

OCHOCO WILD & FREE ROAMING HORSE
MANAGEMENT PLAN

Ochoco National Forest
Big Summit Ranger District

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OCHOCO WILD AND FREE ROAMING HORSE MANAGEMENT PLAN

I. Objective

The objective of this management plan is to provide for the protection, management and control of wild, free roaming horses in order that we might perpetuate a sound biological unit consistent with the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, and the principles of multiple use management.

II. Authority

Public Law 92-195 (85 stat. 649, 16 USC 1331-1340) establishes Wild Horses and Burros as part of the "Natural System" of National Forest System Lands and requires their protection, management and control. Other laws applicable to National Forest System lands also commonly apply to the administration of these animals. All actions must be consistent with the intent of the Multiple Use - Sustained Yield Act of 1960 (74 stat. 215, 16 USC 528-531).

III. Past History

The first horses on this range originated approximately 50 years ago according to local residents. The animals escaped from, or were set loose by different ranchers in the surrounding area, some of the horses coming from the area around Post, Oregon. Others coming from the Mitchell area, and still others from the Prineville area.

The horses established their territories on and around Round Mountain, and have since that time been kept at approximately 60 head by local horse chasers, natural deaths and predators.

When the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act was passed in December of 1971, the horse chasing ceased and since that time we have had a yearly increase of approximately 8% in the herd.

IV. Basic Data

A. Description of Territory

Legal description is as follows:

~~T.13S., R.19E., Sections 20, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35.~~

~~T.13S., R.19E., Sections 34, 35 and 36. match~~

~~T.14S., R.19E., Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.~~

The horse range is located approximately 25 miles east of Prineville on the Big Summit District of the Ochoco National Forest.

For further information refer to the Environmental Analysis Report attached to this management plan.

See EA

B. Coordination With Other Uses

1. Watershed

At this time we foresee no unsolvable problems relating to this resource. Refer to attached EAR.

2. Wildlife

There is sufficient forage and cover for big game, small varmints, birds, etc. within the horse range. At this time we can see no conflict. Refer to attached EAR.

3. Recreation

Wild horses have no conflict with recreation. The two resources, in fact, enhance one another. For further information refer to attached EAR.

4. Timber

There is some conflict between wild horses and tree planting. The horses have destroyed some of the trees that have been planted in the O'Neil Butte area. In the future we plan to eliminate the conflict by fencing off the planted areas. Refer to attached EAR for further information.

5. Fire Control

At this time we see no conflict between the horses and fire control. Refer to attached EAR.

6. Mining

There are a number of mining claims on the horse range. All but two of these mines have been abandoned. There is no conflict between mining and horse use. Refer to attached EAR.

7. Range Management

The horse range encompasses portions of two sheep allotments (Canyon Creek and Reservoir) for a total of 27,300 acres. At this time there is no conflict between the uses, and we plan to manage the resource to provide sufficient forage for sheep, horses and wildlife in the future. Refer to attached EAR for additional information. Our objective in Range Management will be to manage in a manner that eliminates resource damage.

V. Analysis of Available Forage and Management

Refer to pages 10 and 11 of EAR, for A and B.

C. Management

1. Numbers - Refer to pages 9 and 10 of EAR

2. Age groups - Refer to pages 9 and 10 of EAR.
3. Culling of excess, diseased, aged, etc.

- a. Horses That Have Strayed Out of 1971 Territory

Horses that have established new territories beyond those which they inhabited prior to December 1971 are considered excess animals. In accordance with the 1971 Act, these horses will be removed. Bringing these animals back into the original territory is not a logical solution. Existing studs within the territory have already established their domains which is what forced these animals outside the range initially. Removing these horses will minimize the possibility of additional horses being led or drawn out of their original horse ranges, causing further expansions of bands and their territories. Since the environmental report was written, one of the bands has expanded its range northwesterly, into the Coyle Creek area. Several young studs have also moved away from their original bands and have begun to establish territories of their own. All excess horses coming from these areas will be captured and put up for adoption. This category of horses will be our 1st priority for culling.

- b. Culling of Excess Numbers Within the Original Territories

The bands within the original territories will be surveyed to determine which horses it will be necessary to cull. Priority for culling within these bands will be age and health conditions. This will include horses that are about 20 years of age and beginning to have difficulty foraging thru the winter and keeping a colt alongside. Also included are horses that are lame to the point that their movement is hindered and they are unable to maintain good flesh. After culling the old and unhealthy animals, and if the herd is still larger than the prescribed range (55-65), then other horses will be culled until the proper numbers are reached. This would include two year olds and yearlings. These healthy excess horses will be put up for adoption.

Any person interested in acquiring a mature horse should realize that these animals will probably never develop into gentle saddle horses. However, if one is interested in having brood mares, or has enough property on which he might like to run mares and/or stallions for the pleasure of seeing wild horses run free, adoption of healthy mature animals from culling within or without the legal horse range will be possible.

I. Field Application

A. Methods of Control

1. Analysis of Vegetation and Numbers (Present and Future)

At this time our analysis of vegetation, (types of forage and amounts), has been conducted with the use of Dr. Fred Hall's publication, "PLANT COMMUNITIES OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS IN EASTERN OREGON AND SOUTHEASTERN WASHINGTON."

Our horse numbers have been determined by on the ground sightings, pictures, and having one man, Terry Bryan, Supervisor's Office, spend two months studying the horses in the field.

Future vegetation analysis will be done in conjunction with Dr. Hall's work and also by placing utilization cages in different parts of the horse range and reading them yearly. The cages will also be moved to different locations on the horse range annually. We plan to keep utilization records of forage on an animal basis so we can correlate our horse use to it and develop trends that might indicate a revision of total numbers is necessary. Total numbers will be analyzed on a 5-year interim basis using the environmental analysis approach.

2. Genetic Strains

We will not go into any type of sophisticated breeding program. We do not plan to favor certain genetic strains over others. Natural selection will be our goal.

Management of Genetic Strains would be economically unfeasible at this time.

3. Fencing of Key Management Areas

Fencing will not be done in management except in small isolated areas which may be the only way to protect the resource.

4. Substituting Studs - Control of Stud Numbers

We do not plan to substitute studs from the horse bands with studs of different breeds, or studs from other areas. This would involve us in a breeding program which is not needed. The individual bands mix occasionally thus providing a small degree of cross breeding.

Controlling our number of studs is the key to preventing establishment of new horse territories outside the original 1971 territory. This will be done on an as needed basis.

5. Reductions in Numbers

We plan to keep a current analysis on numbers from year to year on studs, mares and colts. Our reductions will come during the fall and/or winter months each year.

We feel that during the first two or three years, we will be culling from 10-15 head annually. After that we will probably cull 5-10 head per year to stay within our range of 55-65 head.

6. Management of Herd Instead of Management of Individual Bands

a. Maintain Herd as a Biological Unit

Management will be directed toward the overall herd as a biological unit instead of at certain bands or individuals within the herd. In so doing we can show a truer cross section of a normal herd and the bands within it. In doing any culling, etc. we will be doing it with the whole herd in mind instead of concentrating on each small band separately.

In culling horses out of small bands, for example, we do not plan to favor one animal over another for culling or retention in the band without specific reasons. Such qualities as color, size, breeding, etc. would not be sufficient reason. Disposition may be a factor to consider.

b. Management of Small Bands to Perpetuate Present Conditions in Horse Range

In concentrating on the overall herd size we must look at the small bands that comprise the herd, keep in mind our herd objectives, and retain only those numbers and individuals that would be conducive to total herd management. In doing so, certain dominant stallions must be removed so as to prevent their taking several mares away from other studs and establishing a large herd within the existing territory. Present distribution and utilization should be maintained in the range.

7. Removal Practices

a. Catch Pens

This method of catching horses will probably be used more than the others if it proves successful. A permanent pen can be made of poles encompassing .5 - 2 acres. At one end can be put either a swinging or sliding gate attached to a release mechanism that releases the gate and allows it to close automatically when a horse trips the release mechanism.

A portable pen can be made by building 8' x 8' panels, attaching them to one another at the ends, and installing a gate of the type/types mentioned above. This type of pen usually covers an area of approximately 40' square.

Salt or hay is placed inside the pen. When the animals come in to feed they set off the trip and cannot escape.

We plan to build at least two permanent pens, and use the portable pen we already have to catch horses for identification and removal purposes next fall and winter.

This type of pen is very humane. The main thing to keep in mind is the humane treatment of the animals when doing the culling, photographing for identification purposes, etc. Lack of harassment of the horses will be stressed at all times.

b. Tranquilizer Guns

At this point in time we are planning on using a tranquilizer gun. We have no one on the Forest who is experienced in the use of them, and we certainly will not attempt to become experienced by practicing on these horses.

We have been contacted by an individual who is experienced and bonded in using tranquilizer guns. When the time comes to remove horses from the range that simply refuse to enter the catch pens, we plan to contract the work to an experienced individual, or use trained Forest Service personnel. The person will then tranquilize our unwanted animals and we will haul them to a place where individuals applying for them can pick them up.

We have spoken to individuals from the OSWC about using their elk truck for transportation of tranquilized animals, or animals caught in pens, that need to be moved. We plan to pursue these ideas further.

c. Disposal of Unmanageable and Unwanted Animals

Shooting will be used to do away with animals that are old, lame and permanently injured, or just too wild to be handled in any other way. Good judgement will be exercised in all cases.

Those captured but not wanted will be put to sleep. This will be done only after the avenues of adoption, relocation, etc. have been pursued.

All disposal activities will be carried out according to State Health codes.

d. Roundup

This method of gathering horses will be used as a last resort since this horse range is rough, somewhat broken and brushy, and does not lend itself to this type of culling. Horse chasers have done this as a sport in the past, but we do not have the men or horses that can accomplish this job, and to rent or contract them would prove too costly.

e. Snares

We do not feel there is a place for this type of device in our management program at all. This type of catch apparatus many times hurts horses, leaves them maimed for life, and in extreme cases causes a slow death.

f. Helicopter and Fixed Wing Airplane

At this time it is unlawful to use aircraft for management of horses, and until the law is changed we have no plans for use of aircraft. Their utility would still be questionable in this particular range.

8. Non-Structural Improvementsa. Spraying and Reseeding

Areas to be sprayed and reseeded are very few, probably two or three. One area, of approximately 50 acres, designated "X" on the horse territory map will need rehabilitation work by 1980. We plan to do the work during FY 1978. The determination of this site is due mostly to sheep grazing done in the past. However, horse use has kept the area from re-establishing itself to palatable grass species.

Approximate Cost: \$2,000.00

Refer to pages 14 and 15 of EAR. Topics: Soil, water, vegetation adverse environmental impacts.

II. Fencing of Area

The areas that are rehabilitated will be fenced by building a mesh wire fence 36" high with 2 strands of barbed wire above it all around. This fence will eliminate use by horses or domestic livestock in order that the new seedlings may become established. The area will be fenced for three growing seasons in order to assure plenty of time for the new grass seedlings to become established.

Approximate Cost: \$1,000.00