

## Another Piece of the Wild Horse Eco-sanctuary

By Larry Hyslop



A group of horses from Saving America's Mustangs

Lots of recent talk has revolved around the Northeastern Nevada Wild Horse Eco-sanctuary proposed by Madeline Pickens' group, Saving America's Mustangs (SAM). It would hold BLM captive wild horses on an eco-sanctuary created out of the Spruce Grazing Allotment.

SAM has another plan involving domestic horses on private ground and on two grazing allotments. Their 560 horses were originally gathered off the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe's Reservation and purchased by Ms. Pickens at the Fallon Auction Barn.

The Warm Creek Ranch is undergoing a grazing permit renewal, during which the BLM is completing a routine Environmental Assessment. In the permit, the species of grazers on the Snow Water Lake and Warm Creek Allotments is being changed from cattle to horses. SAM could later return to cattle but not both at the same time. This is a routine change that other Nevada ranches have received.

The conversion from cattle to horses is being done at a 1 horse equals 1.2 cattle, since a horse processes more forage than a cow. Whereas the old grazing permit for the Snow Water Lake Allotment and Warm Creek Allotment allowed no more than 235 cattle, the new permit allows only 200 horses. These horses would spend about eight months on these grazing allotments, which are public land.

These are domestic horses and therefore, must carry brands on public land. This part of the eco-sanctuary does not involve any federally-managed wild horses. The use of these allotments accounts for less than half of the ranch's horses and the rest will stay on private ground all year.

Although most of the Warm Creek Ranch is on the East side of U.S. 93, south of Wells, the Warm Creek and part of the Snow Water Lake Allotment is located on the west side of the highway. This will necessitate moving horses across the highway twice a year. The permit renewal also stipulates drilling two new wells and repairing three other wells. If the permit is granted with no problems, horses could be on the allotments next spring.

I asked Madeline Pickens about her plans for ecotourism. During the first year, visitors will arrive mostly as tour bus groups. These groups will be taken out on horse-drawn wagons to a viewing stand where they may be served lunch. They will most likely view these domestic horses, since the Eco-sanctuary wild horses will be too dispersed for easy viewing. Madeline also described possible custom safaris where people might enter the eco-sanctuary on horses and camp for 3-4 days while viewing horses.

When asked how the Eco-sanctuary process was advancing, she replied "they (the BLM) can take as long as they want". She says with the long-term holding costs for captive wild horses and hay prices, the BLM is wasting taxpayers' money. "The door is open for them", she and SAM are ready to accommodate the BLM.

Elko Daily Free Press, "Nature Notes", 10/5/2012  
© Gray Jay Press, Elko, NV

Return to [Elko Nature Notes](#)