

## AWHPC ALERT

### **Gold Butte HMA**

All burros, last functioning HMA out of three on the Nevada side of Lake Mead.

#### **Comment Deadline:**

September 19, 2008

#### **Proposal:**

Preliminary EA # NV052-2008-435 Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP).

Will guide the management of the burros for the next 10-20 years.

BLM used the Gold Butte Gather EA of December 2006 as their “scoping document” so no scoping period was provided to the public.

#### **Contact Info:**

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BLM does not list an email address or option and states mail must be postmarked by 9/19/08.

#### **Proposal Info:**

Two Alternatives – New Plan, No Action

Fails to comply with NEPA, which requires a “range” of alternatives.

The “new plan” is aimed at authorizing “genetic diversity” by establishing the criterion of

- a) continuing genetic testing
- b) supplement wild burro herds if genetic markers drop below healthy genetic thresholds with other burros in “similar HMAs”.
- c) Allowing “selective removal” meaning they will sort who goes back. Claims the current authorized management only allows for gate cut, aka, taking everything that is gathered with no sorting of gender or age classes.
- d) Managing for a 50%/50% gender ratio.

The BIGGEST issue is they are proposing to do is gathering the burros every time the population is reported as exceeding 49 burros. BLM intends to circumvent the AML process by authorizing keeping the burros in the AML range but only allowing them to range between 22-49, not 22-98.

They plan on completing a rangeland health assessment by 2010 where they will reconsider the AML again “officially”. What are the legal ramifications of this if they have already authorized only 22-49 burros through the HMAP supposedly authorizing the management for the next 10-20

years. I am trying to get as much info about the range as possible but they are still censoring lots of stuff.

PLEASE SEE THE ATTACHED FIELD TRIP REPORT. BLM has also provided a few of their most recent “monitoring reports” with photos but they have so far NOT measured anything around where the Field Trip Report photos are taken. I have included one of these reports for comparison purposes. Just scroll down to the last page or two for the photos to get an idea of the “difference” in what they are “measuring” and what is out there. All the reports are the same so you only need to look at one.

There are 24 springs identified within the area. BLM has refused to answer questions about how many are fenced, how many have troughs but if you read the Field Trip Report, it sounds like quite a few.

BLMs new plan has failed to incorporate any maintenance of these water developments or fencing, nor do they address the “recovery plan” for the wildfire damage in the HMAP – a violation of the RAC Standards they are suppose to be conforming too through this proposal.

#### Population:

1998 Initial Estimated Herd Size: 600 burros.

AML re-established in 1998 LUP: 98

BLM then set it as a “range” of 22-98, though they haven’t provided the documents that approved this. Current FOIA is in...

BLM removed 132 burros in March 2006 and 140 burros in March 2007 for 272 total due to two wildfires burning almost 50% of the HMA. Both times they claimed they left 30-40 burros. A census in May 2007 after the March 2007 round up counted 48 burros + 3 foals. Yet BLM then estimated the population was 186 from this count! A “new” census in December 2007 counted 80 burros with 3 foals, they adjusted THAT to 120 but NOW, they claim it is 94 burros. Same ole same ole.... Wonder why they had a sudden change of heart in reporting 186? ☺

#### Sample Alert

The Bureau of Land Management’s Las Vegas Field Office has proposed a new Herd Management Area Plan for the Gold Butte Herd Management Area (HMA) in Southern Nevada, effective for the next 10-20 years.

The Gold Butte HMA is the last of three HMAs BLM has not yet zeroed out but the new proposal plans to remove the wild burros when they reach half of what the established appropriate management level (AML) is. The plan authorizes round ups every 4-5 years and targets leaving 22 burros. When they grow to 49, BLM intends to remove them again, even though the established AML allows up to 98 burros throughout the 271k acre HMA.

BLM rounded up the Gold Butte burros in March of 2006 and 2007, taking at least 272 burros. After the 2007 round ups, 48 burros were counted but BLM estimated there were 186 instead. A new adjustment now estimates 94 burros are still in the area with only 3 burro foals now being found.

BLM is only offering two options; The New Plan or No Action. Please support the **No Action Alternative** until a viable option is presented for sincere management. This should at least include:

- An Alternative that allows the wild burro herds to reach their high AML range of 98 before BLM removes them, not 49 as the current plan is written.
- Including maintenance of the existing water developments (aka, troughs outside fenced springs) and require water be provided if any new springs are fenced.
- Allow the burros forage measurements to still extend 10 miles around water. The new plan only allows 1-3 miles to be used, a very short distance for burros!
- Must present a rangeland recovery plan for those portions of the HMA that were burned by wildfires. Currently, BLM has no plan in place to help the burros survive for the next 20 years.
- Establish a time frame for migration patterns allowing the burros to use Lake Mead water in the summer. Though burros have always gone here, BLM has no set time allowance for their migration and they can be removed at anytime.
- Do not continue to allow National Park Service to remove or dispose of this last remaining burro herd. All removals must be done by BLM through normal procedures.

Comments must be postmarked by **September 19, 2008.**

Contact:

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Be sure to include **EA # NV052-2008-435,**  
**Gold Butte Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP)** in your response.  
**On behalf of America's wild horses and burros**  
**Thank You!**