

FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Modoc NF – Pacific Southwest Region

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<http://www.fs.usda.gov/modoc>

2019 Devil's Garden Plateau Wild Horse gather wrap-up



Historians and families who have been in the area for generations know that over the last 140 years horses have roamed the Devil's Garden Plateau on the Modoc National Forest. With the advance of modern agricultural machinery the horses were no longer needed for the heavy work on the ranches. Many were released by local ranchers and native tribes after they had outlived their usefulness. Some simply escaped from their ranches and owners.

As the herd continued to grow, grazing pressure increased on lands where horses reside. Deer and pronghorn populations—along with wild horses and other wildlife—have been competing for the same food and water sources on and around the territory. Sustainability of forage to maintain growing horse herds has been decreasing through the years, but the number of wild horses has been increasing.



The Appropriate Management Level, or AML, for the Devils Garden Plateau Wild Horse Territory was set by the Territory Management Plan completed in 2013 at maximum of 402 adult horses based on analysis of what these rangelands can support while also support other mixed uses. The Modoc National Forest conducts aerial surveys of the horse population every three years. In the spring of 2016, a survey was conducted that found 2,246 adult horses in and around the Devil's Garden Territory. Subsequently there have been three wild horse gathers since 2016 including the 2019 gather. The most recent survey in the spring of 2019 resulted in a population estimate of 1,802.



The 2019 wild horse gather began on September 5, 2019 with Sun J Livestock Inc. being contracted to conduct gather operations. The gather concluded on Oct. 6, 2019.

With the assistance of Sun J, Forest Service employees and volunteers, 499 horses were gathered over 30 days with 344 horses staying at the Double Devil Horse corrals and the remainder going to BLM wild horse corrals in Litchfield, CA.



The success of the gather will continue in the coming days, weeks and months at the Double Devil Wild Horse Corrals.

Employees are working to feed and care for the horses and prepare them for placement. Forest personnel, partners and volunteers are working together to place Devil's Garden Wild Horses into new families and homes where they can be trained, fed and loved. Placement began Oct. 15, 2019, and 67 horses have already found new homes. **The next placement event is planned for Nov. 2, 2019. Please call 530-233-8738 to make reservations.**