



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
High Desert District – Rock Springs Field Office
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(WYD03), (WYD04)

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Scoping Statement Adobe Town, Salt Wells Creek and Great Divide Herd Management Areas Population Management Action

Description of Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rock Springs and Rawlins Field Offices propose to gather and remove excess wild horses to the low Appropriate Management Level (AML) from three Herd Management Areas (HMAs): Salt Wells Creek, Adobe Town, and Great Divide Basin to comply with the 2013 Consent Decree *Rock Springs Grazing Association v. Salazar* [Civil Action No. 11-CV-263-NDF]. These three HMAs were scheduled to be gathered in 2016; however, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling on the 2014 checkerboard removal activities caused that planned gather to be canceled and redesigned as an AML gather under Section 3 of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971.

The 2017 wild horse populations in the three HMAs are projected to be over AML: 835 wild horses in the Salt Wells Creek HMA (AML is 251-365); 820 wild horses in the Adobe Town HMA (AML is 610-800); and 650 wild horses in the Great Divide Basin HMA (AML is 415-600). A total removal of 1,029 wild horses is needed to achieve the low AML in the three HMAs (584 removed from Salt Wells Creek, 210 removed from Adobe Town, and 235 removed from Great Divide Basin HMA). The gather operations would include helicopter drive trapping. This capture method utilizes a helicopter to herd wild horses into a temporary trap. The proposed gather is expected to take place in the fall of 2017.

Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents

The proposed action is in conformance with the Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved on August 8, 1997 and the Rawlins RMP approved on December 24, 2008. Management objectives for wild horses include providing for the protection of the rangeland resource, while maintaining a self-sustaining, healthy population of wild horses on the public land in those areas where horses existed at the time the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act was passed (1971). Wild horse HMAs were established and confirmed through the RMP planning process.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

To comply with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, the BLM is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed gather. The EA will serve several purposes. It will provide both the public and governmental agencies with information about the potential environmental consequences of the project and alternatives; identify measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the proposed action and alternatives; and provide the responsible official with information upon which to make an informed decision regarding the project and whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or finding of no significant impact. The EA will be prepared by an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource specialists.

Scoping is an essential element of the NEPA process. Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to: identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the EA, identify environmental issues of concern related to the proposed project, determine the depth of analysis for issues addressed in the environmental document, and identify potential mitigation.

This scoping statement has been prepared to describe means by which the general public, governmental agencies, and other interested parties may participate in and contribute to the analysis process. Public input is important in establishing the scope of analysis for any NEPA document and the BLM encourages public participation.

The following resource values have been identified within the project area:

- Recreational activities such as hunting
- Wildlife and wild horse viewing
- Special status plant species
- Special status animal species
- Wildlife
- Cultural resources
- Historic trails
- Livestock grazing

Timing Requirements

Public input is valuable early in the process and will enable the BLM to develop a well-informed environmental assessment. **Comments should be submitted by April 4, 2017**, and may either be emailed to: blm_wy_adobetown_saltwells_hma@blm.gov (Please include “2017 AML Gather” in the subject line), or mailed/hand-delivered during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) to:

BLM Rock Springs Field Office
2017 AML Gather
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, WY 82901.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your

comment to withhold your identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Public comments are most helpful if they are specific. The regulations (40 CFR 1503.3) state that comments on a proposed action "shall be as specific as possible and may address either the adequacy of the statement or the merits of the alternatives discussed or both." The most valuable comments are those that cite specific actions or impacts in the document and offer informed analysis of what is presented.

This scoping statement and all other future documents corresponding with this action will be posted on the BLM ePlanning website at:

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/projectSummary.do?methodName=renderDefaultProjectSummary&projectId=74247>

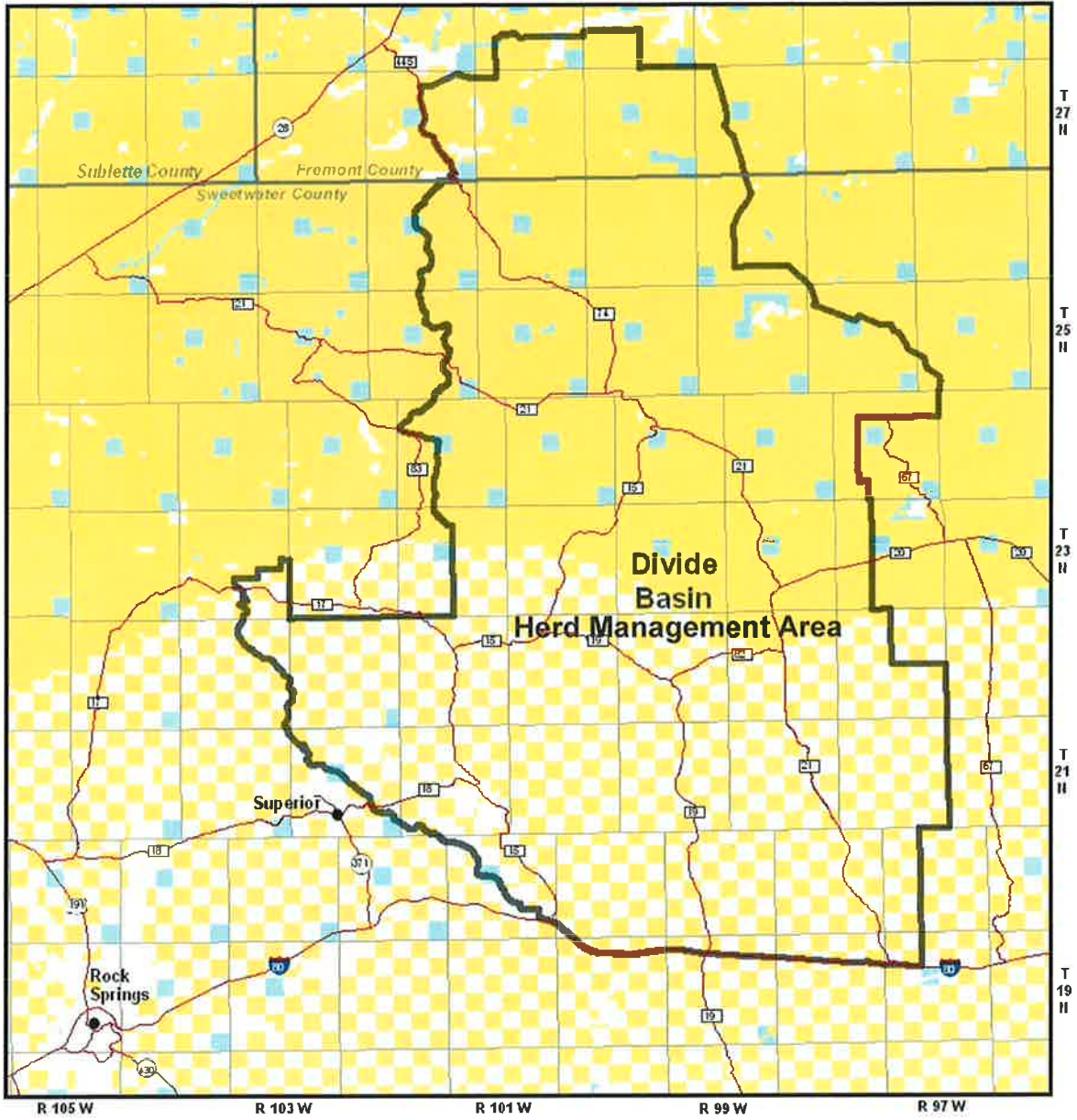
The website can be accessed by the general public. The EA will be posted to this site after comments from the public are incorporated. The EA is anticipated to be available in the summer of 2017. You may also obtain a paper copy of the EA by contacting the Rock Springs Field Office at (307) 352-0256.

Sincerely,


Kimberlee D. Foster
Rock Springs Field Manager


for Dennis Carpenter
Rawlins Field Manager

Enclosure: Map
cc: Interested Public



Divide Basin Herd Management Area

- Herd Management Area Boundary
- Bureau of Land Management
- Private
- State



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for use of the data for purposes not intended by BLM

