



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Mount Lewis Field Office

50 Bastian Road

Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820

Phone: 775-635-4000

Fax: 775-635-4034

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field.html

In Reply Refer To:
LLNVB0000 (4700)

FEB 09 2015

Dear Reader:

Enclosed please find the Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Fish Creek Herd Management Area (HMA) Gather. The Fish Creek HMA is located south of Eureka, Nevada in Eureka County, and is administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Battle Mountain District, Mount Lewis Field Office (MLFO). The Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the Fish Creek HMA is 101-170 wild horses, with a current estimated population of 549 wild horses.

The Final EA for the Fish Creek HMA Gather is available on-line at the link below. Hard copies are available from the Mount Lewis Field Office.

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field/blm_programs/wild_horse_and_burro/Fish_Creek_Wild_Horse_Gather.html.

The Preliminary Fish Creek Gather EA was made available to the interested public on December 22, 2014 for a 30 day comment period. All comments were reviewed and considered prior to completion of the Final Fish Creek Gather EA. As a result of some of the comments received, some additions were made to the EA to provide additional information or clarification. Beyond these changes, no substantial modifications were made to the EA as a result of the comments received.

The enclosed Decision implements a plan to use multiple gathers over a 10-year period for implementation of Population Growth Suppression (PGS) in conjunction with various types of gather methods to successfully treat mares with fertility control, and remove excess wild horses from the range.

Due to National funding and holding space limitations, and anticipated gather efficiencies, the BLM cannot achieve the goals of the Proposed Action and attain the established AML through a single gather in 2015. The 2015 gather would therefore become the first phase in a long term population management strategy designed to address large scale wild horse gathers while still achieving BLM's management goals of attaining AML, reducing population growth rates, and obtaining a thriving natural ecological balance on the range as identified within the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act (1971).

The initial gather would begin on or about February 11, 2015. The objectives of the initial gather to be completed in 2015 include the capture of 500-549 wild horses. The fertility control vaccine PZP (Porcine zona pellucida) or other current formulation would be applied to mares released back to the range (estimated 150-175 mares) to slow population growth. Approximately 300-349 wild horses would be released back to the range following the gather, with approximately 200 excess wild horses transported to BLM Wild Horse and Burro Facilities to be prepared for adoption to the public.

Long term management goals for the Fish Creek HMA include management of a healthy population of wild horses through achievement and maintenance of the established AML (101-170 wild horses) and continued implementation of PGS. The BLM would continue to implement fertility control through bait and water trapping, darting and helicopter gathers. Darting could be utilized to booster treat mares initially treated with PZP-22. Bait and water trapping could be used to booster mares and retreat or initially treat mares with PZP-22, and provide for limited removals. Helicopter gathers would occur as needed to continue the population growth control protocols, remove excess wild horses and to achieve or maintain the established AML. Fertility control would be applied to all the released mares to decrease the future annual population growth and reduce the number of excess wild horses that would have to be removed during future gathers. Removals of excess wild horses could be implemented through the life of the plan to achieve the management targets, to relieve resource concerns and/or remove concentrated groups of excess wild horses both inside and outside the boundaries of the Fish Creek HMA.

It is estimated that most of the wild horses removed in the 2015 gather would be 3 years of age or younger, and would be highly adoptable. The Fish Creek HMA includes a large portion of roan colored horses in addition to palomino, buckskin, bay and brown. A special on-site adoption is planned to occur in Eureka, Nevada on February 28, 2015, where 10-15 young weanlings and yearlings gathered from the Fish Creek HMA will be offered to the qualified public for adoption.

Anyone interested in attending the Fish Creek Wild Horse On-Site Adoption planned to occur with the gather is encouraged to contact the MLFO to receive updated information about the date, location and the horses that will be offered, as it becomes available. Note that additional information will also be posted on the Fish Creek Gather website at the link given at the beginning of this letter.

If you have any questions, please contact Shawna Richardson, Mount Lewis Field Office Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, at (775) 635-4181.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Vermeys". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Michael Vermeys
Acting Field Manager,
Mount Lewis Field Office