



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Wyoming High Desert District
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901-3447



APR 6 2016

In Reply Refer To:
4700 (WYD03)

Scoping Statement
Adobe Town Herd Management Area
Population Management Action

Description of Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Rawlins Field Office (RFO), proposes to conduct the removal of wild horses from the Adobe Town Herd Management Area (HMA) as provided in Section 3 of the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WHA), 16 U.S.C. § 1333, and by regulation 43 CFR 4720.1, and the April 3, 2013 Consent Decree entered in the *Rock Springs Grazing Association v. Salazar*, Civ. No. 11-263-NDF (D. Wyo.) (2013 Consent Decree: <http://bit.ly/BLMWYWHBProgram>).

Consistent with the 2013 Consent Decree, the BLM conducted population surveys in April 2015. The census data from this survey statistically estimated that there are approximately 858 wild horses within the Adobe Town HMA, which exceeds the appropriate management level (AML) of 610-800 wild horses. Additional census flights will be conducted in April 2016. AML's identified in the approved Rawlins Resource Management Plan (RMP) will be maintained after this gather.

The wild horse population is expected to increase by approximately 20-percent each year. Accounting for the 2015 and 2016 foaling seasons, the population is estimated to be 1,235 wild horses by July of 2016.

Consistent with the 2013 Consent Decree, the BLM, RFO, proposes to gather excess wild horses from the Adobe Town HMA (see enclosed map). The project will remove horses to the low AML range, and utilize a fertility control vaccine to reduce future population growth. In addition, the BLM proposes to conduct a research study in conjunction with the University of Wyoming in the Adobe Town HMA.

The research project would entail placing approximately 15-40 radio collars on mares returned to the HMA. The radio collar research will allow the BLM to learn about habitat selection, seasonal use and movement between habitats, and migration patterns within, and outside of, the HMA. Prior to collaring any wild horses, an animal care and use protocol for collaring will need to be approved by the University of Wyoming Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee for

review by a panel of veterinarians and animal welfare officials. The project will also need approval by the Wild Horse and Burro Division Chief before collars could be placed on wild horses. The gather and removal of wild horses from the Adobe Town HMA could occur in conjunction with, or independent of, the proposed research project.

The gather operations will include helicopter drive trapping due to the large size of the HMA (over 445,000 acres). This capture method utilizes a helicopter to herd wild horses into a temporary trap. Gathering is anticipated to start on, or about, November 1, 2016, on the Adobe Town HMA only. The Adobe Town HMA is adjacent to the Salt Wells Creek HMA. These two HMAs have been managed as a complex in the past, but for this project, they will be managed separately.

Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents

The proposed action is in conformance with the RMP approved on December 24, 2008, and the Green River RMP approved on August 8, 1997, as amended. 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 was passed (1971). Wild horse HMAs were established and confirmed through the RMP planning process.

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

National Environmental Policy Act

To comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, the BLM is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed gather. 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 (EIS) 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 EIS. 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 none is 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 the 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 May 6, 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
Bureau of Land Management
Wyoming High Desert District
Rawlins Field Office
1300 North Third Street
P.O. Box 2407
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301
Fax: (307) 324-4224

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

blm_wy_adobetown_hma@blm.gov

(Please include “**Adobe Town Scoping Comment**” in the subject line.)

Public comments are most helpful if they are specific. The 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 future documents corresponding with this action will be posted on the BLM Wyoming e-planning website at:

<http://bit.ly/AdobeTownGather>

The website can be accessed by the general public. The EA will be posted to this site after scoping comments from the public are reviewed and incorporated. The EA is anticipated to be available in the spring of 2016. In addition, you may obtain a paper copy of the EA from the RFO at the address shown above.

If you have any questions, please contact the BLM, RFO, at the address shown above, or telephone (307) 328-4200.

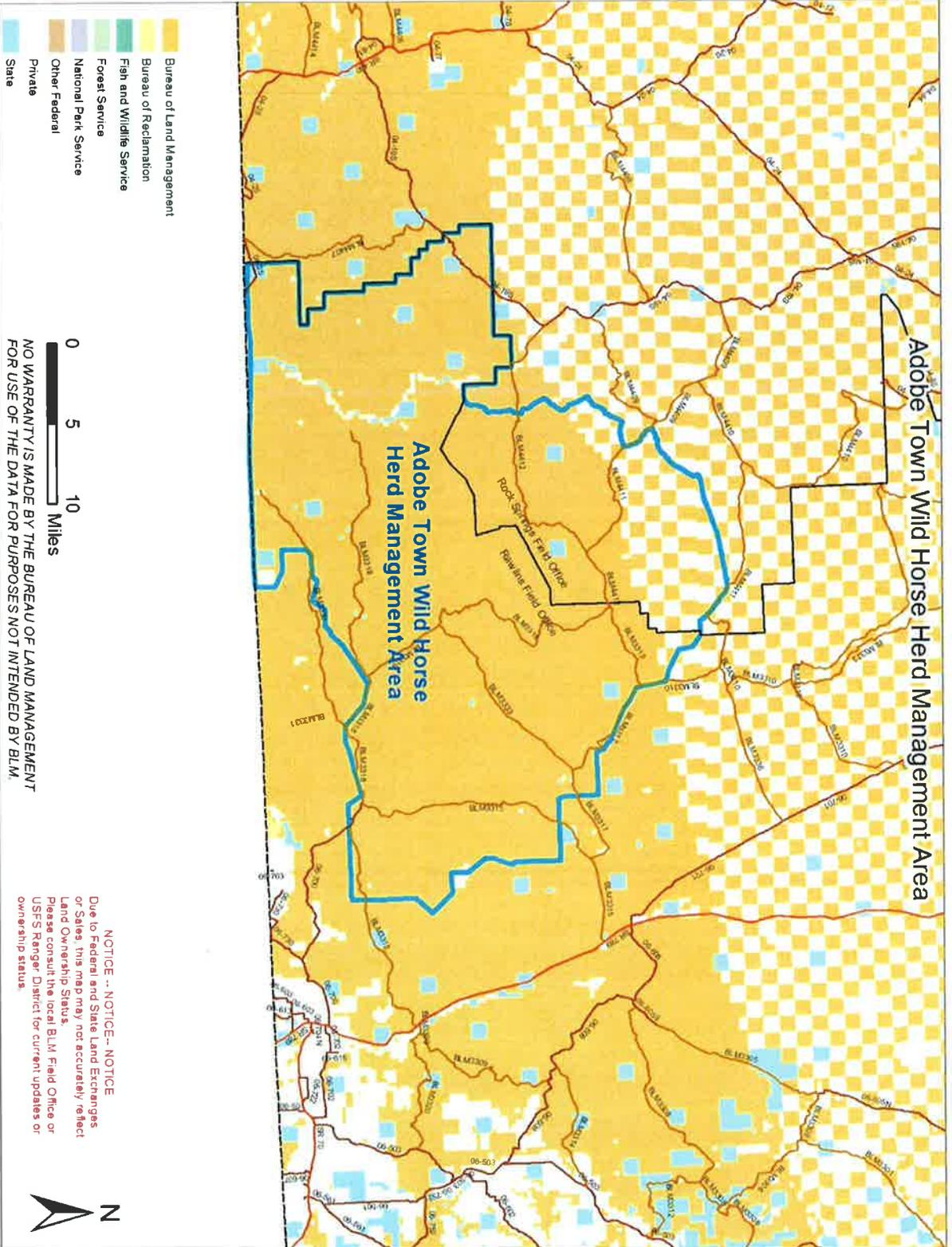
Sincerely,



Dennis J. Carpenter
Field Manager

1 - Enclosure:
1 - Map

cc: Interested Public



- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Other Federal
- Private
- State



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 Due to Federal and State Land Exchanges or Sales, this map may not accurately reflect Land Ownership Status.
 Please consult the local BLM Field Office or USFS Ranger District for current updates or ownership status.

