



BLM/CO/GI-21/003

Photos by Tj Holmes

For more information contact the Tres Rios Field Office at (970) 882-1120. Maps of the area are available at most BLM offices and at Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in Colorado.

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Spring Creek Basin Herd Management Area is managed by the Bureau of Land Management with support from the following organizations:

Contact Information



The BLM Tres Rios Field Office works with interested individuals and organizations to manage horses within the herd management area. These individuals and organizations assist the BLM in fertility control efforts, herd documentation, maintenance on exiting fences and water developments, and vegetation monitoring efforts.

Partnerships

The BLM allows natural predation and processes in the herd management area and manages for a population of 50 to 80 adult horses to ensure healthy rangelands and healthy horses. Horses are left to be as wild as possible and are not provided food, vaccines, deworming medications, hoof trimming, or vet care.

Genetic testing shows that most of the horses in the Spring Creek Basin Herd Management Area descend from Morgans and Thoroughbreds. Horses from other herd management areas are periodically introduced to Spring Creek Basin to maintain genetic diversity.

Adoption

The BLM works to place excess animals into private care through its adoption program. After gathers, horses 11 years and older are sold or sent to long-term pastures. All other horses are adopted locally or sent to the BLM's Cañon City facility for adoption or to be sent to long-term pastures. Information on adopting a wild horse is available online at www.blm.gov/adoptahorse, through the national information line at (866) 468-7826, or by contacting the Tres Rios Field Office at (970) 882-7296 or the Royal Gorge Field Office at (719) 269-8539.

Spring Creek Basin
 Herd Management Area

U.S. Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Land Management



Welcome to Spring Creek Basin

Spring Creek Basin Herd Management Area covers about 22,000 acres of rolling salt-desert shrub and piñon-juniper hills in Disappointment Valley in southwest Colorado. Natural cliffs and ridges define the landscape and combined with fencing, control horse movement. One of four herd management areas in the state, its namesake comes from Spring Creek, a seasonal drainage that flows from the eastern ridge through the basin to the west side of the HMA on its way to Disappointment Creek.

The 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act provides for the management, protection and control of unbranded and unclaimed horses and burros on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. Under the terms of this Act, these two agencies manage “horses and burros in a manner that is designed to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on the public lands.”

Herd Management

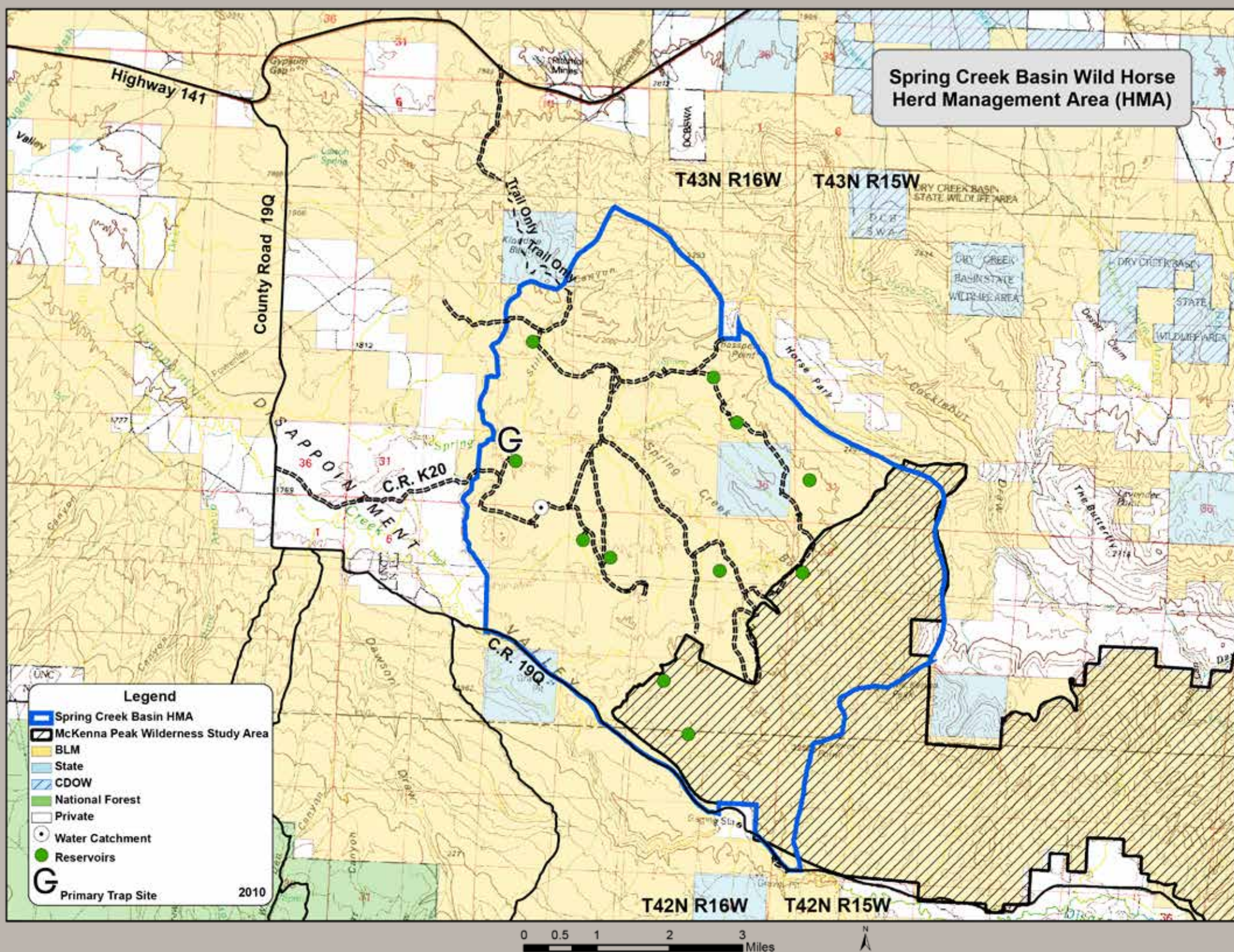
The Bureau of Land Management manages wild horses to reduce overpopulation and achieve healthy herds on healthy rangelands. To control overpopulation, the BLM periodically gathers horses to keep the herd at a level the landscape can support. Bait trapping, a temporary corral set up with bait such as hay, is the preferred method for horse gathers. Appropriate herd levels are determined by the resources in the area.

The BLM also uses fertility control to reduce overpopulation of horses. In 2011, a contraceptive darting program was introduced using porcine zona pellucida (PZP), a non-barrier contraceptive that temporarily affects fertilization. Yearly use of contraceptive vaccines will reduce the frequency of necessary horse gathers in the future.



Herd Management Area Details

The herd management area's terrain varies from rolling hills to rugged mountains with elevations ranging from 6,200 feet to 7,400 feet. The McKenna Peak Wilderness Study Area overlaps the southeast portion of the area. Primary forage plants for the horses include Indian ricegrass, Salina wildrye, green rabbitbrush, black sagebrush, galleta grass, winterfat, greasewood, four-wing saltbush, needle-and-thread grass and shadscale. The herd management area provides habitat for mule deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, bald and golden eagles, peregrine falcons, coyotes, prairie dogs, snakes, black bears, and mountain lions.



Visit With Respect

Please be safe and aware when traveling through the herd management area.

- Follow the Leave No Trace principles.
- Keep a safe distance from wild horses. If an animal's behavior noticeably changes or if you disrupt their behavior and cause them to flee, you are too close. Use binoculars, spotting scopes, and telephoto lenses to get a better view.
- Water is a limited and precious commodity in this desert landscape. Camp at least 1/4 mile away from water sources and do not disturb horses when they are drinking or headed to water.
- Leave cultural and historical objects for others to find and enjoy.
- Limit motorized vehicle use to designated roads.
- Do not trespass on private lands. Access to these lands is by permission only.
- Always keep your pet(s) under leash or voice control. Pets can increase stress on wildlife and horses.
- Do not touch, feed, or chase wild horses. Any harassment or disturbing behavior towards horses is illegal.
- Do not allow your saddle or pack animals to run loose or mix with the wild horses. Domestic horses can easily transmit diseases to wild horses.
- Stay on established roads and monitor weather. Moisture can cause slippery roads and flash floods can make some roads impassable. We do not recommend entering the area when rain or snow is imminent.
- Carry plenty of water and be prepared for sunny and windy conditions.



Where To Find Wild Horses

During the spring, look for the horses on the east side of the range and along the northeastern hills. In the summer and fall, the horses are more visible in the open areas of the range.

Vehicle Access To Spring Creek Basin

The main entrance to the Spring Creek Basin Herd Management Area is from San Miguel County Road 19Q, also known as Disappointment Road, from the west side of the basin. Vehicles cross private property along County Road 19Q and between 19Q and the area's boundary. Off-road driving is prohibited and vehicles are required to stay on designated roads.

Driving Directions

From Dove Creek, CO: About two miles northwest of Dove Creek, turn north (right) onto Colorado Highway 141. Drive about 32 miles to Road 19Q on the northeast side of Disappointment Valley, then turn right and drive south five miles on 19Q to Road K20E and turn east (left). From there drive three miles to the herd management area boundary.

From Montrose, CO: Drive south on U.S. Highway 550 to Ridgway. Turn west (right) on Colorado Highway 62, which becomes Colorado Highway 145 where it comes out from Telluride. Continue 16 miles past Norwood and turn south (left) on Colorado Highway 141. Just west of Gypsum Gap, turn south (left) onto Road 19Q. Drive about five miles and turn east (left) onto Road K20E. Drive three miles to the herd management area boundary.