

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

---

**Finding of No Significant Impacts  
DOI-BLM-UT-W010-2017-0009-EA**

---

**December 2018**

**Onaqui Mountain Herd Management Area  
Population Control**

***Location:*** Townships 6-11 South, Ranges 5-9 West, multiple sections, Salt Lake Meridian, Tooele County, Utah.

***Applicant/Address:*** Not Applicable.

Salt Lake Field Office  
2370 South Decker Lake Boulevard  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84119  
Phone: (801) 977-4300  
Fax: (801) 977-4397

Salt Lake Field Office



## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

### DOI-BLM-UT-W010-2017-0009-EA

#### Onaqui Mountain Herd Management Area Population Control

##### Background

The Salt Lake Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has completed the Onaqui Mountain Herd Management Area (HMA) Population Control Environmental Assessment (EA), serialized as DOI-BLM-UT-W010-2017-0009-EA. The EA and other supporting documents are included on BLM's NEPA Register at <https://go.usa.gov/xP2ag>.

The project would implement a long-term population control plan for the Onaqui Mountain Herd Management Area (HMA). This plan would implement initial and follow-up gathers of excess wild horses within and adjacent to the HMA via trapping (bait/water) and/or helicopter methods. It also implements the use of fertility control vaccinations (*Porcine zona pellucida* (PZP) and GonaCon-Equine, or other approved formulations) on mares.

The purpose and need for this action is described in Section 1.3 of the EA. Generally, the BLM seeks to accomplish the following objectives with this project:

1. achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationships on the public lands consistent with the provisions of Section 1333 (a) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.
2. maintain the greater sage-grouse Sheeprock population; and
3. achieve and maintain rangeland health within the HMA.

The HMA is located in Tooele County, Utah, near the Juab County line and covers 205,394 acres containing private, State of Utah, and BLM-managed lands. Department of Defense lands occur immediately adjacent to the HMA, which horses do utilize.

The EA, Scoping Report, and Comment Reports are available on the NEPA Register, and are incorporated by reference for this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). In preparing this EA, the BLM developed and carried forward for detailed analysis three alternatives [A – Proposed Action; B – Alternative B (GonaCon-Equine Vaccine/Sterilization); and Alternative C (No Action/Use PZP only)]. The BLM also considered but eliminated from detailed analysis fifteen alternatives. These alternatives included:

1. No Gathers or Maintenance Activities within the HMA
2. Adjustments to HMA or HA Boundaries
3. Relocate Bands to New Locations
4. Adjustments to AML Numbers
5. Reductions/Closures in Livestock Grazing
6. Increase PZP Treatments
7. Designate a National Wild Horse Range
8. Promote Equine Therapy Program
9. Research Program
10. Use of Bait and/or Water Trapping Only

11. Gathering at the High End AML
12. Control of Wild Horse Numbers by Natural Means
13. Make Individualized Excess Wild Horse Determinations Prior to Removal
14. Use of Alternative Capture Techniques Instead of Helicopter Capture
15. Fencing to Exclude Wild Horses from Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat

Refer to the EA, Scoping Report, and Comment Report for a discussion/description of each alternative and the rationale for not considering them in detail in the EA. Based on public comments, the BLM reconsidered sterilization (spaying and neutering) and added this as a component to Alternative B, which originally only considered the use of the GonaCon-Equine vaccination.

### **Finding Of No Significant Impact**

Based on my review of EA and supporting documents prepared for the Onaqui Mountain Herd Management Area Population Control project and consideration of the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that Alternative A, with the addition of the use of GonaCon-Equine as analyzed in Alternative B, will not result in significant impacts on the human environment and an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required.

This population control plan is not a major federal action and it will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. None of the environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the Final EIS prepared for the Pony Express Resource Management Plan (RMP), as amended by the Decision Record issued for Wild Horse Appropriate Management Level and Herd Management Area/Herd Boundary Environmental Assessment (UT-020-2002-100) (February 2003) and the Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments for the Great Basin Region, Including the Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions of Idaho and Southwestern Montana, Nevada and Northeastern California, Oregon, and Utah (September 2015) and its Attachment 4 (ARMPA).

This finding is based on the context and intensity of impacts as identified in the EA and as detailed below.

### **Context**

The population control plan is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 240,153 acres (205,394 acres managed by BLM) that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The vegetation and setting is typical of the Basin and Range Province of the western United States. This HMA remains as a popular area for wild horse enthusiasts due to its location in Utah near to the populated areas of the Wasatch Front. Social media and wild horse photographers have popularized this herd and have helped create world-wide audiences.

In Utah, the BLM manages 19 HMAs and the combined AML for all HMAs in the state is 1,956 animals. The Onaqui Mountain HMA is one of these 19 HMAs. Each HMA is unique in its terrain features, local climate, and natural resources, just as each herd is unique in its history, genetic heritage, coloring, and size distribution. The Onaqui Mountain HMA will continue as an integral part of the BLM's wild horse and burro program.

Given the limited and site specific context of the proposed action, the significance of the proposed action depends on the effects in the project area and immediate locale (43 CFR §1508.27(a)). As demonstrated below, the intensity of the proposed action's adverse impact is minimal. Consequently, the context and intensity of the proposed action do not rise to the level of "significance" as defined by CEQ.

### **Intensity**

Intensity refers to the severity of impact. The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into resources and issues considered (includes supplemental authorities Appendix 1, H-1790-1) and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations, and Executive Orders:

#### **1. Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.**

The population control plan would impact resources as described in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of the EA. Standard operating procedures and protective measures to reduce impacts to wild horses, air quality, cultural resources, fuels/fire management, invasive species/noxious weeds, lands/access, migratory birds, greater sage-grouse, soils/vegetation, special status species (plant/animal), travel/transportation, wastes, water resources/quality, wetlands/riparian zones/floodplains, wildlife and livestock grazing were incorporated in the design of the action alternatives. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA and associated appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the Pony Express RMP Final EIS or the ARMPA Final EIS.

#### **2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.**

Public health and safety was addressed in Section 2.2.1 of the EA. The potential for risks to public health and safety would be low, however, if they occurred, would occur over limited, brief periods. Specifically, during gather operations, traffic utilizing local roads will be properly managed (including temporary closures) to ensure public and visitor safety around wild horses, equipment, and helicopters. Crews and contractors will notify the BLM of any fires and comply with all rules and regulations administered by the BLM concerning the use, prevention and suppression of fires on federal lands, including any fire prevention orders that may be in effect at the time of the permitted activity. Solid or liquid materials brought to public land to support aspects of this plan, will be stored in original containers, used as per manufacturer's directions, and removed from the site as soon as is practicable or at the conclusion of the gather/maintenance activities. Wastes will not be disposed of on site.

#### **3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.**

There are no unique characteristics of the project area. Although not "unique," priority habitat for greater sage-grouse exists within the project area. The EA analyzed impacts to greater sage-grouse and determined that the proposed action would not have a material adverse effect on this species. Additionally, the following components of the Human Environment and Resource Issues, although present, would not be affected by this project for the reasons listed in Appendix C of the EA.

Air Quality, Cultural Resources, Environmental Justice, Farmlands (Prime or Unique), Fuels/Fire Management, Geology / Mineral Resources/ Energy Production, Greenhouse Gas

Emissions, Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds (EO 13112), Lands/Access, Livestock Grazing, National Historic Trails, Native American Religious Concerns, Paleontology, Property Boundary Evaluation, Socio-Economics, Threatened, Endangered, Candidate or Special Status Plant Species, Travel/ Transportation, Visual Resources, Wastes, Water Resources/ Quality (drinking/surface/ ground), Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, and Woodland / Forestry

The following components of the Human Environment and Resource Issues are not affected because they are not present in the project area:

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Fish Habitat, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness/Wilderness Study Areas.

The following components of the Human Environment and Resource Issues were analyzed in detail in the EA at Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

Wild Horses, Migratory Birds, Recreation, Greater Sage Grouse Habitat, Threatened, Endangered, Candidate or Special Status Animal Species, Soils and Vegetation Excluding Special Status Species, Wetlands/ Riparian Zones &/floodplains, and Wildlife Excluding Special Status Species.

Standard operating procedures and protective measures were developed and included to minimize impacts to these resources. The historic/cultural and biological resources of the area have been inventoried and potential impacts have been limited. Locations for new traps or facilities would be culturally and biologically cleared prior to use.

**4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.**

Controversy means disagreement about the nature of the effects of the proposed action, not expressions of opposition to the proposed action or preference among alternatives. The most common controversies identified through scoping were relating to using PZP as the only population control strategy, the appropriate number of horses to remove, and suggestions that the effects of GonaCon-Equine are unknown. Each of these topics is addressed in the EA, and are not considered highly controversial in terms of the nature of the effects

Fertility control measures including vaccinations and sterilizations are commonplace among domestic horses. The gathers and vaccinations are a common practice in the management of wild horses on public lands. The nature of the activities and the resulting impacts are understood and have been analyzed and disclosed to the public through supporting NEPA documents, including this EA.

**5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.**

The population control plan is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects to the human environment are analyzed in Chapter 4 of the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Helicopter and bait/water and trapping are not new methods of capturing wild horses and have been successfully completed for decades. There are no uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment associated with these capture methods. Fertility control vaccines may involve some

controversy, but there are no uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment associated with their application.

**6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

The decision is compatible with future consideration of action required to manage wild horses. The population control plan does not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Significant effects are not predicted. A complete analysis of the effects of the selected alternative and the other alternatives is described in Chapter 4 of the EA.

**7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.**

The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. The population control plan is not related to other actions within individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impact, and any additive, countervailing, and/or synergistic interactions do not result in significant cumulative impacts. A complete disclosure of effects of the selected alternative and the other alternatives is described in Chapter 4 of the EA.

**8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.**

The population control plan will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. A Class III inventory (U18BL0494) has been completed for the plan and consultation with SHPO has been completed in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

**9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.**

Although one listed species (western yellow-billed cuckoo) and 22 sensitive species potentially occupy habitat within the HMA or at gather sites or temporary holding facilities, it has been determined that they will not be affected because the project area is small and is unlikely to provide habitat for these species.

The area affected by gather sites and temporary holding facilities would be relatively small. Sites used for gather sites and temporary holding facilities are typically low value habitat because of proximity to high use areas, such as roads, stock ponds, and troughs, and the resulting degradation of habitat due to compaction, trampling, and vegetation removal. In addition, sites and facilities would be surveyed for sensitive species and their habitats prior to construction of each site or facility. Project activities would be relocated to avoid listed/sensitive species occurrences or spatial buffers would be placed around active nest/den/burrow/roost sites where project activities would not be allowed until the sites were no longer active.

The BLM received technical assistance and informally consulted with the Fish and Wildlife Service Utah Field Office regarding the effects of this proposed action. The BLM determined that the project would have no effect to listed or proposed species.

**10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.**

The project does not violate any known federal, state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process.

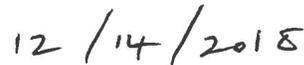
Letters were sent to Native American tribes inviting them to consult on this project. Concerns were not received or expressed by the Native American tribes (EA at Section 5.2). The BLM invited Federal, State, and County governments to participate as cooperating agencies in preparing this EA. The results of this process are summarized in the EA at Sections 5.2 and 5.4.

**Signed**



---

Matt Preston  
Salt Lake Field Manager



---

Date