and extend the time before another gather would be needed to remove excess wild horses. By maintaining population size with the AML, rangeland resources would be sustained and protected from the deterioration associated with wild horse overpopulation. This strategy ensures a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship on public lands in the area, and is consistent with the provisions of Section 3(b)(2) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WFRHBA).

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.

#### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

To comply with the NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations which implement 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 the governmental agencies with information about the potential environmental consequences of the project and alternatives; identify all practical 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 of the 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 uranium mining 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 BLM would appreciate receiving substantive comments on this scoping letter within 30 days from the date of this letter. Questions and written comments would be most helpful if received on or before March 28, 2011. Please submit your comments to:

Melanie Mirati, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist  
BLM Rawlins Field Office  
P.O. Box 2407  
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301  
(307) 328-4200  
Fax: (307) 328-4224

Or

Scott Fluor, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist  
BLM Lander Field Office  
1335 Main Street  
Lander, Wyoming 82520  
(307) 332-8400  
Fax: (307) 332-8444  
Email: RedDesertComplex\_HMA\_WY@blm.gov  
(Please include "Red Desert Complex Scoping Comments" in the subject line).

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

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

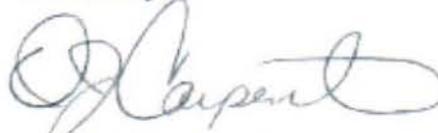
The website can be accessed by the general public. The preliminary Environmental Assessment will be posted to this site, and there will be a 30-day comment period. You may obtain a paper copy of these documents by contacting the Rawlins or Lander Field Offices at the addresses and/or phone numbers listed above.

Sincerely,



Rubel Vigil, Jr.  
Acting Lander Field Manager

Sincerely,

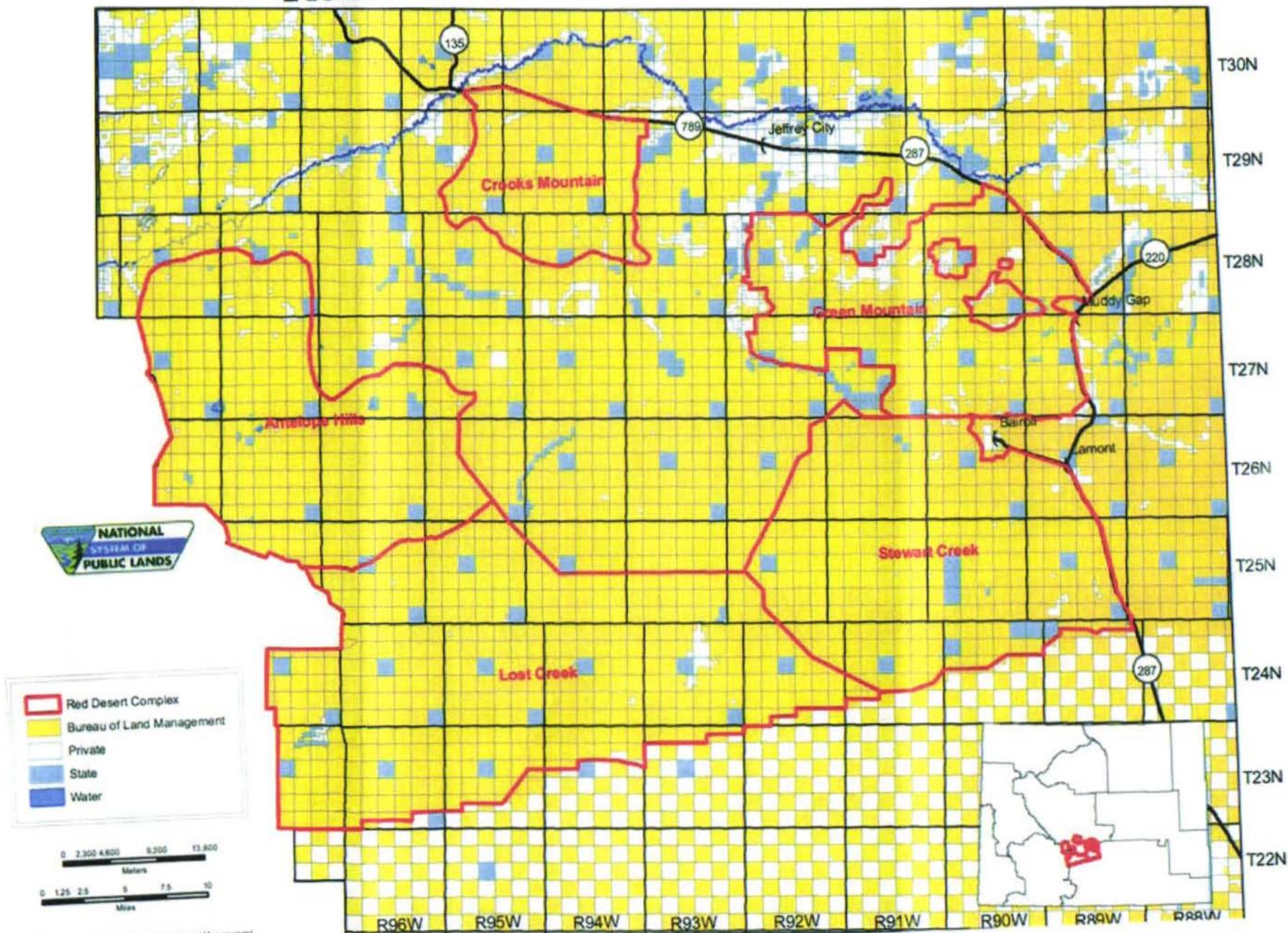


Dennis J. Carpenter  
Rawlins Field Manager

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.