



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Boise District Office

3948 Development Avenue

Boise, Idaho 83705

<http://www.id.blm.gov/offices/boise>



December 30, 2011

In Reply Refer To:
1060 (LLIDB00100)

Dear Interested Public:

This letter requests your comments regarding a proposal to capture, treat, release, and potentially remove wild horses from the Black Mountain and Hardtrigger Herd Management Areas (HMA) in the Owyhee Field Office. The BLM is mandated to create or maintain a thriving, natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship in HMAs, consistent with the provisions of Section 3(b)(2) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WFRHBA). One method the BLM uses to fulfill this mandate is to maintain wild horse numbers within appropriate management levels (AML) for each HMA. The AMLs for Black Mountain and Hardtrigger HMAs were set in the 1999 Owyhee Resource Management Plan.

In the past, the BLM has maintained wild horse numbers using removal gathers. Although adoption efforts have been very successful, supply often exceeds demand and surplus wild horses must be housed in long-term pastures. The capture, treat, and release program is a proactive effort to slow population growth and reduce the frequency of gathers and number of wild horses put into the adoption program and/or long term holding.

In the Black Mountain and Hardtrigger HMAs, approximately 190 wild horses would be gathered in the fall of 2012 using a "helicopter drive" capture method. Between 35 and 66 adult mares would be treated on-site with an immuno-contraception (PZP-22) to help slow population growth.

Wild horse growth rate calculations predict that the HMAs population will be at or near the upper end of AML by this fall's proposed gather. Approximately 94 excess horses would be removed, if the wild horse population is 190 (High AML) or above. Ninety-six horses (low AML) would remain in the HMA, including all treated mares.

If the population is under 190 at the time of the proposed gather, all horses would be released back into the HMAs. However, based on past experience, some horses would need to be removed to ensure their health and welfare. Additionally, horses outside of the HMA would be removed. Horses removed from the HMAs would be offered for adoption or placed in a long-term pasture, depending on their age and condition. Captured horses would be safely and humanely handled.

The BLM will be evaluating this proposal in an Environmental Assessment (EA). A preliminary EA will be sent to interested publics in early 2012, with estimated completion by late spring 2012. The BLM is requesting comments on the proposed action, possible alternatives, and issues that should be addressed in the EA. Comments would be most helpful if they are directly relevant to the proposal and project area, and are received by the end of January 2012, so that they can be incorporated into the EA.

Comments will be accepted as follows:

- through the BLM NEPA web page (https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do) (locate the project by searching under State = Idaho, Office = ID - Owyhee FO, Document Type = EA, and Fiscal Year = 2012, then follow the instructions under How to Get Involved)
- by email (blm_id_bdo_wildhorse@blm.gov) with the project title in the subject line
- U.S. mail at the address listed below.

Please identify whether comments are submitted as an individual or the designated spokesperson for an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this proposal is Steve Leonard, BLM Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, Boise District Office, 3948 Development Avenue, Boise, ID 83705. His telephone number is (208) 384-3300.

Sincerely,

/s/ Aden L. Seidlitz

Aden L. Seidlitz
Boise District Manager