

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment WY-010-EA08-148
September 12, 2008**

Finding of No Significant Impact

**Wild Horse Gathering for the
Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area**

*Location: 6th Principal Meridian, T. 46-50 N., R. 96-99 W.,
Bighorn, Park, and Washakie Counties, Wyoming.*

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INTRODUCTION:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis, (EA No. WY-010-EA08-148). The proposed action is for removal of excess wild horses from the Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA).

Alternatives analyzed in detail:

- A. Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) – Gather to Low Range AML (70 Mature Horses)
- B. Alternative 2 – Gather to 100 Horses with Fertility Control
- C. Alternative 3 (No Action) – No Gather/Removal

The first alternative would involve capturing about 280 wild horses, returning about 70 mature animals to the HMA, and removing the remainder of the horses. The proposed removal would be conducted in accordance with the Standard BLM Operating Procedures for Wild Horse Removal (EA - Appendix B).

The second alternative would involve capturing about 280 wild horses, returning about 100 mature animals to the HMA, and removing the remainder of the horses. The proposed removal would be conducted in accordance with the Standard BLM Operating Procedures for Wild Horse Removal (EA - Appendix B). Also under this alternative, immunocontraceptive research would be conducted on horses returned to the range.

The third alternative would not involve capture and removal of excess wild horses.

The EA is available at the Worland Field Office, and on the Wyoming BLM website (<http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/wfodocs>), and is incorporated by reference for this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:

The Proposed Action is subject to the Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Grass Creek Planning Area, approved in September, 1998, which established the following objective for wild horse management in the WFO jurisdiction:

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

The Proposed Action has been determined to be in conformance with this plan as required by regulation (43 CFR 1610.5-3(a)). The Fifteenmile HMA has been designated as suitable for long term sustained wild horse use in the Grass Creek RMP, and the proposed capture and removal conforms to the land use decisions and resource management goals and objectives of the land use plan.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION:

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. Environmental effects do not meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects

described in the Grass Creek RMP. *Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed.* This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described:

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into BLM's Critical Elements of the Human Environment list (H-1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memoranda, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** The proposed action would impact resources as described in the EA. Those resources analyzed are: wild horses, vegetation, soils and watershed, wildlife, domestic livestock, wilderness, recreation, heritage resources, and energy development. Mitigating measures to reduce impacts have been incorporated into the proposed action in the form of the Standard BLM Operating Procedures for Wild Horse Removal (EA - Appendix B).
2. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** The proposed action is designed to have minimum impact on public health. Transportation of equipment to the project location will be in conformance with state and federal laws.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** Heritage resources in the project area have been inventoried and avoided. Potential impacts have been mitigated in the design of the proposed action.

The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment and Other Resource Issues are not present in the project area and are not affected: areas of critical environmental concern, environmental justice, farmlands (prime or unique), flood plains, Native American religious concerns, wetlands and riparian, and wild/scenic rivers.

4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** Comments received from the public were in support of the proposed action, and were addressed in the EA.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas.

The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks

6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The actions considered in the selected alternative were considered within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative and all other alternatives are described in Chapter 3 of the EA.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.** Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the proposal is contained in Chapter 3 of the EA.

8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The project will not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Consultation with SHPO has been completed in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA and the Programmatic Agreement between the Wyoming BLM and SHPO.
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.** Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to wildlife have been incorporated into the design of the proposed action. Although sensitive species may occupy habitat within the project boundary, it has been determined that they will not be affected because of measures outlined in the EA. No threatened or endangered plants or animals are known to occur in the area.
10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.** The project does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Authorized Official:



Mike Roberts

Acting Worland Field Office Manager

Date: 2008 Sep 22