

III.17 WILD HORSES AND BURROS

This chapter presents the environmental setting and affected environment for the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP or Plan) for wild horses and burros. It describes the environmental setting for the entire Plan Area on federal lands. All six alternatives analyzed in Volume IV are located within the Plan Area, but wild horses and burros are only managed on federal lands. It also describes the environmental setting for certain areas outside of the Plan Area since some actions would occur there.

III.17.1 Regulatory Setting

III.17.1.1 Federal

III.17.1.1.1 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971

Wild horses and burros are protected by the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1331-1340), as amended by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978. The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act protects wild, free-roaming horses and burros and their habitats. It directs the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to manage these wild animals on public lands in their respective jurisdictions.

The general management objectives for wild horses and burros are to:

1. Protect and manage viable, healthy herds while retaining their free-roaming natures.
2. Provide adequate habitat through the principles of multiple-use and environmental protection, while maintaining a thriving ecological balance.
3. Provide opportunities for the public to view wild horses and burros in their natural habitat.
4. Protect wild horses and burros from unauthorized capture, branding, harassment, or death.

III.17.2 Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas by Ecoregion Subarea

California contains 33 geographic herd areas where wild horses and burros lived when the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act was passed in 1971. California's free-roaming wild horses and burros range over 7.1 million acres of BLM-administered land and 2.3 million acres of non-BLM land. The USFS does not have jurisdiction over any wild horse and burro territories within the Plan Area. In a subset of herd areas, known as herd management areas (HMAs), BLM actively manages wild horse and burro herds. Through its

land use plans, BLM has identified HMAs that are suitable for the long-term management of wild horses and burros.

California has 22 HMAs on BLM-administered lands. The BLM’s management goal for those HMAs is to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on those lands. Each HMA has been studied to determine appropriate management levels for its wild horses and burros. This assessment considers other natural resources such as vegetation, wildlife, and other uses including livestock grazing and recreation.

The Plan Area contains several herd areas and five HMAs (See Figure III.17-1). These are listed in Table III.17-1 and described in more detail by ecoregion subarea in sections III.17.2.1 through III.17.2.10.

**Table III.17-1
 Herd Management Areas and Herd Areas Within the
 DRECP by Ecoregion Subarea (BLM-Administered Lands Only)**

HMA and Herd Areas	Acres
<i>Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
Chemehuevi HMA	13,000
Chocolate–Mule Mountains HMA	127,000
Herd Areas	386,000
Total	526,000
<i>Imperial Borrego Valley Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
Chocolate–Mule Mountains HMA	65,000
Herd Areas	80,000
Total	146,000
<i>Kingston and Funeral Mountains Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
Chicago Valley HMA	260,000
Herd Areas	476,000
Total	736,000
<i>Mojave and Silurian Valley Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
HMA	
Herd Areas	21,000
Total	21,000
<i>Owens River Valley Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
Lee Flat HMA	1,000
Centennial HMA	6,000
Herd Areas	35,000
Total	43,000

**Table III.17-1
 Herd Management Areas and Herd Areas Within the
 DRECP by Ecoregion Subarea (BLM-Administered Lands Only)**

HMA and Herd Areas	Acres
<i>Panamint Death Valley Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
HMA	
Herd Areas	239,000
Total	239,000
<i>Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
HMA	
Herd Areas	6,000
Total	6,000
<i>Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
Chemehuevi HMA	91,000
Herd Areas	337,000
Total	428,000
<i>Providence and Bullion Mountains Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
HMA	
Herd Areas	44,000
Total	44,000
<i>West Mojave and Eastern Slopes Ecoregion Subarea</i>	
HMA	
Herd Areas	17,000
Total	17,000

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore, the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

Source: BLM 2007 and BLM GIS data 2013

The environmental baseline includes more than 50 renewable energy projects that are either under construction or nearly completed within the Plan Area. These projects are listed in Appendix O and shown in Figure III.1-2a and Figure III.1-2b (Chapter III.1, Section III.1.3.3). There is no overlap between these renewable energy projects and either HMAs or herd areas.

III.17.2.1 Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains Ecoregion Subarea

The Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains ecoregion subarea contains a large portion of the Chocolate–Mule Mountains HMA, a small portion of the Chemehuevi HMA with 387,400 acres of herd areas (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1). The Chemehuevi HMA, located

in eastern San Bernardino County, covers an area from 7 miles south of Needles, California, to the Parker Dam on the Colorado River, in San Bernardino County, and stretches east of U.S. Route 95 (U.S. 95) eastward to the Colorado River. As of 2012, this HMA contained approximately 108 wild burros. The Chemehuevi HMA contains 79,000 acres; 12,600 acres are within BLM-administered lands that are also within the Plan Area (BLM 2007).

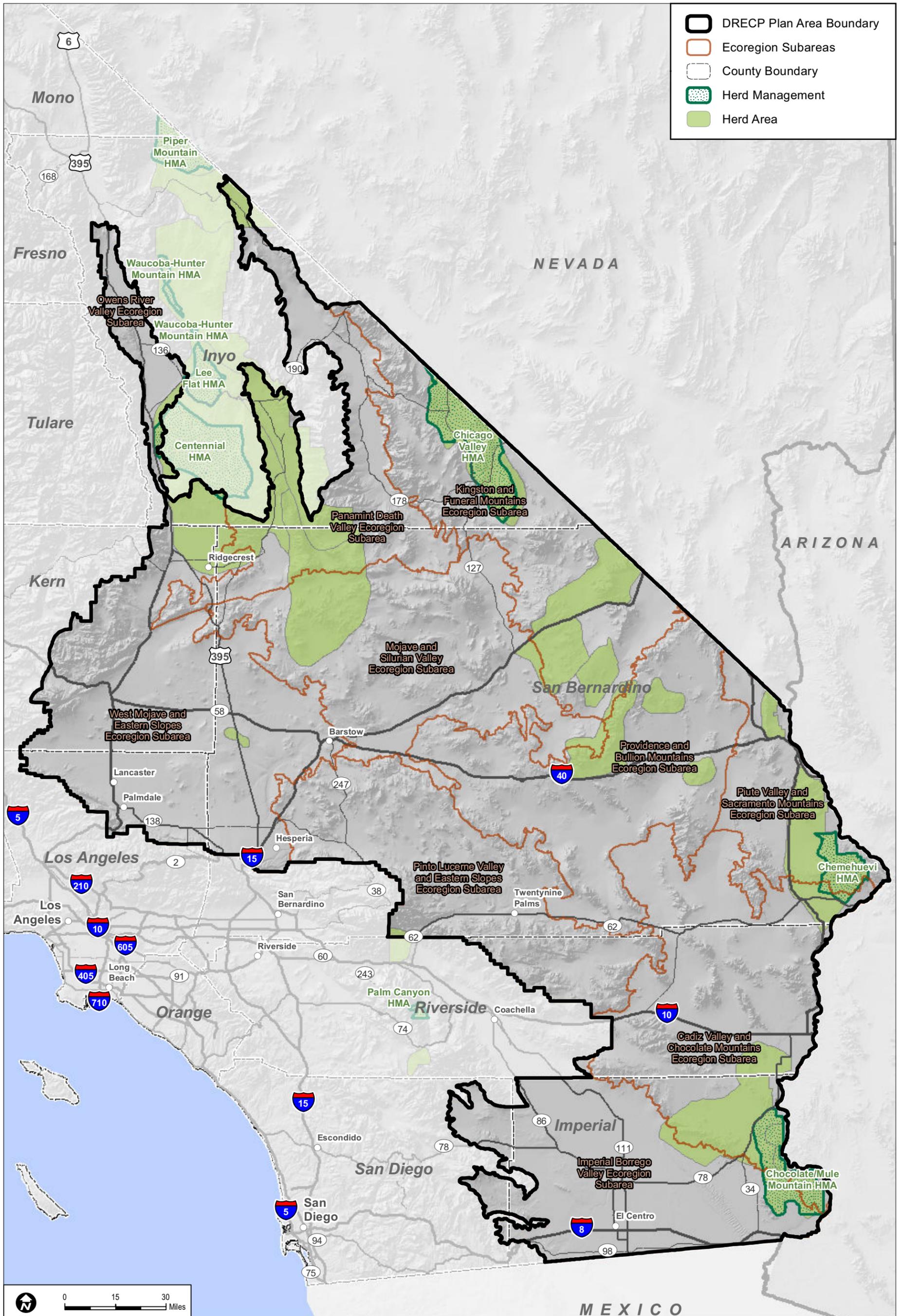
The Chocolate–Mule Mountains HMA is in southeastern Imperial County, along the Colorado River bordering the Picacho State Recreation Area west of Yuma, Arizona (See Figure III.17-1). As of 2012, this HMA contained 121 wild burros. The burros in these areas are believed to originate from mining operations in the 1800s. With introduction of the railroad and abandonment of the mines, miners abandoned their animals into the foothills (BLM 2012[a] and 2012[b]). The Chocolate–Mule Mountains herd area and the Cibola-Trigo HMA were combined and reduced under the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert (NECO) California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) and are now called the Chocolate–Mule Mountains HMA. This HMA encompasses a total of 159,000 acres; 127,600 acres are within BLM-administered lands and also within the Plan Area (BLM 2007).

III.17.2.2 Imperial Borrego Valley Ecoregion Subarea

The Imperial Borrego Valley ecoregion subarea contains a portion (65,300 acres) of the Chocolate–Mule Mountains HMA, as well as 80,500 acres of herd areas (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1). The Chocolate–Mule Mountains HMA is described in more detail in Section III.17.2.1, Cadiz Valley and Chocolate Mountains Ecoregion Subarea.

III.17.2.3 Kingston and Funeral Mountains Ecoregion Subarea

The Kingston and Funeral Mountains ecoregion subarea contains the Chicago Valley HMA as well as 476,300 acres of herd areas (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1). The Chicago Valley HMA is in southeastern Inyo County along the California/Nevada border near Death Valley Junction. This HMA consists of approximately 278,000 acres managed for wild horses, 259,500 acres of which are within BLM-administered lands that are also within the Plan Area. As of 2012, this HMA contained 12 wild horses. The horses in this area are believed to originate from ranching operations (BLM 2012[c]).



- DRECP Plan Area Boundary
- Ecoregion Subareas
- County Boundary
- Herd Management
- Herd Area



Sources: ESRI (2014); CEC (2013); BLM (2013); CDFW (2013); USFWS (2013)

FIGURE III.17-1

Wild Horse and Burro Herd Areas and Herd Management Areas within the Plan Area

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III.17.2.4 Mojave and Silurian Valley Ecoregion Subarea

The Mojave and Silurian Valley ecoregion subarea contains 21,400 acres of herd areas and no HMA acres (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1).

III.17.2.5 Owens River Valley Ecoregion Subarea

The Owens River Valley ecoregion subarea contains small portions of both the Lee Flat and Centennial HMAs and 35,400 acres of herd areas. The Lee Flat HMA is located east of the dry Owens Lake bed in Inyo County (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1). In this HMA a total of 73,000 acres is managed for wild burros even though, as of 2012, there were no wild burros in this HMA. As a result of the California Desert Protection Act of 1994, Death Valley National Park acquired 45% of the Lee Flat HMA, which contained permanent, reliable water sources for burros. The National Parks Service (NPS), which now administers the area, removed the burros in the early 2000s. The wild burros in this area are believed to originate from mining operations in the mid-1800s (BLM 2012[d]). The Lee Flat HMA has 1,100 acres within BLM-administered lands in the Plan Area.

The Centennial HMA is in Kern County, approximately 10 miles north of Ridgecrest, California (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1). This HMA consists of a total of 319,000 acres, managed for wild horses. As of 2012, this HMA contained 400 wild horses and 180 burros. The Centennial HMA has 6,200 acres within BLM-administered lands in the Plan Area. The horses in this area are believed to originate from ranching operations (BLM 2012[e]).

III.17.2.6 Panamint Death Valley Ecoregion Subarea

The Panamint Death Valley ecoregion subarea contains 239,300 acres of herd areas and no HMA acres (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1).

III.17.2.7 Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes Ecoregion Subarea

The Pinto Lucerne Valley and Eastern Slopes ecoregion subarea contains 5,900 acres of herd area and no HMA acres (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1).

III.17.2.8 Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains Ecoregion Subarea

The Piute Valley and Sacramento Mountains ecoregion subarea contains a large portion of the Chemehuevi HMA as well as 337,200 acres of herd areas (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1). The Chemehuevi HMA is described in more detail in Section III.17.2.1. The Chemehuevi HMA has 91,200 acres within BLM-administered lands in the Plan Area.

III.17.2.9 Providence and Bullion Mountains Ecoregion Subarea

The Providence and Bullion Mountains ecoregion subarea contains 44,300 acres of herd areas and no HMA acres (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1).

III.17.2.10 West Mojave and Eastern Slopes Ecoregion Subarea

The West Mojave and Eastern Slopes ecoregion subarea contains 17,000 acres of herd areas and no HMA acres (See Table III.17-1 and Figure III.17-1).

III.17.3 Affected Environment for the Natural Community Conservation Plan

The affected environment for the Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) is the same as that described for the entire Plan Area. While there are both Department of Defense (DOD) and tribal lands within the Plan Area, the Plan does not analyze the effects on these lands; they are therefore not included in the description of the affected environment.

III.17.4 Affected Environment for the General Conservation Plan

The affected environment for the General Conservation Plan (GCP) includes a subset of lands covered by Plan-wide analysis and the NCCP. In addition to DOD and tribal lands, the GCP also excludes all other federal lands (e.g., BLM-administered public lands, national parks). The GCP does address wild horses and burros because they are only managed on federal lands.

III.17.5 Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas Outside the Plan Area

III.17.5.1 Transmission Out of Plan Area

The transmission corridors outside the Plan Area generally fall into four geographic areas: San Diego, Los Angeles, North Palm Springs–Riverside County, and the central California Valley. This setting includes designated HMAs and herd areas for wild horses and burros within 1.5 miles of the center of transmission corridors, or a 3-mile-wide swath. The 3-mile swath was chosen to conservatively account for potential deviations or the route.

The transmission corridors in the Los Angeles, San Diego, and Central Valley areas do not include either HMAs or herd areas. In the North Palm Springs–Riverside area, two HMA/ herd areas are within a 3-mile swath of the transmission corridors. The Morongo herd area would be traversed for approximately 4 miles, and the Palm Canyon HMA and herd

area would be within approximately 1.5 miles of a transmission corridor under Alternative 2 (BLM 2013).

III.17.5.2 Bureau of Land Management Land Use Plan Amendment

There are 548,400 acres of wild horse and burro herd areas and 248,700 acres of HMAs within the CDCA but outside the Plan Area (See Table III.17-2). The USFS does not have any wild horse and burro territories within the CDCA.

**Table III.17-2
 Herd Management Areas and Herd Areas Inside the CDCA Boundary but Outside the Plan Area (BLM-Administered Lands Only)**

HMAs and Herd Areas	Acres
<i>Herd Areas</i>	
Centennial	211,000
Coyote Canyon	Less than 100
Lee Flat	85,000
Morongo	22,000
Palm Canyon	3,000
Panamint	55,000
Piper Mountain	88,000
Sand Spring–Last Chance	40,000
Waucoba–Hunter Mountain	45,000
Total	548,000
<i>Herd Management Areas</i>	
Centennial	65,000
Lee Flat	71,000
Palm Canyon	3,000
Piper Mountain	88,000
Waucoba–Hunter Mountain	22,000
Total	249,000

Note: The following general rounding rules were applied to calculated values: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10, and therefore totals may not sum due to rounding. In cases where subtotals are provided, the subtotals and the totals are individually rounded. The totals are not a sum of the rounded subtotals; therefore, the subtotals may not sum to the total within the table.

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