



# United States Department of the Interior



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In Reply Refer To:  
4170 (NVE0200)

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

### Owyhee Complex Herd Management Area Gather Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-N010-2012-0055-EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts in the EA, I have determined that Alternative B will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

Reasons for this finding are based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) with regard to the context and intensity of impacts.

Context: The Owyhee Complex (Little Owyhee, Owyhee, Little Humboldt, Rock Creek and Snowstorm Mountains HMAs) consists of approximately 1,055,023 total acres, but the gather area consists of approximately 2,047,281 acres, which encompasses additional lands where wild horses are residing outside of the Owyhee Complex.

The environmental analysis was prepared with input from the interested parties.

Intensity: There is no evidence that the severity of impacts is significant:

1. The action is expected to meet BLM's objective for wild horse management of maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship consistent with other resource needs.

The Tuscarora Field Office (TFO) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to implement Alternative B; by gathering 538 wild horses and removing approximately 296. Approximately 242 wild horses would be released back to the range following the gather. Of these, about 97 mares would be vaccinated with PZP-22 (Porcine Zona Pellucida or most current formulation) fertility control vaccine. The gather, removal and fertility control are intended to slow population growth, maintain population size within the appropriate management levels (AMLs), and extend the time before another gather to remove excess wild horses would be needed. If there are funding and holding space

limitations, it may take multiple gathers over a 10 year period to achieve desired population goals and to fully implement the proposed action.

The initial proposed gather would begin on or about November 18, 2012 and take approximately 30 days to complete. During the November gather it is anticipated that the Owyhee HMA will be the only area gathered within the TFO based on funding and holding space limitations. Approximately 186 wild horses would be gathered, 47 removed, and 139 returned of which 46 mares would be treated with PZP or the most current formulation for fertility control. Once the gather begins, the area would be gathered so as to minimize movement of wild horses and to reduce stress from competition for severely limited resources and multiple gather attempts.

2. The Standard Gather Operation Operating Procedures (EA, Appendix A) would be used to conduct the gather and are designed to protect human health and safety, as well as the health and safety of the wild horses and burros. Alternative B has no effect on public health or safety.
3. Alternative B has no potential to affect unique characteristics such as historic or cultural resources. No adverse impacts to the Owyhee, Rock Creek, and Little Humboldt HMAs are anticipated. There are no wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas present in the areas.
4. The effects of Alternative B on the quality of the human environment are not considered to be highly controversial, and effects of the gather are well known and understood.
5. Possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risks. Alternative B has no known effects on the human environment which are considered highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. This is demonstrated through the effects analysis in the EA.
6. The action is compatible with future consideration of actions required to improve wild horse management in conjunction with meeting objectives for wildlife within the herd management area. Alternative B does not set a precedent for future actions. Future actions would be subject to evaluation through the appropriate level of NEPA documentation.
7. Alternative B is not related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts.
8. Alternative B has no potential to adversely affect properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and would not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
9. Alternative B would have no negative effect on any other threatened or endangered species or habitat determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act. The EA has identified one threatened species (Lahontan cutthroat trout) and one candidate species

(Greater sage-grouse) in the project area. Review of the threatened and endangered species section of the EA indicates an overall improved/sustained ecological condition for the threatened and candidate species under Alternative B. The threatened and candidate species are expected to meet life cycle requirements. Therefore, it has been determined the proposed activities would not adversely affect any threatened or candidate species or their critical habitat.

10. Alternative B is in conformance with Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Alternative B is in conformance with all applicable 43 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations). Alternative B is in conformance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or Endangered Species Act.

A letter was sent to the Fish and Wildlife Service seeking their concurrence on September 17, 2012. A letter of Concurrence was received October 17, 2012, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Reno, Nevada. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm and unnecessary or undue degradation of the public land are inherent to Alternative B.

/s/ Richard E. Adams  
Richard E. Adams  
Field Manager  
Tuscarora Field Office

10/18/2012  
DATE