

**United States Department of Interior**  
**Bureau of Land Management**  
**Idaho Falls District**  
**Challis Field Office**  
**Environmental Assessment**  
**Challis Wild Horse Gather Plan**  
**DOI-BLM-ID-I030-2012-0006-EA**  
**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI- BLM-ID-I030-2012-0006-EA would not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This finding was made by considering both the context and intensity of the potential effects, as described in the above EA, using the following factors defining significance:

1. *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The Proposed Action will have beneficial impacts and minimal direct or indirect adverse impacts to wild horses, hazardous waste, soils, water quality, wetlands/riparian zones, wildlife/fisheries, grazing management, cultural resources, recreation, and the human environment over the short and long term as described in the environmental assessment. (EA Sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.14, 3.15)

The Proposed Action will slow population growth in the Challis Herd Management Area (CHMA) to maintain population size within the Appropriate Management Level (AML) and reduce the need for long-term pasture of excess horses; thereby meeting Secretary of the Interior's Initiative for Healthy Horses on Healthy Rangelands, and also complying with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. (EA Sections 2.31 and 3.21)

Maintaining AML within the CHMA will continue to achieve healthy lands and viable herds, and the protection and improvement of watersheds. (EA Sections 2.3, 3.21)

The action is expected to meet BLM objectives for wild horse management in maintaining a thriving, natural ecological balance consistent with other resource needs and multiple uses. (EA Sections 2.31, 3.21)

2. *The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.*

No effects on public health and safety were identified in the EA. (EA Section 3.14.2)

3. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

No major effects on unique geographic characteristics of the area, cultural or historical resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas were identified in the EA. Cultural resources would not be adversely impacted as planned capture sites utilize previously disturbed and inventoried areas. Any unplanned capture sites would be inventoried prior to use. Treatment of mares with fertility control vaccine resulting in fewer offspring and slower herd growth and removal of excess wild horses is expected to continue to make progress in meeting objectives for riparian, wetland, aquatic and terrestrial habitat. (EA Sections 3.0, 3.6, 3.13)

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The analysis did not identify any controversy or disagreement concerning effects on the quality of the human environment. Public comments did express concerns about effects of management actions on various resource values. No significant individual or cumulative impacts are anticipated as a result of this action. (EA Section 3.0)

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The analysis did not identify any effects on the human environment which are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. The Challis Field Office has completed 14 gathers in the CHMA since 1983, which included administration of the PZP vaccine beginning 2004; and is aware of the associated effects. The 1989 Challis Herd Management Plan Update identified a 60/40 male/female sex ratio which was implemented during the 2009 gather. (EA Sections 3.0, 3.2) (EA Appendices A, B and C)

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 proposed action represents a continuum of actions associated with wild horse management. Gathers have occurred periodically in the past and will continue periodically in the future, as long as the CHMA exists. The proposed action does not set a precedent, trigger future actions, or is part of a larger action. (EA Section 3.2)

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The analysis did not identify any significant cumulative or secondary effects. (EA Section 4.0)

8. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or 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.*

Consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) has been conducted in accordance with the BLM National Programmatic Agreement and the implementing Protocol agreement between Idaho BLM and Idaho State Historic Preservation Office. (EA Section 3.0 and EA Appendix B)

The analysis showed that the Proposed Action would not result in adverse effects to cultural or historical resources. Areas that might see heavy hoof action (capture sites) have been; or will be surveyed for impacts prior to any action. Capture sites will be moved if cultural or historical resources cannot be avoided. (EA Section 3.0 and EA Appendix B)

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.*

The analysis showed that the Proposed Action would not result in adverse effects to threatened, endangered, or sensitive fish, fisheries, and designated critical habitats within the CHMA. There is a limited distribution of perennial streams occupied by fish and designated as critical habitat. It is anticipated that only a single capture site would occur in the Road Creek watershed where perennial fish streams and critical habitat exists. Elements of the action alternatives would prevent effects by locating activities outside of riparian areas or in previously disturbed locations. Therefore, there would be no effect to ESA listed fish or critical habitat. (EA Section 3.8)

There would be no adverse effects to threatened, endangered or sensitive terrestrial wildlife species. A reduction in the wild horse population would lesson forage removal/consumption and the potential for the disturbances by horses. (EA Section 3.12)

- 10 *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The analysis in the EA found that the alternatives are consistent with Federal, State, and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment and wild horses. (EA Section 1.4)

/s/ Todd Kuck  
Todd Kuck  
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Date

