



The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.

April 22, 2016

Jay D'Ewart, Wild Horse Specialist
Rock Springs Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, WY 82901

RE: Scoping for Checkerboard Wild Horse Removal

Dear Mr. D'Ewart,

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the proposed Checkerboard Wild Horse Removal consisting of the Great Basin, Salt Wells Creek and Adobe Town Herd Management Areas (HMAs) located within the Rock Springs Field Office (RSFO).

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As wild horses affect our agriculture industry, our natural resources, and welfare of our citizens, it's important you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and continue to provide us the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

The WDA recognizes the importance of managing wild horses within the HMAs and adjacent lands, and insists Bureau of Land Management (BLM) actively manage wild horses to ensure an ecological balance exists between wild horse populations, wildlife, livestock, and healthy rangelands throughout the state.

We fully support the proposed action to remove all the wild horses from the Checkerboard in order to comply with the terms of the 2013 Consent Decree with Rock Springs Grazing Association. This includes the removal of wild horses from White Mountain HMA down to low appropriate management level (AML). In addition, while the scoping document only suggests gathering wild horses located within the Checkerboard, WDA insists all wild horses outside of HMAs on adjacent lands be gathered as well.

The WDA understands the BLM has another wild horse project proposal to remove wild horse from the block federal portion of Adobe Town in November. The WDA would encourage the BLM to combine the two projects to eliminate excess costs associated with two separate gathers. Performing separate gathers has the potential to push wild horses from the block federal back onto the Checkerboard and would not accomplish the BLMs requirements under the Consent Decree or the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971.

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We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed project. We strongly encourage BLM to gather and remove wild horses from the HMAs and adjacent areas as soon as possible, to reduce further impacts to important wildlife and vegetative resources in the area.

Sincerely,



Doug Miyamoto

Director

DM/cw

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Stock Growers
Wyoming Wool Growers
Wyoming Board of Agriculture