

## Backcountry SUV

By Tom Taylor, BLM Volunteer

Nothing beats a good backpack trip into the backcountry... except for one problem - the backpack.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had my solution: the Adopt-a-Wild Horse or Burro Program. I adopted my wild burro in 1989, tamed and trained her to take a halter and lead rope, and then to carry a pack saddle. In turn, she took the load off my back!

Now we (I mean Hualapai and myself) hike multiple days with fresh foods and beverages. We hike with loads measured in pounds and don't fret about which freeze dried meal tastes best or how many ounces it weighs!

Coming off the public rangelands, BLM wild burros are sure-footed and tolerant of extreme climates and terrain, and yet within a short period of time, they become people-friendly. Hualapai became a willing partner in the backcountry. Often when we meet other trail hikers weary from traveling with loads on their backs, they marvel at my former wild burro. Hualapai welcomes the attention she gets from these encounters.



Hiking with Hualapai has also been instrumental toward introducing my children to backcountry travel and camping. Their initial exposure to backcountry travel has been a positive experience. They've always traveled with lighter loads and appreciate the people-friendly qualities in Hualapai.

The BLM adoption process is clear and direct, and the staff is accessible and helpful.

Just like the credit card slogan says, "don't leave home without it," I too would say to backcountry travelers "adopt a BLM burro, and don't leave home without her!"