

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

Bristlecone Field Office
702 N Industrial Way.
Ely, NV 89301

Bureau of Land Management

Wells Field Office
3900 E. Idaho St.
Elko, NV 89801

DECISION RECORD

Antelope and Triple B Complexes Wild Horse Gather & Herd Management Area Plan

DOI-BLM-NV-L060-2025-0001-EA

September 30th, 2025

I. DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action (Alternative A). This decision is effective immediately pursuant to 43 CFR 4770.3(c). The Proposed Action is consistent with land use plans as outlined in Section II below and will allow for achievement of management objectives in the Antelope and Triple B Complexes.

Under this decision, and as analyzed as the Proposed Action, the Bristlecone Field Office and Wells Field Office will:

- Implement a Herd Management Area Plan with a management strategy which would include several population growth suppression methods.
- Immediately gather and remove excess animals in order to reach low Appropriate Management Level (AML) as expeditiously as possible through an initial gather, and if necessary, a follow-up gather or gathers, in order to reduce the population to within AML range. Follow-up gathers to remove excess animals to achieve low AML shall be conducted as promptly as appropriate to allow sufficient time for the animals to settle after a helicopter gather and to provide for a safe, efficient, and effective follow-up gather operation.
- Apply fertility control methods (vaccines) to released mares.
- Maintain a sex ratio adjustment of 60% male and 40% female.
- This will allow BLM to achieve management goals and objectives of attaining a herd size that is at or within AML, to reduce wild horse population growth rates, and to obtain a thriving natural ecological balance on the range as required under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WFRHBA).

II. COMPLIANCE AND CONFORMANCE

The Herd Management Area Plan and associated gather plan is necessary to remove excess wild horses and bring the wild horse population back to within the established AML range. This will achieve a thriving natural ecological balance between wild horses, wildlife, livestock, vegetation and the available water as required under Section 3(b)(2) of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act and Section 302(b) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

The BLM is required to manage multiple uses to avoid continued degradation of the rangelands, and removal of excess wild horses is necessary to protect rangeland resources from further deterioration or impacts associated with the current overpopulation of wild horses within the Antelope and Triple B Complexes.

As approved in this decision, the Proposed Action is consistent with the wild horse management objectives identified in the 2008 Ely District Resource Management Plan and the 1993 Wells Resource Management Plan Wild Horse Amendment.

The BLM prepared the Antelope and Triple B Complexes Wild Horse Gather & Herd Management Area Plan Final Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-L060-2025-0001-EA to disclose and analyze the environmental effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives, which consist of establishing a Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP) (Appendix XIII) and gathering and removing excess wild horses from within and outside the Antelope and Triple B Complexes (Complexes).

The Antelope Complex consists of the Antelope, Antelope Valley, Goshute and Spruce-Pequot Herd Management Areas (HMA). The Triple B Complex consists of the Triple B HMA, Maverick-Medicine HMA and the Cherry Springs Wild Horse Territory (WHT). Both Complexes are managed by the Bristlecone and Wells Field Offices, with the exception of the Cherry Springs WHT that is managed by the USFS Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The EA analyzes associated impacts with management activities and removals to reach and maintain the Appropriate Management Level within the Complexes. The EA is consistent with BLM's management responsibilities under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971.

The BLM has determined that excess wild horses are present on public lands within and outside the boundaries of the Complexes and that removal of these wild horses to within appropriate management level (AML) is necessary to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance. The AMLs were set under the 2008 Ely District Record of Decision and the Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the 1993 Wells Resource Management Plan Wild Horse Amendment. The AML for the Antelope Complex is 427-789 and the estimated wild horse population as of the end of March 1, 2025, is 4,258 wild horses. The AML for the Triple B Complex is 472-889 and the estimated wild horse population as of the end of March 1, 2025 is 1,909 wild horses.

III. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Antelope and Triple B Complexes Herd Management Area Plan Management Evaluation Report was made available to interested individuals, agencies and groups for a 30-day public review and scoping period that opened on October 14, 2024, and closed on November 14, 2024. Scoping comments were received from approximately 6,000 individuals (primarily as form letters)

or organizations, and agencies. Many of these comments contained overlapping issues/concerns which were consolidated into 159 distinct topics.

The Preliminary EA was made available to interested individuals, agencies and groups for a 30-day public review and scoping period that opened on May 29, 2025, and closed on June 29, 2025. Comments were received from approximately 450 individuals (primarily as form letters) or organizations, and agencies on the Antelope and Triple B Complexes Wild Horse Gather & Herd Management Area Plan Preliminary Environmental Assessment. Many of these comments contained overlapping issues/concerns which were consolidated into 180 distinct topics.

A detailed summary of the comments received and BLM's response and use of comments in preparing the final environmental assessment can be found in Appendix XV. The EA is available on the National NEPA Registrar web page at: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2034747/510>.

IV. RATIONALE FOR DECISION

Upon analyzing the impacts of the Proposed Action (Alternative A) following issuance of the EA for public review; I have determined that implementing the Proposed Action (Alternative A) will not have a significant impact to the human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not required as set forth in the attached Finding of No Significant Impact.

Current monitoring results for the Complexes do not indicate that increasing, evaluating, or revising the AML is warranted at this time. Monitoring data confirms the need to remove excess wild horses above the current AML to reverse the downward trends, promote improvement of rangeland health and ensure safety and health of wild horses.

I have selected the Proposed Action (Alternative A) over the No Action Alternative because leaving excess wild horses on the range under the No Action Alternative would not comply with the WFRHBA or applicable regulations and BLM policy, nor would it comply with the Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Standards and Guidelines (February 12, 1997) for Rangeland Health and Healthy Wild Horse and Burro Populations. I selected the Proposed Action over the other action alternatives because as analyzed in the EA, the Proposed Action is expected to achieve management goals faster and with fewer potential impacts on the wild horses themselves. The Proposed action will prevent deterioration of rangeland resources, including vegetative, soil and riparian resources, as a result of the current overpopulation of wild horses within and outside the Complexes, with potentially irreversible loss of native vegetative communities due to overuse and increased fire risk/damage. The proposed action reduces the number of wild horses relocating to areas outside the Complexes' boundaries, and adversely impacting public land resources not designated for wild horse management. The Proposed Action also decreases the likelihood of emergency conditions arising, requiring an emergency gather to prevent individual animals from suffering or death due to insufficient forage or water. Under the Proposed Action, wild horse populations would be expected to decrease. Decreased herbivory and impacts of this decreasing population could be expected to increase fine fuels in the short term. The Proposed Action would be expected to lead to an increase of native understory species and a decrease in non-native invasive species due to

improved rangeland health. The fire regime could be expected to shift to a less frequent and intense fire regime as favored by native species. Hazardous fuels reduction and habitat improvement projects would continue to avoid areas that are over AML resulting in less active improvement of the landscape.

V. RIGHT OF PROTEST AND/OR APPEAL

If you wish to appeal this decision, it may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with 43 CFR Part 4.

VI. APPROVAL

MELANIE
PETERSON

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Melanie A. Peterson

Bristlecone Field Manager

ELISABETH
PUENTES

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Elisabeth Puentes

Acting Wells Field Manager

Date

Date