

10. Wild Horse History and Management

Mentors: [Leisl Carr Childers](#), [Retta Brugger](#), [Dessa Watson](#), [Linda Masters](#)

Locations: Grand Junction and Meeker

Mentor Team:

Faculty: Leisl Carr Childers

Department: History

Extension Office: Retta Bruegger, Regional Extension Specialist, Range Management, Western Region, Grand Junction

Other Potential Partners*: Dessa Watson, Instructor, CSU Extension Education Online, Meeker
Linda Masters, Extension Director & Agent, Rio Blanco County, Meeker
TBD, Range Specialist, White River BLM Field Office, Meeker

* Including, but not limited to those named here.

Project Introduction

Wild horses and their management is one of the most nationally controversial public lands issues. Colorado is home to four herd management areas: the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range near Grand Junction, and the Piceance-East Douglas, Sand Wash Basin, and Sand Creek Basin. Debates over wild horse management often pit local residents against tourists, ranchers against wild horse advocates, and make the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the agency charged with overseeing the animals, the target of everyone's frustration. The arguments are usually centered on how to manage herd size and what to do with the surplus population. The BLM relies upon gathers to remove excess animals when the agency determines the wild horse population has exceeded the capacity of the range. The gathered horses are then put up for sale via the Wild Horses and Burro's Adoption Program. Wild horses are entirely trainable once adopted, but they require handling by experienced trainers.¹ This has led to the growth of mustang training programs to help facilitate wild horse adoptions. One such program, held for the first time last year, is the Meeker Mustang Makeover.² This wild horse training program is in need of educational and promotional materials. In addition, CSU Extension in Grand Junction and CSU Extension Online are in need of fact sheets that also provide educational information on wild horses. These fact sheets serve as conduits of information for those interested in wild horse adoptions and the combined need of these groups have created an opportunity for a CSU Extension intern to work with a CSU Public History faculty to research, write, and visualize short treatments of the history of wild horses in Colorado and the specific herd management areas, the protocols of wild horse gathers and adoptions, and explanations of the different wild horse training programs available in the state, especially the Meeker Mustang Makeover.

¹ Pat Raia, "Adopting a Mustang: What It Takes," *The Horse*, April 13, 2017 (<https://thehorse.com/17565/adopting-a-mustang-what-it-takes/>)

² See the Meeker Mustang Makeover Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Sports-Event/Meeker-Mustang-Makeover-375536216381937/>.

Internship Description

This internship will be conducted during Summer 2020 in conjunction with the Extension office in Grand Junction and Meeker, and with CSU and BLM partners to develop and deploy historical and current information about the history and present management of the Piceance-East Douglas herds and the Meeker Mustang Makeover, and wild horses herds in Colorado generally. Through this internship, the intern will train in the method of historical inquiry and the practice of public interpretation. Applicants should be interested in wild horses, history, and public interpretation and communication.

Internship Learning Outcomes In this internship students will:

- 1) Conduct primary source research;
- 2) Develop succinct historical context and narrative;
- 3) Create visually driven fact sheets and promotional materials.