

Preliminary

Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Joint Management Area Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Joint Management Area (JMA) described herein includes the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Herd Management Area (HMA), additional lands managed by the National Park Service that were designated as part of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range and the Forest Service's Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Territory (WHT).

This document is prepared to be consistent with the 2015 Billings Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record Of Decision (ROD). This document supersedes all previous herd management area plans and will serve as the activity level management plan for the Pryor Mountain Joint Management Area. **This document is only for the management of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Joint Management Area and therefore this document applies only to the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse JMA.** Due to monitoring and documentation of the Pryor Mountain wild horses, management within the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range JMA can be more specialized than that of most BLM managed herd management areas.

The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Joint Management Area Plan (JMAP) will establish short and long-term management objectives for the wild horse herd and their habitat within lands administered by both the BLM, US Forest Service (USFS), and National Park Service (NPS) land within Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area. These objectives will guide the management of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range JMA wild horses for the life of the plan.

The Pryor Mountain JMA is located in the southeastern portion of Carbon County, Montana, and northern Big Horn County, Wyoming. The area is approximately 50 miles south of Billings, Montana, and 10 miles north of Lovell Wyoming. The area is high in diversity and complex in nature. Elevations range from 3850 feet to 8750 feet above sea level. Annual precipitation varies with elevation from 6 inches of precipitation in the lower elevations to upwards of 20 inches in the alpine high elevation. Plant communities also vary with elevation and precipitation from cold desert shrub to sub-alpine forests and meadows. Soils vary in depth from shallow (less than ten inches) to 20-40 inches deep depending on site locations and position on the landscape. Water is considered limited as there are five perennial water sources.

The majority of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) was created by order of the Secretary of the Interior, Stewart L. Udall on September 9, 1968. At the time, the PMWHR encompassed 33,600 acres of BLM and NPS lands in Montana. In 1969, another adjustment occurred, adding lands within Wyoming. In December 1971 the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act was signed into law. The management and protection of all unclaimed wild horses and burros was delegated to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture. The Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service were charged with administering the Act as outlined in Section 1332 (a) of said Act. In 1974 and 1975, the range was expanded pursuant to authority contained in the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act when a joint Forest Service and BLM decision

was reached in the 1974 Pryor Mountain Complex Land Use Decision and BLM Pryor Mountain Complex Management Framework Plan.

The appropriate management level (AML) was first established in 1984 as 121 wild horses, in 1992 the AML was adjusted to 95 wild horses, and in 2009 AML was established as a range of 90-120 wild horses. The 2015 Billings Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan management decision established once again the wild horse population will be managed within a population range between 90-120 wild horses. This number would maintain, protect manage, and control a healthy wild horse herd inside the HMA within the appropriate management levels (AML) to ensure a thriving natural ecological balance, while preserving multiple use relationships with other resources, and making progress towards Standards for Rangeland Health (Standards 1 and 5).

Implementation of a Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP) or a Joint Management Area Plan (JMAP) is consistent with the authority provided in 43 CFR 4700 and the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (WFRHBA). The JMAP is needed to manage wild horses within the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Joint Management Area to maintain the wild horse herd as a self-sustaining population of healthy animals in balance with other uses and the productive capacity of their habitat and attain the objectives outlined in the Billings Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan.

JOINT MANAGEMENT AREA PLAN

The selected management strategy would incorporate several population control methods, together with reconstruction and maintenance of the existing water developments. Under this strategy, wild horses would be managed within the established AML range of 90-120 wild horses over the life of the plan, as follows:

- Approximately 90-120 wild horses would be managed as a breeding population.
- Balancing sex ratios of the population to be adjusted to a 50/50 male/female sex ratio.
- Wild horses that display good confirmation and a variety of colors will be selected first to be placed back on the JMA.
- In keeping with wild horse management decisions from the 2015 RMP, maintain a mix of colors and bloodlines within the JMA, not allowing any specific color or bloodline to dominate. Maintaining all bloodlines will no longer be a management goal.
- Any individuals who are part of a dominant bloodline could be considered for removal.
- Stallions or mares may be from a different HMA but displaying similar or desired characteristics of the wild horses within the JMA may be released to maintain or increase the genetic diversity of the herd.
- Remove excess animals through a selective removal criteria.
- Excess animals will be removed to the low-range of the AML upon determination that excess animals are present.
- Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) specifically ZonaStat-H would be the treatment of choice through remote darting application, however if objectives cannot be achieved and new fertility controls are available, they could be used as directed through the most recent direction of the National Wild Horse and Burro Program. Mares that are non-responders to ZonaStat-H would be considered for removal or treated with another approved fertility control vaccine. The use of any new fertility controls will use the

- most current best management practices and humane procedures available for the implementation of the new controls.
- Existing water developments will be maintained or reconstructed if necessary within the JMA, these existing developments include: Mine Guzzler, Jacks Farm Guzzler, Boundary Guzzler, Old Water Hole, Horse Trap Guzzler, Skyline Guzzler, Ridge Guzzler, Bat Guzzler, Bad Pass Trough, Burnt Timber Catchment, and Cottonwood Spring Trough.
 - AML would be evaluated, as needed, following an in-depth analysis of resource conditions including actual use, utilization, available forage and water, range condition and trend and precipitation data.
 - Seasonal closures will be in effect from April 15 to June 15 to protect wild horse foaling and their habitat during peak foaling season.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

- Future gather operations will be conducted in accordance with IM 2015-151, Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program for Wild Horse and Burro Gathers (CAWP) or by Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) if the CAWP is discontinued).
- Future gather operations will be conducted in accordance with the most current direction and current policies at the time of the gather.
- Currently (April 1, 2020) the current IMs are as follows:
 - IM No. 2020-012, Wild Horse and Burro Gather Planning, Scheduling and Approval
 - PIM No. 2019-004, Issuance of Wild Horse and Burro Gather Decisions
 - IM No. 2015-151, Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program for Wild Horse and Burro Gathers
 - IM No. 2015-70, Animal Health, Maintenance, Evaluation and Response
 - IM No. 2013-058, Wild Horse and Burro Gathers: Public and Media Management
 - IM No. 2013-060, Wild Horse and Burro Gathers: Management by Incident Command System
 - IM No. 2013-061, Wild Horse and Burro Gathers: Internal and External Communicating and Reporting
- Animals selected for fertility control treatment can be treated with Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) vaccine, consistent with the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Environmental Assessment (BLM 2015), or another fertility control treatment such as GonaCon vaccine.
- It is expected that bait and/or water trapping and helicopter drive trapping and helicopter assisted roping would be the primary gather technique to gather and remove excess wild horses. To the extent possible gather sites (traps) will be in previously disturbed areas. Post-gather, every effort will be made to return released animals to the same general area from which they were gathered.
- An Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS) or other veterinarian may be on-site or on call during future gathers, as needed, to examine animals and make recommendations to BLM for the care and treatment of the wild horses. Decisions to humanely euthanize animals in field situations will be made in conformance with BLM policy.
- Data including sex and age distribution, reproduction, condition class information (using the Henneke rating system), color, size, and other information may also be recorded, along with the disposition of that animal (removed or released).

- Hair follicle and/or other genetic material samples will be collected periodically for ongoing genetic diversity monitoring. Results of genetic monitoring analysis will contribute to BLM management decisions intended to maintain acceptable levels of genetic diversity, and to minimize the risk of inbreeding depression.
- Horses gathered and determined to be domestic animals, based on consultation between BLM and Big Horn (Wyoming) and Carbon (Montana) County brand inspectors, will be turned over to the local brand inspector accordance with state law.
- Wild horses which pose a biosecurity risk, stray onto private land, or repetitively leave the JMA should be removed.

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Specific management, monitoring and implementation objectives are summarized below:

Management Objective(s)	Monitoring Objective(s)	Implementation Objective(s)
<p>A. Population Control</p> <p>Objective 1: Manage wild horse populations within the established AML range (90-120) to protect the range from deterioration associated with overpopulation.</p> <p>Objective 2: Manage wild horse populations to allow for a 5% average growth rate or lower.</p> <p>Objective 3: Adjust the sex ratio of the breeding population to a natural ratio.</p> <p>Objective 4: Gather to the low-range of the AML.</p> <p>Objective 5: Apply fertility control to mares within the JMA to reduce population growth rates below natural rates of approximately 20%.</p>	<p>Annual Population Inventories based on ground counts of wild horses.</p> <p>Determine population number and annual growth rate.</p> <p>Document the number of mares/stallions released following each gather.</p> <p>Conduct post-fertility control monitoring in accordance with established procedures.</p>	<p>Use fertility control measures to achieve and then maintain herd size within AML (RMP MD WH-1). Schedule gathers to remove excess wild horses when the total wild horse population exceeds the AML for the JMA, when animals permanently reside on lands outside the JMA boundaries (i.e. use is more than seasonal drift), or whenever animal health/condition is at risk.</p> <p>Adjust fertility control treatments and removals as needed to allow for the desired average growth rate.</p> <p>Manage a breeding population of 90-120 wild horses. Within the population, achieve a 50%/50% sex ration of males to females immediately following future gathers.</p> <p>Immunocontraceptive use would be conducted in accordance with the approved standard operating and post-treatment monitoring procedures. The fertility control prescription would treat mares ages 2 and 3 with ZonaStat-H. Young mares in the one-year old age class becoming two years old could begin primer treatments in the autumn at 18 months of age but would not be treated before 18 months of age. Mares ages 4 and older would not receive a treatment until after they have successfully foaled once (successfully foaling is defined as a foal living to be 1 year of age). Once a mare has received six consecutive treatments, she would be removed from the fertility control treatment unless she foals again, in which case she would then receive a minimum of three more fertility control treatments or treated with another approved immunocontraceptive. Mares that are non-responders to ZonaStat-H would be treated with another approved immunocontraceptive or removed from the JMA.</p>

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<p>B. Removal Criteria</p> <p>Objective 1: Maintain characteristics that are typical of Pryor Mountains horses.</p> <p>Objective 2: Ensure that no specific colors dominate as a result of management manipulation.</p> <p>Objective 3: Wild horses that are no longer breeding or have contributed genetically could be removed unless needed to achieve AML.</p> <p>Objective 4: Wild horses affected by conditions that may be inherited (including but not limited to parrot mouth, dwarfism, hernias, and manifestations of developmental orthopedic disease such as clubfeet, contracted tendons or crooked limbs) will be removed.</p> <p>Objective 5: Assure all age classes are represented post-gather.</p>	<p>Maintain photos and data of wild horses on the JMA and/or are introduced to the JMA.</p> <p>Evaluate the confirmation and physical characteristics of wild horse on the range and during gathers.</p> <p>Monitor post-gather results.</p>	<p>In selecting animals for removal or return to the range post-gather, phenotypes that are characteristic to Pryor Mountain wild horses will have priority to be maintained (RMP MD WH-2, MD WH-3).</p> <p>In selecting animals for removal or return to the range post-gather, ensure that no single-color group comes to predominate in the herd (RMP MD WH-7).</p> <p>In selecting animals with heritable conditions for removal it would minimize the likelihood these conditions being passed onto future generations.</p> <p>Manage wild horses to achieve a diverse age structure (RMP MD WH-2), the following relative age distribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 15%, and not to exceed 50% Young Age Class (Ages 0-3) • At least 25%, and not to exceed 60% Middle Age Class (Age 4-9) • At least 20%, and not to exceed 50% Old Age Class (Age 10-19) • Not to exceed 30% Very old Age Class (Age 20+)
<p>C. Rangeland Health</p> <p>Objective 1: Assess rangeland health periodically on the JMA.</p> <p>Objective 2: Limit utilization by all herbivores to 50% of the current year's above ground primary production for key grasses and 45% for key shrubs and forbs.</p> <p>Objective 3: Collect assessment, inventory and monitoring (AIM) data to help inform management decisions to ensure Rangeland Health Standards are being achieved.</p> <p>Objective 4: Decrease utilization by wild horses within a 1-3 mile radius of existing water developments from heavy/severe to light/moderate.</p>	<p>Locate key monitoring areas within the JMA.</p> <p>Assess rangeland health using procedures outlined in Technical Reference 1734-6 and/or the most recent rangeland health technical reference adopted by the local office.</p> <p>Establish baseline trend studies using the frequency sampling procedures as outlined in the Rangeland Monitoring Handbook.</p> <p>Measure utilization at key areas/use pattern mapping annually.</p> <p>Measure utilization at key areas or use pattern mapping annually.</p> <p>Monitor utilization to determine whether existing developments are effective in reducing wild horse utilization from heavy to light or moderate within the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range JMA.</p>	<p>Complete the rangeland health assessment for the JMA. Summarize trend, precipitation, riparian, utilization and use pattern mapping periodically. (RMP MD WH-4).</p> <p>Establish additional site-specific resource management objectives for key areas, as needed.</p> <p>Based on above, adjust AML or identify management actions to address/resolve rangeland health issues, as needed/appropriate. Re-adjustments in AML will be based on vegetation monitoring, herd monitoring and forage and water availability as the limiting factors.</p> <p>Maintain existing water developments to ensure water availability.</p> <p>Annually maintain developments or complete reconstructions as needed.</p> <p>Use population inventories, photos, field reports, mapping, and other tracking methods to monitor movements of wild horses within and outside the JMA.</p>

Management Objective(s)	Monitoring Objective(s)	Implementation Objective(s)
<p>Objective 5: Disperse wild horse use throughout the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range JMA.</p>	<p>Monitor movements of identified wild horses to determine use patterns, seasonal migrations and range of travel.</p>	<p>Do not allow additional fencing within the JMA. Eliminate fencing within the JMA whenever possible. Improve fencing along boundaries of the JMA to be wildlife friendly while being a true barrier to wild horses.</p>
<p><u>D. Healthy Populations of Wild Horses</u></p> <p>Objective 1: Manage wild horses to achieve an average body condition class score of 3+ (RMP MD WH-2).</p> <p>Objective 2: Maintain or increase genetic diversity within the herd, as evidenced by observed heterozygosity (H_o). Do not allow specific colors or 'bloodlines' to dominate as a result of management decisions.</p>	<p>Visually observe wild horse body condition (Henneke Condition Class Method) at key watering locations and on the range annually.</p> <p>Record average body condition and document during periodic gather and population inventories operations.</p> <p>Collect hair follicle and/or other genetic material samples periodically, to monitor levels of observed heterozygosity.</p>	<p>Maintain water developments to increase water sources and availability. Annually maintain water developments. Keep wild horse populations in the JMA within AML.</p> <p>Conduct gathers when needed if wild horse body conditions are less than Henneke condition class score 3. Conduct emergency gathers due to drought, wildfire or other unplanned/unforeseen events. Wild horses selected to be returned to the JMA would be based on diversity including color, conformation, and genetic analysis (if available).</p> <p>If observed heterozygosity (H_o) values decrease below the average baseline value from 1994-2001 (0.661), <i>and</i> if H_o values decrease by more than 1% per 10 years, and H_o below the average baseline value, then additional wild horses displaying characteristics that are similar to the desired characteristics for horses in the PMWHR will be introduced (RMP MD WH-2, MD WH-3).</p> <p>One method to increase genetic diversity and reduce the dominance of specific colors or bloodlines (RMP MD WH-7) is to remove animals that have overrepresented color types or for whom is known that they have a disproportionately high number of closely related horses (such as siblings, half-siblings, and first cousins) in the herd. Another method is, potentially, to introduce small numbers of stallions or mares from a different HMA but displaying characteristics that are like the desired characteristics for wild horses in the JMA.</p> <p>Forage and water resources are finite on the JMA. Young, fertile animals that are determined excess, can be sent to other wild horse herds (i.e. in Utah -- Sulphur or other recipient HMA) to ensure that any unusual genes from the PMWHR JMA are maintained in other herds of wild horses.</p>