

USDA Forest Service SMNRA
Bureau of Land Management
Randy Swick, Area Manager
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Ref: Spring Mountain Wild Horse Herd Management

The wild horses have gone unchecked for too many years.

We have lived in Cold Creek for twenty four years. We have walked the land watching the ecosystem being vastly changed by over grazing and creating a negative impact to our water and water ways.

After the wildfire in 1982 the land was reseeded with Crested Wheat grass. This flourished and covered the burned areas providing foliage for the wild life. Over the years the crested wheat grass and natural grasses like rice grass etc. have dwindled, disappeared through over grazing by the horses. The good grasses have been taken over by cheat grass, red broom and other new weeds like Bur Buttercup that are not good foliage and bad for the ecosystem.

I, Edna, was the Cold Creek Chairperson for many years with the Nevada Fire Safe Council and learned the fire potential for cheat grass & red broom. When dried cheat grass is pound for pound more flammable than gasoline. These bad grasses now encompass much of the Forest Service land surrounding Cold Creek Community and are increasing growing out of control within the community especially where it is fenced. This makes Cold Creek very vulnerable to uncontrollable wild fires.

However I confess with the over grazing the horses are pressed to even find dead cheat grass to eat, especially this year.

The horses are not native but introduced. They become competitive with native wild life for grazing. Horses are not hunted and have no controls except gathers which have not been done in years.

The grazing land in Cold Creek is also shared with all the long standing wildlife in the area. Both the elk and deer are spending much more time in and near the community for water and foraging off vegetation around the stream and on watered lawns.

The past two mornings we watched 35 elk from our home in Cold Creek. This is most unusual considering warm weather. With the Carpenter 1 Fire having consumed over 25,000 acres, at this time, and still 90% out of control this herd of elk could easily be displaced wildlife seeking out new territory. This puts an even heavier burden on the over taxed Cold Creek land already stressed.

This year is one of the driest we can remember. For the first time even the weeds and wild flower are not growing or have been devoured. No rain is in site and the land is parched.

There is a legal and historic feeder stream which is diverted off the Cold Creek Stream. This feeder stream fills three ponds below the Cold Creek Community. The water is a reservoir used by helicopters to fight fire not only in Cold Creek but surrounding areas. We often see the horses rolling and grazing in this stream. This weakens the bank holding the feeder stream. Horses can impede and totally stop the waters flow to the ponds.

The water used to be clean and people came to Cold Creek to drink directly from Cold Creek Stream and the feeder stream. Now the Cold Creek Stream and the feeder stream are polluted from horse defecation. Several forms of algae are threatening to impede the flow to the ponds and must be raked out monthly to prevent the water from over flowing.

Our Cold Creek Volunteer Fire Chief came here nearly 30 years ago and can confirm how much better the land and water was at that time when there were less hoses.

The horses have no fear of humans or cars. Quite the contrary. Herds will approach anyone or any car hoping for food to stave off the hunger. Even the colts are standing in the middle of the road with no fear. Yesterday after passing several herds we passed four horses standing in the middle of the road with their hind quarters together and heads pointed out in a star shape. They did not flinch as we passed. Potential tragedy awaits humans and horses.

Many of these horses are starving. Some horses sustain life by becoming beggars. Many horses gravitate to the community of Cold Creek where they know people put feed out for them. We have seen cars stop and unload bales of hay and often hand feed the horses. This encourages the horses to approach cars and forage along the road.

Our plea to the governing bodies: USFSSMNRA and BLM, is that they resume removing over population of horses from Cold Creek area. The horses in the past were being managed and every few years gathers were

done. Then it seem that that horse management stopped. No gathers weredone to our knowledge. The horse population has vastly grown over those years. Pleads and letters to do gathers have been ignored at the expense of the vegetation and negative impact on the ecosystem.

You spoke of not making decisions until 2014 let alone a gather. Something needs to be done as soon as possible. The land is parched. We have lost nearly all, if not all, of our good grasses. Many of the horses are starving.

Excellent suggestions were made at the meeting in Cold Creek for food traps gathers. This would be such a cheap and painless way for the horses, especially along the road, to be gathered. Plus they would love the food.

In previous gathers the horses were in much better shape. These horses are awfully thin with ribs showing and near starvation to do a safe helicopters round up.

Please call for an emergence gather to be done humanely.

It would be very beneficial if hay drops were implemented until a gather is arranged this summer or fall. If a gather goes into 2014, then continue the hay drops to feed the the horses until a gather is executed.

Please reseed. Good grasses have been all depleted. To replace the destruction of over grazing and allow the land to rejuvenate reseeding would provide foliage for remaining horses and our growing wild life population,

Consider some form of sustainable Birth Control to prevent the uncontrolled growth of the herds of horses. This would prevent the expense of major roundups and money to supporting those horses removed from the land.

I have photos to substantiate some of the above. Also we would be happy to show the USFS or BLM areas of impact in the Cold Creek area.

Sincerely,

Edna Clem
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