



**OREGON CHAPTER
OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY**

PO Box 2378
Corvallis, OR 97339

DATE: 9 November 2015

TO: Ms. E. Lynn Burkett, Bureau of Land Management, Lakeview Field Office
1301 S. "G" Street, Lakeview, OR 97630

RE: Beaty Butte Wild Horse Gather

FROM: Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Jenniffer Bakke – President
ortws.pres@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Burkett,

The Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ORTWS) represents nearly 400 professional field and research biologists, educators, students, administrators, and conservation enforcement officers from many areas of public and private enterprise. Our mission is to promote wise conservation and management of wildlife resources in Oregon by serving and representing wildlife professionals. A central purpose of ORTWS is to aid public discussion of natural resource management in our state by communicating sound science to entities engaged in management decisions.

ORTWS supports removing excess free-roaming horses in the Beaty Butte gather, and considers this rangeland management action necessary for the BLM to comply with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 (Act).

A robust body of peer-reviewed scientific literature reveals that unmanaged horses negatively impact the health of rangeland ecosystems. Free-roaming horses compete with native wildlife for food and water resources and disproportionately impact critical habitats such as natural springs, seeps and riparian zones. Furthermore, the grazing strategies of free-roaming horses are not ecologically equivalent to the influence of managed cattle. Consequently, horses consume 20-65% more forage than a cow of equivalent body mass and clip vegetation closer to the ground, further impeding plant recovery.

Considering the implications of best available rangeland science, the current estimate of 1,500 free-roaming horses in the Beaty Butte region are not compatible with a thriving natural ecological balance, which is required by the Act. The Beaty Butte region also overlaps with core management areas for the greater sage-grouse, a focal management species for state and federal natural resource agencies and a flagship of ongoing environmental advocacy. Over-utilization of grouse habitat by free-roaming horses could have significant implications to grouse nesting and brood rearing success.

We encourage you to proceed with implementation of the Beaty Butte Wild Horse Gather. We believe this action is justified based on best available science, supports the stability and integrity of the native flora and fauna, considers imperiled species, and the multiple uses of the range, including a healthy horse population consistent with the framework of the Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jenniffer Bakke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jenniffer Bakke
President
Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society