Driving Directions

From Dove Creek, Colo.: About two miles northwest of Dove Creek, turn north (right) onto Colorado Highway 141. On Colorado Highway 141, drive about 35 miles to Road 19Q. Go south (right) on 19Q about five miles and turn east (left) onto Road K20. Drive about three miles on Road K20 to the HMA. A cattle guard and signs with wild horse information are at the entrance of the HMA.

From Norwood, Colo.: Go west for 16 miles on Colorado Highway 145 to Colorado Highway 141. Turn south (left) on Colorado Highway 141 and go to Road 19Q. Go south (left) on 19Q about five miles and turn east (left) onto Road K20. Drive about three miles on Road K20 to the HMA. A cattle guard and signs with wild horse information are at the entrance of the HMA.

From Montrose Colo.: Drive south on U.S. Highway 550 to Ridgway. Turn west (right) on Colorado Highway 62, which becomes Colorado Highway 145 where it comes out from Telluride. Continue on 16 miles past Norwood and turn south (left) on Colorado Highway 141. Just west of Gypsum Gap, turn south (left) onto Road 19Q. Drive about five miles and turn east (left) onto Road K20E. Drive three miles to the HMA boundary.

Wild Bunch Partners

In 2008, several advocacy groups joined to form the Disappointment Wild Bunch Partners, a partnership that works with the BLM on behalf of the Spring Creek Basin wild horse herd. These volunteers help maintain herd records that guide management decisions within the HMA, spend countless hours working with BLM staff to complete projects within the HMA and work to expand public awareness of the horses. Members include representatives from the Colorado chapter of the National Mustang Association as well as the Four Corners and Mesa Verde chapters of the Back Country Horsemen.

Contact Information

The Spring Creek Basin HMA is managed by the BLM with support from the following organizations:

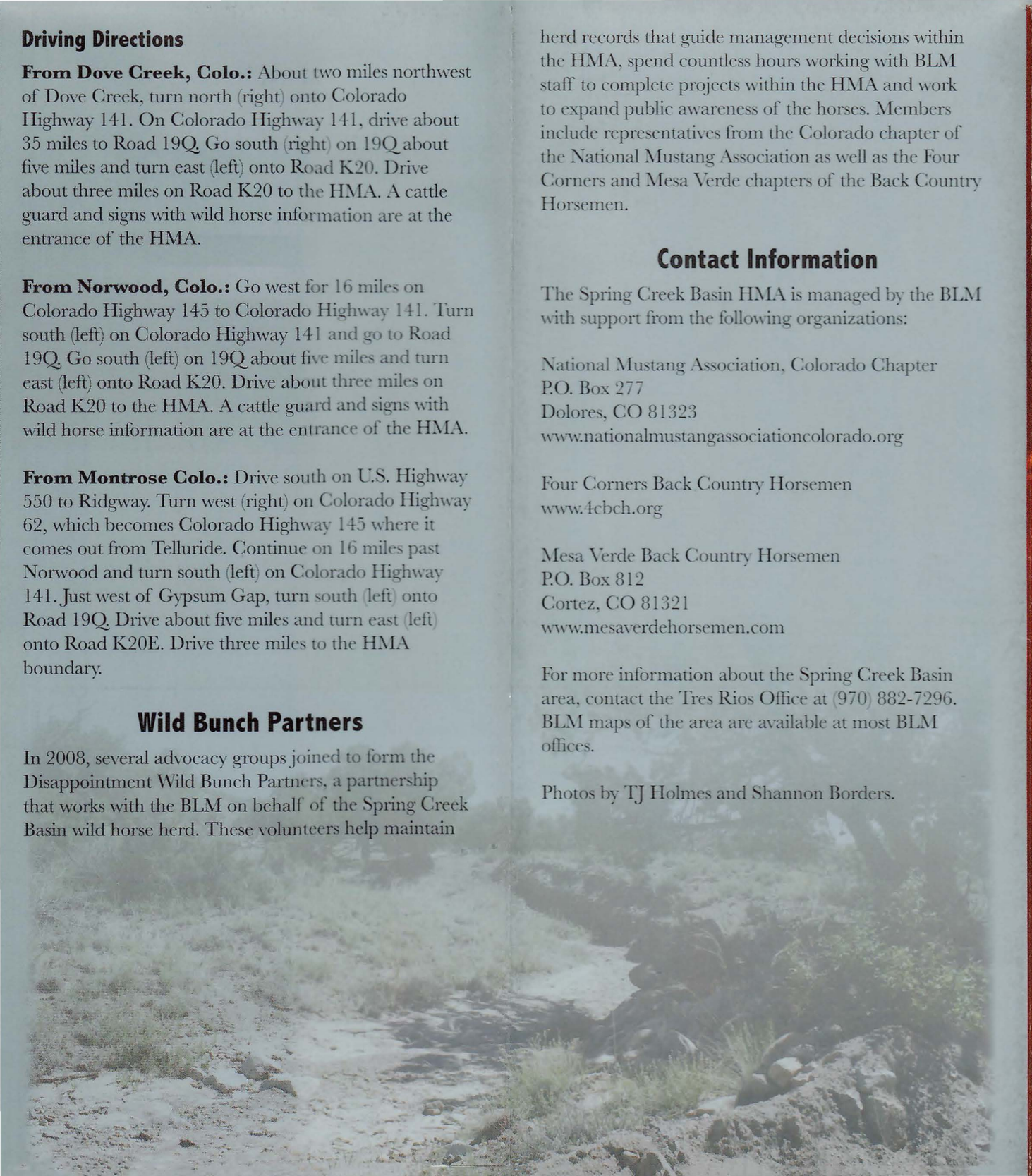
National Mustang Association, Colorado Chapter
P.O. Box 277
Dolores, CO 81323
www.nationalmustangassociationcolorado.org

Four Corners Back Country Horsemen
www.4cbch.org

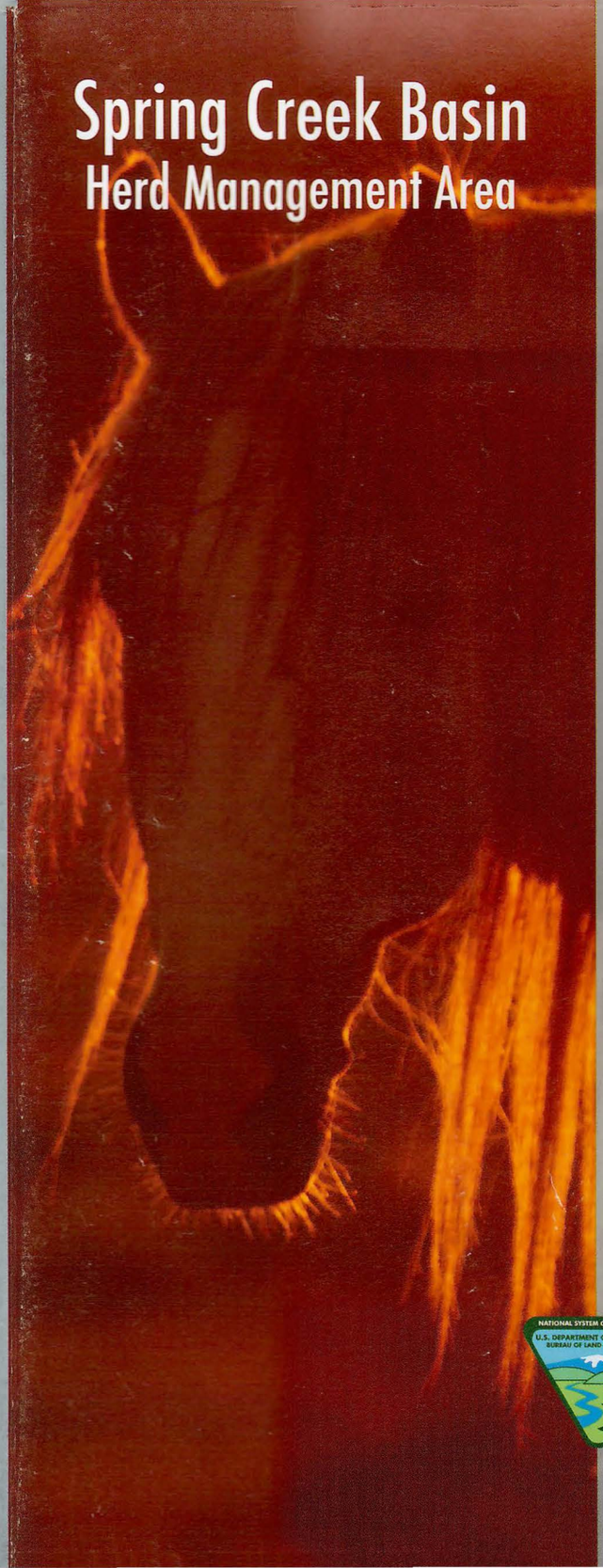
Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen
P.O. Box 812
Cortez, CO 81321
www.mesaverdehorsemen.com

For more information about the Spring Creek Basin area, contact the Tres Rios Office at (970) 882-7296. BLM maps of the area are available at most BLM offices.

Photos by TJ Holmes and Shannon Borders.



Spring Creek Basin
Herd Management Area



BLM

Tres Rios Field Office • COLORADO

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Welcome to Spring Creek Basin

The Spring Creek Basin Herd Management Area (HMA) is one of four herd management areas in Colorado and covers about 22,000 acres of rolling salt-desert shrub and pinyon-juniper hills in the southwestern portion of the state. The HMA is located in Dry Creek Basin on Colorado's Western Slope between Norwood and Dove Creek. The basin's namesake, Spring Creek, is a seasonal drainage that flows from the eastern ridges of the basin to the west side of the HMA on its way to Disappointment Creek.

The basin's natural barriers such as cliffs and ridges are supplemented with fencing to define the HMA and control horse movement. The McKenna Peak Wilderness Study Area overlaps 29 percent of the southeastern portion of the HMA and continues on about nine miles east of the HMA boundary.

HMA Details

The elevation in the HMA ranges from 6,200 feet to 7,400 feet. Primary forage plants for the horses include Indian ricegrass, Salina wildrye, green rabbitbrush, black sagebrush, galleta grass, winterfat, greasewood, fourwing saltbush, needle-and-thread grass and shadscale. This area also provides habitat for mule deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, bald and golden eagles, peregrine falcons, coyotes, prairie dogs, snakes, black bears and mountain lions.

Herd Management

The 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act provides for the management, protection and control of unbranded and unclaimed horses and burros on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service. Under the terms of this act, these two agencies are charged with managing "horses and burros in a manner that is designed to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on the public lands."

The BLM manages for a population of 35 to 65 adult horses within the Spring Creek HMA to ensure healthy rangelands and healthy horses while allowing predation and natural processes to occur. This means vaccines, deworming medications, hoof trimming and vet care are not administered to the horses. Horses are left to be as wild as possible while being managed within the HMA boundary.

Genetic testing shows most of the horses in the Spring Creek Basin HMA descend from Morgans and Thoroughbreds. Wild horses from other HMAs are periodically introduced to maintain genetic diversity.

Every spring, colts and fillies are born within the HMA. To keep the herd at a level that can be supported by the range, horses are periodically gathered to reduce the population. Appropriate herd management levels are based on land use planning and rangeland monitoring. The gathered horses are offered for adoption locally or from a short-term holding facility in Cañon City, Colo.

The BLM also uses contraception to manage horse populations. In the Spring Creek Basin HMA, mares are annually darted with a contraceptive treatment called porcine zona pellucida (PZP). Only a few mares receive PZP darting to ensure the herd's genetic diversity while balancing herd growth. The BLM believes that there is potential for savings in reduced removal and holding costs through the use of fertility control in wild horses.

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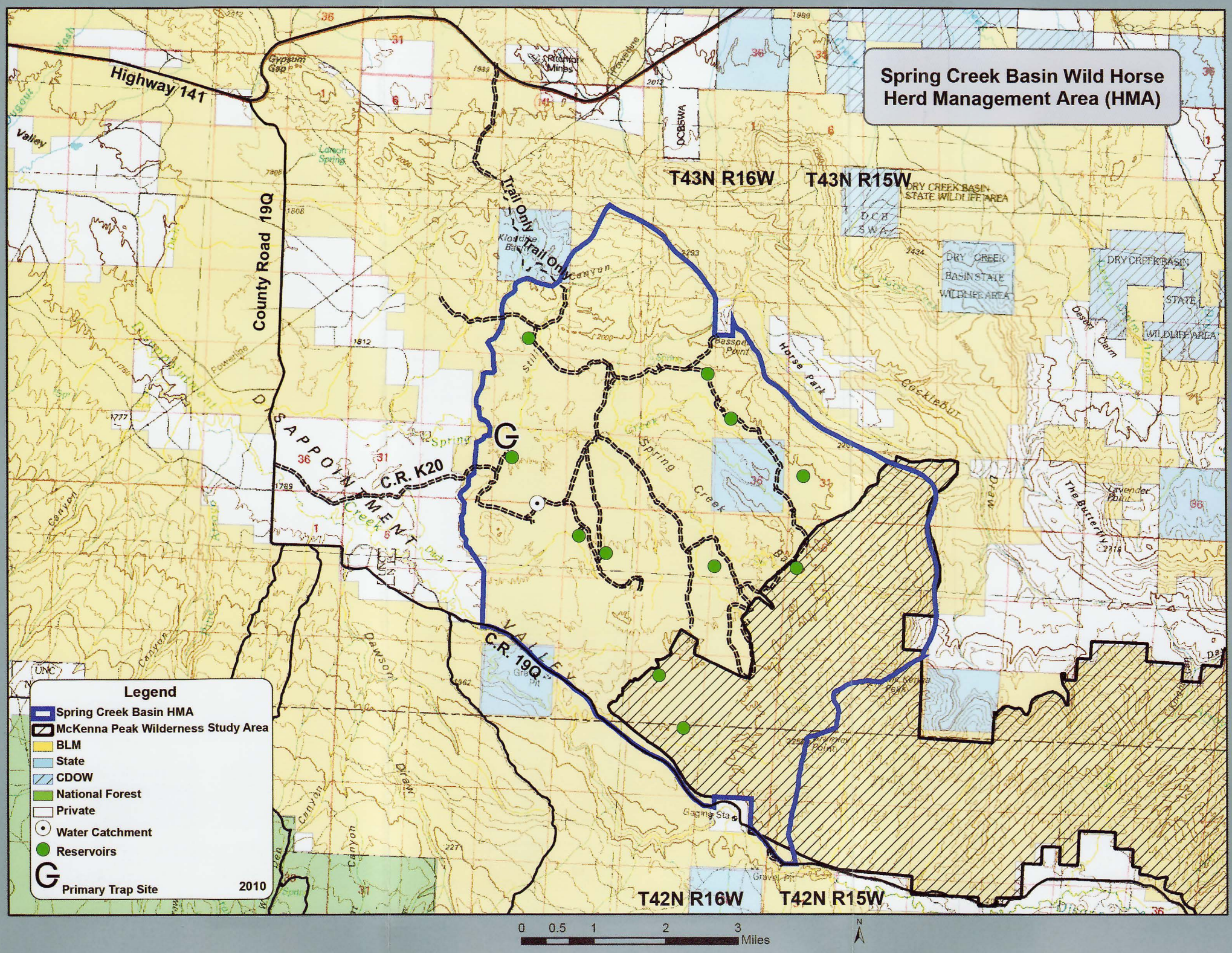

Adoption

Information on adopting a wild horse is available from the Tres Rios Field Office at 29211 Highway 184, Dolores, CO 81323 or by phone at (970) 882-7296. You can also call the national information line at (866) 468-7826 or go to www.blm.gov/adoptahorse/.

American Legends

Legend says that in the early 1900s, a rancher from Montana came to Dry Creek Basin with a herd of stolen horses. He raised the horses to sell to the U.S. Cavalry and other groups. When the law began to close in on him, he gathered some of his horses and quickly left the area. Local ranchers subsequently managed the remaining horses by culling undesirable horses and adding their own stock. The BLM now manages the herd in Spring Creek Basin under the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971.

Visit With Respect

Please be a good neighbor when traveling through this area, which is home to wild horses as well as a wide variety of birds and other wildlife.

- Leave No Trace of your visit.
- For your safety and the safety of the wild horses, please keep a safe distance. Observe horses from a distance the animals consider safe. If an animal's behavior changes noticeably, you are too close. If you disrupt their behavior and cause them to flee, you are too close. You can use binoculars, spotting scopes and telephoto lenses to get a better view.
- Water is a precious commodity in this desert landscape, and is limited in both quantity and quality. Please do not camp within 1/4 mile of water sources or disturb the horses when they are drinking or headed to water.
- Leave cultural and historical objects for the next person to find and enjoy.
- Motorized vehicle use in the area is limited to designated, maintained roads.
- Do not trespass on private or state land. Access to these lands is by permission only. Between County Road 19Q and the HMA boundary, County Road K20E crosses exclusively through private land; please stay on the road.
- Cattle may graze within the HMA by permitted use between Dec. 1 and Feb. 28.
- Pets can increase stress on wildlife and horses, so please keep your pet(s) on leash.
- Don't touch or feed wild horses. They are wild and must remain so. Also, don't chase horses or behave in any way that might be seen as harassment; this is illegal.
- If you bring saddle or pack animals to the HMA, do not allow them to run loose or mix with the wild horses. Diseases common in domestic horses are easily transmitted to wild horses, which may have a lower resistance.

Where To Find Wild Horses

During the spring, look for the horses on the east side of the range and along the northeastern hills. In the summer and fall, the horses are more visible in the open areas of the range.

Please observe safe viewing practices by staying on established roads and keeping an eye on the weather. We suggest staying out of the HMA when rain or snow is imminent as moisture can cause slippery roads and flash floods that cause impassable roads that cross arroyos.

Carry plenty of water and be prepared for sunny and windy conditions.

Vehicle Access To Spring Creek Basin

The main entrance to the Spring Creek Basin HMA is from San Miguel County Road 19Q. Off-road driving is prohibited throughout the HMA.