



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Wind River/Big Horn Basin District
Lander Field Office
1335 Main Street
Lander, WY 82520
www.blm.gov/wy

In Reply Refer To:
4700 (WYR050)

December 19, 2016

Scoping Notice

for Gathering of Wild Horses in the North Lander Complex (Conant Creek, Dishpan Butte, Muskrat Basin, and Rock Creek Mountain Wild Horse Herd Management Areas)

Fertility Control Application and Removal of Excess Wild Horses

Description of Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lander Field Office proposes to gather wild horses from the North Lander Complex of herd management areas (HMAs) including: Conant Creek, Dishpan Butte, Muskrat Basin and Rock Creek Mountain and any wild horses that have strayed outside one of these HMAs but are within the immediate geographic area (south of Hwy 136 north of Hwy 287 and within 10 miles of the complex boundary). The appropriate management level (AML) for each HMA within the complex is shown in the table below.

HMA	Low AML	High AML
Conant Creek	60	100
Dishpan Butte	50	100
Muskrat Basin	160	250
Rock Creek Mountain	50	85
Complex Total:	320	535

The proposed operation would include gathering wild horses and conducting fertility control treatments on the population. Population surveys were conducted in August 2016 and the current estimated population is 1026 individuals. The proposed gather would seek to remove horses to reduce populations to the low AML. Additionally, any mares returned to the complex would be treated with fertility control vaccine to slow population growth, maintain population size within the AML, and to extend the time period before another gather would be needed.

The gather operation would include helicopter drive trapping. This capture method utilizes a helicopter to herd and trap wild horses. The gather may also utilize bait and water trapping where

applicable and appropriate. Gathering is anticipated to start in the fall of 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents

The proposed action is in conformance with the Lander Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved on June 26, 2014, and the established AMLs. Wild horse HMAs were established or confirmed through the Lander RMP planning processes.

This action is needed to slow population growth, maintain population size within the AML, manage wild horses within the management areas designated for management and extend the time before another gather would be needed. By maintaining population size within the AML, rangeland resources would be sustained and protected from the deterioration associated with wild horse overpopulation. This strategy ensures a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship on public lands in the area and is consistent with the provisions of Section 3(b)(2) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971(WFRHBA).

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

To comply with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, which implement NEPA, the BLM will prepare an environmental assessment (EA). This document 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 all practicable means 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. The EA will be prepared by an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource specialists.

One essential element of the NEPA process is scoping. Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to: identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental analysis; identify environmental issues of concern related to the proposed gather; determine the depth of analysis for issues addressed in the environmental document; and identify potential mitigation.

Known resource issues or potential conflicts include: recreational activities such as hunting, wildlife and wild horse viewing; special status plant species; wildlife, and special status wildlife species; historic trails; oil and gas drilling and uranium mining and utility construction; fertility control vaccine; and livestock grazing.

This scoping notice has been prepared to describe means by which governmental agencies, the general public, 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

Substantive comments on the proposed operation are due by January 31, 2017.

Please email your comments to:

wy_north_lander_gather@blm.gov

Comments may also be mailed or hand delivered to:

Mr. Clay Stott
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
BLM Lander Field Office
1335 Main Street
Lander, Wyoming 82520
(307) 332-8400

This scoping notice and all other future documents corresponding with this action will be posted on the BLM's ePlanning site at:

http://bit.ly/2017_North_Lander_Gather

The website can be accessed by the general public. The EA will be posted to this site and there will be a 30-day comment period at that time. You may obtain a paper copy of these documents by contacting the BLM Lander Field Office at the address or telephone number listed above.

Sincerely,

Rick Vander Voet
Field Manager

Enclosure:

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cc: Interested Publics