

http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/newsroom/2007/west_douglas_decision.html

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West Douglas wild horse decision affirmed

MEEKER, Colo. – The Bureau of Land Management announced today that its decision to remove a small herd of wild horses south of Rangely has been affirmed.

BLM will now begin the public process of developing a Gather Plan to remove approximately 120 horses in the West Douglas Herd Area. The first gather is expected next year, and more than one gather will be needed to remove all the horses from the area. The majority of the horses gathered will be available for adoption through BLM's wild horse and burro program. The remaining horses will be placed in long-term holding facilities.

The 1997 Resource Management Plan for the BLM White River Field Office recommended the removal of the West Douglas Herd, while expanding a larger wild horse management area in better habitat to the east.

"Wild horses are an integral part of the multiple use management of the 1.5-million acre White River Resource Area," said Field Manager Kent Walter. "We will continue to manage for wild horses in the better-suited, 190,000-acre Piceance/East Douglas Herd Management Area west of Meeker. In 1997, we expanded the appropriate management level of that area by 65 percent – from 140 to 235 horses."

In September 2005, BLM completed an Environmental Assessment that concluded the herd should be removed because the 123,000-acre West Douglas Herd Area could only support up to 60 horses, too small a herd to maintain genetic viability naturally.

BLM engaged state and local government agencies and the public to help determine the management plan for the West Douglas Herd Area. Rio Blanco County, the State of Colorado Department of Agriculture, and the Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council are among those who support the decision to remove horses from the West Douglas Herd Area.

BLM received several protests during the 30-day protest period that followed the 2005 decision. These protests have now been resolved by the BLM's Washington D.C. headquarters, allowing the White River Field Office to implement its decision.

Under the authority of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, BLM manages, protects, and controls wild horses and burros as part of its overall multiple-use mission. The Bureau works to ensure that population levels are in balance with rangeland resources and other uses of the public lands. BLM removes wild horses and burros from the range each year to control the size of herds. Wild horses have virtually no predators and can double in population about every four years if not managed.

BLM manages four Herd Management Areas in western Colorado for wild horse herds: The Piceance/East Douglas west of Meeker, the Little Bookcliffs Herd northeast of Grand Junction, the Sand Wash Herd west of Craig, and the Spring Creek Herd southwest of Montrose.

The Bureau's goal is to place as many of the wild horses and burros gathered from the range into private care. Since 1973, the BLM has placed more than 217,500 animals into private ownership through adoption. Under a December 2004 amendment to the 1971 law, the Bureau also seeks good homes through sales of horses and burros that are more than 10 years old or have been passed over for adoption at least three times. Since that amendment took effect, the BLM has sold more than 2,500 eligible horses and burros.

BLM encourages those who are interested in providing good homes to wild horses or burros to visit http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/wild_horse_and_burro.html for information about adoptions or sales.

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NOTE: This release discusses two wild horse herds in the White River Field Office. A map showing these areas is available at: http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/wrfo/wrfo_wild_horses.html