



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

High Desert District
Rock Springs Field Office
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901-3447
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In Reply Refer To:
4700 (WYD04)

MAR 22 2016

Scoping Statement Checkerboard Wild Horse Removal

Description of Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rock Springs Field Office proposes to remove all wild horses from the checkerboard lands within and outside of the Great Divide Basin, Salt Wells Creek, and Adobe Town Herd Management Areas (HMAs) (maps attached).

The BLM shall conduct the removal of all wild horses from the checkerboard within the HMAs, as provided in Section 4 of the Wild and Free Roaming Wild Horse and Burros Act of 1971 (WHA), 16 U.S.C. §1334 and by regulation, 43 CFR 4720.2, and the consent decree entered by the U.S. District Court on April 3, 2013, in *Rock Springs Grazing Association v. Salazar*, Civ. No. 11-263-NDF (2013 Consent Decree). Wild horses in HMAs in the BLM solid block lands would not be gathered.

The most recent population surveys were conducted April 13-29, 2015 resulting an estimated population, of approximately 232 adult wild horses in checkerboard lands within the Great Divide Basin HMA, approximately 242 adult wild horses in checkerboard lands within the Salt Wells Creek HMA and approximately 26 adult wild horses in the Adobe Town HMA. The wild horse populations on the checkerboard lands exceed the limits set forth in the 2013 Consent Decree, therefore triggering their removal.

The 2013 Consent Decree provides in part:

Paragraph 1: “Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. §1334, BLM agrees to remove all wild horses located on RSGA’s private lands, including Wyoming Checkerboard lands, with the exception of those wild horses found within the White Mountain Herd Management Area (HMA), in accordance with the schedule set forth in paragraph 5.”

Paragraph 4: “...If BLM determines, based on the results of any census and on projected reproduction rates, that the population in the Checkerboard lands is likely to exceed 200 wild horses for Salt Wells/Adobe Town Areas combined or 100 wild horses for Divide Basin, the BLM shall prepare to remove the wild horses from Checkerboard lands within the respective area...”

The removal operations would include helicopter drive trapping. This capture method utilizes a helicopter to herd wild horses into a temporary trap. Gathering is anticipated to start on or about October 10, 2016.

Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents

The proposed action is in conformance with the Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved on August 8, 1997 and Rawlins RMP approved on December 24, 2008. Management objectives for wild horses include providing for the protection of the rangeland resource, while maintaining a self-sustaining, healthy population of wild horses on the public land in those areas where horses existed at the time the WHA (1971). Wild horse HMAs were established and confirmed through the RMP planning process.

The proposed action is also in compliance with the 2013 Consent Decree.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

To comply with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, the BLM is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for the removal. The EA will serve several purposes. It will provide both the public and governmental agencies with information about the potential environmental consequences of the project and alternatives; identify measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the project and alternatives; and provide the responsible official with information upon which to make an informed decision regarding the project and whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or finding of no significant impact. The EA will be prepared by an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource specialists.

Scoping is an essential element of the NEPA process when preparing an environmental impact statement. Under Department of the Interior NEPA regulations (43 CFR 46.305), the BLM may elect to apply a scoping process when preparing an EA, although it is not required. Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to: identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated, identify environmental issues of concern related to the proposed project, determine the depth of analysis for issues addressed in the environmental document, and identify potential mitigation.

This scoping statement has been prepared to describe means by which the general public, governmental agencies, and other interested parties may participate in and contribute to the analysis process. Public input is important in establishing the scope of analysis for any NEPA document, and the BLM encourages public participation.

Timing Requirements

The public is encouraged to participate throughout the EA process. However, in order for your comments to be most useful, **scoping comments are due by April 22, 2016.**

Please note that public comments submitted for this scoping review, including names, e-mail addresses, and street addresses of the respondents will be available for public review and disclosure at the address below during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Please submit your comments to:

Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
BLM Rock Springs Field Office
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901
Fax: (307) 352-0329

Electronic comments must be sent to the following email address to be considered:

blm_wy_checkerboard_hmas@blm.gov

(Please include "Checkerboard Scoping Statement Comments" in the subject line.)

Public comments are most helpful if they are specific. The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1503.3) state that comments on a proposed action "shall be as specific as possible and may address either the adequacy of the statement or the merits of the alternatives discussed or both." The most valuable comments are those that cite specific actions or impacts in the document and offer informed analysis of what is presented.

This scoping statement and all other future documents corresponding with this action will be posted on the BLM Wyoming website at:

[http:// www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/rsfo/Checkerboard.html](http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/rsfo/Checkerboard.html)

The website can be accessed by the general public.

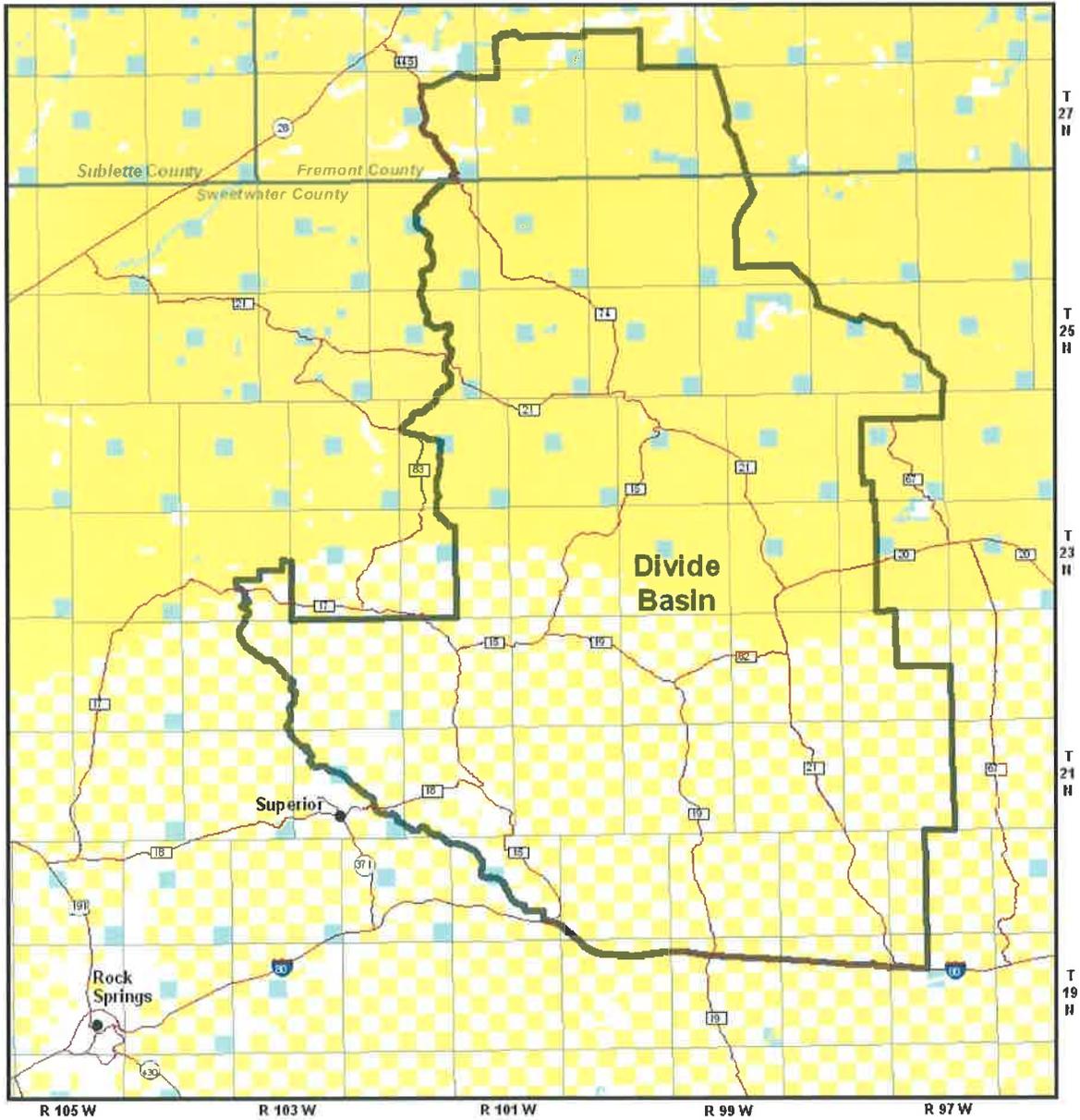
Sincerely,



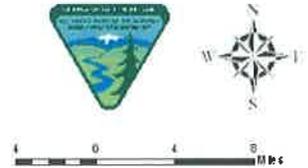
Kimberlee D. Foster
Field Manager

Enclosure: Map

cc: Interested Public



- Divide Basin Herd Management Area**
-  Herd Management Area Boundary
 -  Bureau of Land Management
 -  Private
 -  State



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for use of the data for purposes not intended by BLM

Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Areas

