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January 18, 2005

NDOW-SR# 06-127

Ms. Karla Norris, AFM-Renewable
Bureau of Land Management Las
Vegas Field Office 4701 N. Torrey
Pines Drive Las Vegas, NV 89130

Re: Decision Record (DR) & Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the

Dear Ms. Norris:

The Department has reviewed the Bureau's DR and FONSI for the *Johnnie, Muddy Mountains, and Wheeler Pass Herd Management Areas Preliminary Environmental Assessment for the Establishment of Appropriate Management Levels* (EA# NV-052-05-399) (AML Plan). We concur with the analysis and decisions for the Muddy Mountains HMA. Unfortunately, we remain disappointed with the Bureau's analyses used to rationalize AMLs for the Johnnie and Wheeler Pass Herd Management Areas. In our letter of November 1, 2005, the Department stated it looked forward to proactive and productive consultation with the Bureau as it finalized the AML decisions and the EA. In the interim, had the Bureau taken the opportunity to actively communicate and discuss with us elements of the analyses with which we found difficulty, the Bureau may have benefited with additional information useful in developing a more sound, ecologically-based AML decision. The only recourse we have at this juncture would be to appeal the DR and FONSI. This is precisely the scenario we wish to avoid as it is usually unnecessary when proper consultation occurs above and beyond NEPA requirements as intended by the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971. We do understand the Bureau's need and appreciate the efforts taken to set an AML for all of its herd management areas. And we support the Bureau and the Forest Service managing wild horses and burros in the northern Spring Mountains as a complex of herd management areas.

Having said this in view of the present situation and instead of pursuing an appeal, we choose to work closer with the Bureau and look forward to an enlightened future. In closing we ask how the Bureau, the Forest Service and the Department might achieve a closer, proactive working relationship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Bradford Hardenbrook".

D. Bradford Hardenbrook
Supervisory Biologist - Habitat

cc: USFS-SMNRA

