



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



FEB 20 2015

In Reply Refer To:
4700 (WYD03) (WYR05)

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)

Fertility Control Application & Removal of Horses Outside Herd Management Areas

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 (HMA) 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 within the appropriate management level, and to extend the time period before another gather to remove excess wild horses would be needed. Population Surveys conducted in August 2013, revealed a number of wild horses have moved outside of the HMAs. The horses residing outside the HMAs would be gathered and removed from the range during this operation as well as the foals of the year.

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, 2015. The project will utilize the fertility control vaccine PZP-22.

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, the Lander RMP approved on June 26, 2014, and 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 Appropriate Management Levels (AML), 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 within 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).

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

To comply with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, which implement NEPA, the BLM will 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 & 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. Substantive comments are due by March 20, 2015. Please submit your comments to:

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P.O. Box 2407
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301
(307) 328-4200
Fax: (307) 328-4224

Mr. Trent Staheli,
Wild Horse & Burro Specialist
BLM, Lander Field Office
P.O. Box 589
Lander, Wyoming 82520
(307) 332-8400
Fax: (307) 332-8444

or

e-mail: RedDesertComplex_HMA_WY@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 BLM Wyoming 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 Environmental Assessment (EA) will be posted to this site, and there will be a 30-day comment period for the EA. You may obtain a paper copy of these documents by contacting the BLM, Rawlins or Lander Field Offices, at the addresses or telephone numbers listed above.

Sincerely,



Rick Vander Voet
Field Manager



Acting

Dennis J. Carpenter
Field Manager

1 Enclosure:
1 - Map

cc: Interested Publics