

Alan Shepherd, On-Range Branch Chief Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Meeting Salt Lake City, UT | 2018





U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

## Wild Horse and Burro Program

- Approximately 82,000 animals are currently on the range, 55,300 of which are excess (Appropriate Management Level (AML) is 26,700).
- The current overpopulation threatens the health of the western rangelands, degrading ecosystem functions and limiting the forage and water available for domestic and wildlife species.
- Emergency gathers are becoming more common to save impacted animals.



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Upper North Fork Spring that has nearly run dry. Antelope Valley HMA, Nevada



Wild horses in poor condition near Deer Spring due to lack of water. Antelope Valley HMA, Nevada

# Wild Horse and Burro Program

- The BLM cannot gather and treat enough animals to reduce herd sizes through fertility control vaccines alone.
- Low adoptions and sales have resulted an additional 46,000 excess, unadopted and unsold animals in off-range facilities.
- The BLM spends almost 60% of its appropriated funding on holding/care of animals removed from the range increased removals to achieve AML would increase these funding needs.



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**Enacted Program Budget** 

FY2017: \$80,550,000 FY2018: \$75,000,000

Wild horses often must leave their designated ranges when food and water becomes depleted

# Report to Congress

- Congress in 2017 requested a report from the BLM containing options for humanely achieving appropriate management level.
- BLM team of managers and specialists developed the report "Management Options for a Sustainable Wild Horse and Burro Program."
- The report was submitted to Congress in March of 2018.



- Sales without limitation and euthanasia (option 1 only)
- Acquiring funding from external sources for gathers, adoptions and holding
- Availability of long-term holding space, including through partnerships
- Authority to transfer animals to non-profits, other federal agencies and state and local governments.





## Assumptions, continued

- Categorical exclusions under NEPA
- Availability of trained veterinarians
- Effective fertility control vaccines
- Additional legislative options and changes



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### Option 1:

Achieve AML in Eight Years, Using All the Authorities within the Act, while Substantially Decreasing Off-Range Holding Costs

- Remove 156,000 animals over a 10-year period
- Treat 38,000 mares w/fertility control over 10-year period
- 40,000 adoptions; 110,000 sales without restriction; 24,000 animals euthanized - over a 10-year period
- Off-range population reduced to 6,000 by year 10
- Costs would exceed current average annual appropriations by about \$200 million over the 10 years
- AML would be achieved within 8 years



### Option 2:

Achieve AML in 10 Years Using Existing Authorities, By Substantially Increasing Program Funding

- Remove 151,200 animals over 10-year period
- Treat 52,400 mares w/fertility control over a 10-year period
- 40,000 adoptions and 2,000 sales with current restrictions over a 10-year period
- Off-range population increased to 110,000 by year 10
- Costs would exceed current average annual budget by about \$1.12 billion over the 10 years
- AML would be achieved within 10 years





#### Option 3:

Achieve AML in Six Years Using Existing Authorities and Create an Adoption Incentive Program

- Remove 129,000 animals over a 10-year period
- Treat 26,000 mares w/fertility control over a 10-year period
- 84,000 adoptions over a 10-year period, increasing adoptions through a financial incentive program; 2,000 sales with current restrictions
- Off-range population increased to 71,000 by year 10
- Costs would exceed current average annual appropriations by about \$1.43 billion over the 10 years
- Appropriate Management Levels would be achieved within 6 years



#### <u>Option 4:</u> Achieve AML in 12 Years Using Existing Authorities, Creating an Adoption Incentive Program, and Increasing Permanent Sterilization

- Remove 36,600 animals over a 10-year period
- Treat 103,000 mares with fertility control methods (focusing on permanent sterilization) over a 10-year period
- 40,000 adoptions over a 10-year period, developing a financial adoption incentive program; 2,000 sales with current restrictions
- Off-range population decreased to 36,800 by year 10
- Costs would exceed current average annual appropriations by about \$320 million over the 10 years
- Appropriate Management Levels would be achieved within 12 years