



# United States Department of the Interior



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In Reply Refer To:

4700/1792 (NV-010-21)

JUN 07 2012

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management, Black Rock Field Office, has issued a decision on the proposed action of an initial wild horse gather in 2012 and a subsequent phased-in approach to reach the appropriate management level (AML) over a 10 year period. The gather operations were originally scheduled to begin in July 2012; however, the lack of spring vegetation growth, minimal residual vegetation from the previous year's forage crop and reduced natural water availability has resulted in declining wild horse health conditions. Current monitoring shows a reduction of wild horse body condition and overall health within the gather area. Although helicopter gathers generally are not conducted before July 1<sup>st</sup>, absent emergency conditions, an immediate removal of wild horses from the south west portion of the gather area and the concurrent removal of wild horses from the remaining portions is necessary before July 1 in order to prevent further harm and stress to the wild horse population within the Jackson Mountains. The intent in initiating the emergency gather in June is to gather the wild horses before their health is severely compromised due to emergency conditions. Although water or bait trapping was originally considered, wild horses' negative response to human presence during water hauling efforts indicated water trapping would be ineffective and possibly detrimental to animal health.

The initial gather effort will attempt to gather approximately 630 excess wild horses from the estimated population of 930 wild horses from the Jackson Mountain HMA. The proposed action also includes a phased-in management strategy to remove excess wild horses, implement fertility control, and adjust sex ratios to 60% male population of the herd over several gathers to occur within the next ten years. The use of water/bait trapping may be used in this phased management strategy as a supplementary gather technique to assist in bringing the herd population to within established AML range. Gathered wild horses will be transported to BLM holding facilities.

In addition to an immediate removal of excess wild horses from the HMA due to declining animal health the gather is also needed to help prevent further deterioration of range conditions from excess wild horses, reduce population growth rates, achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and maintain healthy wild horse populations within established AML.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Jackson Mountain HMA Wild Horse Gather, Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and Decision Record (DR) are now available and can be viewed online by following the links from the Winnemucca District's NEPA website at [http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm\\_information/nepa0.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm_information/nepa0.html). Hardcopies of these documents are available upon request from the Winnemucca District.

Sincerely,



Gene Seidlitz  
District Manager  
Winnemucca District Office