

Wild horse removal should help grass, cut erosion

North End round-up aimed at improving range

by Cynthia Stowell

Somewhere out on the range north of the Warm Springs river there are about 500 wild horses eluding a handful of humans and a helicopter. The humans want the horses in trap corrals and the horses want only the freedom to continue grazing on depleted range grasses.

Coyote and Roadrunner

"It's like a coyote and roadrunner cartoon," said crew boss Jacob Frank, Sr. "We spend hours coming up with new schemes that usually explode in our faces."

It's not fun and games for Jacob, his eight summer work program boys, the North End horse ride bosses and their volunteer riders. For six weeks they have spent as much as twelve hours a day engaged in the serious business of rounding up the North End's uncontrollable horses, many of which have had a little or no contact with humans. The hardworking men and boys have brought in only 148 head, 103 of which have been sold for rodeo stock or slaughter.

There are at least several hundred more out there, estimates Jacob. A B.I.A.-funded helicopter count last fall identified 1500 head, 600 of which were deemed uncontrollable. Although the foaling increase cannot be figured until pairs are brought in, it could be as high as 80%. At that rate, round-ups like this one can barely even keep up with the increases, said Extension agent Clint Jacks.

But they're going to keep on trying, because the fate of a natural resource depends on the management of livestock. "With this effort we're trying to cure longterm problems," said Jacob, citing soil erosion and the disappearance of nutritive grasses as the chief concerns. "We're not getting as many horses sold as we wanted, but it's better than doing nothing."

Of equal concern to Jacob, a North End horse ride boss when not working for Extension, is that livestock owners learn to be responsible for the control of their stock. "If we can get the livestock back in control, what good is it unless people get out there and work them?" Many of the uncontrollables were at one time gentle but through neglect have become wild. The result has been not only the gradual depletion of a resource but the straying of stock off the reservation. "That's when it becomes a tribal problem," said Jacob.

A tribal problem

Tribal Council appropriated \$21,000 to start up the eight-week removal program. Sale fees are expected to partly reimburse the Tribes and provide a pot for ongoing management efforts. Three years in the planning, the project was set in motion by the passage of four resolutions earlier this year. Resolutions No. 5200, 5410 and 5500 appointed ride bosses and spelled out their authority. Resolution No. 5502 provided for this summer's intensive horse round-up.

Administered through the O.S.U. Extension Office, the program employs a crew of eight boys through the Tribes' summer work program under the guidance of Jacob Frank. Simnasho horse ride boss Franklin Suppah has been central in locating riders, contacting owners and arranging for the sale of stock.

It is Suppah who decides how monies derived from the sale of unbranded stock should be distributed among riders

Owners must take responsibility

Cooperation from the owners has been fairly good said Jacob. Getting riders together for round-ups is generally a problem, a fact contributing to the current condition of the range and the increase in wild stock.

In recent years livestock owners have come to depend on others for management of

what is being done, others can't see that the range is as "far gone" as it is, noted Jacob. "They say we used to have a lot more horses, which is true, but the difference was that they were controlled." And the grasses that look thick and green are actually "undesirable weeds" like Medusa head and cheat grass that have replaced nutritious grasses.

"The range is a natural resource. Let's take responsibility for it and conserve it," appeals Jacob.

livestock management, a good investment in the future of the range. Much attention has also been brought to the crisis condition of the range and the need for action.

As Clint Jacks describes it, the current range capacity in the North End is 10,000 Animal Unit Months, but livestock are consuming 30,000 AUM's. Depleted grass has resulted in severe erosion in the Coyote and Quartz creek watershed where over 1,000 tons of soil are lost a day. Gullies measuring 5'x5' have moved 150' in one weekend, Jacks further explained.

It is a problem unique to the North End of the reservation, says Jacks, and results from the combined factors of too many horses, not enough riders, and the clay soil that characterizes the area. The capacity of Log Springs, once a meadow and now a dry, barren stretch of ground, could change dramatically with proper conservation. While it now takes 60 acres to feed one cow for one month, in five years it can be reduced to 2 acres, said Jacks.

"Critical to this whole thing is the development of early spring pastures, giving native grasses a chance to grow," explained the extension agent. But first, stock must be manageable. "If we can get rid of the uncontrollables, then we can control the others—but not until then. We as people determine what happens on the range by what we do with our livestock."

Jacks noted that records on the progress of this summer's program are available at the extension office for anyone to review. A booklet recapping activities will be assembled at the conclusion of the program.



and the kitty. Monies from the sale of branded stock go to the owners, with a 12% ride fee taken out.

A touch of drama

A helicopter from Corvallis adds a touch of drama to the round-up. On contract for 80 hours at \$175 an hour, the helicopter saves time and saddle horses, according to Jacob, who rides with the pilot whenever he can.

From the air, horses can be spotted much easier and moved more effectively to corrals. Mounted "shortstops" on the ground prove to be essential when horses get into trees or down into canyons, or when herds must be turned abruptly, explained Jacob.

Once in the corral, controllable horses are separated out and released, and uncontrollables have their fates decided. When possible, owners of the horses are contacted by Suppah and together they decide whether certain horses should be sold or "worked." If the owner can't be found, the horse might be turned out, but "if we know we probably won't catch him again, we'll go ahead and sell him," said Jacob. Three buyers have been involved in the round-up, purchasing horses from \$70 to \$275 for rodeo stock or for slaughter.

A few horses have had to be destroyed on the spot because of broken limbs. Jacob explains that removal or destruction are certainly not the only options. If an owner expresses interest in working his stock, "fine" "We're not trying to prove we have the authority," he said. "We're trying to do the best for the owner, too."

their stock, explained Jacob, failing to appoint riders or otherwise contribute to round-ups. Ride bosses are less able to delegate duties, finding themselves saddled with the bulk of the work, and often taking the blame for missing or mishandled stock.

While many owners understand and approve of

Consciousness-raising

With only two weeks and 40 helicopter hours left in the round-up, Jacob and his crew realize that they will be far short of their goal of 300 horses removed. But the project will have been instructive in more than one way. Jacob feels that the boys have learned a great deal about responsible



Framed

Hot weather didn't slow down construction crews at Warm Springs Forest Products Industries where a \$5.5 million renovation is underway. A welder assembled the base frame for a new band saw head rig in the sawmill. According to construction manager Harold Bowman, the replacement of the 40-year old head rig will yield more production and cut boards more accurately. Different areas of the mill are on four-day, ten-hour shifts to give construction crews long weekends to work.

Spilyay Tymoo Photo by Stowell