

Wyoming Department of Agriculture

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



Dave Freudenthal, Governor
Jason Fearnelyhough Director

July 6, 2009

Melanie Gilbert, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
Rawlins Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 2407
Rawlins, WY 82301

Dear Ms. Gilbert:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to the Scoping Notice to gather wild horses in the Red Desert Complex as a population management action.

Our comments are specific to our mission: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As the proposed project affects our agriculture industry, our natural resources, and the welfare of our citizens, it is 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 supports the proposed action to gather wild horses and utilize a fertility control vaccine in the following areas: Antelope Hills Herd Management Area (HMA), Crooks Mountain HMA, Stewart Creek HMA, Green Mountain HMA and Lost Creek HMA. The gathering of wild horses in these areas is essential to maintain the appropriate management level (AML) and ensure a natural ecological balance to the range.

The Consent Decree dated August 14, 2003, between the State of Wyoming and U.S. Department of Interior and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) agrees to perform an inventory of the HMAs every three years to reduce the population of wild free-roaming horses and burros to the lower end of the AML. It is our understanding the following management action will occur:

- Lost Creek HMA – gather 235 wild horses (AML = 60-82)
- Stewart Creek HMA – gather 185 wild horses (AML = 125-175)
- Antelope Hills HMA – gather 125 wild horses (AML = 60-82)
- Crook Mountain HMA – gather 87 wild horses (AML = 60-82)
- Green Mountain HMA – gather 316 wild horses (AML = 170-300)

We support the continued work of the BLM to manage wild horse populations in the State of Wyoming, while providing for the protection of rangeland resources. The gathering of wild horses is in conformance with the Rawlins and Lander RMPs and provides for the continuation of healthy viable populations of wild horses on public lands for future generation to view.

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We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the scope of the proposed management action. We encourage continued attention to our concerns and look forward to hearing about and being involved in future proposed actions and decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason Fearneshough". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jason Fearneshough
Director

JF/cw

CC: Governor's Planning Office
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
State Grazing Board
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts