



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Prineville Field Office

High Desert Region

2042 SE Paulina Hwy.

Prineville, OR 97754

(541) 447-5111

FAX (541) 447-8065

www.dfw.state.or.us

June 6, 2022

Slater Turner, District Ranger
Crooked River National Grassland
3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754

RE: Ochoco Wild Horse Adoption Facility – Scoping

Dear Mr. Turner,

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments to the Crooked River National Grassland (CRNG) on the proposal to create a temporary wild horse holding and adoption facility at the old headquarters administrative site.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) follows the states wildlife policy ORS 496.012. This policy mandates that fish and wildlife shall be managed to prevent serious depletion of any indigenous species and to provide the optimum recreational and aesthetic benefits.

ODFW is supportive of the Ochoco National Forest implementing the wild horse management plan and reducing wild horse to AML (Appropriate Management Level). ODFW has provided specific comments related to that plan and will submit those as attachments with this letter.

ODFW has met with CRNG representatives multiple times and have discussed this proposal in depth. Most of this correspondence has been related to updating the MOU and the management plan for the Rimrock Springs Wildlife Management Area. Updating the MOU and the management plan will be critical in moving forward with the development of a temporary wild horse holding and adoption facility. The Rimrock Springs Wildlife Management Area is closed to hunting and trapping and is managed to promote the wildlife resource to non-consumptive users (recreation and wildlife viewing). To assure the temporary wild horse holding facility does not interfere with those original goals of the Rimrock Springs Wildlife Management Area, ODFW offers the following suggested comments to the proposal.

- 35 horses seems to be a large number of animals to be housed at this location even temporarily. ODFW recommends a more thorough analysis of the site and how many horses can be safely placed within the boundary.
- The facility should only hold horses from the Ochoco National Forest lands. If the intent is to place horses from neighboring National Forests or jurisdictions, it should be done at a site that is more conducive to a permanent holding facility. And that facility should be

built and sited on properties that have less wildlife value than Rimrock Springs Wildlife Management Area.

- Drainage for corrals should be done to assure water quality is not impacted at Rimrock Springs. Monitoring and testing should be done to assure this standard is met.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have questions or want information that the Department can provide please contact me.

Sincerely

G r e g J a c k l e

Greg Jackle
District Wildlife Biologist
Ochoco District
Greg.s.jackle@odfw.oregon.gov
541-447-5111



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife



Prineville Field Office
East Region
2042 SE Paulina Hwy.
Prineville, OR 97754
(541) 447-5111
FAX (541) 447-8065
www.dfw.state.or.us

May 15, 2020

Slater Turner, District Ranger
Lookout Mountain Ranger District
Ochoco National Forest
3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754

RE: Draft Environmental Assessment for the Ochoco Wild Horse Management Plan

Dear Mr. Turner,

As the agency mandated with management of Oregon's fish and wildlife (ORS 496.012), the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is responding to your request for comments on the Ochoco Wild Horse Management Plan (Plan) Draft Environmental Assessment (EA). Once finalized, the Plan will replace the current management document for the Ochoco wild horse herd published in 1975.

The Department generally supports the Ochoco National Forest's (Forest) selection of Alternative 2 as its preferred Alternative. By reducing the current Appropriate Management Level (AML) from 55-65 wild horses to 12-57, Alternative 2 strikes an ecological balance between the habitat needs of the Forest's wild horses and its fish and wildlife species.

In addition, the Department recommends the following be included in the final Plan:

- Proposed criteria for selection of gather sites.
- Additional details regarding ecological monitoring of impacts to both upland and riparian sites for each Alternative and their connection to Forest Standard & Guidelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have questions or want information that the Department can provide, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Sara Gregory
Wildlife Habitat Biologist
Deschutes Watershed District
sara.c.gregory@state.or.us
541-388-6147

cc: Bruce Eddy – ODFW East Region Manager
Mike Harrington – ODFW Deschutes Watershed Manager
Greg Jackle – ODFW Ochoco District Wildlife Biologist
Brett Hodgson – ODFW Deschutes District Fish Biologist



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Prineville Field Office
High Desert Region
2042 SE Paulina Hwy.
Prineville, OR 97754
(541) 447-5111
FAX (541) 447-8065
www.dfw.state.or.us

July 20, 2017

Ochoco National Forest
3160 NE 3rd Street
Prineville, OR 97754

RE: Ochoco Wild Horse Herd Management Scoping

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has reviewed the Ochoco National Forest Wild Horse Management Plan Update Scoping Document (Proposed Action) and provide the following comments.

It is the policy of the State of Oregon that fish and wildlife shall be managed to prevent serious depletion of any indigenous species and to provide the optimum recreational and aesthetic benefits. The State Fish and Wildlife Commission shall represent the public interest of the State of Oregon to implement coequal goals of wildlife management: 1) to maintain all species of wildlife at optimum levels.....7) to make decisions that effect wildlife resources of the state for the benefit of the wildlife resources and to make decisions that allow for the best social, economic and recreational utilization of wildlife resources by all user groups (ORS 496.012).

The Proposed Action seeks to update and determine the Appropriate Management Level (AML) of wild horses for the Big Summit Territory (Territory). It will also update methods to slow the horse herd rate of growth and develop a plan and protocols for capturing, handling and adoption.

The Department supports the Ochoco National Forest (Forest) in conducting a current comprehensive review of the AML for the Territory, and agrees that the limiting factor affecting this herd is available winter forage and available winter space. Careful consideration to the needs of native wildlife and plants must also be considered when determining AML. The Department is supportive of the Forest developing options for humane capture, adoption, and fertility control to keep the population of horses at AML.

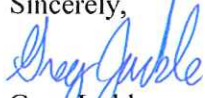
The Department recommends the Forest develop a statistically valid sampling methodology for monitoring horse numbers within the Territory and surrounding USFS lands. The Department understands the challenges related to monitoring this population within heavily timbered habitat and thus recommends that all options of determining population abundance be discussed. Some practical examples are winter time low level flights over South exposures, utilizing Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) to identify animal locations and lastly examine the ability to determine population size using a scat based DNA sample technique.

The Department recommends the Forest develop a rigorous range monitoring program to examine the impacts of wild horses on range and riparian areas. Horse activities in riparian areas could slow the natural rate of recovery and prevent riparian areas from properly functioning. If there is horse-related degradation, the USFS needs to have a plan on how to fix and prevent future problems.

Lastly, the Department is supportive of developing an emergency action plan to assist decision makers on the most reasonable and responsible methods of assisting hurt or compromised horses. The Department feels that if the Forest develops an appropriate AML, the incidences of injured, or starving horses will be minimal.

The Department appreciates the ability to provide comment on this Management Plan update. If the Department could provide additional assistance during the development of this plan please let us know.

Sincerely,



Greg Jackle
District Wildlife Biologist
Ochoco District