

Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) Worksheet

DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2021-00XX-DNA

U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

OFFICE: Tonopah Field Office

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER:

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: Stone Cabin Herd Management Area (HMA) Emergency Gather

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: The Stone Cabin HMA is located approximately 30 miles east of Tonopah, NV in Nye County. The Stone Cabin HMA is 48 miles long, stretching north and south through the extent of Stone Cabin Valley. The area consists of 402,567 acres of BLM land and 5,139 acres of a mix of private and other public lands for a total of 407,706 acres. The Stone Cabin HMA Emergency Gather pertains only to the portion of the HMA north of US Highway 6 (Stone Cabin North).

APPLICANT: BLM

A. Description of Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures.

The Proposed Action is to capture and permanently remove 450 wild horses within the northern half of the BLM-managed Stone Cabin Herd Management Area (HMA) as a result of exceptional drought conditions that exist in the HMA. Water resources are relatively limited in the HMA and consist primarily of developed and undeveloped springs. Due to ongoing drought, forage is severely reduced or non-existent in the HMA, creating a situation of declining animal health.

The Tonopah Field Office plans to gather and remove 450 wild horses through bait and water trapping. Gather operations will begin on or around August 19, 2021, depending on conditions. Bait and water traps will be placed in an estimated four locations throughout the northern half of the HMA: Gather operations will last until objectives are met, or until conditions change (such as weather patterns) which preclude continued successful trapping. Gather operations will be conducted in accordance with the Wild Horse and Burro Program's Comprehensive Animal Welfare Policy (CAWP) Instruction Memorandum (PIM 2021-002). Due to the nature of bait and water trap gathers, the public is not allowed to be on-site for gather activities.

The Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the Stone Cabin HMA is 364 wild horses. The AML for the northern portion of the HMA is 182. A helicopter inventory flight was completed July 24-25, 2021. At that time, 552 wild horses were identified in the northern portion of the Stone Cabin gather area which included 75 foals. The most recent gather was completed in 2016.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

LUP Name	Tonopah Resource Management Plan	Date Approved:	October 1997
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The Proposed Action is in conformance with the *Tonopah Resource Management Plan (RMP)*, approved October 1997 and consistent with the following RMP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions):

- To create healthy, productive rangelands through implementation of ongoing rangeland monitoring and evaluation program;
- To improve the condition of public rangelands to enhance the productivity for all rangeland values;
- To manage wild horse and/or burro populations within HMAs at levels which will preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance consistent with other multiple-use objectives;
- Manage Wild horses and/or burros at appropriate management level (AML);
- Assure sufficient water and forage exists for wild horses and/or burros in HMA's;
- When the AML is exceeded, remove excess wild horses and/or burros to a point which may allow up to three years of population increase before again reaching the appropriate management level;
- Manage the vegetation resource for the desired plant communities;
- Manage for proper functioning condition on all streamside riparian areas, and all springs, seeps, wet meadows, and other riparian areas in the Tonopah Planning Area;
- Habitat for all federally listed threatened and endangered species or Nevada BLM Sensitive Species (plant and animal) will be managed to maintain or increase current populations of these species.

C. Identify applicable NEPA documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

Name of Document: Stone Cabin Complex Wild Horse Gather Plan and Final Environmental Assessment

Document No.: DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2011-0106-EA

Date of Approval: December 2011

Name of Document: Reveille Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather Plan Final Environmental Assessment

Document No.: DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2020-0006-EA

Date of Approval: January 2020

List by name and date other documentation relevant to the Proposed Action (e.g., biological

assessment, biological opinion, watershed assessment, allotment evaluation, and monitoring report).

- Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
- Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978
- Field Report for Stone Cabin HMA June and July 2021
- Taylor Grazing Act of 1934

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?

Yes. The current Proposed Action, the gathering and removal of wild horses and burros from the Stone Cabin HMA is described and analyzed in the Stone Cabin Complex Wild Horse Gather Plan and Final Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2011-0106-EA. The EA analyzes the effects of trapping and removing wild horse from the HMA. While the EA analyzed trapping with a helicopter, that method has greater potential impacts on wild horses during the trapping process than bait and water trapping, and therefore the impacts of bait and water trapping fall within those analyzed in the EA. The effects of bait and water trapping are further described and analyzed in the Reveille Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather Plan Final Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2020-0006-EA. The Reveille HMA borders the Stone Cabin HMA, so the affected environment and potential impacts are similar.

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource value?

Yes, the range of alternatives analyzed in existing NEPA document(s) for the gathering of excess wild horse and burros remains appropriate with respect to the current Proposed Action.

Since the completion of the Stone Cabin Complex EA in 2011 and the Reveille EA in 2020, there are no new environmental concerns, interests resource values or circumstances identified that would require additional alternatives to be developed.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessments, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

Yes. The existing analysis covers the gathering and removal of excess wild horse and burros from within and outside the established boundaries of the Stone Cabin HMA. The Field Report for Stone Cabin HMA, which was prepared in June and July 2021, documents that excess wild horses are impacted by drought conditions occurring in the HMA. Further documentation was obtained through completion of an inventory flight on July 24-25, 2021.

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

Yes. The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects for the current Proposed Action are similar to those identified in both the Stone Cabin and the Reveille EAs. The EAs sufficiently analyzed all affected resources related to the implementation of the current Proposed Action, including the gather and removal of wild horses.

5. Are there public involvement and interagency reviews associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Yes. The public involvement and interagency review associated with the Stone Cabin and EA is adequate for the current Proposed Action.

Prior to completion of the Stone Cabin EA, a scoping letter dated June 29, 2011 was mailed to 22 individuals, agencies and organizations on the interested public list for the Stone Cabin and Saulsbury HMAs. Among these was the Nevada State Clearinghouse which made the scoping letter available for review by Nevada state agencies. On October 29, 2011, the Tonopah Field Office issued the preliminary Stone Cabin Complex Gather EA along with a notification of its availability for a 30-day review and comment period to the interested public mailing list for the Stone Cabin Complex. The BLM reviewed and considered all comments as it completed the final Stone Cabin Complex Gather EA, including letters both supporting and opposing the gather, as well as numerous form letters.

E. BLM Staff Consulted

Name/Title	Resource Represented	Signature
Aimee Bolinger Wild Horse and Burro Specialist	Wild Horse and Burros	
Shawna Richardson Wild Horse and Burro Specialist	Wild Horse and Burros	
Brandon Crosby Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife	<i>BQC</i>
Cassandra Albush Archaeologist	Cultural Resources	<i>Cassandra J. Albush</i>
Brian Truax Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Management	<i>Brian S. Truax</i>

F. Conclusion

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

Signature of Project Lead

Date _____

Signature of NEPA Coordinator

Date_____

Signature of Responsible Official

Date_____

Note:

See accompanying Decision Record for appeal information.