

-ARIZONA-

Harquahala Herd Area



LOCATION

The Harquahala (hark-ah-hay-la) Herd Area (HA) lies six miles south of Aguila, Arizona, on Eagle Eye Road, twenty-five miles west of Wickenburg, Arizona, on US Highway 60. The wild burros inhabit the Harquahala Mountains and surrounding foothills and valleys.

SIZE

The Harquahala HA consists of 126,000 acres and extends from the Harquahala Mountains on the north side, to the Big Horn Mountains on the south.

HABITAT

The Harquahala Mountains are a relatively low granite range, surrounded by broad desert basins. The average precipitation is about five inches a year with summer temperatures exceeding 125 degrees. The desert vegetation consists of typical upper Sonoran Desert, which includes palo verde, ironwood, ocotillo, mesquite, creosote bush, triangle leaf bursage and the giant saguaro cactus. In addition, the Harquahala Mountains contain pockets of Interior Chaparral Subdivision of the warm-temperate scrublands typified by jojoba, shrub live oak, sugar sumac and mountain mahogany. Because of the high diversity of species, the area has been identified as a Special Botanical Area. The area contains numerous springs that provide water for the wild burros, livestock and other wildlife. Riparian vegetation such as cottonwood, willow, cattails and bullrush occur at many of the spring sites. Wild burros share their habitat with other wildlife such as desert bighorn sheep, desert mule deer, bobcat, mountain lion, coyotes, gray fox, Gambel's quail, dove, various bat species, desert tortoise and other non-game species.

HISTORY

Wild burros of the Harquahalas are believed to be descendants from escaped or released domestic pack animals from the late 1800s.

POPULATION

In 1971, following passage of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, BLM classified the Harquahala Mountains as a "zero burro population" area. This required removing all burros from the mountain range. The decision was based on conflicts in the area with private land owners, agricultural interests, bighorn sheep and other resources. Funding, however, was not provided and total removal never occurred. Today, the population is estimated to be about 90 burros.

MANAGEMENT

The Lower Gila Resource Management Plan Amendment proposed to establish the Harquahala Herd Area as a management area. Wild Burros would be managed to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance within the area. Some burros will continue to be removed when monitoring data indicates that damage to the vegetative resource is occurring. Animals causing damage to private property, including agricultural crops, will also be removed.

OFFICE CONTACT

For more information, contact the Phoenix Field Office at 21605 N. 7th Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85027-2099 or call (623) 580-5500.

