

Highland Peak

Herd Management Area

Nevada BLM Ely Field Office

The following is an example of the Bureau of Land Managements legal treatment of wild horses within their federally protected herd areas and habitat.

On January 16, 2007, a concerned resident in Lincoln County Nevada reported that about 200 wild horses were removed from public lands just west of the Lincoln County Airport located in Panaca, Nevada. According to their report, approximately two weeks after the wild horse removals, three tractor trailer loads of sheep were unloaded in this same area and continued to be unloaded daily until the resident estimated that over a 1,000 sheep were now in the area.



Highland Peak Wild Horse
Captured 12/11/06 1 Year Old Filly
Winning Bid-\$125.00 1/22/07

The Ely Field Office in Nevada removed 217 wild horses in December in several of their Herd Management Areas. The Highland Peak HMA, part of the Dry Lake Complex Gather Plan, (1) was one of the round ups conducted to "maintain a thriving ecological balance" with other rangeland users.

Upon contacting BLM Ely personnel, it was confirmed that shortly after the wild horses were removed, legally permitted sheep were then stocked in the area. According to Ely's Assistant Field Manager, 6,600 sheep have been authorized in livestock allotments within the Highland Peak HMA. (2)

The Highland Peak HMA also falls within the jurisdiction of the 1999 Lincoln County Elk Management Plan. Within this plan, 14 HMAs are identified as affecting the Elk Management Areas with a maximum of AML of 644 wild horses (3) for all HMAs and an elk population target of 1,850. (4)

The Highland Peak HMA encompasses 137,975 acres of public land with an "appropriate management level" (AML) issued in 2004 of just 33 wild horses. (5) This is an average of 1 horse per 4,178 acres. With a genetically viable number of at least 150 horses needed to ensure a stable population, this current management strategy poses a serious threat to their continued survival. (6)

In December 2006, the BLM removed a total of 64 horses with an estimated 25 horses remaining.(7) The estimated cost of these removals is approximately \$138 thousand dollars. (8)

References:

- (1) Dry Lake Complex Wild Horse Gather Plan and Preliminary Environmental Assessment, (E.A.) NV-040-07-002, Department of the Interior, BLM Ely Field Office, December 2006.
- (2) Personal E-Mail Communication, Received 2/22/07 12:44 PM
- (3) 1999 Lincoln County Elk Management Plan, Pg. 4, Table 2-Herd Management Areas (HMAs) and Established AML.
- (4) 1999 Lincoln County Elk Management Plan, Population Goals and Objectives, Potential for Elk Distribution, Population Management Levels, and Elk Free Zones, Pg. 14, Action 3
- (5) Dry Lake Complex Wild Horse Gather Plan and Preliminary Environmental Assessment, (E.A.) NV-040-07-002, Department of the Interior, BLM Ely Field Office, December 2006. Pg. 27, I. Appendix I, Appropriate Management Levels.
- (6) Learn More- Genetic Diversity and Viability, Management Toward Extinction-Wild Horse and Burro Freedom Alliance, 2000, Accessed 6/11/07 American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign www.wildhorsepreservation.com
- (7) Ely Field Office Gather Summary, Dry Lake Complex, December 2006. Courtesy of Benjamin Noyes, WH&B Specialist, Ely Field Office.
- (8) Based on figures provided in An Economic Analysis of Alternative Fertility Control and Associated Management Techniques for Three BLM Wild Horse Herds by John M. Bartholow. Cost estimates were taken from budget planning spreadsheet supplied by Linda Coates-Markle, BLM/MT (4/29/2003) as interpreted by Don Glenn, BLM/DC (6/17/2003) and Lili Thomas, BLM/NV (9/22/2003). Includes cost of removal, transportation, medical, & assumes 1 year containment with all animals successfully adopted.

Photos taken from BLM Internet Adoption Websites. HMA & AML Statistics from BLM FY06 Herd Statistics.
Research Data & Statistics Compiled by Mac Donald June 2007