

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
IDAHO STATE OFFICE
Scoping Document for EA # DOI-BLM-ID-B020-2015-0006-EA**

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to fund the holding and maintenance of a short-term holding (STH) facility for a maximum of 5,000 excess wild horses and burros (WHB) located in Owyhee County, Bruneau, Idaho in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (WFRHBA). Federal actions, including actions on private/state land funded by the federal government, must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this scoping document is to inform the interested public of the proposal and to solicit comments regarding potential environmental issues related to the Proposed Action to assist with the NEPA review for the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) with an estimated completion date of May 1, 2015. The BLM will assess the comments received in response to this solicitation and identify alternatives to the Proposed Action that address potential environmental issues and meet the purpose and need for the project.

Public Input Needed

Comments are specifically requested on the Proposed Action, preliminary issues, and alternatives. Comments are due by April 8, 2015. For due consideration in developing the EA, comments must be directly relevant to the proposal and project areas. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA. Please send your comments with the title of this project in the subject line by means of hard copy or electronically to:

Electronically

Subject: Idaho Short Term Holding Facility
Email Address: BLM_ID_idahoSTHfacility@blm.gov

Hardcopy

BLM Idaho State Office
RE: Idaho Short Term Holding Facility
1387 S. Vinnell Way
Boise, ID 83709

Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of 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 analysis is Chris Robbins, Idaho BLM Range/Wild Horse and Burro Program Lead, (208) 373-3804.

Need for and Purpose of Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to fund the humane care of wild horses at a STH facility through a BLM contract for a maximum of 5,000 excess WHB on approximately 80 acres of private land in Bruneau, Idaho. The need for the Proposed Action is to provide the necessary space for a STH facility to safely and humanely care for WHB because of excess WHB removed from lands consistent with authority provided in Section 3 of the WFRHBA.

Existing Condition/Affected Environment

The proposed facility is located on private land in north central Owyhee County, three miles west of Bruneau, Idaho. The proposed facility lies just west of the Bruneau River Valley and encompasses approximately 80 acres of private land that has been used as a livestock feedlot for several years. A primary land use identified in the Owyhee County Comprehensive Plan contains Agricultural Land Use, which includes ranching and farming.

Soils

The soils within the project area consist of a Bramwell silty clay loam (~80%), Garbutt silt loam (~15%), and Bram silt loam (~5%). These soils are very deep and range from somewhat poorly drained to well drained. Permeability is mostly slow. A majority of the runoff is very slow, hazard of water erosion is slight, and hazard of wind erosion is moderate. Substantial change in the surface layer of the soils is likely due to the presence of a previous feedlot. However, soil profiles are likely intact, but under layers of manure and decomposed hay.

Upland Vegetation

Upland vegetation on the existing site consists of a very small amount of greasewood and other weeds. A large majority of the site (>90%) is bare ground with a mix of manure because of the previous use of this location as a feedlot for cattle and other livestock. Buildings have been removed and almost complete removal/disturbance of vegetation has occurred. This site has been so disturbed and modified, it is highly unlikely that native perennial plants could ever reestablish on this site without significant restoration and seeding, and only after the use of the land as a feedlot ceased.

Special Status Plants

Due to the previous disturbance of the site and prior use as a feedlot, no special status plants are known or expected to be present. No previous special status plant inventory has been conducted.

Wildlife (Including Special Status Species)

Due to the previous disturbance of the site and prior use as a feedlot, some wildlife are likely present, but limited to common and/or non-native species that flourish in agricultural settings. These likely include a few rodent species (e.g., house mice and deer mice), starlings, and house sparrows.

Migratory Birds

On January 11, 2001, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13186 (Land Bird Strategic Project) placing emphasis on conservation and management of native migratory birds. These migratory species are not protected under the Endangered Species Act, but most are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Management for these species is based on BLM Instruction Memorandum – IM 2008-050, dated December 18, 2007 (BLM 2007). It is very unlikely that migratory bird species currently utilize the project area for foraging or nesting due to the current condition of the site.

Riparian/Aquatic Resources

No riparian/aquatic resources are present within the project area.

Water Quality

No streams, springs, or rivers occur within the project location. However, Jacks Creek is approximately 0.13 miles from the proposed facility.

Air Quality

Air quality in a given area is described by the concentration of various pollutants in the atmosphere. National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are established by the U.S. EPA for criteria pollutants (ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, and particulate matter). These standards are generally expected to be met under the existing conditions in the area. Air quality in the project area is considered good due to the rural setting and distance from any affecting sources. Consequently, ambient pollutant concentrations have rarely been monitored. The nearest monitoring stations are located in Boise where particulate matter (PM10) and CO are of concern. Recent monitoring in the Treasure Valley area show two new pollutants of concern – fine particulate (PM2.5) and ozone. The BLM would meet or exceed the NAAQS and the Prevention on Significant Deterioration (PSD) regulations with all authorized actions.

The IDEQ has the primary responsibility to carry out the requirements of the Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) in Idaho. The primary mechanism for implementation is known as the State Implementation Plan, which EPA requires each state to prepare.

The CAA also establishes a national goal of preventing any further degradation or impairment of visibility within federally designated attainment areas. Attainment areas are classified as Class I, II, or III and are subject to the PSD program. Class I areas include some national wilderness areas and national parks. Class III status is assigned to attainment areas to allow maximum industrial growth while maintaining compliance with NAAQS. All other attainment areas are designated Class II.

As of March 16, 2016, all areas in Owyhee County are identified as attainment areas. There are no non-attainment or maintenance areas. Lands within Owyhee County are designated as Class II, which allows moderate deterioration associated with moderate, well controlled industrial and population growth.

Currently, air quality parameters are in compliance and exceeding federal and State standards due to a lack of emission sources throughout much of the area based on its rural setting.

Cultural/Paleontological Resources

No cultural inventory has been completed by the BLM within the project area. A site visit and inventory will be conducted prior to completion of the NEPA document and issuance of any decision.

Alternative A – Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is to construct, operate, and maintain a STH facility for a maximum of 3,500 WHB on 80 acres of private land owned by the contractor just off of Highway 78 on Jacks Creek Road, in Owyhee County, near Bruneau, Idaho. The STH facility would:

- provide pens, feed, salt, minerals and water necessary for maintaining a maximum of 3,500 WHB;
- corrals and adequate facilities to load, unload, prepare, and sort WHB;
- provide humane care of all WHB during receiving, holding, and preparation, and prior to shipment to long-term holding, sale or adoption;
- provide regular, on-the-ground observation of WHB to ascertain their well-being and safety;
- and provide management by individuals who are knowledgeable and experienced about the behavior and nutritional requirements of equines.

The corrals and working facility would be constructed of stout pipe, at least 72" high, and free of protrusions and hazards. Gates will be constructed of similar material and at the same height as the fences. Slopes within the pens shall provide for adequate drainage. Pens would allow for a maximum of 100 WHB per pen. Each pen would allow 700 square feet per animal, or about 70,000 square feet per pen. Separate corrals at the facility would be available for confining lame or sick animals needing special care. Once constructed, the pens would be cleaned and proper dust abatement would be required at the direction of the BLM authorized officer.

A perimeter fence at least 48 inches in height would be provided around the facility in the event a WHB escapes from an individual pen. Entry gates would have the ability to be locked during non-work hours to provide for WHB safety. Feed (grass/alfalfa hay) would be stored in quantities appropriate to the number of WHB on site at all times. No ground hay or feed products will be used as feed for these animals. Some animals may require grass hay or additional feed. Processed hay (cubes, chopped, pelleted or other processed) would need to be approved by the COR/PI. Animals would be fed daily. Granulated, rock, or block salt would be accessible to all WHB in each pen. Minerals necessary to maintain WHB in good condition would be provided to WHB in each pen as a supplement or added to the salt. An inventory of WHB kept at the site would be maintained. WHB would be observed daily. Any remains would be disposed of in accordance with State or local sanitation laws.

County building permits in addition to all other required permits would be the responsibility of the contractor. The contractor would be responsible for obtaining the necessary permits required for a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) from the State of Idaho and for the

construction and maintenance of any infrastructure associated with the CAFO permit. Each pen would have a reliable water source capable of supplying a minimum of 16 gallons of clean water per animal, per day.

Preliminary Resource Issues

- This will be a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation.

Alternative B - No Action

The No Action Alternative would not authorize the holding of WHB at this Simplot Facility.

Decision to be Made

The Idaho Deputy State Director for Resources is the authorized officer responsible for the decision regarding the impacts of funding this project. Based on the results of the NEPA analysis, the Idaho Deputy State Director (Resources) will decide if and under what conditions, stipulations, and terms a short term holding facility would be authorized for operation.

Attachments

Map 1 – Overall Site Location



Map 2 – Site Overview

