

National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Meeting  
Tulsa, OK

May 10-11, 2004

Board members present: Robin Lohnes, Hilleary Bogley, Dr. Jay Merriam, Dr. Wayne Burkhardt, Larry Johnson, Dr. Vernon Dooley, Renee Taylor, and Gary Zakotnik. Board member not present: Bill Higham. Washington Office and BLM staff: Tom Dyer, Jeff Rawson, Don Glenn, Sally Spencer, EK James, Dean Bolstad, Lili Thomas, Glade Anderson, Ramona DeLorme. OK Field Office: John Melhoff, Oklahoma Field Manager, Bob Mitchell, and Chris Tincher. USDA, Forest Service representatives: Ralph Giffen, WO liaison, and Toni Strauss, USDA, FS, WH&B Specialist, Reno, NV.

John Melhoff, Oklahoma Field Manager, expressed his and Linda Rundell's, New Mexico State Director, welcome to Tulsa, OK. He indicated that the wild horse and burro program continues to grow within Oklahoma.

Bob Mitchell, Wild Horse and Burro Program Manager, in the Oklahoma Field Office, spoke to the Board about the wild horse and burro program. The office assists the National Program Office with the long-term holding facilities which are located in Oklahoma and Kansas. There are seven holding facilities: Bartlesville, Catossa, Pawhuska and Foraker (all in Oklahoma); Cassoday and Teterville (East and West) (in Kansas). The Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Center is located in Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, which is on 200 acres of pasture with supplemental feeding in the winter. It has a capacity of holding 300-500 animals a year. On the second Tuesday of every month, they hold adoptions at the Pauls Valley facility. They also hold satellite adoptions once a month within their four state area. They have adopted approximately 1,000 animals. There are two prison training programs: Hutchinson Correctional Facility (Kansas) and James Crabtree Correctional Center, located in Helena, Oklahoma. The animals are halter or saddle trained by the inmates and are adopted out for \$200 to \$750, depending on the level of training. At the Crabtree Center, individuals can select and adopt a wild horse and register to have the prison inmates train the horse. The contract will be between them and the adopter.

Bob Mitchell also spoke about the New Mexico Socorro Herd Management Area which will be gathered this June. Water trapping will be used for the gather. It has an AML of 40-60 animals; there are now 130 animals.

Majority of the horses going back East, for adoptions, come from the Palomino Valley Center, in Nevada. It was noted that the Hutchinson facility is also a holding facility for animals to rest prior to shipping to adoption sites in the East.

### **February 2004 Minutes**

The minutes were approved by the Board with no corrections.

### **February Recommendations/Response**

Tom Dyer reviewed the February 2004 Recommendations (both were similar and were addressed together):

1. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that the Bureau of Land Management analyze a targeted health care approach for all removed animals.
2. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that BLM consider discontinuing West Nile vaccinations and target use of remaining vaccinations as appropriate.

BLM proposes to continue the current vaccination program for excess wild horses and burros that are placed into the adoption program. This program provides the most optimum situation for people who are adopting animals and maintaining them as property of the United States Government for a minimum period of one year prior to title. Having the animals vaccinated will provide for a much easier transition period for the adopters by not putting an extra burden on the individual to vaccinate an animal that would require special handling during the initial gentling process. In addition, the ability to market excess wild horses and burros as fully vaccinated provides for the optimum situation to increase the number of successful adoptions of wild horses and burros. Any cost savings resulting from not vaccinating adoptable animals could be offset if the number of adoptions were decreased as a result of eliminating vaccines.

BLM sees an opportunity for a targeted health care program that could provide a potential cost savings in vaccinations for animals that are immediately placed into long-term holding facilities. Inadequate pen space at preparation centers to maintain larger numbers of animal groups for different vaccination regimens does not allow implementation of this change when the facilities are at or near holding capacity. The expense to expand facilities is not justified when the volume of animals is likely to decrease in the near future. BLM could implement this in several years when appropriate management levels are achieved and the volume of animals decreases.

As opportunity for implementation of a targeted health care program arises, BLM would consider the elimination of rabies and West Nile Virus vaccine for unadoptable animals placed in long-term holding facilities. Vaccinations for influenza, equine viral rhinopneumonitis and distemper are considered necessary for all animals at short-term holding to prevent or minimize highly contagious respiratory diseases. The possibility of quarantines and disruptions to animal flow in the system caused by or worsened by not vaccinating for respiratory diseases isn't acceptable and bares too

much risk. There could be a reduction in vaccine cost by discontinuing sleeping sickness vaccination for long-term holding horses, but the increased labor and inefficiency caused by administering two vaccines instead of one negates the reduced vaccine cost.

The greatest opportunity of all for significant cost savings is to decrease the time long-term holding animals spend at short-term holding prior to shipment to long-term holding.

It is important for BLM to focus on shipping long-term holding animals from preparation centers as soon as possible. Experienced personnel indicate that most animals could be shipped 45 to 60 days after preparation if long-term holding space is available

BLM looks forward to any discussion of these items with the Advisory Board at the May 10, 2004, meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for any further refinements to these proposals.

#### **2004-2006 Advisory Board Charter**

Jeff Rawson updated the Board on the status of the nominations for the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board. There are three categories to be filled: Wild Horse and Burro Advocacy; Veterinarian Medicine and Public-at-Large. May 15, 2004 is the deadline for receiving nominations.

Sharon Kipping has been working on getting the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Charter signed. The Department of Ethics wanted to include statements pertaining to conflict of interest and equal employment opportunities. Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture will sign the Charter. It is hopeful that the Charter would be signed by July 1, 2004.

#### **FY04 Program Update – Gathers, Facilities, Adoptions and Two IMs**

Lili Thomas updated the Board on the 2004 Gather Schedule. BLM had added an additional column, AML low/high, to the schedule. This only indicates what was done this fiscal year. Also, added to the schedule is a row that will reflect the Forest Service gathers. This will separate them from the other states, and they will be considered as a separate category. There was discussion pertaining to the items in the yellow colored area (the burro gathers) and if they were an additional gather above the flat budget. These gathers were in the flat budget allocations.

Dean Bolstad reported on the pipeline report and the animal numbers of horses and burros by facility. The short-term facilities are at 59% capacity and the long-term holding facilities are at 96% capacity.

Funding is available for the preparation facility in Kingman, AZ and the planned completion date is 2005. These funds are not from the Wild Horse and Burro Program funds.

Adoption chart showed that 3,372 animals were adopted as of Midyear FY04. This was an increase of 26% from last year. There are approximately 350 burros in the system with a high demand for them exceeding the supply. 2,865 animals need to be placed out of the long-term holding facilities. There was a discussion on the proposal for changing the fee structure. A concern was raised as to whether the base price of \$125 needs to go through a regulatory process. It was noted that each State Director has the authority to reduce the fee. The Board agreed to discuss the fee structure at the next meeting.

Dean Bolstad reviewed the Washington Office Instruction Memorandums No. 2004-151-Establishment/Adjustment of Appropriate Management Levels, and Managing Planned, Escalating Problem and Emergency Gathers, dated March 30, 2004. It gives guidance and policy to BLM field offices for completion of AML establishment, and procedures to identify, prioritize, and mitigate potential and actual emergencies involving wild horse and burro gathers. WO-IM-2004-138 – Gather Plan and Environmental Assessment Review and Content Requirements for Fertility Control, dated March 19, 2004, gives guidance and policy to BLM field offices on review requirements, timelines and content requirements for Gather Plans and associated NEPA documents for wild horses. The Board encouraged the Bureau to track the policy implementation of the policies reflected in these two instruction memorandums, make adjustments as necessary and ensure the continuation of these policies. During the discussion of Fertility Control, the Board suggested that in the report furnished to them concerning Herd Management Areas (HMAs) that there be a notation by the HMA if there is fertility control going on within that HMA. They also encouraged the Bureau to maintain a high priority on fertility control.

### **FY04 Funding Capabilities**

Jeff Rawson reviewed the Fiscal Year 2004 budget with the Board. There is a budget of \$29M along with a request for reprogramming funds within the BLM of \$10.5M. In order to achieve AML by FY06, an additional \$12.8M will be required in FY05. The current funding levels will move 3,000 animals this year. Approximately \$16-17M will be required for feeding, preparation and handling costs, the remaining dollars are for adoptions and gathers. The Bureau will need a minimum of one to two more long-term holding facilities, which will cost approximately \$50,000 to open and approximately \$900,000 per year when full.

### **National Adoption Plan**

Sally Spencer apprised the Board on the progress of the Adoption Plan. The BLM is creating a National Adoption Schedule that will include locations, dates, and number and types of animals available for adoptions. The Plan also includes: an Adoption Best Practices Guidelines detailing what steps need to be done at each event; an exhibit guideline;

and a guideline of what you can expect when you get the animal home, including a listing of farriers, veterinarians, and mentors; a guideline of the offices will use after the event. Marketing for the Facilities and Prison Programs is also being considered. The final product will be an Instruction Memorandum with an attached 3-ring binder.

Dr. Jay Merriam spoke about the use of PZP. The application of PZP in conjunction with gathers should be kept as a high priority and was encouraged. Dean Bolstad noted that BLM has 450 does of the multi-year vaccine available and an additional order for 500 does has been processed. During the discussion of short- and long-term holding, Wayne Burkhardt suggested an alternative. It was suggested that the Bureau should consider buying out grazing permits. This would help reduce costs. Gary Zakotnik and Renee Taylor inquired about the status of the Wyoming Project. Jeff Rawson stated that the Wyoming Project was a viable project to be considered and will be meeting with Wyoming at the end of June. The Bureau agreed to review the efforts of the Wyoming Project and to see if they can create more incentives to the participants and they also agreed to discuss it at the next Board meeting.

### **Foundation MOU**

Sally Spencer reported that the Memorandum of Understanding between the Bureau of Land Management and the National Wild Horse and Burro Foundation was signed April 1, 2004. The Foundation is looking at opportunities to enhance adoptions with support from Take Pride in America partners. The mission of Take Pride in America is to increase volunteer stewardship within the United States. The Board would like to be kept updated on the Foundations activities. Jeff Rawson agreed to discussion with Carol Alm on how best to maintain communications. Gary Zakotnik inquired about the proposal from Mark Hunter (Wild Horse and Burro Education Program). Mr. Hunter withdrew his proposal last April, since there was no funding available from the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program (\$500,000).

There was some discussion of the Internet Adoptions and if the Internet went down did the BLM have any contingency plans. The Board wanted to know how BLM continued to hold the Mantle Internet Adoption once the Internet went down. Dean Bolstad summarized how it was continued during the round table discussions. The Board asked to get an update and a review on how BLM would manage the adoption program, in general, if the Internet went down again.

### **Targeted Health Care**

Glade Anderson reviewed the targeted health care analysis and the discontinuing the use of West Nile vaccination. He received input from the Field Staff, National Program Office, Al Kane, and Jeff Rawson. The reports on the targeted health care and West Nile vaccination were given to the Board.

### **Research and Census Update**

Research – Dean Bolstad noted that the fertility control assistance agreement is about to be approved and will be signed toward the end of May 7, 2004. BLM is looking at a 3 to 4 year long term PZP agent. After a six month development period, a study of 20 mares will begin. The adjuvant trial still continues.

Census Techniques – There are two techniques: Mark-Resight: relies on uniquely marked animals and compares the proportion of marked animals versus unmarked animals seen during the survey; requires pre-survey herd information and Double-count with a sightability bias correction: relies on 2 observers and is a form of mark-resight; sighting probability varies by observer; does not require pre-survey herd information. It was suggested to include the Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) proposal from Nevada as an added technique to be used. The Winnemucca Field Office, located within Nevada, and USGS-BRD will be working together using this technique. The Board would like to get more information on infrared censusing.

John Bartholow's report consisted of cost projections computed for alternative strategies that could be used by BLM to manage three wild horse populations (contraceptive treatment). The Board suggested that BLM follow-up these activities to ensure a total integration of these efforts with timely communication between all the participants and periodic assessment of progress.

### **National Hay and Trucking Contracts**

National Hay and Trucking contract was presented by Glade Anderson. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board and the Simpson and Thomas Reports (2003) recommended that a national or a regional hay and trucking contract be evaluated for potential cost savings to the program. It was determined that it would not be cost efficient. The trucking is the most expensive portion. There are too many different operations involved and they all need to be flexible.

### **USDA, Forest Service Update**

Ralph Giffen is working with the Forest Service Budget Department to get money transferred to the Bureau of Land Management for gathers, adoptions and holding expense.

Toni Strauss is working with the National Program Office sorting through maps and checking on boundaries between BLM and the Forest Service in Nevada. Forest Service is working with the Field Offices to make sure their gathers are coordinated with BLMs gathers.

**Recommendations**

There were no recommendations made by the Advisory Board. The Board noted that this was a good sign. It indicated that the communications are open between BLM and the Board.

Public comments began at 4:00 pm.

**Next Meeting Date/Site**

The next Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for August 9-10, 2004, in Reno, Nevada with a possible field trip to the Warm Springs Correctional Center (prison inmate gentling program) in Carson City, Nevada or to a gather site. The date and times for the field trip will be determined later.

Meeting formally adjourned at 4:15 pm, Monday, May 10, 2004.