



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**  
Four Rivers Field Office  
3948 Development Avenue  
Boise, Idaho 83705



**DECISION RECORD**  
**Four Mile Herd Management Area Emergency Gather**  
**DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2024-0048-DNA**  
**8/19/2024**

**I. BACKGROUND**

The Paddock Fire (a lightning caused fire) started on August 5, 2024, and burned approximately 187,185 acres. The entirety of the Four Mile Herd Management Area (HMA) was consumed (Attachment 1). The HMA is 18,800 acres (16,761 BLM acres, 925 acres of State of Idaho (IDL) lands, and 1,114 acres of private land) and is managed by the BLM Four Rivers Field Office. Approximately 52 wild horses are currently on the HMA, which is wholly within the Willow Ridge grazing allotment. The last gather on the Four Mile HMA occurred in September of 2021, when 215 horses were captured out of a total of 226 on the HMA. Prior to that, BLM conducted a gather on the Four Mile HMA in 2009, when 123 horses were captured, 112 horses were removed, and 11 horses were released back into the HMA.

**II. DECISION**

It is my decision, effective upon issuance, that all horses (approximately 52), or as many horses possible, will be gathered and removed from the Four Mile HMA using both the drive-trap and bait/water trapping methods (Attachment 2).

Because the entire area of the Four Mile HMA burned, habitat and forage are extremely lacking in the HMA and 100% removal of wild horses is necessary. It is normally practical to gather 80-90% of the wild horses by drive-trap methods. However, 10-20% of the wild horses could be difficult to capture due to inaccessibility and/or their lack of responsiveness to drive-trap gather methods. If drive-trap operations are not successful in capturing 100% of the wild horses in Four Mile HMA, the BLM will conduct a bait/water capture gather to remove the remaining horses. When this method is used, feed, water, and/or mineral licks will be placed in a temporary trap(s) area to lure wild horses into the trap.

All animals will be shipped to the Boise Off-Range Corrals (ORC) immediately after the gather. They may be shipped to the Bruneau ORC after vaccination and preparation at the Boise ORC. After range conditions have sufficiently recovered from the Paddock Fire (approximately 2 years), horses will be returned to the HMA. Stocking rates will be at the low end of the Appropriate Management Level (AML), which is 37 horses for Four Mile HMA. Any wild horses permanently removed from the HMA (approximately 15 wild horses) will be available for adoption approximately one to two months after the gather. All mares over 2-years old that will be returned to the Four Mile HMA will be treated with a BLM approved fertility control vaccine (PZP or GonaCon).

The initial drive-trap gather will take place between approximately August 25 and September 15, 2024. Bait/water capture of those animals the initial gather does not capture will occur over several months after the initial gather.

Design features are described in Appendix G (Wild Horse Gather SOPs) of the Four Mile HMA – Wild Horse Gather Plan DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2019-0028-EA:

- A BLM Contracting Officer's Representatives (COR) and Project Inspectors (PI) would monitor gathers. The CORs and PIs would be responsible for ensuring contract personnel abide by the contract specifications in the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program (USDI BLM, 2015 - IM No. 2015-151).
  - Population estimates for the HMA would be updated as population surveys are conducted in the future. Genetic monitoring would occur, following gathers and/or trapping, and would be implemented, following IM 2009-062 (USDI BLM 2009), as recommended in the H-4700-1, handbook, and/or future updated policy guidance.
  - In order to maintain/increase genetic diversity (observed heterozygosity) on the Four-Mile HMA, 1-2 young mares from a different HMA in a similar environment, will be released at least every generation (about 10 years), by adding them into the fenced HMA.
  - Fertility control monitoring would be conducted in accordance with the population-level fertility control treatment SOPs in Appendix B and IM 2009-090 (USDI BLM 2009).
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- A BLM contract veterinarian, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) veterinarian, or other licensed veterinarian would be on call or on site as the drive-trap gather is started and then as needed for the duration of the drive-trap gather to examine animals and make recommendations to the BLM for the care and treatment of wild horses to ensure humane treatment.
  - Additionally, animals transported to a BLM ORC are inspected by facility staff and the BLM contract veterinarian to observe health and ensure the animals have been cared for humanely.
  - Monitoring of animal health and rangeland forage condition and utilization as well as aerial population surveys would continue. Aircraft would be used to conduct population inventory flights as needed. Flights would typically occur during the winter months.
  - Data including sex and age distribution, condition class information (using the Henneke rating system), color, size and other information may also be recorded, along with the disposition of the animal (removed or released).
  - Trucks and trailers used to haul wild horses would be inspected prior to use to ensure horses can be safely transported. Wild horses would be segregated by age and sex when possible and loaded into separate compartments. Mares and their un-weaned foals may be shipped

together. Transportation of recently captured wild horses is limited to a maximum of 10 hours.

- Access throughout the HMA would be achieved by use of 4x4 vehicles and other off-highway vehicles (OHVs). Vehicles would be utilized on existing roads and trails in the HMA. On a case-by-case basis, the use of OHVs off existing roads and trails may be allowed for administrative purposes; however, such use shall be made only with the approval of the authorized officer.
- The Comprehensive Animal Welfare Plan (CAWP) established in IM-2015-151 (USDI BLM, 2015) would be followed to ensure safe and humane gathers.
- Only weed-free hay would be used at gather sites.
- BLM would coordinate with the livestock operator at least 30 days prior to initiating gather activities to ensure that gather activities would not disrupt authorized livestock grazing operations.
- BLM would repair any range improvements that are damaged as a result of gather

### **III. CONFORMANCE**

This action is in conformance with the Four Rivers Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) Date Approved: August 2023 and is in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

As discussed in the Four Mile HMA Emergency Gather DNA (DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2024-0048-DNA) the actions included in this decision were adequately analyzed in the Four Rivers Field Office Herd Management Areas Plan (DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2019-0028-EA).

The following criteria have been reviewed and determined to adequately address the action as described in the Determination of NEPA Adequacy for the action:

- a. The action is essentially the same as, the alternative selected and analyzed in the existing document.
- b. The range of alternatives analyzed in the existing EA is appropriate to this project.
- c. The existing analysis is still valid and there has been no new information or circumstances that would substantially change the analysis.
- d. The effects of the action are similar to those identified in the existing document.
- e. Public involvement in the previous analysis is adequate for the action

### **IV. RATIONALE FOR DECISION**

This decision to gather wild horses and apply fertility treatment will provide for the safety of the Four Mile HMA wild horse herd and the maintenance of viable populations in a thriving natural ecological balance as required by the Four Rivers Resource Management Plan and the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 due to the effects of the Paddock Fire that burned 100% of the HMA. This fire severely affected resources that wild horse herds depend upon

including forage, cover, and water. Given the lack of resources on the HMA, the gather will be conducted utilizing drive trapping because it is the quickest and most efficient method for gathering wild horses. Fertility control treatment of mares will reduce population growth, thus resulting in a longer duration before another removal gather is needed.

The Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) is based on the analysis provided in the Proposed Action of the Four Rivers Field Office Herd Management Areas Plan Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2019-0028-EA).

The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this EA and selected alternative, which this Decision incorporates by reference, provides detail regarding the BLM's finding that there will not be significant impacts from implementing this decision. These considerations include beneficial and adverse impacts, effects to public safety, unique characteristics of the affected area, controversy over the effects, uncertain or unknown risks, how this decision affects future actions, its relation to other actions, threatened and endangered species, and regulatory requirements. These considerations did not indicate a significant impact to any affected resources. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

The authority for this Decision is contained in Section 1333(a) of the 1971 Free Roaming Wild Horses and Burros Act as amended, Section 302(b) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 as amended, and Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 4700.0-6(a); 4710.4; 4720.1 (a & b); and 43 CFR 4770.3 (c). These regulations state:

4700.0-6 (a)

(a) Wild horses and burros shall be managed as self-sustaining populations of healthy animals in balance with other uses and the productive capacity of their habitat

4710.4

Management of wild horses and burros shall be undertaken with the objective of limiting the animal distribution to herd areas. Management shall be at a minimum level necessary to attain the objectives identified in approved land use plans and herd management area plans.

4720.1(a & b)

Upon examination of current information and a determination by the authorized officer that an excess of horses or burros exist, the authorized officer shall remove the excess animals immediately in the following order.

- (a) Old, sick, or lame animals shall be destroyed in accordance with subpart 4730 of this title;
- (b) Additional excess animals for which an adoption demand by qualified individuals exists shall be humanely captured and made available for private maintenance in accordance with subpart 4750 of this title.

4770.3(c)

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (a) of 4.21 of this title, the authorized officer may provide that decisions to remove wild horses or burros from public or private land in situations where removal is required by applicable law or necessary to preserve or maintain a thriving ecological balance and multiple use relationship shall be effective upon issuance or on the date established in the decision.

## **V. RIGHT OF APPEAL**

This decision to implement an emergency gather and capture, treat, release, and remove wild horses within the Four Mile HMAs is effective upon issuance, in accordance with the authority provided in 43 CFR 4770.3 (c).

You have the right to appeal this decision to the Four Rivers Field Manager, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4.410, 4.411, 4.412, and 4.413. The posting of this decision record on Eplanning initiates the 30-day appeal period. If you appeal, your appeal must be filed with the Bureau of Land Management at the following address:

Brent Ralston Four Rivers Field Manager Bureau of Land Management  
Four Rivers Field Office  
3948 S. Development Ave.  
Boise, ID 83705

The appellant must also serve a copy of the appeal by certified mail to the Boise Field Solicitor's Office at the following address:

US Department of the Interior  
Office of the Regional Solicitor  
Boise Field Solicitor's Office,  
University Plaza, 960 Broadway Avenue, Suite 400  
Boise, Idaho 83706

Within 30 days after filing the Notice of Appeal, you must file a complete statement of reasons and a statement of standing as to why you are appealing with the U.S. Department of Interior, Interior Board of Land Appeals in accordance with 43 CFR 4.412. The Statement of reasons and statement of standing must also be served on the Four Rivers Field Manager and the Boise Field Solicitor's offices at the addresses provided above.

Failure to provide proper service of the appeal, statement of standing and statement of reasons will subject the appeal to summary dismissal as provided at 43 CFR 4.413(b) and 43 CFR 4.402 (b), (c) and (d).

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4942, January 19, 1993) for a stay (suspension) of the decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for stay must accompany your notice of appeal. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to: Interior Board of Land Appeals Office of Hearing and Appeals 801 N. Quincy Street, Suite 300 Arlington, VA 22203.

In accordance with 43 CFR 4.21(b), a petition for stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards: (1) the relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied; (2) the likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits; (3) the likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and (4) whether the public interest favors granting the stay. In accordance with 43 CFR 4.401, the BLM does not accept fax or email filing of a notice of appeal and/or petition for stay. BLM cannot accept electronic submission (e.g. compact disk or other electronic media) of appeal documents due to the Federal Information Systems Security Awareness guidance. Please submit relevant appeal documents in hard copy form for consideration. Any notice of appeal and/or petition for stay must be sent or delivered to the office of the authorized officer by mail or personal delivery.

Decision Record-Four Mile HMA 2024 Emergency Gather  
DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2024-0048-DNA

## VI. APPROVAL

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for: Brent Ralston  
Field Manager  
Four Rivers Field Office

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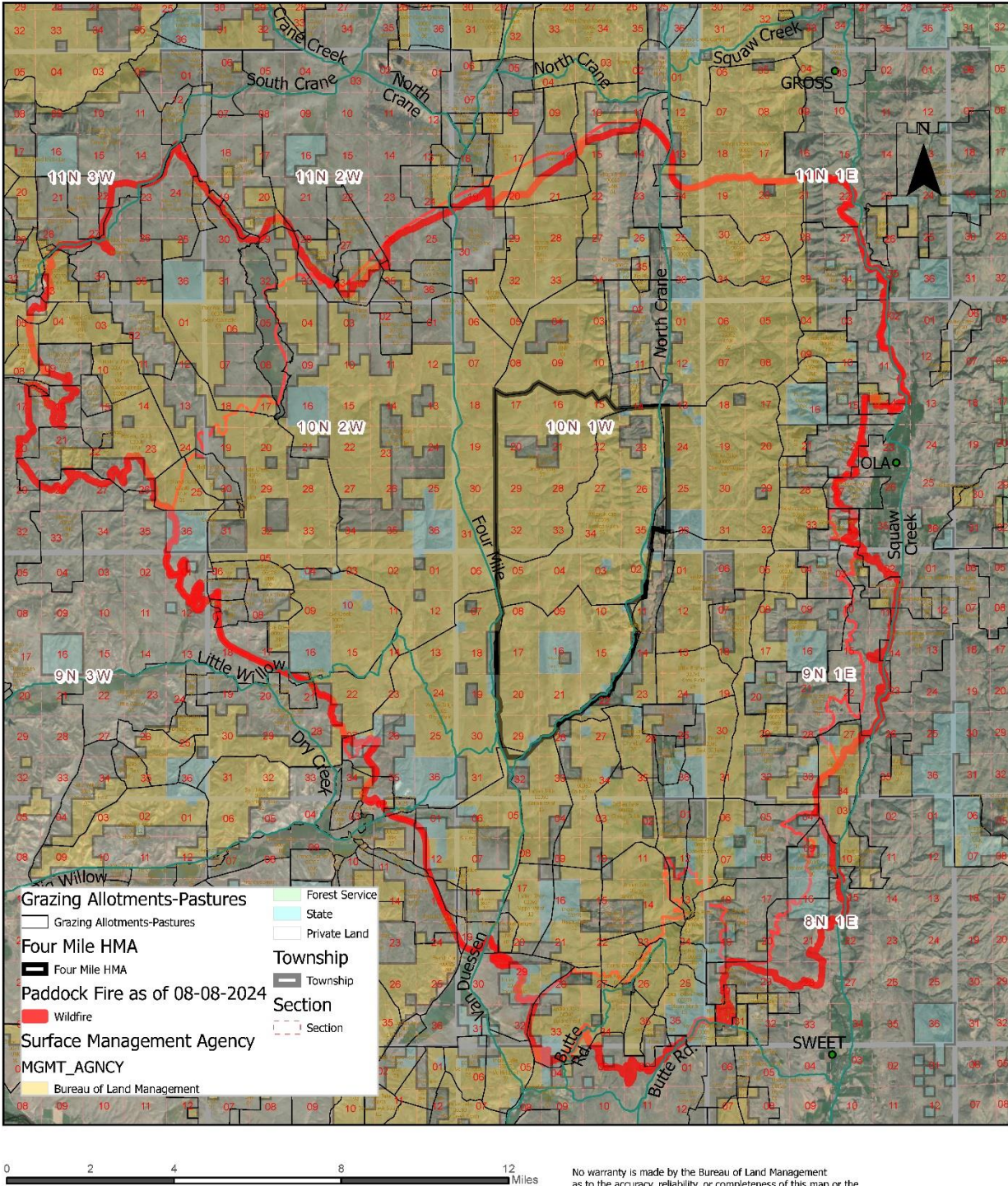
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**ATTACHMENTS:** Maps (2)



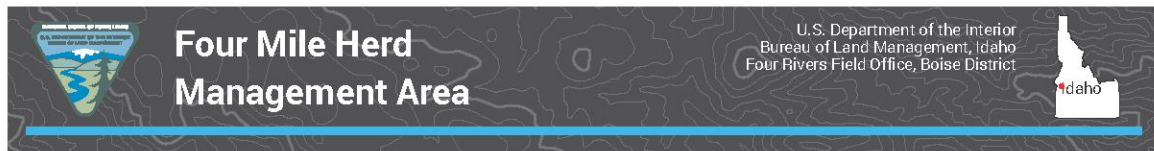
Attachment 1. Paddock Fire Boundary and Four Mile HMA Boundary

Four Mile HMA/Paddock Fire Boundary Map 08/08/2024

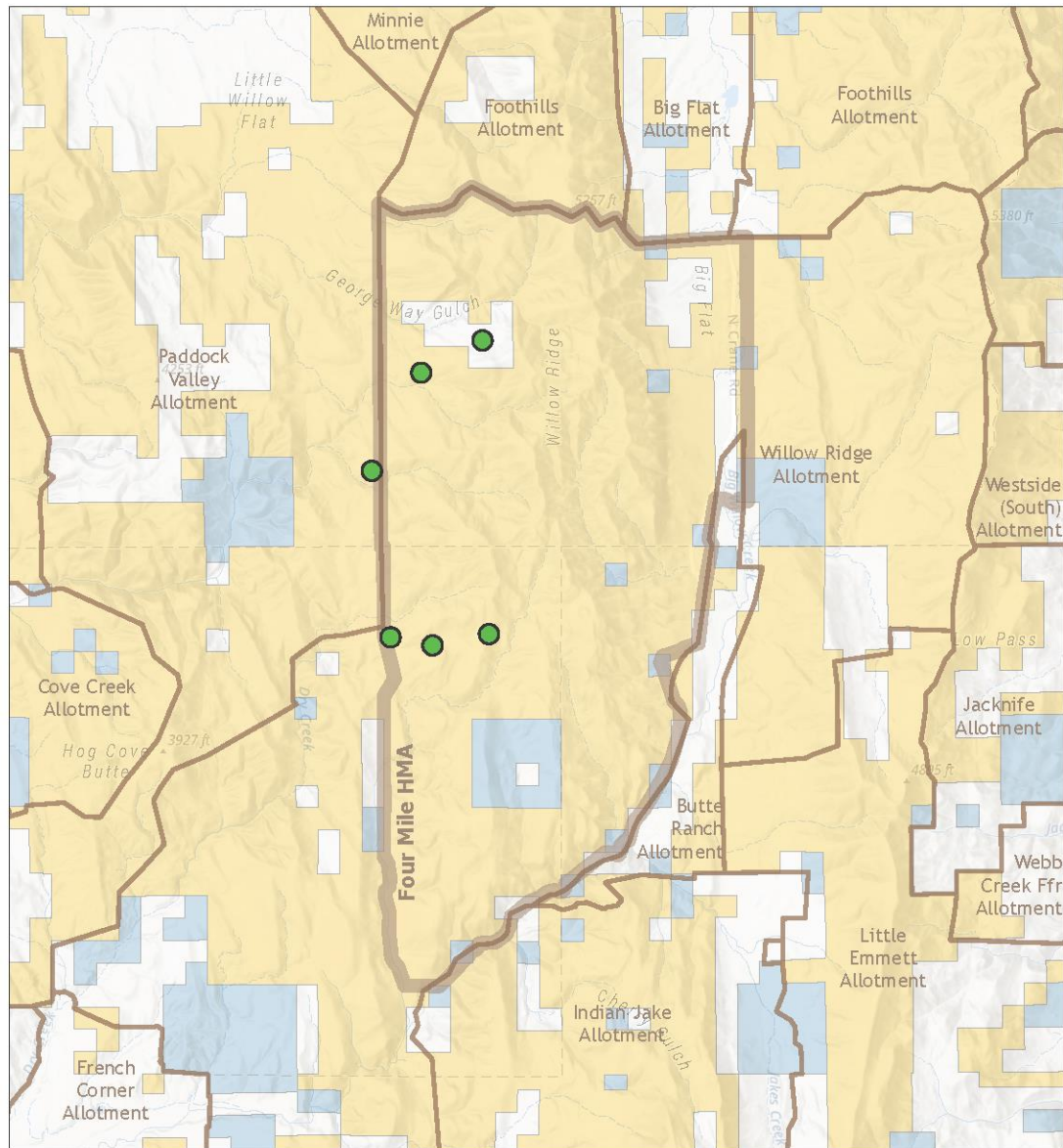




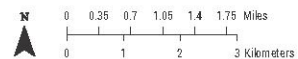
## Attachment 2. Four Mile HMA and Trap sites



8/9/2024



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|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Four Mile Herd Management Area | Surface Management Agency |
| Gather/Bait and Trap Site      | Bureau of Land Management |
| Grazing Allotment              | State of Idaho            |
|                                | Private                   |



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of this map or the data displayed for individual use or aggregate use with other data.

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