

Adobe Town/Salt Wells Fall 2010 Wild Horse Gather Facts

Where are the herds and what is special about these animals?

- The Adobe Town and Salt Wells herds roam over about 2,574,258 acres of public, state, and private lands in Carbon and Sweetwater counties. The BLM manages 1,747,208 acres of the Adobe Town and Salt Wells Herd Management Areas (HMAs).
- The HMAs provide forage and habitat for wild horses as well as wildlife, including the greater sage-grouse, pronghorn, mule deer and elk.
- These HMAs also contain many important biological, geological, scenic, recreational and cultural resources. The other predominant land uses within the HMAs are livestock grazing, wilderness recreation and general recreation, including hunting.
- The wild horses are descendants of introduced Spanish horses, local ranch horses and cavalry mounts.



What needs to be done to maintain this herd?

- To maintain extra healthy herds in the Adobe Town and Salt Wells area, and to restore to, or maintain the rangelands in a healthy condition, BLM plans to gather enough horses to restore the population to a level that can be sustained in balance with the other uses described above.



- Through a land use planning effort in 2008 for the Rawlins RMP and 1997 for the Green River RMP that included full public involvement, the BLM determined the appropriate management level (AML) for both areas to be an identified management range of 861 to 1,165. However, the current population is estimated at 2,438 horses, an overpopulation resulting in ongoing damage to the rangelands.
- Under the 1971 Wild Free-roaming Horse and Burro Act, BLM is required to “remove excess animals” to “restore a thriving ecological balance to the range” when horse numbers exceed the AML.
- Currently, the estimated population for the Adobe Town/ and Salt Wells areas Complex have approximately 2,438 horses which is based on the July 2009 census flights and has been adjusted for one year’s foal crop. The BLM will gather approximately 1,950 animals and remove approximately 1,580 in order to bring the population to the low end of the appropriate management level.
- Of the animals to be returned to the range, some mares would receive fertility control vaccine, and more stallions than mares would be returned to slow the growth of the herd.
- The animals that are removed will be offered for adoption through the BLM’s wild horse and burro adoption program, or placed in long-term holding pastures.



Why is the gather necessary?

- Overpopulated wild horse herds overuse the rangeland, threatening their own health and the health of native wildlife and plants, damaging scarce water sources and reducing water quality.
- Riparian functional assessments (studies of wetland ecosystems) were completed as part of the Upper Colorado River Basin Standards and Guidelines Assessment in 2001. This assessment found overgrazing in riparian habitats, including trampling and trailing damage by wild horses.
- Livestock grazing is also a factor, but BLM actively manages this authorized use to mitigate the impacts, where as, wild horses roam freely, year-round as the law allows.



How does BLM balance wild horses with livestock management?

- Forage is allocated by Animal Unit Months (AUMs). An AUM is the amount of forage consumed in a month by an adult horse, a mare and foal, an adult cow, a cow and calf, or five sheep.
- During specified times throughout the year, BLM currently authorizes up to 177,829 AUMs for livestock on allotments that have areas within the Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek HMAs. Wild horses are allocated 10,332 to 13,980 AUMs.
- Twenty-two grazing allotments occur within the Adobe Town and Salt Wells Creek HMAs. Between 2005 and 2009, actual livestock use averaged 34 percent (60,461 AUMS) of the authorized active use in these HMAs overall.



For more information: <http://www.blm.gov/wy> BLM WSO September 2010