

McCullough Peaks Bait Trap Removal Fact Sheet

General

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Cody Field Office (CYFO) will gradually gather and remove excess wild horses from the McCullough Peaks Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA) using non-helicopter gather techniques (bait trapping) through 2018 (or as long as it can be reasonably concluded that no new information and no new circumstances have substantially changed in the area of analysis), and continue the use of fertility control.

The current wild horse population for the HMA as of Oct. 9, 2012, is 153 horses, and the target appropriate management level (AML) is between 70-140 horses. The use of bait trapping to gradually remove excess horses through 2018 will help maintain a population of approximately 100 adult wild horses in the MPHMA.

The gather is tentatively scheduled to begin Jan. 17, 2013. The environmental assessment (EA) is complete and the decision record was signed on Nov. 30, 2012.

The BLM's goal is to manage for the health of the rangeland ecosystem within the McCullough Peaks HMA, while sustaining healthy populations of wild horses. Science and monitoring have indicated in order to conserve a healthy rangeland, the number of animals the HMA can sustain is between 70 and 140. So, complying with the BLM's legal mandate and multiple-use mission, managing the herd between 70 and 140 horses is the best balance to achieve the health of the rangelands and the wild horses.

Should this gather not occur in 2013, the wild horse population could increase to the point that bait trapping will not be a feasible method to remove the excess horses. Removing horses gradually through bait trapping will prevent the need to have another helicopter drive trap gather in the near future. Although helicopter gathers are proven to be a safe, effective and humane method of capture, they can be harder on the animals than a bait trap. Not conducting this gather would be inconsistent with the BLM's goal of using alternative tools for managing wild horses whenever possible.

The BLM manages the McCullough Peaks HMA through a combination of removals, fertility control and natural attrition. The results of the fertility control program began in 2009 are beginning to be realized and should result in a stabilized population in the near future. However, the fertility control aims to level out the population, not reduce it, and currently the population is too large to maintain a healthy ecological landscape. Therefore, the BLM is proposing to conduct the non-helicopter gather.



Need for the Gather

The BLM must manage the range for a variety of purposes, one of which is to sustain healthy populations of wild horses. In addition, the BLM manages for recreational use and forage and water for wildlife and livestock.

Managing appropriate numbers of wild horses is designed to maintain a balance so that rangelands can be healthy and productive for years to come.

Overpopulated wild horse herds overuse the rangeland, threatening the health of native wildlife and plants, reducing water quality, and even threatening the health of the horses themselves.

The BLM removes excess wild horses from public lands to reach or maintain an appropriate management level (AML) of wild horses. This level represents the calculated number of wild horses that the land can support in balance with other public land uses and resources.

Gathering wild horses to within the AML helps preserve and maintain healthy wild horse populations able to survive and thrive during severe winters, drought, or other uncontrollable and unforeseeable environmental influences.

The AML was determined based on scientific and environmental analyses conducted in the development of the herd management plan (HMP) and environmental analysis.

The current wild horse population for the HMA is approximately 153 animals, and the target AML is 70-140.

The gather is consistent with the provisions of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 as amended, which mandates that the BLM remove excess wild horses to achieve a thriving, natural ecological balance in the area.

To abide by this law, the BLM manages the McCullough Peaks HMA through a combination of removals, fertility control and natural attrition as determined in the HMP.

The excess animals we remove will be put up for adoption through the BLM adoption program. An adoption will be held in April in Powell.

The results of the fertility control program began in 2009 are starting to be realized and should result in a stabilized population in the future. A small bait trap gather will result in a population within the AML.

Other

The public was encouraged to participate throughout the planning process and provided input, information, data and analysis that helped develop a comprehensive environmental analysis, proposed action and alternatives.