

COMMISSION FOR THE PRESERVATION  
OF  
WILD HORSES

MINUTES OF THE OPEN MEETING

February 11, 2005  
Reno, Nevada

Commission Members Present:

Mike Kirk, Chairman  
Jim Evans, Vice Chairman  
Julie Von Tobel Gleason  
Christine Brehm  
Gracian Uhalde  
Catherine Barcomb, Administrator

Others Present:

Susie Stokke, BLM  
Maxine Shane, BLM  
Bart Lawrence  
Cindy Lawrence

**1)\*Discussion and Decision re: Approval of the Minutes of the Commission meetings held on October 14, 2004.**

After discussion of the minutes, a suggestion to add page numbers to the minutes, Commission Evans motioned to approved the minutes of the October 14, 2004 Commission meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Uhalde, unanimously approved.

**2) Discussion re: Red Rock HMA in Las Vegas, Appeal filed by WHOA, Letter from State Agencies, and Response from BLM State Director and BLM Solicitors**

Cathy Barcomb, Administrator, reported that the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, including representing the Commission, had written a letter to Bob Abbey, State Director for BLM. The letter included the State's concerns for the management of the Red Rock Herd Management Area as presented in the BLM's evaluations and subsequent printed final management plans. Ms. Barcomb reported that Mr. Abbey had written a response to the States concerns. She also noted that Wild Horse Organized Assistance (WHOA) had filed an appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) on the final management plan. IN addition, Ms. Barcomb reported that the BLM Solicitors had responded to WHOA's appeal points which were of concern to her.

Ms. Barcomb reported that she had concerns with the response from the BLM Solicitors in that they stated it was their opinion that herds could be managed without genetic diversity because BLM could bring in other horses from different HMA's to maintain the gene pool. In addition, the Solicitors felt that water was not an issue but that as long as volunteers would haul water in drought conditions that it was acceptable for BLM to establish an artificial appropriate management level (AML). Ms. Barcomb stated her concerns that these issues could affect not only herd management in Nevada but throughout the west by setting a precedent with this one herd. Ms. Barcomb had supplied copies of all correspondence, appeals, and BLM Solicitors response to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Uhalde wanted it noted for the record that BLM had sent out a special team to evaluate the Red Rock HMA for forage availability and AML. Mr. Uhalde stated that it was the recommendation of the BLM internal team that the Red Rock HMA be managed for zero horses, that the habitat wasn't suitable for horses and would not sustain even an AML of 1 horse. He added that the team did recommend that the area was potentially suitable for burros as they differed in diet but this area could not sustain any horses. Mr. Uhalde stated he understood the tourism draw but questioned why BLM made judgment decisions on habitat and animal management in opposition to their own recommendations.

Commissioner Kirk added that he remembered a proposal by the "Outside Las Vegas" team to provide educational opportunities for horses at the interpretive center and wondered what was happening with that proposal. He added that if they were a tourist attraction in a specially managed situation that the BLM wouldn't really need to worry about a gene pool.

Commissioner Brehm noted that the location of the horses isn't actually where the tourists can see them. She stated that if they were to be "display" horses, a zoo type situation or herd, that they would need to be in a different location as they are completely inaccessible to the public now unless you have 4 wheel drive and are crazy enough to take your vehicle into those locations. She noted that they are really only accessible on horseback. She added that a suggestion would be to manage them in another area and the HMA would need complete

revegetation to the plant base, that it currently is wrong for horses, as noted in the BLM internal report.

Commissioner Uhalde added that the range was in extremely poor condition.

Commissioner Gleason stated that she felt it was a great place to showcase horses and burros but need to think about the feasibility of management in that area. She added that she thought it was a great opportunity to educate the public.

Susie Stokke, BLM Nevada Wild Horse Lead, reported that the Oliver Ranch outdoor educational center was in the works. She reported that there was a proposed wild horse and burro facility being planned that would include a barn, hospital, arena and holding area to house 25 to 50 head of animals. She stated that they were proposing a “store front adoption center” and education material designed to target youth programs, around the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level. Ms. Stokke reported that the funding for this center was coming from land sales in Southern Nevada and construction was planned for 2007, depending on funding.

Commissioner Uhalde stated that he would like to see the name of this management area changed to take it from a HMA to “something”. He said he wasn’t sure of what name could be used but didn’t want to see an HMA managed as a zoo, that wasn’t there some other name to put on this proposed herd and area.

Susie Stokke mentioned a 40-acre parcel that was outside of the HMA but within the National Conservation Area that had been considered for some type of management of a small herd. She mentioned that John Jamrog, previously with the Las Vegas BLM District Office had been putting together a report containing various management and planning options for the Red Rock herd. She added that Mr. Jamrog had recently transferred to other employment outside of BLM and didn’t know where that report had ended up. She suggested that talking to Mr. Jamrog and then looking at his report would be a good place to start. She added that if it would take special legislation to create an area for management, that we would probably need to work with Senators Reid and Ensign.

Commissioner Uhalde stated that he felt the Commission should write letters to Senators Reid and Ensign to urge them to set up a special area for the horses to let them be managed but not under the HMA situation therefore creating a precedent of managing a HMA like a zoo.

Cathy Barcomb, Administrator, suggested that it was premature to write any letters to the Senators prior to investigating what the laws and regulations would allow, that we really didn’t know what we were writing to propose.....That the Commission and BLM should look into all possibilities, come up with a developed plan and proposal which may or may not include legislative changes, get support

from other agencies.....and then write letters to the Senators for support if that was appropriate. She also noted that the Commission doesn't write letters directly, that we would need to make a recommendation to Allen Biaggi, Director of DCNR, or get his permission to write such a letter.

Ms. Barcomb reported that under current BLM regulations and the Wild Horse and Burro Act that BLM "must manage for horse in those areas identified under the 1971 Act, that she felt BLM did not have the option of managing horses in any other areas". Ms. Barcomb noted that BLM does have the ability to create sanctuaries but questioned what guidelines did the law provide for in setting up and managing a sanctuary. She added that any current sanctuaries are under private contract and are non-breeding herds of horses. Ms. Barcomb questioned if this could be done and suggested that the BLM would need to investigate this with their Solicitors. Ms. Barcomb recommended that since Commissioners Gleason and Brehm were so close to the issue and knew the people involved, such as Mr. Jamrog, that the two of them investigate the possibilities and report back at the next Commission meeting for discussion and action plan. She also asked Ms. Stokke if she would look into the Solicitors opinion of what could and couldn't be done under current laws and what would be possible with changes to the regulations?

Commissioner Brehm stated that she knew where Mr. Jamrog was employed and felt he would discuss the options with her. She added that she felt he would give her a copy of his report, which would show all options that were being discussed, and the Commission could then look into those options with BLM.

Susie Stokke, BLM, stated she thought this was a good idea and would also like to know how to locate Mr. Jamrog and have his number.

After discussion, Commissioners Brehm and Gleason, would be looking into options for managing the Red Rock herd to optimize the tourism and educational values present, to manage in other areas versus the official HMA, and also potential legislative needs to accompany any proposals. Commissioner Brehm would contact Mr. Jamrog. Susie Stokke, BLM, would look into opinions of the BLM Solicitors on management in other areas than the HMA but within the NCA.

The Commissioners and Ms. Stokke would report back to the Commission at the next meeting where the Commissioners would discuss the options and make recommendations.

### **3) Discussion re: An Update on the Status of the BLM Wild Horse Program in Nevada to include gathers and planning, Susie Stokke, BLM**

Susie Stokke, BLM, reported the BLM had removed approximately 3,500 horses from Buffalo Hills, Pilot Mountain, Calico's, and the Antelope Complex and that another 600 horses were to be removed by March 1. She noted that many came

into the gathers in very poor condition and that Buffalo Hills horses were in very poor condition and full of parasites. Ms. Stokke noted that with a 7 year drought that a lot of the horses went into winter in very poor condition with little to no forage to get through the winter. She added that she was concerned for death loss, maybe Pilot Mountain, that probably they lost the entire years foal crop. Ms. Stokke stated that there were many foals in Buffalo Hills, Calico, and Antelope. She stated they had treated 233 mares with fertility control (80 in Antelope, the remainder in the Calico's). She also reported they had removed 48 horses from Fish Lake HMA for safety reasons. That the area was adjacent to the highway where hay trucks go down the road, with hay blowing off the trucks, and the horses eating that hay beside the roadways and then horses getting hit on the roads. Ms. Stokke noted that they have requested NDOT to fence the right of way.

Ms. Stokke stated that they had treated all the mares in Buck and Bald HMA and Fish Creek Complex. She added that if BLM doesn't do fertility control that they will never reach AML. She reported that 88 of the 102 HMA's in Nevada have AML's established, that two are under the management of the Forest Service, that all AML's would be established by September 2005. She stated that 7 were in Battle Mountain, 3 in Winnemucca (Tobin, N. Stillwater), and 3 in Las Vegas (Wheeler, Muddy, and Johnnie).

#### **4) Discussion re: Nevada BLM Adoption Strategy, Susie Stokke, BLM**

Susie Stokke, BLM, reported that she was working on an adoption strategy for BLM in Nevada. She stated that she has been talking to the groups to determine what's working and what's not working and then asking BLM people what's working and what's not. Then they would be looking into suggestions for improvement, taking a look at the information and then developing a strategy to improve adoptions. She stated that Nevada, Idaho, and Montana had the highest costs per animal for adoption and that they needed to be more effective and efficient. Ms. Stokke stated they were not adopting enough animals and that the cost per animal in Nevada is higher. She also noted that there were no funds available for advertising in the Nevada budget, only gathers and that funding is only one issue, they were just not drawing enough people to Nevada to adopt.

Ms. Stokke stated they may not be having adoptions at "shows" in the future as they were not cost effective and that they would have a plan to present at the future Commission meeting in April. She added that the Palomino Valley Corrals was going to be changing their strategy and opening up the facility on Saturdays. That the new assistant manager, when hired, would be working Tues-Sat. and will primarily be involved in developing the adoption program to include training demonstrations, information, and a web page for the corrals. Ms. Stokke stated that there was no money for the prison program and that they

were subsidizing it out of the holding contract. She added that Nevada BLM was better off giving other states the funding to adopt horses and they can ship them out to other states to adopt for Nevada. She noted that BLM was looking into developing private contracts for individuals/organizations to operate the adoptions.

**5) Discussion re: Prison Wild Horse Training/Adoption Program, Cathy Barcomb**

Cathy Barcomb, Administrator, reported that she felt the prison program was the shining star of the wild horse and burro program. The next adoption was for Feb 12<sup>th</sup> and the new indoor training arena would be dedicated for use. She reminded the Commission that it took 2 ½ years of fundraising to come up with the funds to purchase the building, the prison built the indoor arena along with donations from different companies in the Reno/Carson City area. She noted that \$6,000 worth of concrete had come from 3 local companies for the Foundation and footings. Ms. Barcomb noted how the program had been gaining national attention including national media and magazines, that there would be photographers and media at the adoption and hoped that it would further expand this program.

**6) Public Comment Period**

none

**7) \*Set Next Meeting Date**

The Commissioners suggested an April meeting in Las Vegas around the Capstone show in Las Vegas, along with a tour of the Nellis range. The suggestion was to set the meeting for the morning of April 8<sup>th</sup>, attend the Capstone show that afternoon, and then do a field tour of Nellis for April 9<sup>th</sup>. Cathy Barcomb was instructed to work on the date and arrangements and determine if it work for the Commission in April and set a next meeting as appropriate.

**8) \*Adjournment**

Commissioner Uhalde motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Evans, unanimously approved.