



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Nevada State Office  
P.O. Box 12000 (1340 Financial Blvd)  
Reno, Nevada 89520-0006  
<http://www.nv.blm.gov>



In Reply Refer To:  
4700 (NV-930)

**JUN 13 2007**

Cindy McDonald

Dear Ms. McDonald:

Thank you for your interest in working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Nevada to provide water to wild horses during the drought we are currently experiencing. Providing water (on either a temporary or long-term basis) is not a substitute for lack of forage. However, when forage becomes limiting, excess wild horses and burros will continue to need removal in order to protect the range from deterioration in accordance with Section 3(b) (2) of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.

BLM generally avoids developing artificial water (such as wells) for wild horses and burros. We try to rely on naturally occurring water instead. When we establish the appropriate management level (AML), we carefully consider the amount of forage and perennial water which is available. We attempt to achieve the goal of establishing a thriving natural ecological balance at the minimum feasible level of management. While we recognize that wild horses and burros do utilize artificially developed water sources, we try to make sure the animals are not dependent on these waters as their only source. This is because if horses depend on artificial water and that source should **fail**, their lives could be at risk. An exception to this is where we develop a spring source which allows water to be maintained at the source while delivering water off site for the animals.

In any event, where wild horses and burros use developed water sources, BLM is required to obtain a water right from the State Engineer which shows wild horses and burros as the beneficial use. Legally, this is the only "guarantee" that the water would be available for the animals. "Purchasing" water from ranchers for wild horses and burros would be a short term solution at best. We do, however, recognize this may be a viable solution in an emergency situation.

Currently, BLM Nevada is at AML on about 80% of the herd management areas. To maintain AML, about 2,600 excess wild horses or burros will need to be removed annually compared to the 5,000-6,000 removed to attain AML over the past several years. Because BLM Nevada is currently at AML, the need for removal of large numbers of wild horses (or burros) on an emergency (unplanned) basis due to the current drought is not expected. Nor do we anticipate the need to provide temporary water to sustain the animals until the next scheduled gather in more than a few locations.

With respect to the Paymaster HMA, the well you reference is outside the HMA boundary. The well's location resulted in horses moving outside the HMA boundary. Developing/maintaining water which encourages wild horses (or burros) to leave their HMA boundary is contrary to regulations (43 CFR 4710.4).

I hope the above information is helpful.

Sincerely,

Ron Wenker  
State Director, Nevada

cc: Field Managers, Nevada

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