



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

High Desert District  
Rock Springs Field Office  
280 Highway 191 North  
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901-3447  
[www.blm.gov/wy](http://www.blm.gov/wy)



DEC 16 2015

In Reply Refer To:  
4700 (WYD04)

## Scoping Statement White Mountain and Little Colorado Herd Management Areas Population Management Action

### Description of Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rock Springs Field Office proposes to gather excess wild horses from the White Mountain and Little Colorado Herd Management Areas (HMAs) (map attached). The Rock Springs Field Office also proposes to conduct a research study in conjunction with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in the two HMAs. The research study would place radio collars on a portion of the mares and place radio tail tracker tags on a portion of the stallions in the HMAs. Approximately one year after the radio collars and tags are fitted to the animals, a portion of the White Mountain HMA mares would be selected to be gathered, spayed and studied further to examine their behavior and band fidelity, demography (birth and survival rates), and spatial ecology both pre- and post- treatment. The Little Colorado HMA would be gathered to the high Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 100 wild horses and would be studied as a control group.

USGS convened a panel of experts to assess available surgical spay techniques and considerations required for their use in field conditions and on wild mares, as opposed to domestic mares. The BLM will use input from this panel in deciding which spay method to use in the study. Prior to any spaying implementation, an animal care and use protocol (ACUP) for the spaying treatment will be submitted to the Colorado State University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) for review by a panel of veterinarians and animal welfare officials.

The most recent population surveys were conducted February 18-19, 2015. A statistician contractor, working under direction of the USGS, provided estimated population sizes specific to the time of the surveys, of approximately 268 adult wild horses in the White Mountain HMA and approximately 330 adult wild horses in the Little Colorado HMA.

Wild horse populations are expected to increase by approximately 20 percent yearly with the 2015 and 2016 foaling seasons, bringing the population to an estimated 386 wild horses in the White Mountain HMA and an estimated 475 wild horses in the Little Colorado HMA by July 2016.

Wild horse population and distribution flights would be conducted prior to the gather to assess the wild horse populations and to determine the necessary level of removals in these HMAs to maintain the AMLs.

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, 2016.

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

The proposed action is in conformance with the Green River Resource Management Plan (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 White Mountain and the Little Colorado HMAs.

The proposed action is also in compliance with the 2013 Consent Decree in *Rock Springs Grazing Association v. Salazar*, Civ. No. 11-263-NDF (D. Wyo.).

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

To comply with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, the BLM is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed gather and research study. 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 when preparing an environmental impact statement. Under Department of the Interior NEPA regulations (43 CFR 46.305), the BLM may elect to apply a scoping process when preparing an EA, although none is required. Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to: identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated, 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 and livestock grazing.

### 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 January 14, 2016.**

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:

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:**

**BLM\_WY\_whitemtn\_littleco\_hma@blm.gov**

(Please include "White Mountain & Little Colorado EA Comments" in the subject line.)

Public comments are most helpful if they are specific. The CEQ 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/rsfo/whitemtn\\_littlecolo.html](http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/rsfo/whitemtn_littlecolo.html).

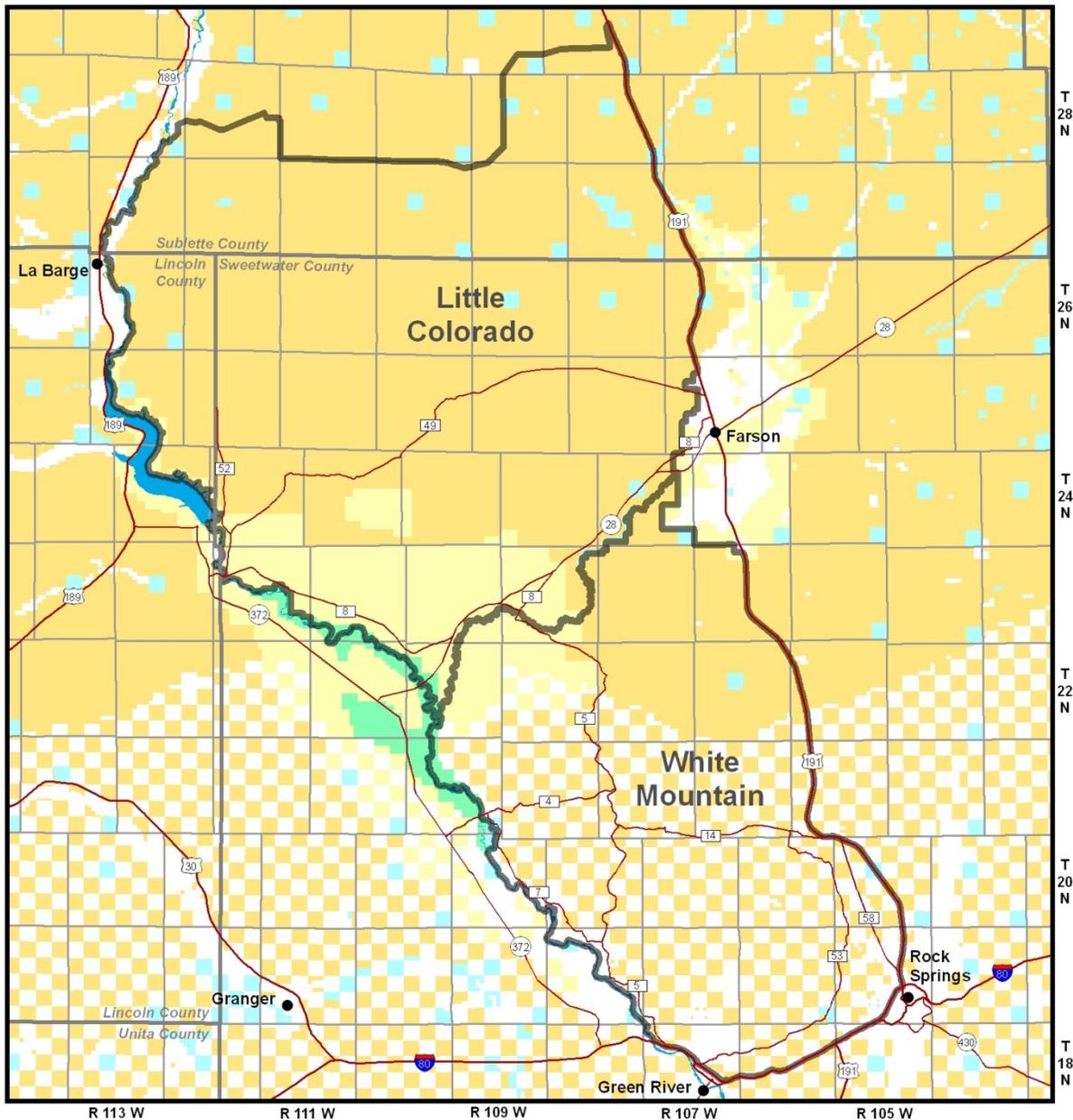
The website can be accessed by the general public. The EA will be posted to this site after comments from the public are incorporated. The EA is anticipated to be available in spring 2016. You may also obtain a paper copy of the EA by contacting the Rock Springs Field Office.

Sincerely,



Kimberlee D. Foster  
Field Manager

Enclosure: Map  
cc: Interested Public



**White Mountain and Little Colorado Herd Management Areas**

- Herd Management Area Boundary
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Fish & Wildlife Service
- Private
- State



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for use of the data for purposes not intended by BLM