

Increased Livestock Slated As BLM Continues Wild Horse Removals

Environmental and Wild Horse Orgs Push Back

VALE, OREGON, UNITED STATES, June 27, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This week [WildLands Defense](#) (WLD) and [Wild Horse Education](#) (WHE) took action to protect wild horses in Oregon as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) continues the practice of increasing forage available to livestock and ignoring impacts to wild horses and other species.

The organizations sent a request for comment directly to the Vale BLM office that oversees wild horses in the area. Burns BLM Andrews Field Office issued the new decision that will increase cattle by over 1400 AUMs concentrated in the Alvord HMA portion of the Barren Valley Complex, and seven Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). The plan increases livestock use without evaluating forage and the ecological balance for wild horses and other wildlife.

“

BLM appears hellbent on turning this beautiful biodiverse Oregon high desert landscape into a cheatgrass dead zone.”
Katie Fite, WildLands Defense

In May, WLD and WHE took a stand against what they call a “chaotic and uncertain grazing scheme nearly devoid of mandatory Terms and Conditions” for a one quarter million acre livestock grazing allotment in Oregon. The organizations filed an Appeal (IBLA, Docket No. OR-020-22-02) against the BLM Alvord AMP Environmental Assessment (EA) [DOI-BLM-ORWA-B060-2014-0019-EA](#) and

all associated documents.

The BLM Burns District approved the plan this year that will increase cattle AUMs by approximately 1400 Animal Unit Months (AUM) in a wild horse Herd Management Area (HMA) in the Alvord livestock grazing allotment, with no consideration given to allocating some of those



Barren Valley wild horse roundup

AUMs to Wild Horses, big game, or to Sage-grouse. The decision also authorized closed door issuance of additional “Non-Renewable” AUMs with no public involvement annually. The Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the district that oversees the HMAs requires consideration be given to increasing Wild Horse AUM allocations if livestock AUMs are to be increased.

In fall of 2021, BLM executed an “emergency” roundup of the Barren Valley Complex (Coyote Lake/Alvord-Tule Springs, Sheepshead/Heath Creek and Sand Springs Herd Management Areas (HMAs). The operation removed 1639 wild horses and killed 27 onsite before the operation ended. The Vale Oregon district of the BLM states that only 198-390 wild horses can be sustained in the HMA. The plan to increase livestock AUMs was being finalized as wild horses were being removed.

Despite the grave adverse impacts to the HMA through activating suspended forage allocation (Animal Unit Months, AUMs) for livestock not permitted to be grazed since 1965, prior to the passage of the WHB Act, and the extensive new cow facilities and water hauling for livestock that can occur at any time, BLM finalized the decision without evaluating forage use for wild horses.

“Not only does BLM ignore their stated legal obligation to evaluate an increase in forage for wild horses if forage is increased for cows, BLM claims they do not have to do any analysis of negative impacts to wild horses. This plan is beyond irresponsible and illustrates multiple use is nothing but pretense.” stated Laura Leigh, President of Wild Horse Education.

“The BLM Alvord decision demolishes sagebrush communities and the Wild and natural values of



Vile stinking cow manure polluting surface water in grossly trampled and polluted Mickey Hot Springs outflow in WSA. Note enclosure fence. It is unclear whether the ACEC fence is on the ACEC boundary line.

Livestock impacts



Shrubs have been completely eliminated here by severe grazing disturbance already taking place. The Alvord FD plans to severely intensify grazing impacts over vast areas of the allotment. Also note off-road driving tracks in in WSA

2022, Current impacts

the WSAs. It both intensifies grazing pressure and outright rips apart the sagebrush sea and Sage-grouse habitat with 7 new wells. It specifically allows water hauling in WSAs. BLM appears hellbent on turning this beautiful biodiverse Oregon high desert landscape into a cheatgrass dead zone." Katie Fite, WildLands Defense.

The decision to increase forage for livestock impacts "not just any old cow beat public lands" – the Alvord allotment includes Wilderness area lands in 3 Alvord pastures, 7 important Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), 3 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) one at least of 20,000+ acres, Research Natural Areas (RNA), and Wild Horse HMA lands in the Coyote Lake-Tule-Alvord HMA. With the brunt of livestock forage increase falling in the HMA and the Wilderness Study Areas.

"This decision is rife with conflicts," note WLD and WHE.

Alarmingly, the decision significantly deceives the public about the status of Sage-grouse habitat claiming that standards were met. BLM appears to use an illustration from another allotment from before issuance of the GRSB 2015 ARMPA, using category/descriptor language from prior to 2015 when broad Greater Sage Grouse Plans were finalized to avoid citing the bird under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

"This cattle industry grass grab threatens all that Americans value on public lands - exposing BLM hypocrisy and false claims of Sage- grouse protection or Managing wild horses as BLM asserts their purpose is a 'Thriving Natural Ecological Balance.' BLM claims it manages for balanced use, but in the Alvord allotment BLM just lets the cattle industry take a bigger bite out of existing allocations for everything else."

WHE and WLD remain committed to continuing to work to protect wild species and wild places being impacted in the area.

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