

National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Meeting
Salt Lake City, UT

July 17, 2006

Board Members Present: Robin Lohnes, Renee Taylor, Larry Johnson, Gary Zakotnik, Dr. Vernon Dooley, Dr. Boyd Spratling, and Dr. Wayne Burkhardt. Board Member Absent: Hilleary Bogley. Washington Office Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Staff: Jeff Rawson, Acting Deputy Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning; Don Glenn, Acting Division Chief; Sally Spencer, Jenny Lesieutre, Dean Bolstad, Ramona DeLorme, and EK James. USDA, APHS: Dr. Albert Kane. USDA Forest Service: Toni Strauss. BLM, Utah State Office Staff: Gene Terland, Associate State Director; Gus Warr, Wild Horse and Burro State Program Lead

Robin Lohnes opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m., July 17, 2006. She introduced the Advisory Board members to the public.

Jeff Rawson, Acting Deputy Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Gene Terland, Associate State Director, Utah State Office, welcomed the Board and the public to Salt Lake City and commented that he hoped everyone would have an opportunity to tour the many sites the city offers. Gene briefed the group on Utah programs and issues. He reported that drought has been an issue in Utah since 2002. Northern areas received moisture but southern regions remain drought stricken. Wildland fires also have been an issue. Six Resource Management Plans (RMPs) are being developed in Utah. Utah manages 21 Herd Management Areas (HMAs) and removes 400 to 600 wild horses and burros annually. There are two holding facilities in the state, one in Salt Lake City with a capacity of about 750 head and the other at Delta with a 300 head capacity. The BLM has partnered with the National Mustang Association and is working with a Utah state correctional facility to open a new prison horse holding and training facility. The National Mustang Association is providing panels and a chute for the program.

Gus Warr, Utah Wild Horse and Burro State Program Lead, gave a more detailed wild horse and burro program report. Nineteen of Utah's HMAs are managed for horses and the two others for burros. Several Herd Areas are being reviewed in the RMP planning process to determine if they should be actively managed for horses. Appropriate Management Levels (AML) are also being reviewed in planning process. Utah's horse and burro population is about 2,700 animals which is 500 more than AML. Some animals have moved and permanently located outside of HMAs to find drinking water due to drought conditions. The Delta facility has been rebuilt and is being used to geld stallions that are enroute to long term holding from other western facilities. This has relieved heavy work loads at some facilities and reduced short term holding time.

Gus indicated that the National Mustang Association had made significant donations to facilities necessary for a 2007 opening of a new prison wild horse program in Utah. The Utah State Veterinarian has been conducting tests for the presence of West Nile in Utah wild horses for the past three years by evaluating blood samples collected for equine infectious anemia testing. No tests have been positive for antibodies to West Nile virus.

Gus reported that the Hill Creek HMA will be gathered in early 2007. In previous years some wild horses and neighboring tribal horses have tested positive for equine infectious anemia. The last time these horses were gathered there were only two test positive horses.

April Minutes

The Board approved the April 2006 minutes with one correction on page 6 under Current and Future Adoptions, third line down. November 2006 was corrected to read November 2005.

Pending Litigation

Don Glenn provided an update on lawsuits and Interior Board of Land Appeal (IBLA) cases.

1. Fund for Animals lawsuit is pending in the U.S. Court of Appeals in the Washington D.C. Circuit.
2. A Nevada decision involving setting AML in the Red Rock Herd Management Area has been appealed and is pending in IBLA.
3. An appeal of the Nevada Dog Skin HMA (NV) gather is pending in IBLA.
4. A new lawsuit has been filed by the Cloud Foundation and the Colorado Front Range organization that requests a temporary restraining order of the use of PZP and removal of horses in the Pryor Mountain Range in Montana. Judgment in the case is pending.

Vacant Advisory Board Positions

1. Nomination packages for the livestock management, wildlife management, and humane advocacy positions were sent on to the Department for review and approval in October 2005.
2. The nomination package for the vacant public interest position was forwarded on for review and approval in February 2006.
3. The terms of three more positions will expire soon. These positions include livestock management, natural resource management and wild horse and burro research. A Federal notice announcing the vacancies and a request for nominations was published on

June 14, 2006 with a closing date of July 14, 2006. The closing date was extended to August 15, 2006.

A revised National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board charter was signed by both the Secretary of Interior and Secretary of Agriculture and will be effective on July 22, 2006. A major change in the new charter is that the term of appointment for Board members in expiring positions cannot be extended until the expired position has been filled. Robin Lohnes expressed concern that the Board was not consulted when the current charter was modified. In years past, the Board had the opportunity to comment. This discussion generated the following recommendation: Due to recent amendments to the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board charter, the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that the Department of Interior timely approve applicants to the Board to ensure effective continuous functioning of the Board. Also, the Board requests it be made aware of proposed changes in the Board's charter to allow timely participation in the review process.

Facility Report

Dean Bolstad provided a facility report for the short and long-term holding facilities. On July 2, 2006 there were 4,862 horses and 370 burros in short-term holding facilities that have a total capacity of 12,495 animals. Long-term holding facilities have a 19,700 head capacity and currently contain 18,858 horses and 8 mules.

He reported on the ages in long term and short-term holding.

Dean also noted that bids and proposals were being solicited for two new 1,500 head long-term holding contracts. Solicitation closes on August 2, 2006. There was discussion of why the solicitation was targeted to west of the Mississippi. The BLM responded that there was greater efficiency in contract administration and lower transportation costs.

2006 Gather Schedule

Dean Bolstad reported on the 2006 Gather Schedule, and pointed out several changes to the schedule since the April Board meeting in Sacramento. Very few removals have occurred since the last Board meeting. The Buck and Bald Complex gather started about ten days ago. Willis Lamm of LRTC and Jill Starr of Life Savers, Inc. attended the beginning of the Buck and Bald gather in Nevada. Their report was positive and complimentary about gathering procedures and animal handling. Robin Lohnes expressed that it was very important for Environmental Assessments (EA) evaluating fertility control to be sent to appropriate people before the EA comment periods close. In response to the Board's request Dean agreed to resume including two columns on the gather schedule that show the number of animals left on the range after the gathers are completed along with a listing of the appropriate management level for each HMA. The Board also inquired about the California's Twin Peaks gather.

2006 Population Statistics

Don Glenn presented the February 28, 2006 population estimate and a graph which displayed populations estimates verses appropriate management levels from fiscal year (FY) 2000 through 2006. He noted that the graph does not reflect the 2006 foal crop or the gathers for FY2006. According to the graph, the BLM is closer now to appropriate management level than anytime in the past. FY2006 Herd Statistics will be published on the web site next week. He noted that the number of HMAs has changed from 201 to 199. Oregon combined 2 HMAs into one HMA and Utah changed one HMA to herd area status due to loss of key habitat through a congressionally mandated land exchange with the State of Utah.

USDA, Forest Service

Toni Strauss gave an overview of the equine DNA profiling research project being done by Dr. Mills of Florida International University. This project could enhance techniques for population estimation and measuring genetic diversity in their small territories with heavy tree cover. The Forest Service has 37 active wild horse and burro territories. Most of the territories are forested and have dense canopy cover which makes aerial and ground survey for population estimates difficult. DNA samples would also be used to monitor the genetic health of the population. A report should be available in late fall or early winter. There are five territories that they are working with BLM to get to AML in central Nevada. She noted that the Forest Service is also being sued by the Cloud Foundation. The Board requested a copy of her Power Point presentation.

Adoption Program

Sally Spencer discussed the current adoption program. As of July 14, 2006, 4,274 animals have been adopted. This includes 3,657 horses, 616 burros and 1 mule. There are 27 adoptions remaining in FY06. She noted adoptions that have been marketed properly are more successful.

She reported that Nevada BLM's solicitation for an adoption contractor in Clark and Lincoln Counties will be out soon and can be viewed at www.FBO.gov.

Sally also reported on Mustang Heritage Foundation activities. They have worked with the BLM Eastern States Office to conduct an online post adoption survey and will be hosting an adoption in St. Cloud, MN in May 2007. They selected St. Cloud, MN because of market research that was done by Fleishman-Hillard showing a high number of potential adopters in that area. The Foundation is also working with the BLM on a project called the Extreme Mustang Makeover that will be held in Texas in 2007. This event will involve professional trainers working with 100 Nevada mustangs and competing for \$25,000 in prize money. The Mustang Futurity Program is also in the discussion phase. The Foundation may work with the BLM to select 20 adoptions where adopted animals would be eligible to compete in a futurity competition during the next

five years. The Foundation will participate in the Reno and San Antonio Expos. The Mustang Heritage Foundation's web site is: www.mustangheritagefoundation.org.

Robin congratulated the adoption team on their efforts. Sally will e-mail the Board a copy of the American Horse Council's report on trends in the domestic horse market.

Sales Authority

Sally Spencer presented an overview on Sale Authority. As of July 14, 2006, 1,953 animals have been sold (1,468 in FY05 and 485 in FY06). The Board inquired about the purchasers. Sally said that 65 individuals have purchased 647 animals. Thirteen organizations including Indian tribes have purchased 1,306 animals. Some of these organizations have adopted or sold the animals to other individuals. Two 501(c) (3) groups have purchased horses since letters soliciting support were mailed to these groups and public land ranchers. Public land ranchers have not purchased any horses.

Save the Mustang /Take Pride in America

Jenny Lesieutre gave an update on Take Pride in America's Save the Mustang Fund. There have been 367 donations totaling \$207,713. There have been two distributions in the amount of \$3,400 for 16 burros and 18 horses. The Fund's existing balance is \$204,313.

After discussion the Board made the following recommendation: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that the BLM work toward different alternatives for utilization of the Save the Mustang Fund including but not limited to the sale authority and consider alternative uses such as virtual adoptions (animals in long-term holding), older animals, and horses not currently in the adoption pipeline.

FY06 and FY07 Accomplishments.

Don Glenn updated the group on FY06 accomplishments and presented tentative targets for the level of funding outlined in the President's 2007 budget.

Recommendation/Response

Dean Bolstad reviewed the BLM's response to the Board's recommendation to pursue the development of a program proposal that will consider the use of sterilization as an appropriate management level tool of wild horses on public lands. He also reviewed a draft paper, Options for Managing a Non Breeding Component Within Self-Sustaining Herds of Wild Horses (July 2006) that was developed by the BLM, APHIS and Board members who were appointed as liaisons to work with the BLM. Dean Bolstad, Bea Wade, Dr. Al Kane, Linda Coates-Markle, Boyd Spratling, Renee Taylor and Dr. Wayne Burkhardt all contributed to the paper.

The paper contained four management scenarios that involved returning geldings to the range as component of the population, adjusting sex ratios to favor stallions and the use of fertility control.

The Board discussed the response and management alternatives presented in the paper. Dr. Spratling said that he would prefer not to castrate animals for return to the range and focus on the use of fertility control. In response to a question Dean said that for the most part horses five years and older would be returned to the range with mostly younger animals being removed. They asked about the costs and savings of each alternative and Dean volunteered to develop estimates and report back to the group later in the meeting.

The Board also asked about the availability of adjuvant for fertility control vaccine manufacture. Dean said that the adjuvant had been unavailable at one point, but that the Humane Society of the United States had entered into an agreement with the European company that makes the adjuvant and that this should eliminate the problem.

West Nile Virus Vaccination

Don Glenn and Al Kane gave an update on considerations regarding continued vaccination of wild horses and burros removed from the range for rabies and West Nile virus. The history of these vaccinations within the program was discussed; including a 2004 recommendation from the Board to discontinue these vaccinations. Because of a very tight budget situation in FY07 and the changing ecology of West Nile Virus in the United States, the need to continue rabies and West Nile virus vaccination was revisited. While West Nile virus infections continue to occur within the United States, case numbers have dropped dramatically within the last few years. The risk of large outbreaks within the program seems to have diminished. The discussion about rabies vaccine concluded that because of the low cost of this vaccine and potential impact of public health, the rabies vaccine should continue. At this time, a good decision with regard to West Nile Virus seems to rest more heavily on financial and marketing considerations and less on the ramifications for animal health. Dr. Spratling agreed. After the discussion, the Board made the following recommendation: In light of budgetary constraints, the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board reaffirms its' 2004 recommendation to cease West Nile Virus vaccinations and target use of remaining stock as appropriate, and the Board further recommends the BLM continue rabies vaccinations.

Public comment began at 3:00 pm.

The Advisory Board reconvened at 3:30 pm with Dean Bolstad presenting the requested cost and benefit estimates of the management alternatives involving fertility control and sex ratio adjustment. The Board discussed the cost analysis and made the following recommendation: The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that during the FY07 and FY08 gather planning, BLM identify HMAs where sex ratio can be adjusted by returning stallions to the range, when appropriate. Fertility control should be used in conjunction with adjusting the sex ratio where possible.

Trainers at the BLM Facilities

Dean Bolstad responded to the Board's request at the last meeting to look into the financial and operational impacts of having a trainer at short term holding facilities. He reviewed the contents of a paper prepared for the Board titled, Trainers at Bureau of Land Management Wild Horse Corral Preparation Facilities. There are currently too many conflicts with preparation activities and a lack of suitable training/holding pens at the BLM facilities to initiate meaningful training programs. The initiation of formal and well organized wild horse training programs at the BLM preparation facilities would require the construction of training and holding pens along with the acquisition of labor to accomplish the work. In most cases the best alternative to accomplish more horse training would be to expand existing or initiate new prison programs where low cost labor is available and where some state prison programs can justify the investment in infrastructure for inmate rehabilitation.

Dr. Boyd Spratling conveyed Richard Sewing's concern about Premises IDs as it relates to the wild horse. The Premises ID will be used by USDA to keep track of the animal movement interstate. USDA will keep the BLM apprised on this issue. Dr. Al Kane, APHIS, explained that this will be voluntary for awhile, but some states are moving forward to develop programs. There is a possibility that the BLM would have to microchip horses and burros before adoption. This would probably be voluntary for some time before being required some time in the future (ie. 2009, 2010).

The next Advisory Board meeting will be November 6, 2006, in Las Vegas, Nevada. It will be a one day meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.

National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Recommendation

Salt Lake City, Utah

July 17, 2006

1. Due to recent amendments to the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Charter, the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends Department of Interior timely approve applicants to the Board to ensure effective continuous functioning of the Board. Also, the Board requests it be made aware of proposed changes in the Board's charter to allow timely participation in the review process.
2. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that the BLM work toward different alternatives for utilization of the Save the Mustang Fund including but not limited to the sale authority and consider alternative uses such as virtual adoptions (animals in long-term holding), older animals, and horses not currently in the adoption pipeline.
3. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board recommends that during the FY07 and FY08 gather planning, the BLM identify HMAs where sex ratio can be adjusted by returning stallions to the range, when appropriate. Fertility control should be used in conjunction with adjusting the sex ratio where possible.
4. In light of budgetary constraints, the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board reaffirms its' 2004 recommendation to cease West Nile Virus vaccinations and target use of remaining stock as appropriate, and the Board further recommends the BLM continue rabies vaccinations.