

Visitation Protocol and Ground Rules for the 2019 Challis HMA Wild Horse Gather

The Bureau of Land Management recognizes and respects the right of interested members of the public and the media to observe the 2019 Challis HMA wild horse gather. However, the BLM must also ensure the health and safety of the public, BLM employees and contractors, and America's wild horses. Failure to maintain safe distances from operations at the gather and temporary holding sites could result in members of the public inadvertently getting in the path of the wild horses or gather personnel, placing themselves and others at risk, or causing stress and potential injury to the wild horses.

Accordingly, the BLM developed this guidance to maximize the opportunity for reasonable public access to the gather while ensuring the Bureau's health and safety responsibilities are fulfilled.

- Public observation opportunities and gather operations may be suspended if poor weather conditions create unsafe flying conditions. A Challis Wild Horse Gather Info Line has been set up at (208) 879-6271. Once operations begin, the information line will be updated daily with the status of the gather. Those interested in observing on Tuesday, Nov. 5, should call the Info Line and RSVP attendance and number in party by Nov. 2. Due to the topography of the possible viewing locations on public land, the BLM may need to limit the number of vehicles traveling to the site(s).
- Observers must provide their own 4-wheel drive high-clearance vehicle, appropriate shoes, clothing, food, water and extra gas.
- Observers are prohibited from riding in government and contractor vehicles and/or heavy equipment.
- The BLM will establish one observation area in the immediate area of the gather and holding sites, and BLM staff will escort individuals to each location. This area will be placed to maximize the opportunity for public observation, while providing for a safe and effective wild horse gather. The utilization of such observation areas is necessary due to the use and presence of heavy equipment and aircraft within the gather operation, and the critical need to allow BLM personnel and contractors to focus on attending to the needs of the wild horses while maintaining a safe environment.
- Observation areas will be sited to protect the wild horses from being spooked, startled or impacted in a manner that results in increased or unnecessary stress.
- Once an observation area is determined, it CANNOT be moved during that day's activities unless otherwise directed by the BLM Lead.
- BLM representatives will escort visitors to and from the gather and/or temporary holding facility during designated observation days.
- Visitors who decide to leave the gather site will not be allowed to return to gather activities for that day.
- Individuals will be directed to the designated observation area by BLM personnel and informed of behavioral rules (such as remaining quiet and still to ensure a safe and effective gather operation).

- Observers are prohibited from climbing on or trespassing into BLM and/or contractor vehicles, equipment or corrals.
- When BLM is using a helicopter or other heavy equipment in close proximity to a designated observation area, members of the public may be asked to stay by their vehicles before being escorted to an observation area, until the use of the helicopter or the heavy machinery is complete.
- When given the signal that the helicopter is close to the gather site while bringing in wild horses, visitors must sit down in areas specified by BLM representatives and must not move or talk as the horses are guided into the corral.
- Visitors must direct their questions and or comments to the BLM spokesperson on-site. Visitors may not engage other BLM or contract staff in a way that disrupts their gather duties and responsibilities; professional and respectful behavior is expected of all.
- During down times, the BLM may make staff members and/or contractors available for a Q&A session.
- It is important to stay within the designated observation area to safely observe the wild horse gather. Individuals attempting to move outside a designated observation area will be requested to move back to the designated area. Visitors who fail to do so may be asked to leave the gather operation and/or receive a citation and/or arrest.
- Visitors who do not cooperate and follow the rules will be escorted off the gather site by BLM law enforcement personnel, and will be prohibited from participating in any subsequent observation days.
- BLM reserves the right to alter these rules based on changes in circumstances that may pose a risk to health, public safety or the safety of wild horses (such as weather, lightning, wildfire, etc.)