HORSES TO BE REMOVED FEBRUARY PROPOSED POST GATHER AREA DATA AUGUST 2006 ACTION POPULATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>FEBRUARY 2006 CENSUS DATA</th>
<th>PROJECTED POPULATION AUGUST 2006</th>
<th>HORSES TO BE REMOVED UNDER THE PROPOSED ACTION</th>
<th>POST GATHER POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Square S, Pasture C</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corral Gulch/Boxelder</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Piceance HA</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjoining Allotments</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Herd Genetics and Population History: Wild horses in the Piceance-East Douglas herd possess balanced conformation and somewhat refined features. The majority of the horses stand between 14.2 and 15 hands and weigh between 800 and 1,000 lbs. In 1995, E. Gus Cothran, the Director of the Equine Blood Typing Research Laboratory at the University of Kentucky, evaluated the genetic makeup of the Piceance-East Douglas herd. Cothran’s report stated, in part: “The primary conclusions from the analysis of genetic variability of the White River Resource Area horse herd are that significant genetic subdivision of the herd exists and that, in general, genetic variation within subdivisions is relatively low. Within the HMA genetic diversity is fairly high. From a management standpoint, this is almost ideal situation. Population subdivision with limited inbreeding within subdivisions and occasional exchange of individuals among subdivisions is one of the best strategies for the long term maintenance of genetic variability. The subdivision of the HMA population with levels of dispersal that now appear to exist should be sufficient to maintain genetic variation within the area for many generations even if relatively small numbers are maintained within subdivisions. If additional interchange of individuals appears to be needed in the future, transfer of one or two year old females every three to five years would be the most efficient strategy.”

Cothran’s study determined the herd shows the closest similarity to the North American breeds, as well as to the Thoroughbred, Arabian and draft horse groups. The Piceance-East Douglas herd has the closest relationship to Colorado’s Little Book Cliffs wild horse herd.

The first census of this herd was completed in 1974 with 139 wild horses recorded during the flight. Since 1974 herd population has been recorded during census as high as 389 in 1995 and as low as 93 horses in 1985 (probable mortality resulting from severe winter weather conditions.) The following table shows the population history in the Piceance East Douglas Herd Management Area determined through census gathers and expected herd recruitment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>CENSUS DATA</th>
<th>ESTIMATED POST-FOAL POPULATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF HORSES REMOVED</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>CENSUS DATA</th>
<th>ESTIMATED POST-FOAL POPULATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF HORSES REMOVED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>167</td>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>340</td>
<td></td>
<td>1992</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>215*</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>248</td>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>466</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
<td></td>
<td>239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Piceance portion of the HMA only.
The following sex ratio data was collected during the 6 gathers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>FILLY %</th>
<th>COLT %</th>
<th>MARE %</th>
<th>STUD %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The filly: colt ratio was recorded as 50:50 during two of the six gathers. The remaining four gathers suggest a normal fluctuation in the filly to colt ratio with fillies varying between 44% and 56% of the animals captured.

The herd’s adult sex ratio appears to favor females over males. Females meet or exceed 50% of the captured population in 5 of the 6 years of data collection. The reason for a higher proportion of adult females in the herd is most likely the result of human manipulation as well as natural selection. To date, male horses have been favored for removal by the BLM during removal projects. Research suggests that natural selection in wild horse herds favors females over males. Garrott (1990) concluded “foal sex ratios tend to be close to parity while there is a trend towards a preponderance of females in the adult segment of the populations.” "The tendency toward a skewed adult sex ratio [towards females] therefore is not the result of a skewed ratio at birth but reflects either a disparity in survival rates between males and females or differential probability of capture.”

To date, while the Piceance-East Douglas herd sex ratio appears to favor females, the ratio does not notably lean towards one sex over another. Variations can likely be attributed to normal fluctuations.

3) Herd Age, Sex and Color Ratio: Herd age and sex data collected during 6 gathers between 1980 and 2002 were compared to determine any notable changes in age, sex or color structure within the herd over a 22 year time span.

### Piceance East-Douglas HMA
**Age Distribution Percent by Gather Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A typical age structure for hoofed, wild ungulates (which includes wild horses) is pyramid in shape with the majority of animals included in the youngest age categories. A comparison of herd age structure based on 6 gathers between 1980 and 2002 suggest the Piceance-East Douglas herd retains a sound, varied age structure with the majority of animals within the younger age classes.

The herd’s foal crop fluctuates between 20% and 23% of the population and averages at 22% of the herd. The one discrepancy in the herd’s age structure is seen in the yearling age class. In 1980 20% of the animals captured were recorded as yearlings. This percent drops notably in the other 4 years of data, ranging between 1% and 5%. A case may be made for human error in aging the captured horses since census figures support an average population increase of 22%.

Garrott (1990), in his doctorate paper on the demography of wild horses completed in 1990 analyzed 60,116 samples and found a frequent misclassification of yearling horses as two-year olds. The error was due to animals being classified as two-year olds because the incisors had fully erupted. Even though a sizeable number of yearlings have erupted incisors they are not in contact, thus the discrepancy. The possibility of human error accounting for the low number of yearlings recorded in these gathers is supported by comparing the number of yearlings recorded in 1994 (2%) with the number of four-year old horses captured in 1997 (9%).

The proportion of older (over 10 years of age) horses increased somewhat between 1997 and 1999. This increase is likely the result of the program’s age selective gather policy that went into effect in 1994 and resulted in older horses being returned to the range. To date, age gather operations do not appear to have negatively affected the Piceance-East Douglas herd’s age structure; the herd remains composed of horses under 10 years of age. However, during the 2002 gather and removal operation horses over the age of 10 were removed from the area and placed in BLM facilities. Of the 27 mares and 31 studs gathered 12 mares and 6 studs were released.
back into the Herd Management Area therefore it is believed that the population will not increase in older (over 10 years of age) but perhaps realize a more diverse spread in age classes.

4) Color Composition: Herd color composition data collected during 6 gathers between 1980 and 2002 were compared to determine any notable changes in color structure within the herd over a 22 year time span.

### Piceance-East Douglas HMA
#### Color Composition by Gather Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>% 1980</th>
<th>% 1983</th>
<th>% 1994</th>
<th>% 1997</th>
<th>% 1999</th>
<th>% 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bay</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Roan</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorrel</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Roan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinto</td>
<td>none</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>trace</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckskin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Palomino</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>Chestnut</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>trace</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cremello</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As evidenced from the table above, diversity in herd color does not appear to have changed appreciably between 1980 and 2002. Rarer colors accounted for a combined 16% of the animals captured in 1980; 11% in 1983; and 5% in 1994. These colors were absent in 1997 and in 1999. The decrease in herd color variation is most likely partially attributable to human manipulation and partially due to unknown internal factors. Both Bay and gray horses possess a varied range of color diversity and have increased in the herd. Preserving what color is left in this herd and possibly introducing horses with more unusual color into the herd could be expected to increase herd color variation over time. Uniquely colored wild horses stand out and can be used as ‘marker’ horses during monitoring and capture projects.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* All phases of the capture, holding, adoption preparation and transport will be carried out according to Bureau policy with the intent of conducting a safe, humane operation. If conditions warrant, or if animal health and welfare is in jeopardy at any time, gather operations will be delayed, or halted. Disturbance of wild horses by activities associated with any gather are unavoidable. There is always the possibility that wild horses will be injured or killed during any phase of the removal operation. Mortality of a random few animals would not be expected to change the overall integrity of the wild horse herd.

All horses will experience varying levels of stress during herding, capture, handling and holding. Stress levels, and the potential for injury, will be highest immediately following capture, when animals are moved through the chutes in preparation for adoption and when animals are being transported between the Yellow Creek Corrals and the BLM Canon City holding facility.
Confinement of animals at the temporary holding facility and during transport will increase the likelihood of injury, and stress/confined related illness. Some young foals may become separated from their mothers while being driven by the helicopter to trap locations. Some of the pregnant mares will be in the second trimester of pregnancy and could abort as a result of the stress imposed by gather activities.

Well-constructed traps, safety-conscious corral construction at the holding facility, well-maintained equipment, and additional pens for animals determined best kept separate from other animals will decrease stress, and the potential for injury and illness. Experienced BLM personnel will be on-site during all phases of the operation. A contract veterinarian will be either on-site or on-call at all times during the operation. Observers will be asked to remain some distance from the animals during all phases of capture, holding and preparation to minimize the level of activity.

Wild horses will be handled only to the extent necessary. Animals identified for relocation will be released with minimal handling in an expedient time frame. Injured animals will be examined and, when necessary, treated by a qualified veterinarian, and separated from other captured horses. Animals determined by the veterinarian as not treatable, or determined that treatment would be less humane than destruction, will be or humanely destroyed by the veterinarian, contractor, or by qualified agency personnel.

Population-wide direct impacts can occur during or immediately following a gather and include band displacement, modification of herd demographics, and the separation of members of individual bands of horses. With the exception of changes to herd demographics, direct population wide impacts have proven, over the last 20 years, to be temporary in nature with most, if not all impacts disappearing within hours to several days of release. The one observable effect associated with gather activities is the herd’s heightened awareness of human presence, helicopters and motorized equipment following a gather activity.

Appendix C consists of an analysis designed to evaluate the ability of the herd to rebound given the current age selection management directives and the AML range of 135 to 235 horses. The analysis works on the premise that the gather data collected in 2002 is representative of current herd demographics. The Jenkins wild horse population model was used to pro-rate the expected age and sex structure of the pre-gather herd. The population model was then used to decrease the herd to 135 horses using current age selective management directives. Pertinent management data, described in Appendix C of this document, was entered into the model.

A series of projections using both demographic and environmental variables were developed to ascertain possible long-term effects resulting from the current program directives and the current AML range established for this herd. Modeling studies with 100 trials per simulation supported the premise that the Piceance-East Douglas herd can be expected to continue to rebound in size and desirable sex ratio following the 2006 selective gather and fertility control treatment.

In each of the trials run, lowering the herd to 135 animals, while taking into consideration environmental variables programmed into the simulations, did not result in the population falling below its capacity to rebound. The model runs resulted in an average population growth 6-14%.
This average is conservative relative to the 20+% population increase known to be typical in the Piceance-East Douglas Herd. The population model suggests that the herd would exceed the 235 upper management ranges when gathered every 4th year. Because of the conservative nature of the model, the field office assumes that any gather proposal that appears sound in the model will also be appropriate in the Herd Management Area.

Herd demographic data will be compared and analyzed with data collected during previous gathers and then compared with data from future gathers. The effects of age and sex selection in the Piceance-East Douglas herd will be weighed with White River Field Office’s Land Use Plan objectives, as well as, objectives in the White River Field Office Wild Horse Program Analysis and Operational Plan.

The WRFO is charged with maintaining the Piceance-East Douglas wild horse herd with the only tools available to achieve such a request being wild horse gathers and their associated removals. With the introduction of fertility control into the Piceance-East Douglas wild horse herd a greater level of maintenance could be realized. The WRFO proposes to apply fertility control to the wild horse mares (approximately 50 to 70 head) that will be released back into the Herd Management Area. It would be necessary for the WRFO to monitor the Piceance-East Douglas wild horse herd by census in the years 2008 and 2010. With the 2008 and 2010 census information the WRFO would make informed decisions on any future use of fertility control as a tool for partial suppression of the herd growth rates in the Piceance-East Douglas Herd, as well as the need for a gather in 2010.

This environmental assessment makes no commitment to long term use of fertility control. Prior to any subsequent gather operation, data collected from herd census monitoring would be incorporated into any future proposed management actions.

The BLM would be able to maintain the herd to the existing AML of 135-235 wild horses with minimal size fluctuations. The question and answer document by Kirkpatrick and Fazio summarizes nearly 20 years of research on fertility control and its application in wild horse herds. The use of fertility control would allow select wild horse mares an opportunity to achieve improved body condition until their next foaling and realize a greater life span on their home range within the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area due to fewer gather operations based on herd recruitment.

**Environmental Consequences of the No Fertility Control Alternative:** A greater number of wild horses would be realized and would require larger or more frequent gathers if fertility control is not considered as a viable alternative.

**Mitigation:** Once horses have been removed from outside the herd area a renewed focus will be to prioritize placement of cattleguards (modification for wild horses as per Bureau standards) at locations specific to fence crossing on roads that experience high public use and present a risk of being left open. Cattleguards would reduce the potential for horses crossing out of the Herd Management Area. The same can be said for the fences that are considered to be boundary fences. A renewed focus will be to prioritize sections that have issue with wildlife damage and present a high risk of damage from outside sources (i.e., cut fences for hunting.
purposes, etc.). Reference Appendix B for the Fertility Control Treatment method proposed under this environmental assessment.

Refer to Appendix A (Standard Operating Procedures) of this document for mitigation included with implementation of the Proposed Action and the Alternative to Reduce Herd to Lower AML Range but not to implement Fertility Control on Select Mares.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:

Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Issues of major importance that are analyzed are maintaining rangeland health and proper management of wild horses within the established boundaries of a Herd Management Area.

Past actions regarding the management of wild horses have resulted in the current wild horse population within the Herd Management Area and some areas outside of the boundary. Wild horse management has contributed to the present resource condition and wild horse herd structure within the area. Removal of excess wild horses to the lower point of the Appropriate Management Level (135 animals) would be expected to promote vegetation recovery and to maintain remaining animals in healthy condition. Until the area can be gathered, negative impacts to vegetation, soils, and riparian areas will continue and excess wild horses will continue to compete with native wildlife for the available water and vegetation.

While this analysis focuses on the removal of 301 excess wild horses within the HMA, the 50-100 wild horses outside the HMA, and fertility control of approximately 65 wild horse mares within the Herd Management Area, the related action that is foreseeable within the HMA is the overall improved management of the wild horses and their habitat. The proposed action should result in stabilization efforts being realized in the fact that fewer, if any, horses will seek habitat outside of the Herd Management Area due to a longer term of lower herd numbers and improved rangeland health.

REFERENCES CITED:


Cothran, E. Gus, Ph.D., Department of Veterinary Science, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 1995, “Genetic Analysis of the feral horses of the White River Resource Area of Colorado”

Cothran, E. Gus, Ph.D., Department of Veterinary Science, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 2002. “Genetic Analysis of the West Douglas CO feral Horse Herd”


PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: This EA and gather plan was distributed to members of the general public, special interest groups, and interagency personnel for review and comment.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nate Dieterich</td>
<td>Hydrologist</td>
<td>Air Quality, Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights, Soils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara Meagley</td>
<td>Natural Resource Specialist</td>
<td>Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Threatened and Endangered Plant Species</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Selle</td>
<td>Archeologist</td>
<td>Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Fowler</td>
<td>Forester</td>
<td>Invasive, Non-Native Species, Forest Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Hollowed</td>
<td>Wildlife Biologist</td>
<td>Migratory Birds, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melissa J. Kindall</td>
<td>Hazmat Collateral</td>
<td>Wastes, Hazardous or Solid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ed Hollowed</td>
<td>Wildlife Biologist</td>
<td>Wetlands and Riparian Zones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris Ham</td>
<td>Outdoor Recreation Planner</td>
<td>Recreation, Visual Resources, Wilderness, Access and Transportation,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Haenkenschiel</td>
<td>Rangeland Management Specialist</td>
<td>Vegetation, Rangeland Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ken Holsinger</td>
<td>Natural Resource Specialist</td>
<td>Fire Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Daggett</td>
<td>Mining Engineer</td>
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<td>Linda Jones</td>
<td>Realty Specialist</td>
<td>Realty Authorizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa J. Kindall</td>
<td>Range Technician</td>
<td>Noise, Wild Horses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
been completed.

Decision Record is considered in effect until the actions included in the proposed action have
been completed.

The decision is to remove the horses from the proposed area as defined in the Biological Opinion
(NARO505089) and to remove all horses within the 120-mile radius.

The proposed action has been placed in full force and effect and the following have been
address:

Recommendations:
1. The proposed action is in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 43, part 4700.
2. The proposed action is consistent with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 43, sections 4700,
   4704, 4714, 4718.
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   4704, 4714, 4718.

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The proposed action is consistent with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 43, sections 4700,
4704, 4714, 4718.
Gather Method: The gather and removal of wild horses from the proposed locations will be completed using helicopter drive trapping, helicopter drive roping, water, or hay trapping. The work will be completed by a nationally awarded gather contractor.

Rationale for Approval of the Proposed Action: The decision to removal wild horses from the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area is based on vegetation monitoring studies which document that an ecological balance currently does not exist within the Herd Management Area. The proposed action will encourage restoration of a balance of use between wild horses, wildlife, and livestock.

The decision to remove wild horses determined in excess of what their range can support is in conformance with 43 CFR 4700.0-6 and 43 CFR 4720.1. The decision to remove wild horses from outside the Herd Area boundaries is in conformance with 43 CFR 4710.4. The decision to release animals in specified age groups back into the Herd Area is in conformance with current Wild Horse and Burro Program directives. The removal decision conforms with the 1971 Wild, Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, PL-92-195; with current regulations, policy, directives, and the objectives contained in CO-110-06-030-EA.

Rationale for Full Force and Effect: The rationale for placing the action into full force and effect is based on the following:

- The planned gather supports the management of wild horses in the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area identified in the 1997 White River Resource Area RMP.
- Reducing wild horse numbers, as identified in the 2006 EA, will encourage protection of key forage species from the overuse attributed to wild horses. The delay resulting from an appeal likely would result in direct, negative impacts on plant communities relied upon by the various range users. This situation, in turn, would negatively affect local watersheds and the habitat of the animals dependant upon this vegetation.
- Limitation of wild horse distribution to inside the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area, is in keeping with CFR 43 4710.4 regulations. A delay in the gather would increase the incidence of horses relocating outside the Herd Management Area boundaries as competition between wild horses, wildlife and livestock increase.
- Completion of the planned removal in a timely, cost efficient manner is an action which benefits the taxpaying public.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. Cultural Resources: Horse trap locations and holding areas, except for the Yellow Creek Corrals (temporary holding facility), will need to be sited to avoid archaeological resources. In areas with acceptable levels of inventory no additional field work shall be necessary except to ensure that sites in the near vicinity can be adequately avoided by drive lines, wing fences and traps. In areas where inadequate inventory data exists an inventory will be necessary to ensure that any resources present are avoided.
general from theseHappy operations, be addressed a buffer adequate to effectively isolate nesting activity from disturbances. Even an active report nest is found in the vicinity of happy nectar operations, these sites will still on those areas where proposed for set or development prior to August 12, 2006. In the.

5. WILDLIFE: The report for report nesting activity will be conducted by WEP.

Resources: Trip facilities may be needed to be modified to avoid impacts during field.

6. Pesticides: Known and reported further locations shall be avoided when locating

Action: Appendix A, EA #CA-110-06-030, Standard Operating Procedures of the Proposed

Management Area, more specifically, those measures affecting facility control. Refer to

Monitoring would continue for the wild horses living within the herd.

4. NOXIOUS WEEDS: Any bad bed a nap site of holding facilities will be certified as weed

Vigilance: The Brum coordinator will be notified in this case of a

3. WEASELS, HAZARDOS and SOLID: The Porta Zone, Peninsula (P.D.) would be handled by

Vigilance areas for any facilities proposed for use in this removal action.

2. Treated and Endangered Plants/Species of CAE (California Environmental Conservation (ACE):
8. **Recreation:** Avoid; if at all possible, gather operations on western portions of gather area (Cathedral Bluffs area) at higher elevations due to increased concentrations of public land hunters on September 16th and 17th. Additionally, inform Colorado Division of Wildlife field going personnel of gather operations, specifically: duration, reason for gather and mitigation measures.

**NAME OF PREPARER:** Melissa J. Kindall

**NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:** Caroline P. Hollowed

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:** [Signature]

**DATE SIGNED:** 08/01/06
The pilot needs the horses into the wings of the ship and then hours while a ground crew on foot


and/or horseclock comes in behind the horses, helps them into the ship's ramp and closes a gate.


Temperature, time of year, animal condition and ramp dimensions.


Horses in each band, the distance bands have to the ramp, topography, weather conditions,


height depends on a variety of factors including proximity of bands to the ramp; the number of


horses and bands moved towards a ramp at one time. The number of horses or number of bands


moving one at a time. The ramp and wings are ready for use, the pilot sticks moving one or


more bands of horses towards the ramp. Once


The helicopter pilot completes a reconnisair to landing to see where the bands are located. Once


are being snapped.


Windows form a visual barrier to the horses and they usually enter the ramp without being aware they


will be out. The ramp and the controls are designed to move the horses towards the ramp.


Helicopter drive-through is involved using a helicopter to spot and then herd horses towards a pre-


The contractor and BP personnel


The same rules apply to both


contractor. The capture will be conducted by BP personnel and the contractor. Both of whom are


in accordance with the provisions of 43 CFR 4700 and with the US Forest Service. Incidental


contractor will ensure the wildlife, safety and human feet safety of the wildlife in the


helicopter drive-through method. The following materials and procedures will be followed during the


helicopter drive-through. The following must be captured will be the primary method used to capture


1. The helicopter drive-through


Capture Method Descriptions


The following stipulations and procedures will be followed to ensure the wildlife, safety and


handling of wildlife apply to contractors, to agency personnel, and to volunteers.


The gathering will be completed through a nationally awarded gather contract. Agency personnel


and responsibilities of individuals directly involved with the planned gather project.


Colorado. In the Rock Springs, Wyoming, portion of the project, the same procedures for capture and


precaution: Double Wild Horse Capture Plan. This appendix outlines the safety considerations


Standard Operating Procedures


Appendix A
behind the trapped horses. The helicopter remains in the trap wings close enough to keep the horses from running back out of the trap and far enough away to assure safety of the ground crew and the horses. Once the gate is closed, or when the pilot sees it is best for him to leave the area, the helicopter leaves the trap site.

A pair of Parada or Judas horses; are often supplied by the contractor to encourage bands of wild horses not to balk in the trap wings, and to run smoothly into the trap corrals. The Judas horses are best friends and do not like being separated from one another. One Judas horse is lightly tied in the trap corral. The second Judas horse is led into the mid-section of the trap wing and held along the edge of one side of the trap wing. As wild horses are moved by helicopter into the trap the Judas horse being held in the trap wing is released. The Judas horse picks up his tail and runs towards the trap corral to be with his buddy. The wild horses see a horse running free ahead of them. Their instinct tells them this horse is running to freedom; they follow the Judas horse into the trap corral. The Judas horses are familiar with being in close proximity to freshly-captured wild horses. The Parada horses, once trapped in the corral, hold their own but are not overly aggressive with the wild horses.

2. Helicopter Assisted Roping

Helicopter assisted roping is used when mares and foals become separated, when every horse must be captured from an area, and when specific animals are targeted for capture. In the upcoming gather helicopter assisted roping may be used if a mare and foal become separated, and to capture horses that have relocated outside HMA boundaries. Helicopter roping will only be used when determined by the COR or PI as the most efficient manner to capture specific horses and when the roping can be done in a safe and humane manner.

In helicopter assisted rope capture individual horses are herded by helicopter towards ropers who rope the horse(s). Once roped, another rider rides alongside the roped horse and roper, helping to haze, or herd, the roped horse either towards the trap or towards a stock trailer. Once at the trap the rope is flipped away from the roped horse’s neck and it joins the rest of the trapped horses. When hazed to a stock trailer the horse is hobbled, laid on its side and then either pulled or slid into the trailer. If the horse is slid into the trailer a fabric or wood surface is placed under the horse to protect the horses’ hide as it is pulled into the trailer. Once in the trailer the horse is freed of ropes and allowed to quiet down before being transported to the trap site.

3. Water Trapping

Water trapping will be used when horses are not able to be helicopter drive trapped or roped, when every horse must be captured from an area, and when specific horses are targeted for capture. In the upcoming gather water trapping may be used for both horses within the HMA and to capture horses that have relocated outside HMA boundaries. Water trapping will be used when determined by the COR or PI as the most efficient manner to capture specific horses and when the helicopter drive trapping and assisted helicopter roping proves to be inadequate means of gathering or can not be done in a safe and humane manner.
Additional trap sites may be required as determined by the Authorized Officer to relieve stress of the animal resources on the area. Sites will be located on or near existing roads, highways, and housing facilities.

**Trap Sites:** The site or road trap locations will be approved by the Authorized Officer prior to setting the safety and health of the animals.

Lower taps and holding facilities will be provided to ensure the body condition of the horses is compatible with the conditions and the terrain over which they must travel. Precaution measures must be taken with small horses.

In cases of emergency, the Authorized Officer will make a careful determination of a boundary line to serve as an other.
to the animals caused by specific conditions at the time of the gather (i.e. dust, rocky terrain, temperatures, etc.).

C. **Stipulations for Portable Corral Traps/Exclosures**

1. Capture traps will be constructed in a fashion to minimize the potential for injury to wild horses and BLM personnel. Trapped horses held in traps longer than 10 hours will be fed and watered.

2. The Colorado Division of Wildlife will be notified as soon as possible if any wildlife are injured during capture operations. Wildlife caught inside traps will be released immediately.

3. All traps, wings, and holding facilities shall be constructed, maintained and operated to handle the animals in a safe and humane manner and in accordance with the following:

   a. Traps and holding facilities shall be constructed of portable panels, the top of which shall not be less than 72 inches high for horses, and the bottom rail of which shall not be more than 12 inches from ground level. All traps and temporary holding facilities shall be without corners; oval or round in design.

   b. All loading chute sides shall be fully covered with plywood (without holes) or like material. The loading chute shall also be a minimum of 6 feet high.

   c. All runways shall be of sufficient length and height to ensure animal and wrangler safety and may be covered with plywood, burlap, plastic snow fence or like material a minimum of 1 foot to 6 feet for horses.

   d. If a government furnished portable chute is used to restrain, age, or to provide additional care for animals, it shall be placed in the runway in a manner as instructed by or in concurrence with the Authorized Officer.

   e. All crowding pens including the gates leading to the runways will, if necessary to prevent injuries from escape attempts, be covered with a material which prevents the animals from seeing out (plywood, burlap, snow fence etc.) and should be covered a minimum of 2 feet to 6 feet for horses.

   f. Alternate pens will be constructed at the temporary holding facility to hold mares with newborn foals, animals that will be released, sick or injured animals, and domestic estrays from the other horses. Horses may also be separated according to age, number, size, temperament, and sex. They pens will be constructed to minimize injury resulting from fighting and trampling.

   g. In some cases, the Government will require that animals be restrained for determining an animal's age or for other purposes. In these instances, a portable restraining chute will be provided by the Government. Segregation or temporary marking and later segregation will be at the discretion of the Contracting Officers Representative (COR).
the welfare of the animals. The frequency (less) used for this contract will be assigned by the

3. The COR/P will have the means to communicate with the contractor's pilots at all times. If

animals, which (other than those struck), and person(s) not involved, in fulfilling

animal's, which (other than those struck), and person(s) not involved in fulfilling

2. When returning, the helicopter shall remain a distance of at least 1,000 feet or more from

applicable regulations of the State in which the gathering is located.

I. The contractor must operate in compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 91.

ii. Contract Helicopter Pilot and Communications

I. Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one hour.

a. A saddle, bridle, or other means of keeping bands intact where animal or human health

b. Capture equipment shall be required to wet down the ground with water.

2. At least one saddle-horse will be immediately available at the camp site to perform Roping if

2. At least one saddle-horse will be immediately available at the camp site to perform Roping if

3. Domestic saddle horses may be used to assist the helicopter pilot on the ground during the

4. During all operations, the Pilot In Command (COR/P) will remain in visual contact with the contractor's pilots at all times.

5. Water troughs shall be provided at each pen where animals are being held. Water troughs

6. When this condition occurs within or adjacent to the area of holding facility, the

animals,

5. Water troughs shall be provided at each pen where animals are being held. Water troughs

4. If animals are held in the traps and/or holding facilities, a continuous supply of fresh clean

not less than two pounds of hay per 100 pounds of estimated body weight per day.

hours or more in the traps or holding facilities shall be provided good quality hay at the rate of

hours or more in the traps or holding facilities shall be provided good quality hay at the rate of

have proper or the help of the pilot will make every attempt to perform the maneuver of the

have proper or the help of the pilot will make every attempt to perform the maneuver of the

2. With respect to the horizontal axis, the pilot or the contractor's pilot shall assist the

assist in the gathering.

3. Domestic saddle horses may be used to assist the helicopter pilot on the ground during the

b. Capture Equipment

Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one hour.

Together

b. Capture Equipment

Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one hour.

7. When this condition occurs within or adjacent to the area of holding facility, the

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b. Capture Equipment

Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one hour.

7. When this condition occurs within or adjacent to the area of holding facility, the

animals,
COR/PI when the radio is used. The contractor shall obtain the necessary Federal
Communication Commission (FCC) licenses for the radio system.

4. The COR or PI will notify dispatch each morning prior to the helicopter leaving the ground to
capture horses; and at the end of each day’s project. Dispatch will be kept informed of the trap
locations and location inside the HMA where the pilot is herding/capturing horses. The gather
pilot and COR will maintain open communications with dispatch to assure both parties are aware
of aircraft other than the gather contractor who may be in the capture vicinity, or who request
permission to travel through, or work in the capture vicinity.

5. The proper operation, service and maintenance of all contractor furnished helicopters is the
responsibility of the contractor. The BLM reserves the right to remove from service pilots and
helicopters which, in the opinion of the Contracting Officer or COR/PI, violate contract and FAA
rules, are unsafe or otherwise unsatisfactory. In this event, the contractor will be notified in
writing to furnish replacement pilots or helicopters within 48 hours of notification. All such
replacements must be approved in advance of operation by the Contracting Officer or his/her
representative.

6. All incidents/accidents occurring during the performance of any delivery order shall be
immediately reported to the COR.

F. Animal Handling and Care

1. Prior to capturing horses, the COR/PI will conduct a pre-capture evaluation of existing
conditions in the gather areas. The evaluation will determine whether the proposed activities
will require the presence of a veterinarian during the project or if the veterinarian can remain on-
call during the gather operation. Animal health, temperature extremes; topography, distance to
the traps, and other factors will be considered when deciding between an on-call vet contract and
an on-site contract.

2. The contractor will be apprised of the all conditions and will be given instructions regarding
the capture and handling of animals to ensure their health and welfare is protected.

3. The Authorize Officer and pilot will identify and discuss natural hazards and man-made
hazards on the ground by looking at a topographic map so the helicopter flight crew, ground
personnel, and wild horse safety will be maximized. Aerial hazards will be recorded on the
project map.

4. No fence modifications will be made without authorization from the Authorized Officer. The
contractor/BLM shall be responsible for restoration of any fence modification.

5. If the route the contractor/BLM proposes to herd animals passes through a fence, opening
should be large enough to allow free and safe passage. Fence material shall be rolled up and
fence posts will be removed or sufficiently marked to ensure safety of the animals. The standing
fence on each side of the gap will be well flagged and covered with jute or like material.
Carcasses will not be placed in drainages, regardless of drainage size, or downstream designation. Holding and prepping will be performed in an environment that promotes visual inspection. Combined disease or illness will be disposed of by removing them from the capture site of origin. The carcasses of animals that must be destroyed as a result of age, injury, lameness, or non-

4. The carcasses of the animals that do or must be disposed of result from any infections, directed by the Authorized Officer. The carcasses of sick animals may require destruction if it is determined it is not feasible to handle for destruction, or death. The Authorized Officer will determine if animals must be destroyed and provide a date of destruction.

5. The animal is a danger to itself or others.
6. The animal is a danger to itself or others.
7. The animal shows a hopeless prognosis for life.

9. Brought or previously owned animals captured during gather operations will be handled in accordance with State, County, and Federal laws and regulations. Capture methods will be identical prior to issuance of delivery orders. Regardless of which

10. Capture methods will be identical prior to issuance of delivery orders. Regardless of which

Treatment of Injured or Sick Disposition of Terminal Animals

Ruminants, and in accordance with BLM policy.

4. CFR 4730, BLM Manual 4730 - Description of Wild Horses and Burros and Disposal of Burros as provided by the WILD Free-Rangeing Horse and Burro Act of 1971, Section 3(b)(2)(A), done by the most humane method available. Authority for humane destruction of wild horses (or

1. The contractor/BLM shall receive the sick or injured animals if treatment is necessary. A

2. Any captured horses that are found to have the following conditions may be humanely

3. The animal is a danger to itself or others.

8. Animals shall be allowed to remain standing on tracks while in transport for a

7. If it is the responsibility of the contractor/BLM to provide security to prevent loss, injury or

6. Wings shall not be contaminated from materials in transit to animals and must be approved by

5. The animal shows a hopeless prognosis for life.
H. Motorized Equipment

1. All motorized equipment employed in the transportation of captured animals shall be in compliance with appropriate State and Federal laws and regulations applicable to the humane transportation of animals. The contractor shall provide the Authorized Officer with a current safety inspection (less than one year old) of all tractor/stock trailers used to transport animals to final destination.

2. Vehicles shall be in good repair, of adequate rated capacity, and operated so as to ensure that captured animals are transported without undue risk or injury.

3. Only stock trailers with a covered top shall be allowed for transporting animals from trap site(s) to temporary holding facilities. Only stock trailers or single deck trucks shall be used to haul animals from temporary holding facilities to final destination(s). Sides or stock racks of transporting vehicles shall be a minimum height of 6 feet 6 inches from the vehicle floor. Single deck trucks with trailers 40 feet or longer shall have two (2) partition gates providing three (3) compartments within the trailer to separate animals. The compartments shall be of equal size plus or minus 10 percent. Trailers less than 40 feet shall have at least one partition gate providing two (2) compartments within the trailer to separate animals. The compartments shall be of equal size plus or minus 10 percent. Each partition shall be a minimum of 6 feet high and shall have at the minimum a 5 foot wide swinging gate. The use of double deck trailers is unacceptable and will not be allowed.

4. All vehicles used to transport animals to the final destination(s) shall be equipped with at least one (1) door at the rear end of the vehicle, which is capable of sliding either horizontally or vertically. The rear door must be capable of opening the full width of the trailer. All panels facing the inside of all trailers must be free of sharp edges or holes that could cause injury to the animals. The material facing the inside of the trailer must be strong enough, so that the animals cannot push their hooves through the sides. Final approval of vehicles to transport animals shall be held by the Authorized Officer.

5. Floors of vehicles, trailers, and the loading chute shall be covered and maintained with materials sufficient to prevent the animals from slipping.

6. Animals to be loaded and transported in any vehicle or trailer shall be as directed by the Authorized Officer and may include limitations on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament, and animal condition. The minimum square footage per animal is as follows:

- 11 square feet/adult horse (1.4 linear feet in an 8 foot wide trailer)
- 8 square feet/adult burro (1.0 linear foot in an 8 foot wide trailer)
- 6 square feet/horse foal (0.75 linear feet in an 8 foot trailer)
- 4 square feet/burro foal (0.50 linear feet in a 8 foot wide trailer)

7. The Authorized Officer shall consider the condition of the animals, weather conditions, type of vehicles, distance to be transported, or other factors when planning for the movement of...
\[ \text{[The text is not legible and cannot be transcribed accurately.]} \]