

Developing Decision Support Tools for Management of Free-Roaming Equids on Public Lands in the Mountain West: An Ecological Assessment

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Wyoming and Nevada, Bureau of Land Management, NASA, and the U.S. Geological Survey, we are integrating satellite imagery with soils and climate data to develop a habitat monitoring and prioritization tool for state and federal natural resource managers. The tool will model patterns in forage production and surface water availability on BLM Herd Management Areas across the three states that account for ~ 70% of feral equids in the West. Our goal is to provide information to help decision makers prioritize sites for horse removal, rangeland restoration, and native wildlife conservation. The project was initiated in August 2019 and is scheduled for completion in 2021.

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Western states rely on public lands for economic benefits derived from livestock grazing, recreation, and hunting. The presence and abundance of wild horses has been associated with wetland degradation, soil compaction, and spread of noxious weeds; consequently, balancing management of horses with other land uses is an ongoing challenge. In collaboration with the Universities of