

-ARIZONA-

Little Harquahala Herd Area



LOCATION

The Little Harquahala Herd Area (HA) is located southeast of Salome, Arizona, between U.S. Highway 60 and Interstate 10. Take the Salome to Buckeye Road southeast toward Interstate 10. The HA includes the extreme western portion of the Harquahala Mountains and a majority of the Little Harquahala Mountains.

SIZE

The HA includes 66,000 acres of upper Sonoran desert and consists of desert mountains, separated by the Centennial Wash.

HABITAT

The area is in mountainous terrain, covered with palo verde, ironwood and catclaw acacia. Here, wild burros stay in the mountains on either side of Centennial Wash during mild winters. The area receives about five inches of rain a year, mostly during the winter months. In the summer, when temperatures exceed 100 degrees, the burros move down into the valley. Burros share this HA with desert bighorn sheep and desert mule deer. Other animals that can be found in the area include the desert tortoise, several species of rattlesnakes and a variety of birds and other reptiles.

HISTORY

Wild burros were introduced into this area in the late 1800s, as released or escaped livestock. As mining booms played out and alternate transportation became available, burros were left to fend for themselves. Burros evolved in the harsh deserts of North Africa and are very well adapted to a dry desert environment. Left alone in this remote region with few natural predators, the wild burro population flourished.

POPULATION

Today, based on tracks and sightings, the population of burros is estimated to be about 50.

MANAGEMENT

Due to the small and isolated nature of the area and conflicts with private landowners and resource values, land use planning documents developed in the early 1980s, prescribed a "zero population" for the Little Harquahala HA. However, funding was never provided and removal down to a zero population never occurred. The Lower Gila Resource Management Plan and Management Framework Plan Amendment, which is currently pending approval, proposes establishing the Little Harquahala HA as a management area. Wild burro populations would be managed to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance.

OFFICE CONTACT

For more information, contact the Yuma Field Office at 2555 East Gila Ridge Road, Yuma, AZ 85365, or call (928)317-3200.