

Commission Agenda Item #15 Wild Horse Update November 2010

Proposed Spruce Mountain Wild Horse Sanctuary

The Bureau of Land Management, NDOW and other agencies attended a field presentation on a proposed wild horse sanctuary involving the Spruce Allotment located in southeastern Elko County. Although a detailed proposed has not been presented, the tentative plans are to change the class of livestock use on over 500,000 acres from cattle to horses and to start off with 1,000 wild horses. The plan would also include educational and tourist related activities and range improvements to both forage and water developments. The BLM has requested a detailed proposal and stated that change would at a minimum need to be addressed in a Resource Plan Amendment. It is anticipated that the documentation and review process could take a year or more of time, depending upon the sophistication of the proposal and the issues that would need to be addressed. One of the unanswered questions would be the disposition of the wild horses currently present on those allotments. A gather is planned in the near future for that area.

Reveille Wild Horse Gather

The BLM has issued the Decision Record to gather 198 horses and leave approximately 80 horses in the herd management area located 50 miles east of Tonopah. There are currently 278 horses in the area (after foaling) which is about twice the number the area can support. The gather goals were based upon a 3-5 year population growth estimate. Gather activities were completed on September 14th. A total of 222 animals were gathered and transported to a short-term holding facility. Two wild horses were euthanized due to congenital or injury-related defects.

Montezuma/Paymaster Wild Horse and Burro Gather

The Tonopah Field Office proposed to gather 123 excess horses and 61 excess burros in an area just west of Goldfield. These numbers greatly exceed the management levels for the areas. Post gather population goals will be 3 wild horses and 10 burros in the Montezuma HMA and 23 wild horses in the Paymaster HMA. The roundup was completed on September 20. A total of 148 animals were gathered, 92 of which were transported to a short-term holding facility for inclusion into the adoption program. One horse died during the gather and 2 horses with club-foot deformities were euthanized.

Moriah Herd Management Area

The Ely BLM District issued a decision to gather 72 excess horses from an area 48 miles northeast of Ely. The roundup was completed on August 30th. A total of 53 wild horses were gathered and removed from the HMA area.

Silver King Herd Management Area

A decision was issued to approve the environmental assessment that addressed the gathering of 445 excess horses in an area 70 miles south of Ely. The gather was

completed on October 14th. A total of 504 wild horses were gathered. All but 7 horses were shipped to holding facilities for inclusion to the adoption program.

Twin Peaks Herd Management Area

The BLM issued a decision to proceed with a roundup of 2,300 wild horses including 1,855 excess horses and 205 burros from the Twin Peaks Herd Management area which straddles the Nevada-California state line north and west of Pyramid Lake. A lawsuit filed against this action by wild horse advocates alleged violations of the Wild and Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The gather was approved and completed on September 20th. A total of 1,799 animals (1,639 wild horses and 160 burros) were gathered in Nevada and California. 59 animals were returned to the HMA and 15 died during or immediately after gather activities.

Eagle, Chokecherry and Mt. Elinore Herd Management Area

Comments were due on September 4th on proposed gathers planned for the eastern Nevada/Utah border area. All three HMAs are far over AML. A total of 748 horses were considered excess and planned for removal. If more than 748 horses are gathered, a selective release would be planned to target a 60% male/40% female ratio. AML for the Eagle HMA is 100-200 wild horse: 85 wild horses are in the Chokecherry HMA where the AML is 30 and 79 wild horses are in the Mt Elinore HMA where the AML is 15-25 wild horses. The final decision has been issued by the BLM. The gather is planned to begin in January 2011

US Highway 93 Corridor Wild Horse Gather

Approximately 50 wild horses have strayed from the HMA and are creating a public safety hazard on the highway. Temporary corrals have been set up and baited for the capture. Upon capture, the animals will be moved to holding facilities and placed into the adoption program.

Clan Alpine Herd Management Area

The plans are to gather 580 horses and vaccinate 232 mares with a 2-year fertility control vaccine. Plans are then to release all of the captured animals. The gather is planned for mid-November 2010. Recapture and retreatment is planned in 2-3 years.

Pilot Mountain Herd Management Area (HMA),

The BLM will gather horses within the Pilot Mountain HMA so that approximately 76 mares can be treated with Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP-22), an approximate two year fertility control vaccine, and released back into the HMA to achieve ecological balance. Approximately 53 excess wild horses within the HMA will also be gathered and removed. The gather is scheduled for late November and is expected to be completed in seven to ten days.

The Pilot Mountain gather originally included gathering a band of approximately 104 wild horses currently residing on the Hawthorne Army Depot, but that action has been suspended to give the Depot and the BLM time to fully investigate a proposal from horse advocate groups for solving immediate safety concerns of horses drifting onto U.S.

Highway 95 and for the long-term maintenance of the group of horses currently on the Depot.

Pine Nut Herd Management Area (HMA),

Starting in late November, the BLM will gather wild horses within the Pine Nut HMA so that approximately 45 mares can be treated with Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP-22), an approximate two-year fertility control vaccine, to slow herd reproduction and reduce the number of excess wild horses that would need to be removed in the future. Horses gathered from within the HMA will all be released back where they were gathered. There are also approximately 67 excess horses residing well outside of the HMA boundaries. An estimated 12-20 of these horses are 12+ miles outside of the HMA in a mix of public and private lands in the Fish Springs area of Douglas County. The rest of the 67 horses residing outside of the HMA are primarily in the Buckskin Range of Lyon County. These 67 excess horses will be gathered and removed. The gather is expected to be completed in five to seven days.

Lahontan Herd Management Area (HMA).

Starting in mid-November the BLM will gather and remove approximately 94 excess wild horses from the vicinity of the HMA, which is south of the Lahontan State Recreation Area in Lyon County, about 35 miles east of Carson City, Nev. The gather is expected to be completed in two to three days.

Callaghan/New Pass Ravenswood Complex Gather

The BLM is proposing a gather of about 866 wild horses within and outside of these Herd Management Areas. Approximately 221 excess horses would be removed and placed into adoption programs. 645 wild horses would be released including 323 mares that would be treated with the PZP-22 fertility control vaccine. Documents state that a recapture and retreatment event would occur in 2-3 years that would include vaccination of mares and removal of excess horses. The Final Environmental Assessment is available. Comments were due no later than October 10, 2010.

Augusta Mountains Wild Horse Gather

The BLM plans to gather approximately 344 wild horses from in and around the HMA. The AML in this HMA is 185-308. Current estimates are identify 294 wild horses in the HMA. In addition, approximately 50 excess wild horses are outside of the HMA. All mares captured and returned to the HMA will be vaccinated with PZP-22. Excess animals will be removed and placed in holding facilities for adoption. Comments on the EA were due on November 5th. NDOW did supply comments in support of the gather. If approved, the gather would be scheduled for January 2011.

Calico Complex Wild Horse Gather

A total of 1,922 excess wild horses were gathered and removed earlier this year from the 5 HMAs that make up this complex. Recent surveys indicate that approximately 600 wild horses remain in an area that has an AML of 600-900. Moderate to heavy impacts resulted from overpopulation in the HMAs. Monitoring of population levels and range resources will continue in the Complex to better manage the wild horses there.

Antelope Complex Gather

The Antelope complex includes the Antelope Herd Management Area (HMA) which is managed by the Schell Field Office in the Ely District and the Antelope Valley, Goshute, and Spruce/Pequop HMAs which are managed by the Wells Field Office in the Elko District. (Refer to the attached map for general location.) The Wells and Schell Field Offices are proposing to gather a combined total of approximately 1,268 to 1,659 wild horses from within the Complex and adjacent areas during the winter of 2011. The proposed gather is tentatively scheduled to begin in January 2011.

NDOW has written a letter in support of the gather. BLM has not issued a decision notice and is in the process of considering a reissue of the EA due to changes in the proposed gather numbers, comments received on the initial EA and a request made in connection with the proposed Spruce Mountain Wild Horse Sanctuary.