

## Cold Creek Emergency Wild Horse Gather **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

- **Why the last minute notice?**

The Forest Service and Nevada BLM have been monitoring the condition of the wild horses in both the Spring Mountain WHBT and Wheeler Pass HMA, and have also received reports and photos from the public. Due to the declining condition of these horses and the lack of available forage, both federal agencies decided to conduct an emergency gather right away.

Wild horses within the Cold Creek area of the Wheeler Pass JMA have a body condition score from BCS 1 (“Poor,” extremely emaciated) to BCS 3 (“Thin”). The U.S. Forest Service proposes to conduct an emergency gather operation to remove up to 200 wild horses from the Cold Creek area. Removing these horses will help alleviate the competition for the limited forage during the extended drought conditions and prevent continued body condition decline and/or death.

- **Didn’t the BLM and Forest Service already remove wild horses from the Cold Creek area of the Wheeler Pass JMA?**

In the summer of 2015, Nevada BLM conducted an emergency gather and removed 234 wild horses from the Cold Creek area of the Wheeler Pass JMA due to a severe decline in body and range conditions. Due to limited forage recovery over the past 2.5 years the body conditions of the area horses have had little to no improvement. If a sufficient number of wild horses are not promptly removed from the area, it is anticipated that individual wild horse body conditions will continue to decline and the most vulnerable horses – mares and foals in particular – will die.

- **After the gather, what will the remaining herd population in the Wheeler Pass JMA be?**

The Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the Wheeler Pass JMA is 47-66 wild horses and 20-35 burros. The March 2018 estimate for the JMA is 275-325 wild horses, which is 392 percent above the high end of the AML range. After removing up to 200 wild horses in the Cold Creek area, the JMA will still be above AML, with a population of approximately 75-125 horses.

The Forest Service and BLM will continue to work on completing the Spring Mountains Wild Horse & Burro Complex Herd Management Area Plan Environment Assessment, which will provide long-term management direction for the Spring Mountain WHBT and Wheeler Pass HMA, including the horses in the Cold Creek area.



- **Will the wild horses be returned to the Cold Creek area?**

Wild horses would not be returned to the JMA due to the overpopulation of wild horses and limited resources. All of the horses gathered will be relocated to a BLM holding facility located in Ridgecrest, California. The horses will either be made available for adoption or transferred to BLM short-term corrals or long-term pastures.

- **What will happen to the wild horse territory in the Cold Creek area?**

The Forest Service and BLM will continue to work on completing the Spring Mountains Wild Horse & Burro Complex Herd Management Area Plan Environment Assessment, which will provide long-term management direction for the Spring Mountain WHBT and Wheeler Pass HMA, including the horses in the Cold Creek area.

- **Will there ever be wild horses in the Cold Creek area again?**

It is likely that wild horses from other parts of the Spring Mountain WHBT and/or Wheeler Pass HMA may continue to be drawn to Cold Creek area because of the available water source. The Forest Service and BLM will make a determination as to the long-term viability of sustaining wild horses in that area through the planning process described above, which will include public input.

- **How will the wild horses be removed and what will happen to them?**

The wild horses will be gathered by low-stress bait trapping by an approved BLM Gather Contractor. The gathered horses will immediately be moved to a temporary holding facility where they will receive health assessments and feeding. Once medically cleared by on-site veterinarians the horses will be transported to a BLM holding facility in Ridgecrest, California, where they will be made available for adoption or transferred to BLM short-term corrals or long-term pastures.

- **Is it possible that some of the horses may have to be euthanized?**

Some of the gathered wild horses may be so emaciated that they may not recover and need to be euthanized. However, the Forest Service and Nevada BLM will treat all the horses humanely and with dignity and respect and do their best to save as many horses as they can.

- **Who decides if a horse will be euthanized?**

The need for euthanasia will be determined by the BLM Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) in consultation with the USDA- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) veterinarian.



- **What will happen with the wild horses at the temporary holding facility?**

All gathered wild horses will be taken a short distance to a BLM temporary holding facility, where they will receive a veterinarian assessment, access to hay and water and be closely monitored. Once the wild horses are strong enough to travel, they will be transported to a BLM holding facility in Ridgecrest, California, and will either be made available for adoption or transferred to BLM short-term corrals or long-term pastures.

- **Will these wild horses be available for adoption?**

The wild horses removed from the range will be transported to the BLM holding facility in Ridgecrest, California, where they will be transitioned to domestic feed, tested for Equine Infectious Anemia (Coggins Test), receive required vaccinations, de-wormed, obtain a unique freeze mark number, and entered into the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program System (WHBPS). Studs will be gelded.

Once the horses have transitioned and are deemed healthy, qualified horses will be offered for adoption and or sale to qualified people through the BLM's Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro Program. Potential adopters must have the proper facilities and financial means to care for an adopted animal.

- **What happens to horses that are not adopted?**

Un-adopted horses will be cared for either in BLM short-term corrals or long-term pastures.

