



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Burns District Office
28910 Hwy 20 West
Hines, Oregon 97738
<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/burns>

AUG 22 2018

Dear Interested Party:

The Burns District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has updated an environmental assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-ORWA-B050-2018-0016-EA, and an unsigned finding of no significant impact (FONSI) analyzing the effects of the Spay Feasibility and On-Range Behavioral Outcomes Assessment and Population Management Plan for Warm Springs Herd Management Area (HMA). The research project is proposed by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in cooperation with the Burns District.

USGS originally partnered with Colorado State University (CSU) and proposed to evaluate the safety, complication rate, and feasibility of ovariectomy via colpotomy (spay) on wild horse mares and the impacts to mare and band behavior once returned to the range as compared with an untreated herd. The draft EA released on June 29, 2018, for a 30-day public comment period included their proposal in the original proposed action. On August 8, 2018, following the public comment period, CSU withdrew from participation in this project. The BLM respects that decision; however, conditions (population level, water availability, rapid population growth) remain the same on the Warm Springs HMA. The BLM must continue to pursue management actions to move toward achieving and maintaining the established appropriate management level (AML) on Warm Springs HMA and reduce the wild horse population growth rate in order to restore and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship on public lands. USGS has updated their proposal to include only the behavioral research portion of the original proposal. Their study would take place on mares spayed by BLM as a management action.

In this updated EA, the Burns District BLM proposes to evaluate the feasibility of ovariectomy via colpotomy on wild horse mares as a population management action and to allow the USGS to evaluate the impacts of spaying on mare and band behavior once returned to the range as compared with an untreated herd.

In conjunction with the BLM spay feasibility study and the USGS on-range behavioral outcomes study, Burns District BLM also proposes a 10-year population management plan for Warm Springs HMA. The plan includes this study, followed by a gather to low AML at the completion of the study, and additional gathers and removals of excess wild horses and burros. Wild horse mares returned to the range following gathers would receive population growth treatments. The USGS on-range behavioral assessment is being initiated to document the BLM experience with this established method for managing the population growth of wild horse herds on public lands; no burros would be

spayed or involved in the study. The population management plan is being proposed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and manage the wild horse and burro populations within AML over a 10-year timeframe.

A no action alternative is also analyzed to assess the effects of not conducting population management actions.

The EA and unsigned FONSI are available at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office>. This link takes you to BLM's ePlanning website. To search for the EA and unsigned FONSI you can either use the map to locate Burns District, Oregon or click on the "Text Search" tab. In the "Text Search" tab select from the drop down menus:

State: Oregon/Washington
Office(s): ORWA – Three Rivers FO
Document Type(s): EA
Fiscal Year(s): 2018
Program(s): Wild Horses and Burros
Click "Search"

If you have comments on the updated EA or unsigned FONSI, submit them *postmarked by* September 2, 2018, to Spay Project Lead, Burns District Office, at the address above. Email comments should be sent to: blm_or_spaystudy_warmsprhma@blm.gov. After consideration of your substantive comments, a decision outlining the action to be taken within the scope of the EA will be developed and issued. If you have already submitted comments on the draft EA of June 29, 2018, and have no additional comments, you do not need to re-submit. If you do submit comments, please include your name and mailing address and you will receive a copy of the decision. If you do not have comments but wish to receive a copy of the decision, please submit a written request, otherwise you will not receive a copy. The decision will also be posted to <https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office>.

Comments, including the names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Burns District Office during regular business hours of 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (except holidays), and may be published as part of the decision. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Anonymous comments will not be considered. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety. Similar comments or form letters will be considered one comment and summarized with one response given.

If you need further information or to receive additional copies, please contact the Spay Project Lead at the Burns District Office at 541-573-4555.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Holly Orr".

for Jeffrey Rose
District Manager