

Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife
P.O. Box 70143
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Mr. Ken Salazar - Secretary of the Interior

October 21, 2009

Dear Secretary Salazar:

I wish to applaud your recognition of the problems presented by overpopulation of wild horses in the west. I am intimately familiar with wild horse issues as I have served for 10 years on the National Advisory Board to BLM for the management of wild horses and burros. As an avid outdoorsman and geologist I have spent thousands of days in the field across Nevada and have for decades witnessed, first hand, the habitat damage and adverse impacts to wildlife of our state.

Your concept of creating sufficient wild horse preserves in Midwestern and Eastern states is vital to the priority of reducing wild horse populations down to appropriate management levels (AML) that our fragile habitat can sustain. Your proposed locations will make public viewing more available, and these areas provide better forage production for healthier horses. Wild horses removed from Nevada and placed on long-term-holding ranches in the Midwest, on an average, live one third longer than do their counter parts left on our Nevada rangeland.

I must emphasize that reduction of over-populated herds down to the LOW range of AML is the prerequisite starting point before any on-the-range management can be successful. Accurate population census is also mandatory - this has eluded BLM for the life of the program.

I am also highly supportive of your strategies to aggressively utilize fertility control, alteration of sex ratios, and even non-reproducing herds in horse management areas. I am not optimistic as to the potential of greatly increasing adoptions due to the poor economy and changing demographics of the public. Adoption rates are less than half of what they once were only a decade ago inspite of tremendously increased marketing efforts. Herds must be managed on the range so that adoption rates equal recruitment. Any other scenario spells guaranteed failure. The difficulty with implementing contraception, sex ratio manipulation, and non-reproducing herds is the fact that it is both impractical and impossible to catch a high percentage of the horses on the range due to mountainous terrain, tree cover, and educated horses. Horses that remain on the range must be treated to lower reproduction rates down to the past years adoptions and sales numbers. This number of horses requiring some type of treatment should be calculated for each horse management area, regions, states, and for the entire west.

To implement the required treatment, firm direction must come from the top down to the horse specialist in BLM. The Advisory Board for many years has urged fertility control be utilized where appropriate on all gathers. The BLM wild horse national office has continually urged field offices to do the same but has no enforcement authority. Many years have been wasted, and only now after more than a decade is contraception gaining wide acceptance with field personnel. BLM's own standards for acceptance of new protocols is also a serious impediment. Even if a new drug was proposed today, a decade would pass before final approval to actually use it in the field; we simply cannot waste another decade!

The wild horse and burro program has been a black eye to BLM and a black hole financially. Only through a comprehensive plan, firm direction from the top, and buy-in from all levels of BLM can this program be righted. All interests must work cooperatively to create a thriving wild horse population living on healthy rangeland in balance with wildlife and other uses.

Sincerely,



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cc: Mr. Bob Abbey - Director, Bureau Land Management
Mr. Neil Kornze - Office of Senator Harry Reid

**NEVADA SPORTSMEN AND CONSERVATIONISTS WORKING FOR THE
ENHANCEMENT OF WILDLIFE AND HABITAT.**