



# 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:  
4710.3 F (010)

July 30, 2004

Dear Reader:

The Bureau of Land Management, Worland Field Office, proposes to gather excess wild horses in the Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA), in August, 2004. The proposal is to reduce the wild horse population from approximately 210 wild horses to the lower range of the Appropriate Management Level (AML), which is 70 wild horses. This action would be implemented under the authority of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, and consistent with the Approved Resource Management Plan for the Grass Creek Planning Area (1998).

The Fifteenmile HMA is in the midst of a fifth consecutive year of severe drought. Forage and water availability for wild horses is severely limited, and currently is not adequate to sustain the existing wild horse population until the next growing season. Since the wild horse population in the Fifteenmile HMA is currently over the AML, a removal was scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2004. However, with the current decline in forage and water availability, immediate removal of excess wild horses to the lower range of the AML is necessary to ensure that the wild horses remaining within the HMA have adequate forage and water to survive and maintain satisfactory physical condition. Removal of excess wild horses will also help to sustain the long-term productivity of the rangeland resources on the public lands that wild horses depend on.

The proposed gather and removal of wild horses from the Fifteenmile HMA, and the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives, is analyzed in the environmental assessment "Wild Horse Gathering For The Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area" (EA Number WY-010-EA04-83), and Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact. **The decision to remove wild horses from the Fifteenmile HMA is being issued under the regulations found at 43 CFR 4770.3(c), and will be effective the date the decision is signed.** These documents are available for public review on the web at the Wyoming BLM homepage ([www.wy.blm.gov/nepa/wfodocs/15mile](http://www.wy.blm.gov/nepa/wfodocs/15mile)). Readers without access to the web may contact Cameron Henrichsen at the Bureau of Land Management, 101 S. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, P.O. Box 119, Worland, Wyoming 82401, or telephone (307) 347-5100, for a copy of the documents.

Sincerely,

/s/ Bill Hill

Bill Hill  
Field Manager



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Worland Field Office**



**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
DECISION RECORD**

**Wild Horse Gathering For The Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area  
EA Number WY-010-EA04-83**

**Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision**

I have determined that the Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved land use plan. I have reviewed this environmental assessment, including the analyses of potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the Proposed Action, with the mitigation measures identified, will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. This decision will not have an adverse impact on energy development, production, supply and/or distribution. My decision is to approve implementation of the Proposed Action with the mitigation measures identified.

**Full Force and Effect Decision**

This decision is issued full force and effect in accordance with 43 CFR 4770.3(c) which states in part: "decisions to remove wild horses or burros from public or private lands in situations where removal is required by applicable law or is necessary to preserve or maintain a thriving ecological balance and multiple use relationship shall be effective upon issuance or on a date established in the decision."

It is my decision to approve the Proposed Action as described in the Wild Horse Gathering for the Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area Environmental Assessment (EA). Beginning on or about August 5, 2004 and ending upon completion of the project, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will gather approximately 210 wild horses in order to remove approximately 140 wild horses from the Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA) and surrounding areas. Approximately 70 mature wild horses will be returned to the HMA. Excess wild horses will be gathered and removed according to Standard BLM Operating Procedures For Wild Horse Removal (EA – Appendix B). The gathering operation is expected to require approximately one week to complete.

Removal of excess wild horses will leave wild horse populations in, or close to, compliance with the Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Grass Creek Planning Area.

**Rationale for Decision**

My decision to approve gathering and removal of excess wild horses is based upon the following:

The RMP provides for maintaining an Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 70 to 160 mature horses within the HMA. The current wild horse population within the HMA is approximately 210 wild horses. This number of wild horses is above the AML established in the land use plan. For this reason, all horses above the AML are considered excess and subject to removal. Gathering wild horses is in conformance with the land use plan, to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship within the HMA.

The Fifteenmile HMA is in the midst of a fifth consecutive year of severe drought. Forage and water availability is severely limited, and currently is not adequate to sustain the wild horse population until the next growing season. Immediate removal of excess wild horses to the lower range of the AML is necessary to ensure that the wild horses remaining within the HMA have adequate forage and water to survive and maintain satisfactory physical condition. Removal of excess wild horses will also help to sustain the long-term productivity of the rangeland resources on the public lands that wild horses depend on.

Based on the analysis in the EA, the impacts to the wild horses and to other resources will not be significant. The horses will be treated in a safe and humane manner. Safety risks to BLM employees or the contractor and the wild horses will be minimized through planned actions identified in the Standard BLM Operating Procedures For Wild Horse Removal.

### **Compliance and Monitoring**

Gathering and removal of excess wild horses will be conducted as described in the Standard BLM Operating Procedures For Wild Horse Removal.

The BLM will continue to monitor wild horse numbers, forage utilization, and range condition to achieve the multiple use objectives within the Fifteenmile HMA.

### **Appeal**

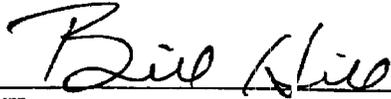
Once the decision is final, it will be subject to appeal. If you wish to appeal this decision, as provided by 43 CFR 4770.3 and 43 CFR 4.4, you must file an appeal in writing within 30 days of this decision with the Worland Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 101 S. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, P.O. Box 119, Worland, Wyoming 82401. The appeal shall state clearly and concisely why you think the decision is in error.

Should you wish to file a motion for stay, the appellant shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- 1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied;
- 2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits;
- 3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and
- 4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

If you decide to also submit a petition for stay of the decision, a copy of the notice of appeal, statement of reasons, and petition for stay should be simultaneously filed with the Office of the Field Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, 755 Parfet Street, Suite 151, Lakewood, Colorado 80215.

**Authorized Officer:**



**Bill Hill**  
**Field Manager**

**Date:** 7/30/04