

Wild horse herds to be thinned

By SENTINEL STAFF

The Bureau of Land Management White River Field Office has made the decision to gather and remove excess wild horses from the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area in northwest Colorado.

The BLM decision was announced Monday afternoon.

"The BLM is committed to sustaining an ecological balance in the Piceance-East Douglas HMA," said White River Field Manager Kent Walter in the news release. "Our goal is to have healthy horses on healthy rangelands."

The Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area includes central Rio Blanco County east of Colorado Highway 139 and south of Colorado Highway 64. The area is about 50 miles north and east of Grand Junction.

The BLM estimates that 838 horses live in the herd management area.

According to the news release, BLM put the appropriate management level between 135-235 horses.

As part of the decision, helicopter and/or bait trapping methods may be used for wild horse gathering operations. Fertility treatments will be used

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KENT WALTER

White River field manager for the Bureau of Land Management

to curb annual herd population growth.

In a previous news release, Walter said the goal was to find a manageable herd size for several reasons.

"We are committed to maintaining a healthy population of wild horses in the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area, as well as being a good neighbor to the communities we serve," Walter said in that previous news release. "We are currently supporting more than 1,200 wild horses in areas where the appropriate management level allows for up to 235. The removal of excess wild horses over the next few years will reduce impacts to private property and promote healthy rangelands."

An additional 400 wild horses roam the area west of Highway 139 on acreage that is not designated as a herd management area.

The BLM's goal is to have no

wild horses living in that area.

The Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area is about 190,123 acres, including about 158,310 acres of BLM-managed land, 26,490 acres of private land and 5,330 acres of state land.

In October, the White River Field Office authorized the removal of about 75 horses from private land in the area because of impacts on that land.

Appeals to the decision will be accepted by the BLM over the next 30 days and must be submitted in writing to: Field Manager, BLM White River Field Office, 220 East Market St., Meeker, CO 81641.

The decision and its associated documents are available online at <https://go.usa.gov/x7fcQ>.

For information about the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program, go to <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro>.