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DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION  
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BUDGET AND PLANNING DIVISION

# SCOPING DOCUMENT

## **Establishing Appropriate Management Levels for Wild Horse and Burro Territories on the Monitor and Hot Creek Mountain Ranges**

**May 4, 2006**

**Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Austin/Tonopah Ranger Districts  
Eureka and Nye Counties, Nevada**

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## PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to establish Appropriate Management Levels (AML) and set general management direction for the Wild Horse and Burro territories (WHT) on the Monitor and Hot Creek Mountain Ranges.

This is needed to allow the Forest Service to manage the wild horses within these territories. The primary management tool will be to gather and remove animals to keep the populations within the AML range.

## PROPOSED ACTION

Based on analysis the following are proposed Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) by territory.

- **Monitor WHT:** 75-130 wild horses on 339,428 acres.
  - 30-50 wild horses managed north of McCann Canyon. These horses interact with the Little Fish Lake WHT horses.
  - 45-80 wild horses managed south of McCann Canyon. These horses interact with BLM's Saulsbury Herd Management Area (HMA) horses.
- **Stonecabin WHT:** 1-2 wild horses on 1460 acres. These horses are part of BLM's Stone Cabin HMA herd and the AML allows for incidental use on National Forest System lands.
- **Dobbin Summit WHT:** 0 wild horses on 48,711 acres. Wild horses do not occupy this territory.
- **Little Fish Lake WHT:** 30-50 wild horses on 88,235 acres. These horses interact with BLM's Little Fish Lake HMA horses and the northern Monitor WHT horses.
- **Sevenmile WHT:** 1-3 wild horses on 5710 acres. These horses are part of BLM's Sevenmile HMA herd and the AML allows for incidental use on National Forest System lands.
- **Butler Basin WHT:** 30-50 wild horses on 53,523 acres. This herd spends summers on Butler Basin WHT and winters on BLM's Sevenmile HMA. The combined AML with BLM is 60 -100 wild horses (50%).
- **Kelly Creek WHT:** 8-15 wild horses on 20,902 acres. This herd interacts with BLM's North Monitor HMA.

The following general management direction is also proposed.

- A. Sex Ratio: Manage for a normal sex ratio of 52% mares: 48% studs to maintain reproductive and genetic health of the populations.

B. Age Structure: Manage for a normal age structure with representation from each age class in a pyramidal structure with foals representing the largest age class at the base of the pyramid. Zero to five year olds will make up the largest percent of the population, six to nine year olds will be the middle percentage, and ten and older horses will be the smallest percent.

C. Recruitment Rate: Manage for a recruitment rate at or below 18%.

D. Animal Condition: Manage for a healthy population with the majority of the wild horses in the population moderately thin to moderately fleshy (Henneke body condition score of 4-6).

E. Phenotype: Wild horses will be managed for historic characteristics. Horses will be well muscled with medium to heavy bone structure and an average size of 14-15 hands in a variety of colors, including grays, bays, sorrels, roans, buckskins, and blacks. Horses will be without apparent genetic defects.

F. Distribution: Manage for historic patterns of use within and among FS territories and BLM herd management areas, preserving the free-roaming behavior of the wild horses.

G. Genetic Diversity: Manage for a high level of genetic diversity in wild horses. Management will allow for a 90% probability that 90% of the existing genetic diversity within each herd is conserved over a 200 year period. If genetic diversity within a herd narrows greater than 10%, action will be taken to restore diversity by introducing 1 or 2 young mares of similar phenotype from another wild horse population into the herd of concern.

The following population controls are proposed:

- Once the estimated population reaches or exceeds the upper level of AML, excess wild horses would be gathered and removed. The number of excess wild horses to be removed would equal the number in excess of the lower level of AML. Proposed gather methods are helicopter drive trapping, horseback herding to a trap, roping, and bait trapping.
- Proposed fertility control is the 2-year porcine zona pellucida (PZP) on 50%-80% of breeding age mares, administered to the same mares not more than every 4 years. Treated mares would be identified by a freeze mark on the left hip.
- Wild horses captured with genetic defects would be removed or sterilized to prevent the propagation of such defects.
- Euthanasia may be authorized for a wild horse as an act of mercy for any animal that 1) displays a hopeless prognosis for life, 2) suffers from a chronic or incurable disease or serious physical defect, 3) requires continuous treatment for the relief of pain and suffering, 4) incapable of maintaining a Henneke body condition score greater than two in a normal rangeland environment, or 5) suffers from a traumatic injury or other condition that causes acute pain.

## LOCATION

The Project Area includes the all of the Wild Horse and Burro Territories on the Monitor and Hot Creek Mountain Ranges. A map of the territories is attached.

## CONTACTS

For additional information, contact project coordinator Steven Williams, Austin/Tonopah Ranger Districts, P.O. Box 130, Austin, Nevada 89310. The telephone number is 775-964-2671. The E-mail address is: [swilliams01@fs.fed.us](mailto:swilliams01@fs.fed.us).

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public involvement in the NEPA process is essential. Scoping is performed as one of the first steps to receive input from interested individuals, organizations and government agencies including federal, state, and local agencies. We invite you to submit written comments stating your concerns and issues that are relevant to the proposed project. Comments received in response to this scoping document and from personal contacts will be considered during the analysis of this project.

To encourage public participation, the Forest Service will use a mailing of information to interested parties. Public involvement will be ongoing throughout the analysis process; however, at certain times public input will be specifically requested. Written scoping comments should be received by **June 4, 2006**. Comments should be sent to District Ranger, Austin/Tonopah Ranger Districts, P.O. Box 130, Austin, Nevada 89310. Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection. To assist you in responding, a self-addressed comment sheet is attached. You need to return this comment sheet or contact us if you want to remain on the mailing list for this project.



AUSTIN/TONOPAH RANGER DISTRICT  
WILD HORSE AND BURRO TERRITORIES  
MONITOR AND HOT CREEK MOUNTAIN RANGES

