



Rattlesnake Herd Management Area Lincoln County, Nevada

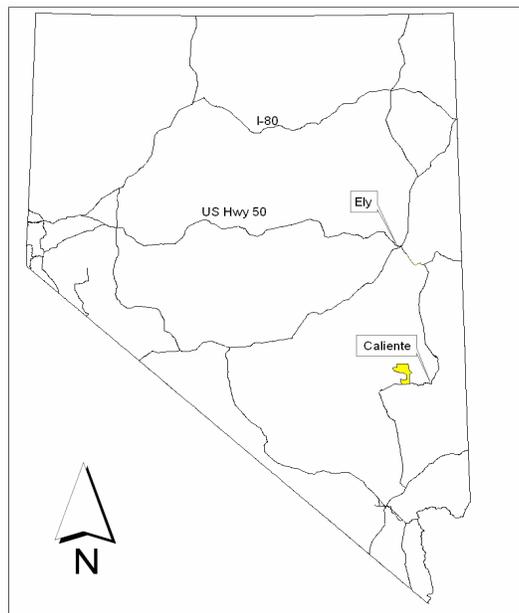
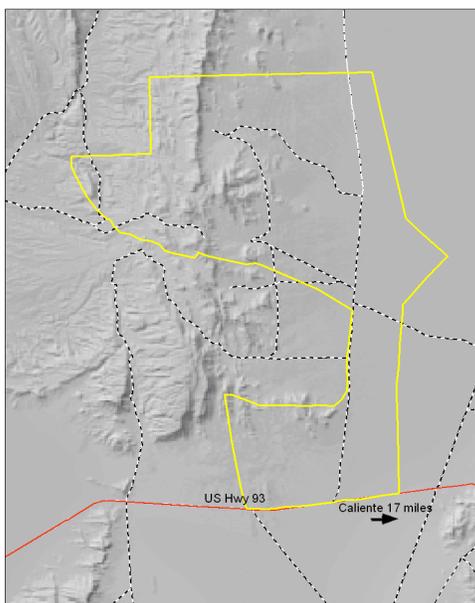


Location/Habitat

The Rattlesnake Herd Management Area (HMA) is located approximately 17 miles west of Caliente, Nevada, in Lincoln County. The HMA is 71,433 acres, all of which is public land. Most of the HMA is located in the southern end of Dry Lake Valley, with the northwestern portion extending up into the North Pahroc Mountain Range. The southern HMA boundary is bordered by Highway 93, and the western boundary traverses north through the North Pahroc Range for approximately 17 miles. The northern boundary cuts across Dry Lake Valley before turning south in the middle of Dry Lake Valley to return to the Highway. The HMA is bordered by the Dry Lake HMA to the north. Numerous gravel and two-track roads access the HMA.

Elevation within the HMA ranges from 6,767 feet in the North Pahroc Range, to 4,595 feet near the Dry Lake Valley playa (dry lakebed). The only permanent water sources consist of several springs: Pace Spring, Wheatgrass Spring, and Rattlesnake Spring, which the HMA is named for. There are reservoirs in the valley bottoms, such as Point-of-Rock Reservoir, that are filled with rainfall run-off, but they routinely go dry. There are also water troughs installed for livestock grazing.

Climate in the area is quite harsh. Winter temperatures can drop well below freezing and summer temperatures rise well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Rainfall averages only 6 to 10 inches per year, divided almost equally between summer and winter. Summer rains are localized, short, and very intense, while winter/spring rains are gentler and over a wider area.



Wildlife in the area include pronghorn antelope, Bighorn sheep, coyotes, and grey and kit fox. Small wildlife species include jackrabbits, cottontails, and several squirrels and rodents. Birds include the rare prairie falcon, ravens, quail, and horned larks. Reptiles include many species of lizards and both poisonous snakes (rattlesnakes) and non-poisonous snakes.

Vegetation

The vegetation of the Rattlesnake HMA is adapted to the arid climate of the area. Dry Lake Valley is dominated by salt desert shrub communities and sagebrush up on the benches. These communities include spiny hopsage, big sagebrush, Wyoming sagebrush, black sagebrush, cliffrose, Douglas rabbitbrush, bud sagebrush, and perennial grasses such as galleta, squirreltail, and Indian ricegrass.

Mountains in the HMA are characterized by sagebrush with isolated juniper trees. Near the springs, riparian communities are present with vegetation such as perennial grasses and sedges, willows, cottonwoods, and salt cedar.

Herd Description

The Rattlesnake HMA is managed by the Ely BLM District for a population of one wild horse to account for incidental use by wild horses that travel south from the adjacent Dry Lake HMA. No wild horses have been censused in the Rattlesnake HMA, but observations from staff show that when particularly hard winters occur with high amounts of snowfall, wild horses from the Dry Lake HMA will travel south into the Rattlesnake HMA where the snowfall is usually less. The wild horses will forage in the area, watering either at the springs or eating snow. Once the snow has melted or forage starts to grow, the wild horses will return north to the Dry Lake HMA. Consequently, wild horses have never been gathered from this HMA. Wild horses in the area are generally descendants of early ranch horses, mining stock, and cavalry remount horses. These horses can show bloodlines of Quarter horses, Arabians, Thoroughbreds, and many other breeds. The predominant colors are bay and sorrel, with roans, palominos, and other colors also occurring. These horses average approximately 13-14 hands (52-56 inches) tall and weigh about 600-800 pounds.