



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Boise District Office

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<http://www.id.blm.gov/offices/boise>



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This letter summarizes a proposal to capture, treat adult mares with the Porcine Zona Pellucid (PZP-22) fertility control vaccine, and release adult wild horses back onto the Black Mountain and Hardtrigger Herd Management Areas (HMAs) - please see attached map.

We are mandated to create or maintain a thriving, natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship in wild horse HMAs, consistent with the provisions of Section 3(b)(2) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WFRHBA). The BLM does this by maintaining wild horse numbers within appropriate management levels (AML) for each HMA. The AMLs for Black Mountain and Hardtrigger HMAs in the Owyhee Field Office were set at 30 to 60 and 66 to 130, respectively in the 1999 Owyhee Resource Management Plan.

Nationwide, there are more wild horses and burros on public lands than can “achieve and maintain a natural ecological balance.” To maintain appropriate herd numbers and to reduce the need for long-term pastures nationwide, the BLM must manage each of its HMAs to slow population growth. Administering a fertility control vaccine is a federally-approved method to slow population growth, maintain population size within the AML, extend the time between removal gathers and reduce the amount of excess animals nationally.

In the past, the BLM has maintained wild horse numbers using removal gathers. Where AMLs were exceeded prior to gathers, the potential existed for conditions in HMAs to not meet the thriving, natural ecological balance mandate. Although adoption efforts have been very successful, supply often exceeds demand and surplus wild horses must be housed in long-term pastures.

A capture, treat and release program is being proposed in the Black Mountain and Hardtrigger HMAs to help proactively meet national Wild Horse and Burro program objectives. Wild horses would be gathered in November 2010 using a helicopter drive capture method. Approximately 160 horses would be gathered. Adult mares (approximately 64) would be treated onsite with PZP-22 to help slow population growth. Adult horses (approximately 140), including all treated mares, would be released back into the HMAs. Horses found outside the HMAs and foals up to 1 year old (approximately 20-50) would be removed to ensure their welfare (i.e. prevent orphaning a foal from a mare or a young weaned foal from a herd). If horses are injured during the gather, they would be taken to the BLM facility for treatment. Removed horses would be offered for adoption or placed in a long-term pasture depending on their age and condition.

The BLM will be evaluating this proposal in an Environmental Assessment (EA). A preliminary EA will be sent to interested publics in July 2010 with an estimated completion of a final EA in August 2010. The Boise District is requesting comments on the proposed action, possible alternatives and issues that you feel should be addressed in the EA. Comments would be most helpful if they are directly relevant to the proposal and project area and are received as soon as possible so that they can be incorporated.

Comments will be accepted:

- Through the BLM NEPA web page (https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do) (locate the project by searching under State = Idaho, Office = ID - Owyhee FO, Document Type = EA, and Fiscal Year = 2010, then follow the instructions under How to Get Involved);
- Via email (Owyhee_Wildhorse_Capture@blm.gov) with the project title in the subject line; or
- Via US mail at the address listed below.

Please identify whether comments are submitted as an individual or the designated spokesperson for 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:

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