



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Worland Field Office
P.O. Box 119
Worland, Wyoming 82401-0119

In Reply Refer To:
4700 (010)

April 22, 2008

Scoping Statement Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area Population Management Action

Description of Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Worland Field Office proposes to gather approximately 200 wild horses in the Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA) (see enclosed map). Census data for the HMA was collected in February 2008, and the wild horse population exceeds the appropriate management level (AML) established for the HMA. The AML range for the Fifteenmile HMA is 70-160 mature horses.

The primary capture method used in the performance of 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 7, 2008.

Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents

The proposed action is in conformance with the Grass Creek Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved in September, 1998. The Grass Creek RMP established the following objective for management of wild horses:

“In the Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area (herd area), maintain free-roaming wild horses in a thriving ecological balance.” [Page 21]

The RMP specified the following management actions necessary to achieve the above objective:

“The herd area will be managed for an initial herd size of at least 70 and no greater than 160 mature animals. To the extent possible, horses will be managed at the lower end of this range during periods of drought.” [Page 21]

“The Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Gathering Plan will be kept up-to-date and implemented for roundups. Emphasis will be placed on gathering horses that wander outside the herd area or onto privately-owned lands.” [Page 21]

Gathering and removal of excess wild horses from the Fifteenmile HMA is in conformance with the Grass Creek RMP. The AML for the Fifteenmile HMA was confirmed through the Grass Creek RMP planning process, with extensive public input.

The proposed management action is also in conformance with the August 2003 Consent Decree upheld by the United States District Court of Wyoming. This is an out of court settlement agreement between the State of Wyoming and the United States Department of the Interior, and the 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 implement 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; wilderness values; wildlife, and special status wildlife species; 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 **May 22, 2008**. Please submit your comments to:

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101 S. 23rd St.
P.O. Box 119
Worland, Wyoming 82401

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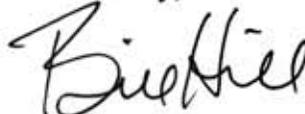
(Please include "Fifteenmile HMA Scoping Comments" in the subject line.)

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/wfodocs/15mile.html>

The web site can be accessed by the general public. The Environmental Assessment (EA) will be posted to this site after comments from the public are incorporated into it. The estimated time of posting of the EA is July 18, 2008. You may also obtain a paper copy of these documents by contacting the Worland Field Office at the address or phone number above.

Sincerely,



Bill Hill
Field Manager

Enclosure: Map