



NATIONAL HORSE & BURRO RANGELAND MANAGEMENT COALITION

*Advocating for commonsense, ecologically-sound approaches to managing horses and burros
to promote healthy wildlife and rangelands for future generations*

April 1, 2021

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chair and Ranking Member:

The National Horse & Burro Rangeland Management Coalition includes a wide range of sportsmen's, livestock, wildlife, and land conservation organizations and professional societies. Collectively, we represent millions of Americans and focus on commonsense, ecologically-sound approaches to managing horses and burros to promote healthy wildlife and rangelands for future generations.

Our coalition is concerned about the exponentially growing population of wild horses and burros on our nation's rangelands.

While both the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) have been executing programming targeted at bringing population numbers under control, current, overpopulated population levels are stressing our nation's rangeland beyond the point of recovery. While 2021 population numbers are not available yet, and have certainly grown since 2021, as of March 2020, wild horse and burro populations surpassed 95,114 animals on BLM managed lands. Currently, USFS estimates populations of 11,000 wild horses and burros on USFS managed lands. This threshold exceeds the estimated ecologically sustainable level of 26,770 horses and burros by more than 68,344. This extreme level of overpopulation negatively impacts the country's rangelands, risking the future of the ecosystem. By continuing to allow horses and burros to exceed sustainable levels, the BLM, USFS and Congress are placing the future of wildlife, rangelands, livestock operations, and the horses and burros themselves in jeopardy.

The focus of federal wild horse and burro management should be to achieve appropriate management levels (AML) and manage within those levels. Direct removal of horses and burros from impacted regions will aid in AML being achieved while simultaneously reducing their impact on the supporting ecosystem.

We appreciate the BLM's increased attention to fertility control methods through research partnerships with universities and the U.S. Geological Survey, as we believe that scientifically-based use of fertility control and implementation of non-reproducing herds can be an important component of the solution to this problem. However, fertility control alone does not solve the problem and should not be the primary approach. Fertility control methods, if they are effective in reducing pregnancies, will only help maintain population levels in the short term, not reduce them.

Direct removal of wild horses and burros from the range is the only way to achieve AML in a reasonable amount of time. Without an increase in the rate of removal of horses and burros, populations will continue

American Farm Bureau Federation • American Sheep Industry Association • Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Masters of Foxhounds Association • Mule Deer Foundation • National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of Counties • National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
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to expand, and our nation will witness not only growing degradation to its rangeland ecosystem, but also growing costs to its taxpayers.

We urge this committee and other members of Congress to address this increasing problem for our nation's valuable public lands by providing adequate funding for managing wild horse and burro populations to appropriate management levels.

Thank you for considering the input of our coalition. We invite your questions and welcome the opportunity to discuss this ongoing issue and possible solutions with the Subcommittee.

Sincerely,

Mary A. Scott
NHBRMC Vice Chair

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