FACT SHEET
Great Divide Basin
Herd Management Area

BLM

Great Divide Basin Gather

Key Statistics and Facts

The Great Divide Basin (DB) Herd Management Area (HMA) encompasses 778,792 acres of public, private, and state land.

The current population for the HMA is approximately 1,640 wild horses based on April 2010 census flights.

The Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the DB HMA has an identified management range of between 415-600 wild horses.

The BLM will use a contractor to remove sufficient animals to bring the population to the low end of the AML range.

Mustangs will be offered for adoption through the BLM's wild horse and burro adoption program, or placed in long-term holding pastures.

Interested members of the public and the news media will be afforded multiple opportunities to attend gather operations and to observe the animals prior to shipping to short-term holding.

The Great Divide Basin HMA contains four livestock grazing allotments with authorization to graze cattle and sheep each year. During the past five years, the average livestock use has been 30 percent of the authorized use. The number of livestock authorized to graze varies year to year depending upon what the individual livestock operator applies for within their permits.

Wild horse AMLs were based on direct observation of range condition completed by a multi-disciplinary team of rangeland management and wildlife experts. These populations are supported by the Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP) developed with full public participation during the RMP planning process.

The Great Divide Basin HMA supports wild horses, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, sage-grouse and numerous other wildlife species.

Not gathering the excess wild horses would result in an annual population increase of approximately 21 percent causing overpopulation and damage to the resources. It also would be non-compliant with the RMP.

Consequences of Postponing/Not Removing Wild Horses

Not removing excess wild horses would put BLM at the risk of being non-compliant with the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, with the 2003 Consent Decree with the State of Wyoming, and with the Court Order with private land owners, and applicable regulations and Bureau policy.

Removing the excess wild horses will help prevent deterioration of the range, and achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship.

Leaving the excess wild horses in the HMA will strain the existing partnerships with other public land users.

Not gathering the excess wild horses would result in an annual population increase of approximately 21 percent causing increasing numbers of wild horses to move outside the Great Divide Basin HMA in search of food and water.

Wild Horse Overpopulations Impact Wildlife and Plants

There are a wide variety of wildlife species common to the ecosystem within the Great Divide Basin HMA, including pronghorn antelope, mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk. Other wildlife species common to the environment include mountain lions, coyotes, bobcats and black-tailed jackrabbits.

There is abundant habitat within the HMA for a variety of raptors including: Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, American Kestrel, Red-Tailed Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Burrowing Owl, Golden Eagle, and Great-Horned Owl.

BLM threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate animal and plant species potentially inhabiting the Great Divide Basin HMA include: Ute Ladies'-Tresses, Blowout Penstemon, Black-Footed Ferret, Greater Sage-Grouse, Mountain Plover, and Gray Wolf.

BLM sensitive species inhabiting the Great Divide Basin HMA include: Idaho Pocket Gopher, Pygmy Rabbit, Swift Fox, Dwarf Shrew, Spotted Bat, Long-Eared Myotis, Fringed Myotis, Townsend's Big-Eared Bat, and White-Tailed Prairie Dog.

Sensitive bird species that may occur in the area include: Ferruginous Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Long-Billed Curlew, Burrowing Owl, Sage Thrasher, Loggerhead Shrike, Brewer's Sparrow, and Sage Sparrow. Mountain Plover have been recorded in the project area and potential breeding/nesting habit exists.

Because wild horses often repeatedly graze in the same area year-round, forage plants in the affected area receives little rest from grazing pressures. The result is a reduction in plant health, vigor, reproduction and loss of native forage species, which diminishes habitat quality.

Livestock Grazing Within the Project Area

Livestock use is at approximately 70 percent, below the level of permitted use. Livestock use is in compliance with the grazing systems outlined in the final multiple use decisions, agreements and term permit conditions providing for periodic rest and deferment of key range sites.

The proposed action is in conformance with the BLM Wyoming "Standards for Healthy Rangelands and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management" (1997). The proposed action will assist in maintaining the health of the public lands within the HMA.