



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

NATIONAL WILD  
HORSE & BURRO  
ADVISORY BOARD

October 5-6, 2022

Volume 1

Day 1 Meeting Minutes

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

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## Wednesday, October 5, 2022

### Welcome and Call to Order

#### *Bryant Kuechle, Facilitator, The Langdon Group*

Mr. Kuechle welcomed attendees to the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board meeting and introduced himself and his role as a neutral third-party facilitator.

#### *Ms. Celeste Carlisle, Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Chair*

Ms. Carlisle welcomed the Advisory Board members (Table 1), staff, Forest Service representative Mr. Chuck Oliver, and all attending by live stream. She called the meeting to order and introduced Dr. David Jenkins as the BLM designated federal officer.

TABLE 1 - NATIONAL WILD HORSE & BURRO ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS	
Board Member	Representing
Ms. Tammy Pearson	Public Interest (Equine Behavior)
Dr. Tom Lenz, DVM	Veterinary Medicine
Ms. Celeste Carlisle	Wild Horse & Burro Advocacy
Dr. Barry Perryman	Public Interest (NRM/Special Knowledge)
Mr. James French	Natural Resource Management
Dr. Ursula Bechert	Wild Horse & Burro Research
Ms. Susan McAlpine	Humane Advocacy
Mr. Steven Yardley	Livestock Management
Dr. Vernon Bleich	Wildlife Management

#### *Ms. Holle Waddell, Acting Division Chief of the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program*

Ms. Waddell introduced the members of BLM in attendance.

### BLM Director Remarks

#### *Dr. David Jenkins, Assistant Director for Resources and Planning, BLM*

Dr. Jenkins: Good morning and welcome to those who are listening remotely and to folks in the room and all the board members. It's good to be meeting in person as we've already said to ourselves many times. Let me make a couple of comments. First off, and I wanted to, in some ways talk a little bit about the successes of 2022 for this program just to provide a context at the very beginning. As you may know last year, we've removed more than 19,000 animals and we see these as imperiled animals on imperiled landscapes. And we've worked really hard to remove animals in that context and reduce the populations that are quite high. We've treated more than, with fertility control vaccines, more than 1500 animals. That's also a new record for us. This year we placed into private care some 7,500 animals. With the help of partners, we conducted over 7,500 compliance inspections. And we actually titled more than 5,000 animals. A titling means a shift from government ownership to private ownership. So over this last year, 5,000 animals moved from government ownership to private ownership. As of September of this year, there were nearly 23,000 animals in corrals and more than 40,000 in pastures. These are animals that we've removed from the range. We've conducted 29 animal welfare assessments at gathers, at Off-Range Corrals and at adoption events. And just to note, the bill on Wild Horse and Burros expenditures reached about 134 million in this last fiscal year, 2022. So those are some of the larger picture items I wanted to mention. Then I also wanted to let you all know, especially folks who are listening, the public who are listening online, is the initiation of a new foundation that works with the BLM, it's called the Foundation for America's Public Lands. Secretary of Interior Holland announced this a few months ago. It has four founding members right at the front. And Governor Steve Bullock, former governor from Montana is one of those founding members. Neil Kornze, who was a former BLM director is one of those members. But Governor Bullock, when he addressed the senior leaders for the BLM said he had four main goals for this foundation and one of them was to enhance awareness of Wild Horses and Burros on public lands. So I want to let the board know that and I wanted to let the public know that because this new foundation, which is similar to the National Parks Foundation and the National Forest Service foundations, I think will provide a great opportunity for more knowledge, more education in this realm for Wild Horses and Burros. So perhaps the board can find

a way to work effectively with that new foundation too. Again, good morning. I want to start by acknowledging the reappointments of three members on the board whose three year terms began in August. Ms. Celeste Carlisle, thank you for coming back. She's our chair representing Wild Horse and Burro Advocacy. Dr. Tom Lenz, thank you for coming back representing veterinary medicine and Dr. Barry Perryman representing, I think you said special knowledge. My notes say public interest, but you can be special knowledge. Alright, special knowledge and public interest, that's right. Okay, great. Well, welcome back and thank you for your prior service on this board. Your efforts are central to giving the federal government BLM advice on Wild Horses and Burros. And I think your efforts are extraordinary. And I think the public should know how extraordinary it is for volunteers to come in with your level of expertise to help us sort through some really, well, many intractable problems of what they are really difficult problems. So thank you. The board provides advice and recommendations to the Bureau of Land Management and to the US Forest Service as we try to fulfill our responsibilities under the 1971 Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act. So as you know, the Act mandates the protection and management of free roaming horses and burros in a manner that promotes a thriving natural ecological balance on public lands. So I look forward to working with you all over these next two days.

***Holle' Waddell, Division Chief of the Wild Horse and Burro Program, BLM***

Ms. Waddell: Thank you David. Appreciate that and good morning. I hope everyone can hear me and welcome. I definitely echo David sentiments. We had an outstanding year of lots of work and hardened dedication, not just from the headquarter staff but also from the Wild Horse and Burros staff out in the states. I want to introduce the BLM staff that I have here in the room today and also thank those that are responsible for coordinating this meeting that a lot goes into preparation for this meeting for not only the advisory board members, but also the information's going to be communicated to the public. I'd like to ask the BLM staff to stand and or wave your hand, whichever you're comfortable with. Serena, she has been very instrumental and it's really her first year with the program and we really appreciate her efforts. Dorothea, she goes without saying, she retired and came back and I won't give an intro, Paul for everybody, but Paul McGuire, who's our acting deputy Off-Range. Our On-Range directing deputy is Scott Floyd, Robin Watson, Jerry Bertola, Crystal Johnson. I should have told you this, you will be hearing from Jerry Bertola later as our CAWP specialist. Meredith Kueck, you'll also be hearing from her, she knows where every animal is. Dr. Paul Griffin, who will also be presenting. Jason Luterman, our Communications Public Affairs Officer and the AV team here at the National Training Center. Big thank you to all of them. Some are in the room and some are behind the scenes working all of their magic Art Alma card, Steve and David. Also a big thank you to the law enforcement that is ensuring the safety of not only the BLM staff but also the public so that we can have a meeting where everyone can be heard and everyone can listen. Thank you to the mediator and facilitator Bryant and Tori and also the Training Center for allowing us to have this meeting. The leadership and staff has been really phenomenal and I really appreciate all of those efforts. And I am Holle' Waddell and I'm the Division Chief for the Wild Horse and Burros Program. And with that, I'll turn it back over to Bryant.

**Agenda & Rules of the Zoom (Virtual/Online Platform)**

***Bryant Kuechle, Facilitator, The Langdon Group***

Mr. Kuechle reviewed the procedural elements for public participation, stating that the BLM recognizes the value of public input and appreciates public interest in expressing themselves regarding matters of concern. He explained the process for registering to provide public comment, noting that there would be three designated opportunities to do so. Mr. Kuechle reviewed the day's agenda.

**BLM Arizona Welcome Remarks**

***Jerry Davis, Arizona Deputy State Director, BLM***

Mr. Davis: Good morning everybody. I apologize, I was until yesterday hoping to be there in person to welcome you to Phoenix, but cold disagreed and so I thought it wasn't worth the risk of getting anybody else sick. So thanks to Holle' and Card and everybody else that jumped through the hoops early this morning to get me online. On behalf of Arizona State Director Race Lazzo, I want to thank each of you for your time engagement and passion and support of Wild Horses and Burros and the various organizations that work to manage the Wild Horses and Burros on our public lands. As the bureau strives to explore and implement new approaches to the management of Wild Horses and Burros, we face ever-present challenges raging from budgets to drought and so on. Your work on the board becomes even more important as we work through those issues. With that, I'd like to welcome all of you to Phoenix. I know that your time here will be productive and I couldn't help but over here at the beginning of the session before we started that some folks were on the hunt for local Burros and we're lucky enough to have an HMA just North of Phoenix. So I recommend you touch bases with our

Wild Horse and Burros State Program lead John Hall, who I'll now turn it over to for an overview of the Arizona Wild Horse and Burros Program. Thank you.

### **Agency Presentations to the Board**

Presentations were given to the board via PowerPoint as follows [see Table 2].

<b>TABLE 2 - PRESENTATIONS TO ADVISORY BOARD</b>	
<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
<b>BLM Arizona Wild Horse and Burro Program Overview</b>	Mr. John Hall, BLM
<b>Forest Service Program Update</b>	Dr. Teresa Drotar, USFS
<b>BLM Budget Update for FY 2023</b>	Ms. Holle' Waddell, BLM
<b>Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program Update</b>	Ms. Jerrie Bertola, BLM
<b>BLM Demonstration of the Wild Horse and Burro Program System Public Reporting Application</b>	Ms. Meredith Kueck

#### ***BLM Arizona Wild Horse and Burro Program Overview***

##### ***John Hall, Arizona Wild Horse and Burro Lead, BLM***

Mr. Hall: Good morning. My name is John Hall, I am the Horse and Burro lead for Arizona. I am also the Facility Manager at the Florence Prison Training and Holding Facility located in Florence, Arizona. Next slide. The Arizona Wild Horse and Burros team is made up of myself and two specialists, a staff assistant and management support from various offices including CRD and Arizona State Office. We have two facilities in Arizona. We have one On-Rang Corral, which is located in Florence. That is our training, holding and prep facility for the entire state. We also have a staging facility in Kingman, Arizona, which we use to hold animals during gathers and a rest place when animals are being shipped. We also have a satellite adoption team in Arizona, which is made up of BLM horse and burro people and also some other BLM resource employees and volunteers. Next slide. I'm going to give you a brief overview of Wild Horse and Burro Management now in Arizona. This is... Oh, that picture is actually from the Black Mountains, which is an area that we manage near Kingman. Next slide. So in Arizona, where are wild horses and burros? We have 11 HA's and six HMAs covering over 4 million acres in the state. Of the 11 herd management areas six are close to relay to the HMAs and overlap considerably. You can see from the crosshatch on the map, that's where those overlaps occur. Next slide. All of the estimates I'm going to be giving to you today on population sizes are going to be based on the March 1st numbers that were published on the BLM website. So the total estimate for the state of Arizona that's including horses and burros as of March was 9,496, of that about 9,000 are burros and about 400 were horses. The AML in Arizona is 1,676 of that 1,436 are burros and 240 are horses. In Arizona and FY 21 we removed 942 animals and in FY '22 we removed about 1200. Actually that number's probably closer to about 1300. We had a gather that just wrapped up a nuisance gather near Yuma last week. Next slide. One of the things that we face in Arizona, just pretty much like the rest of everywhere in the Western United States is drought. And I wanted to show you this map early on before we start talking about the HMAs so you can have a kind of an understanding of what drought looks like in the west. And luckily this year we've had quite a bit of a reprise from drought over the summer months due to pretty good monsoon rains. But that does not solve our long-term drought problem. Next slide. One of the things that we've done in Arizona recently is implemented a strategy with the support of headquarters on trying to get to AML basically across the state in the next five years. And in some of our HMAs, our AMLs may need to be updated or our ranges need to be established a little bit better. So that was one of the things that we're looking at first. We also will be gathering two AML and those established ranges. Those gathers may include some large gathers in the beginning. So helicopter gathers or large bait trapping gathers to achieve AML to try to get to a point where we can get into a more maintenance mode on those HMAs where we will do smaller periodic gathers mostly in-house with bait trapping. This strategy also identified two additional specialist positions. Luckily we've been able to hire one here in Phoenix, but we still do have a vacancy in the Yuma area for a specialist for CRD. This strategy is meant to be fluid and fluctuate. A lot of it is depending on funding and what we can do throughout the year with that funding. Next slide. I'm going to move into talking about the different HMAs. So Black Mountain HMA is our largest HMA in Arizona. It's 1.1 million acres. It's a very rocky area, volcanic and the AML is 478. This HMA is located just

outside of Kingman. And as of March our population was about 3000 burros. We did do a gather after that in May and so our population is going to be a little bit different now than it was in March. Next slide. As I mentioned before, we did a large scale gather in Black Mountain in FY '22. Took us about a month. We removed approximately 1100 burros with the assistance of the helicopter. It's the largest burro gather we've done in Arizona in our history. We were able to complete that event with no deaths and no significant injuries of any burros or staff or contractors, which was a huge accomplishment for us. During that gather, we did capture some of the HSUS jennies that had been treated with PZP. The ones that we caught that were in that program, we re-treated them and then released them at a later date. Next slide. The Cibola Trigo HMA is our Southwest, basically herd management area along the Colorado River, it's just outside of Yuma. It's very rocky, very little vegetation. It's definitely our most arid HMA. The AML is 165 burros and 150 horses. As of March of last year or this year population was about 378 burros and 300 horses. One of the unique things about the Cibola Trigo HMA is that a lot of the HMA is located on the proving grounds and on near wildlife refuges. So when we do removals, we have to ship animals by boat, which is that picture there. Next slide. Here's the Lake Pleasant HMA. It's the one that's just right outside of Phoenix here by the lake. It's approximately a 100,000 acres and a large part of the HMA falls within the Lake Pleasant Regional Park. The vegetation there is similar to... Well, you guys have seen it, what's outside of town here it's desert. Some of the areas when you get closer towards Wickenburg are a little bit more productive, but it's pretty arid. It's approximate population as of March 22 was 869 burros. I'd like to point out that our Steve Bird is in that picture back when he was a specialist. Next slide. I also will talk about the Three Rivers. There's three separate HMAs, but we manage them as kind of one unit mostly because the fencing is very little between those HMAs and it's pretty large. So you have the Alamo, Big Sandy in Havasu combined there approximately a million acres. You have everything from low desert all the way to kind of desert grassland in some of the areas on the Three Rivers. And the combined AML is 372 to 465 burros. Our current population is about 3,800 as of March. Next slide. I wanted to show the map of the HMAs again. I know that I didn't cover the Tassi-Gold Butte HMA, but that HMA is one that has very few burros. Most of those animals actually cross over the state line and they're coming from the other side. And it's not somewhere where we have a lot of active management, but you can see the other HMAs here on the map without the HAs. Next slide. So I'm going to go over a few of our programs here in Arizona. Our adoption and sales program has been very successful over the last four years. We place an average of about 700 animals out of the Florence facility and out of the state office basically. We do have tip trainers that go across state lines and bring animals in. On average, like I said, we place about 700. In FY '21, we placed almost a thousand and this year we're going to place about 750 by the time everything's been entered. The placement in Arizona is a combination of Florence, the trainer incentive program, satellite events and sales. And we typically hold five to seven adoption or demo events every year. We actually have an event coming up this weekend in Florence, which is going to be our first satellite event that we've had since almost two and a half years because of COVID. So everyone's more than welcome to come down to Florence if you'd like this weekend. Next slide. One of our big partnerships in Arizona is the Trainer Incentive Program through Mustang Heritage Foundation. We do place quite a few animals yearly through that program. We host usually about three tip challenges a year where anywhere from 20 to 60 animals are placed at a single event. Usually it's a lot of youth and they'll keep the animals for 90 days and then at the end they have a competition. And here's just some pictures of a recent competition. You can see that the kids do really well with these horses within 90 days. They're really great events to go to. Our other big partnership in Arizona is the Florence Prison Holding and Training Facility. We place about 75 animals typically a year through our training program, mostly horses. We do train burros, but for the most part the inmates are training the horses. The program was set up in 2013 and it's been very successful. It's a great rehab program for the inmates. We do have a staff trainer that trains the inmates and then oversees them daily, and we've just had great success with it. Next slide. The other unique thing that we have in Arizona is that we have a partnership through the prison with the University of Arizona School of Veterinary Care or Veterinary Medicine. They provide all of our care at the facility itself. At any given time, we have our lead vet come in and she usually brings three to five students to assist us with any veterinary care that we need. This summer, from April to August was actually the first time that the school had surgical rounds done at our Florence prison. So we had 12 students three days a week doing surgical rounds, including helping us prep animals after the gather events and also doing castrations. Every student that came through the surgical rounds was able to complete one to three castrations on the animals and it was a very, very successful, we're really happy to have that program. Next slide. The major management challenges that we face in Arizona is similar to most other states. We're over AML, four to five times in some areas and it can be pretty bad with the number of animals that we've got. I know I showed you that drought map earlier. Shortage of water has started to impact our HMAs. We're starting to see a lot more places dry up where water was available in the past. And body condition of animals definitely goes down when we see that issue. We also have, as mentioned before, we have program-wide budget limitations that we all face in the BLM, so that's something that we are always dealing with. And also HMAs have changed since they were established. For instance,



this HMA right outside of Phoenix in Lake Pleasant, there was not that many people that lived around that HMA when it was established. So now we have a lot of human interaction with these animals that basically didn't exist before. Private property, public roads, public safety. One of our biggest things in Arizona that we deal with on basically a daily basis is collisions. Burros get on roads, burros get fed by people and they get used to them. And they're naturally just inquisitive and want to basically figure out what's going on. So unfortunately, a lot of times they'll just stand in the road, people won't see them, and so vehicle collisions are a big problem. Next slide. So I'll give you an example of Burros' curious nature. And this would be viewed by most people as kind of cute and cuddly, you see an animal that's coming close. I was on our Black Mountain gather this year about 20 miles outside of Bullhead City, so pretty much in the middle of nowhere. And I was assisting the contractor finding groups of burros during the gather. And this Lone Jack walked up to my Jeep. Next picture. And continued to walk up to the Jeep. Next picture. And eventually stuck his head right in the Jeep. Now I know this seems to be something that we would view as curious nature and everything, but what we're finding is that this animal is 20 miles out in the middle of the desert and he's so used to people that he's sticking his head in a Jeep. So that becomes a major issue because once they're that habituated to people, that's when we start having so many problems along the roadways and so many problems on public land or on private lands. So with that, I will take any questions.

### **Discussion on Arizona Wild Horse and Burro Program Overview:**

Commissioner French: In your adoption program, do you have a waiting list or are you pretty much adopting, have an excess of animals following at the conclusion of an adoption season?

Mr. Hall: So our facility in Florence has a capacity of a thousand animals. We typically have about 350, 750 animals in Florence. One of the issues that we face with burros is that when we gather them, pretty much all the jennies are going to be pregnant. So if a jenny has a baby, we're not going to allow that baby and jenny to move until we were able to actually wean that animal, it's not safe. So when we do these large scale gathers like we did with a Black Mountain, we've supplied a lot of the adoption events across the country with burros. There is a high demand for burros. If we can prep them and get them across to the east coast, they're placed. We've found that our program with kind of supplying a pipeline of burros, they're able to ship them to the East coast has been really helpful, and in New Mexico and Texas as well. So right now I am sitting on about a thousand animals in Florence, but I also am almost have, I think 250 babies. So we have a lot of pairs that have to stay basically.

Ms McAlpine: First of all, John, I'd like to publicly thank you for hosting Dr. Lenz and I the other day at the facility. And you and your staff being so open to answering our questions and showing us how you're making every effort to meet and exceed all of the comprehensive animal welfare program standards. We had a fabulous time learned a lot, we're impressed. And again, thanks a lot. Are you going to provide us with this presentation? I'd really like to have it if we could get.

Mr. Hall: I believe that it's already been uploaded to the website.

Ms McAlpine: Awesome, thank you.

Dr. Bleich: I'm curious about the primary method of capture using corral traps over water or helicopters or what methods are being employed?

Mr. Hall: The majority of burros caught in Arizona are utilizing bait traps either in-house or contract. The Black Mountain gather was the first helicopter gather we've had since 2012. We find that bait trapping can be a very effective method with burros, but then burros get into areas that it's not effective, they're just too far up in mountains, road access is an issue. And bait trapping works well when environmental conditions allow. If you've had a very good year with a lot of vegetation and a lot of production animals move pretty far out and they're pretty hard to catch.

Dr. Bleich: Sure. Just out of curiosity, and you probably mentioned this in your presentation. But what time of the year are you doing most of your captures?

Mr. Hall: In the hot months. Most of our gathers are going to be, or especially bait trapping is going to be done March through September. We really focus a lot in like kind of June and July, so right before the monsoon start where you have that dry period. And we mostly trap in the dusk and morning hours when the animals are actually moving.

Dr. Perryman: I noticed that the reasoning or the categories for triggering gathers, one of the triggers that you had in the presentation was habitat destruction. What is your trigger for indicating when habitat destruction is occurring? What criteria are you using for that?

Mr. Hall: So basically over utilization, and then we also look at the range health standards. We'll do a range health assessment on the HMA or On-range of allotments on the HMA. And then we couple that with population estimates that are completed through our population surveys.

Dr. Perryman: Okay, so you have like it's an ongoing thing because you don't just wake up one day and suddenly the habitat is being destroyed, it's a chronic thing that happens. So you have a continued monitoring program then?

Mr. Hall: In some of our HMAs we do. One of the things that we identify in the strategy is that we are going to continue setting up monitoring programs throughout the state to actually do long-term monitoring so that we do have that data when we do decide to do a removal. And some of that data can be extrapolated from the range utilization, also like our range staff that they collect that. because a lot of the HMAs do overlap with some of the range allotments.

Dr. Perryman: Right. Continue to do that.

Mr. Hall: That's our goal. Because in so many areas that we have, particularly in places like Nevada, the destruction has already occurred and there haven't been any livestock to monitor their range utilization in some cases for decades. So yes, please continue that effort so that you're managing your numbers before the habitat destruction actually occurs, which is where we are in so many of our other areas. Great, thank you.

Mr. Davis: I just wanted to add to what John was just saying about monitoring. So in addition to the things that John mentioned, we're also doing AIM statewide at a landscape scale. And as part of that ongoing monitoring, we're actually working with the BLMs National Operations Center in Denver to take a look at all of our historical monitoring that we have trend and other things that indicate the health of the range land and kind of integrating those with the newer data sets and the monitoring that the Wild Horse and Burro Program has done as a whole to provide kind of an overall picture of what the health has been for that range line and how it's kind of progressed.

Dr. Bleich: Is there any overlap with grazing allotments on any of these HMAs?

Mr. Hall: Yes, on Black Mountain, on Big Sandy, bit on Alamo, not Cibola Trigo, on Lake Pleasant. So most of them, yes.

Dr. Lenz: So John, when you have an animal like that Jackie you showed that's so habituated to people, do you remove that individual or do typically you wait until you've got a group to remove?

Mr. Hall: Typically if we were bait trapping, I would definitely focus on that animal. Just because a lot of times an animal like that is going to be difficult in the trap and he'll usually keep other burros away from the trap. So we would tend to focus on trying to get that guy out of there. Since this was a helicopter gather and we weren't set up to do something like that, that burro, he wouldn't move with the helicopter no matter what we tried to do. We talked about trying to lead him all the way to the trap with hay, but he only followed me for about a hundred feet and then decided he didn't want to



anymore. So yes, typically we would focus on animals that are a problem like that because they do pose the biggest public safety issue.

Dr. Lenz: So you might have told us the other day, what age do you wean those foes?

Mr. Hall: Four to six months depending on the condition of the baby. If it's born in facility, it'll probably be closer to four months. If it was caught on the range and brought in, it's probably closer to six months. Everything is based on their body condition and how well they're responding to switching over to feed.

Dr. Lenz: So do you separate them and maintain them on that facility or do you move them to another facility when you wean them?

Mr. Hall: Once they've been weaned, typically I will prepare them to either be shipped out to one of our satellite events or to one of our other facilities where they're having an event or they'll go into one of our other various programs. We don't usually move any animals over to training in particular until they're about three to five years old.

Dr. Bechert: Hi. I just had a quick question. You mentioned that most of the burros get shipped to the east coast and I was wondering what they're used for there. Are they primarily pets or?

Mr. Hall: Companion animals a lot. Some people do use them as working animals. People use them as guardian animals to protect sheep and goats and their cattle herds, but I think the majority is just companion and pets. Burros are quite a bit more docile than horses just by nature and usually if you feed them for a while, they tend to gentle down pretty quick. So a lot of people that don't have horse training experience do fairly well with burros just because of their nature.

Dr. Bechert: Is there one area on the East coast where more of them go?

Mr. Hall: That would be more of a question for Crystal and Meredith. We do ship quite a few burros to the east coast, but I also do ship a lot of animals to the New Mexico, Texas area and a lot of animals are placed down there as well. We've shipped burros all the way up to Oregon, Idaho, wherever there's an adoption demand, we try to make sure that we can supply them with animals.

Mr. French: I just had a question having to do with your AML and your numbers. You mentioned that in looking at the numbers, you're about twice or a little bit better than twice your AML for most of your HMAs . When the trigger happens, when you realize your range condition is reached a point of triggering the need for a gather, does that also by policy trigger a reduction in AUMs and those allotments that overlapped into those HMAs?

Mr. Hall: I can't answer that question. I think that would be something that you would have to ask field offices in particular if that would be the field office manager's decision on whether or not they're going to reduce AUMs.

Mr. French: Okay, so it's not a hard and fast policy then?

Mr. Hall: No.

Ms. Carlisle: Ms. McAlpine and then Jerry you'll be next. Or let me just clarify. Jerry, did you have an answer to that?

Mr. Davis: Well, I don't know that I have an answer, but I wanted to add to what John said and just to confirm that there's not a hard and fast rule that makes it an automatic reduction. Like John mentioned, it would be kind of up to that local authorized officer. But really it comes down to causal factor when we're doing that land health evaluation and kind of

determining what the causal factors are for not achieving the health standards. And so it really kind of depends on that. So there likely would be a comparable reduction in AUMs, but the nature of that and what that kind of looks like all really depends on the conditions on the ground on that particular allotment in the HMA.

Ms. McAlpine: John, you said you placed a significant number of animals out of state, so who does the welfare checks on those animals?

Mr. Hall: It would be the office of jurisdiction where the animals located. So for instance, if it was in New Mexico, then the New Mexico staff would be responsible for that compliance.

Ms. McAlpine: Okay, and briefly the other day we talked about the number of animals who are actually returned or removed from their adopting families. Can you tell me again what those numbers were?

Mr. Hall: I can't give you the exact numbers. I can tell you in Arizona it's a very low amount. Usually it's less than 20 a year is what we tend to have returned back to us. We've found that utilizing the Mustang Heritage Foundation and the Trainer Incentive Program has been very successful with us with actually keeping animals at their homes because it gives people a little bit of a headstart with their animals because they've already had some journaling done with them. And the same with our training program at the prison. It's been very successful with animals actually staying with the adopters or purchasers.

Ms. McAlpine: So you're talking about possibly less than 1% up to 1% of the numbers of animals you place a year?

Mr. Hall: In Arizona, yes.

Ms. Pearson: Thanks for being here and your report. I'm just sitting back absorbing all of the information because these guys are asking all the right questions, so I haven't had a chance to chime in. But one question that I would have is what's the typical or what maybe recommended age for adoption? Because I've raised horses my whole life and the sooner you get, I've actually had, I've had the burros as well. We raised a jenny and twins, twin babies and we could do anything we want with those babies. They were very friendly and we rode them and maintenance was kind of a nightmare, like keeping their hooves trimmed and that kind of stuff is really hard in a cell because they grow fast. So what's normally like that range that's good as far as training? You said three to five years.

Mr. Hall: So with burros, I would say the younger, the better. Most people would prefer to get weanlings or yearlings. Although I do have a group of trainers that only wants 10 year older burros and jack's in particular for some reason, but that's their specialty. They like those type of burros and they do very well training them. When I take weanlings to an event, I'll place every single one of them. There's been times here in Morana, actually we had an adoption event a couple years ago. We ended up coming back to Florence three times to get more Burros because there was that much of an adoption demand during that adoption. And the majority of them at that event were weanlings. People are very... Burros can be really, really affectionate, especially if you raise them from when they're really young, they can be great companion animals. So I think that if you're looking at going into actually utilizing the animal as a work animal, probably three to five years would probably be a better timeframe because then you can actually pack weight on them. If they're any younger than that, then you're risking injuring the animal basically.

Ms. Pearson: Okay. Yeah, so speaking from experience, we didn't use ours as work animals, but the intent was to do that. But they were more pets and we had a lot more fun. I mean, the kids would just play with the babies until they grew up, but they could ride them, they could ride them out in the crill or whatever. We didn't really saddle break them. They they rode them bareback and all the whole town, the whole neighborhood came and played with the burros. Like you're saying with the babies, is that usually the target for those that are adopting? And then do most people hire a TIP trainer or do they follow through with that program on some of their burros, or?

Mr. Hall: So the way that it works with the TIP trainers is that they pick the animals up from the BLM and then they find the adopters. We don't, it's not kind of a book beforehand thing. Can you repeat the second part of your question or the first part of your question? I think it was still related to age.

Ms. Pearson: Yeah, I was just wondering what the target age was normally for most people. But you said that you don't--

Mr. Hall: It's all over the place.

Ms. Pearson: Having trouble replacing little ones.

Mr. Hall: Yeah, it's all over the place. Really different people want older animals. Some people want to get an animal that they can train and start working right away, whereas others want to establish that strong bond from a young age so that they have a closer connection, I guess you could say, for them when they're later on in life. But what we've found is that there's a huge demand for burros. Like if we take animals to an event, in some places we'll place every single one of them no matter the age.

Mr. French: I kind of want to go back into that question having to do with AUMs and AML. And I know you probably can't answer this, but I'm going to get it out on the table so we can have the conversation with some of the other members in the room. As we exceed, and I'm drawing on my experience from the Nevada side of the border. As we exceed AML in a lot of these allotments and especially when we approach double AML or even more than that, we start to see triggers on the public land, on the vegetation and in many cases dramatic changes. And in Nevada at least, at least in the last decade or so, that has triggered reductions in AUMs for those allotments that overlap. And I'm wondering if that policy exists in Arizona as well. Are there routine reductions in AUMs as a result of exceeding AML and range condition?

Mr. Hall: I'm going to hand this off to Jerry, he had his hand up pretty quick..

Mr. Davis: To jump in, but the short answer is no. Arizona does not have a formal policy or even an informal policy that would trigger those types of AUM reductions. Like I mentioned earlier, it would kind of be looked at on a case by case basis. What we've really tried to do, especially over the last three plus years here in Arizona, is actually when we're looking at those land health evaluations, trying to really be precise about what the causal factors are for the conditions and then to work to address that particular causal factor or factors as it may be. And oftentimes that may be grazing, but it may not be in a lot of scenarios also. And so that's really trying to be accurate and truthful about what are causing the issues out there, whether that's Burros or potential recreational activity, or all those types of things and then working to do that. And so what we've tried to do is, work with permittees where we can to improve the Rangeland Hill, but also not necessarily penalized permittees for things that are outside of their control and are not the actual causal factor for the impacts to the health of her. Does that answer your question, sir?

Mr. French: Yeah, I think that was a policy from the state of Nevada for many, many years. I think that that policy has shifted somewhat in the last decade or so as we got to critical mass with overpopulation of horses on a lot of those HMAs. And so we are seeing reductions in AUMs now and in fact we've seen some suspension and actual loss of grazing privileges on some of those allotments. My follow up question though, I wanted to ask you has to do with voluntary non-use. Are you seeing your permittees taking voluntary non-use as a result of the degradation of some that vegetation coming up from those HMAs?

Mr. Davis: We're definitely seeing voluntary non-use, but I'm not aware of any situations where it's specifically related to like overpopulation of burros or degradation of the resources. I think mostly we're seeing voluntary non-use in cases being impacted by drought as we are kind of all across the southwest. We've worked really closely with our ranchers and permittees here in Arizona and holding kind of ongoing meetings and conversations to understand what the issues are out there. And if that's burros, we try and work with them to address it before it becomes an impacting type issue. And it kind of goes likewise with drought. We've really tried to maintain these kind of one-on-one conversations. And so our ranchers here in Arizona have been really proactive on taking those voluntary actions where necessary and where it makes sense for the health of the range land.

Mr. French: Thank you, that answered it. Thanks.

Ms. Pearson: So a couple of different questions. I have my own personal experience in Utah and know where we come from. As far as that goes, we've got several HMAs in my county and in particular I have an HMA on my BLM allotment in our private ground. The maintenance of the water is taken care of by the permittee. The BLM does not do any maintenance whatsoever in our areas and in general in Utah. So any water source is my responsibility as a permittee. The other issues are the impacts of like the critical riparian areas that the wildlife depend on. So are you guys seeing those kinda impacts to wildlife and those riparian areas with the burros? I mean, I know what horses do to riparian areas. Are the burros similar impact?

Mr. Hall: Burros tend to not hang out around the water as much as horses do. They usually come in, get water and leave. We definitely are seeing impacts to riparian areas. I mean, overpopulation, especially along the Colorado River, you're going to have burros coming down to the river to get water. As for when it comes to range improvements, a lot of our areas, the burros are not as much of an issue with the range improvement. There may be in particular range improvements that have been damaged by the burros, but like I said, they tend to come in and go out pretty quick. They really don't like to hang out with the cows who usually are hanging out around the waters. So you'll kind of see, there'll be shifts. You'll have cows come in and then they'll go hang out and then the burros will come and go in and out, they usually don't just stay. So they're definitely could be impacts. I think you'd have to look on it on an allotment by allotment basis when it comes to the HMA.

Ms. Pearson I think, just a follow up question. Is your wildlife groups and stuff involved? Have they been concerned about the overpopulation and--

Mr. Hall: Arizona Game and Fish is definitely involved. Bighorn Sheep Society, the Desert Mule Deer Association, we do have regular discussions with them through different types of meetings and burros usually do come up, they're usually is brought up as a concern.

Ms. Pearson: So in Utah, sorry, always Utah, we've created several different partnership levels and leveraging funding and whatever and there has been a lot of voluntary BLM, our our BLM permittees. Personally we keep our cattle off because we know the feed's not there. So we do the voluntary reductions. We've had a couple of requested reductions here and there, and this was before the drought was hitting, it was all the horse impact. But what we've had to do is, like I said, leverage these funding things to come in and actually fence off riparian area specifically. It's not areas that the cattle get to, it's up in the hills and it's kind of our springhead and our watershed for the pipelines that we bring down into the valleys. But the wildlife have had a huge, are seeing a huge impact to those riparian areas and not because of the horses. And the horses do come in and dig out the springs and just kind of wipe them out. So we've had to come in and fence those kind of areas off just to protect those spring heads.

Ms. Carlisle: Dr. Bleich, and just a heads up for everybody that we've got half hour-ish. We can go a little long, but we also have to cover recommendations and approval of minutes, so just be mindful. Go ahead Dr. Bleich.

Dr. Bleich: Thank you. In areas that are, I'll use the term overpopulated with horses, they have expanded into geographic areas that are not within the HMA, and I think these are referred to as herd areas for lack of a better term. When you are estimating populations of burros, do you restrict your flight lines or your sampling scheme to the herd management area itself, or do you extend them in some way to try to get a, I'll use the term more meaningful estimate of the total number of burros both in and outside of that HMA? And a second question is, have wilderness limitations affected your ability to capture burros?

Mr. Hall: When we fly our population surveys, we do make every effort to make sure that we cover all the areas where burros are going to exist, either in the HMA or outside of the HMA. So they're routinely. Last year we did two flights in November. There were areas that we flew that were not within the HMA, but we know that Burros had existed at those places at certain times. And we make every effort. When we do identify animals that are pretty far outside of their HMA, we do try to make every effort in order to remove or relocate those animals in order to try to keep the populations really

within the HMA. Even if they're overpopulated, we would still like to keep them in their herd management areas, because if you don't, obviously populations expand and we'll start to find new food resources and water resources and they'll kind of just move across the state. What was the second question?

Dr. Bleich: Have your trapping efforts or your hurting efforts been impacted by wilderness constraints?

Mr. Hall: So on our last gather, the Black Mountain Gather, we do have, I believe it was three wilderness areas written into those wilderness management plans, there were mitigation measures that we were able to use in order to still be able to set up traps within those wilderness areas. And we also had a certain amount of hours we could fly over those wilderness areas at a certain elevation. So as long as they're written into the wilderness management plans, then they don't pose as much constraints as you would see in other wildernesses.

Dr. Bleich: So you don't see protests from the public who are concerned about disturbing wilderness experiences through the use of helicopters or the presence of these corrals, they don't protest your efforts?

Mr. Hall: We make every attempt to mitigate those issues. So we work with Fish and Wildlife Service if we're working in critical habitat in order to get clearances, in order to do gathers in those areas if needed. And we also alert the public that we will be conducting gather operations in that wilderness area and allow them to basically have their comment period during the environmental assessment in order to try to mitigate those problems.

Dr. Bleich: Your statement regarding trying to maintain dartings within the HMAs is was very comforting. I worked extensively across the river from Yuma in Imperial County, and one of the biggest issues that we were faced with with respect to bighorn sheep and Desert Hill there in that area was the constant expansion westward of burros through areas like Julian Wash and Wash with very little success in maintaining burros within the established HMA and that was a major issue. And I congratulate you for your efforts there in Arizona. Thank you--

Mr. Hall: So I'm very familiar with... I'm from Yuma, born and raised and was a specialist on the Arizona side for 10 years. And because of my experiences in Yuma and seeing how the population can expand so rapidly outside of the herd management areas, that's why when I was able to move into this position, we focused a lot on trying to make sure that we're keeping animals managed where they're supposed to be according to our herd management area plans.

Dr. Bleich: Well, thank you for doing so.

Mr. French: Thanks again. I'm curious, I come from Northern Nevada where burros are kind of, they're not common within those HMAs and so forgive me for all of the questions and whatnot. But I'm curious as to, we've talked a lot about forage limitations and the triggers involved with removals of animals based on, and I know from my part of the country it's generally forage generated and vegetation impacts. But as you're well aware of in your part of the country, it's as much about drought impacted springs and whatnot and the availability of water resources and the competition between burros and wildlife species in particular, I think the one most of us are thinking about are desert bighorn,. But a lot of other species that I've watched burros run off of springs and whatnot and defending them. I know that that is a key component with regard to drawing down a population, having to do with that limitation on water. And I'm wondering if there's a program within the Bureau of Land Management in Arizona and or a partnership with some of the NGOs that are interested in desert species of wildlife for development of artificial water offsite. I know in Nevada we have a lot of guzzler programs and we produce an awful lot of water to try to expand populations to utilize vegetation where they otherwise could not because of unavailability of water. And I'm just wondering what Arizona is doing.

Mr. Hall: So are you asking are there burro specific waters or?

Mr. French: Yeah, and I think with regard to the NGOs, most of them are wanting to develop water for bighorn and whatnot, but I know we try to upsize those projects to include what we anticipate for the burro population as well.



Mr. Hall: So if you look at our burro distribution throughout Arizona, you'll notice that the majority of our animals are somewhere where there's a large permanent water source, either Colorado River, Lake Pleasant, Big Sandy, Lake Havasu. And because of that, Game and Fish has a pretty strict policy of anywhere that burros exist, they're going to fence them out. They put up actual barriers, it's usually hard pipe that they put up around their waters, they're wildlife waters in particular. And a lot of ranchers will try to continue to fence them out. When they're not being used by cattle, they'll close the fences to make an attempt to keep the burros out. I think that a lot of the local agencies or state agencies, their policies to try to just keep them out of the waters they're established for wildlife, which is difficult because burros, they can push through fences just like cows do. So a lot of policy has been formed to try to just keep burros out of the waters instead of, I guess providing them supplemental waters. Like I said, the majority of our animals are going to exist around large bodies of water, so they kind of have that permanent water source throughout the year.

Mr. French: So basically you're just discouraging those populations that are not affiliated with those large bodies of water from existing at all.?

Mr. Hall: We're trying to make sure that they do have availability of water, but not distribute the population so much that it's going to be going outside of their herd management areas.

Dr. Lenz: Is there much natural predation on the range, are the burros or the foals?

Mr. Hall: So there has been some work done that has showed predation on the range. I think Dr. Griffin, who's presenting later would be much more of an expert on that. I know that this year in particular during one of our flights, we did experience a lion that was on a burro kill and was defending the kill. So it is something that definitely happens. I don't think that it's as very common. But like I said, Dr. Griffin would have much more information on that.

Dr. Lenz: Okay, great. Thanks.

Ms. Carlisle: I actually have one quick question, but we could perhaps defer till tomorrow's presentation. I'm noticing that we have a presentation about the pilot fertility control project there. But perhaps you can speak to... I think it's great that when you all did your capture and nine jennies were identified who had been previously treated, that coordination effort between the BLM and the HSUS in this case for that project, how did that occur? Because that's a piece that, it's a little bit complex, it's not impossible obviously. But that coordination effort, if you could speak to it a little bit or perhaps you all are talking about that tomorrow.

Mr. Hall: I think that would be more appropriate for them to talk about it tomorrow. Our specialist in CRD has much more information on the HSUS Project. I was the incident commander on that gather and did assist on that gather, but he was the one that did all the coordination between HSUS.

### **Approval of June-July 2021 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Carlisle moved to accept the minutes as presented. This motion was seconded. All approved and the minutes were accepted.

### **June-July 2021 Advisory Board Recommendations and BLM and USFS Responses**

Ms. Carlisle: Let's go ahead to BLM and Forest Service responses to our board recommendations from the last meeting, which occurred June/July of 2021. I'll go ahead and read the recommendation and then BLM could respond for service with--

Ms. McAlpine: Madam Chair, I have a statement I'd like to make. This board and other boards that have been working on the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program and our relationship with BLM does a significant amount of work in the two to three weeks before a public meeting, reviewing information and developing draft recommendations in our subcommittees that react to that research and information that we are getting in. So it would be extraordinarily important in the future that



any of the recommendations that we make this year or any year in the future, that we have BLM or Forest Service responses to those recommendations at least two weeks in advance. We have a lot of recommendations that would have changed significantly this year had we had the information before we came to the meeting. And thank you. I mean, what we received was really excellent and helpful, but it would've been more helpful to have had it about two weeks ago.

Ms. Carlisle: All right, and with that, we're off with our last round of recommendations. Our first recommendation was that the current and likely continuance of unprecedented drought in much of the intermountain West and Desert Southwest has revealed the need for a viable, catastrophic Wild Horse and Burro contingency plan for this and future protracted drought scenarios. Board recommends BLM immediately develop and implement as necessary an emergency action plan, including the capacity to gather and house an unprecedented number of equids, coincidentally contacting FEMA and Interior regarding possible funding and issuing an emergency declaration. The intent of this is to restore a thriving natural ecological balance, prevent further range degradation, and provide for habitat that exists and persists in the future.

Dr. Jenkins: Thank you, Celeste. I'm going to ask Holle' Waddell to respond here. Chief Waddell, thank you.

Ms. Waddell: Thank you, David. Given the challenges and cascading impacts posed by increasing Wild Horse and Burro populations degraded land, climate change and invasive species, the Secretary of the Interior was directed to establish a task force with representation from the Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Geological Survey, and any other bureaus the secretary deems appropriate in 2022. The task force will consult FEMA as necessary for information and funding as the task force develops any strategies or recommendations to achieve a sustainable population through aggressive non-lethal population control. BLM Wild Horse and Burro specialists continue to monitor habitat and animals as BLM lands are faced with the impacts of drought in various states. The headquarters Wild Horse and Burro program continues to hold bimonthly calls to keep uprise of emerging situations. The information is used in conjunction with the reported drought conditions to make informed management decisions for herd management areas. In fiscal year 2022, two emergency gathers were completed due to impacts of drought and imperiled animals. BLM has focused its planned gathers in areas of concern to reduce the risk of emergency situations. As of September 19th, BLM has gathered approximately 20,851 animals this year and removed approximately 19,011 in fiscal year 2022, which is the largest effort to gather and remove in the bureau's history. These removals resulted in 20 herd management areas meeting appropriate management levels, moving these herds toward a thriving ecological balance and reducing impacts to range lands that they inhabit. BLM is preparing a national drought policy with the goal of building long-term drought, resilience of renewable resources on public lands to support the agency's mission in times of frequent and severe drought. The BLM developed a drought focused website to inform the public on how the BLM manages drought related issues. And that is a live link, and I've asked Dorothea to email this to you all so you all can access that drought website if you're interested.

Ms. Carlisle: Any comments or questions from the board on that? Commissioner French.

Mr. French: I had a couple of... I think we all... I think the drought and the severity of this drought caught us all by surprise, I think. And we saw it coming for a distance, but I don't think the severity of it, I know from my standpoint it caught me by surprise in particular. And I know that to have actually captured almost 20,000 horses, that's a huge stretch. And I'm just wondering from a contractor perspective, the guys that go out and actually do this work and whatnot, what's the capacity? And in terms of if we found ourself in a position where we had to do another year like this in order to meet those challenges, in your view, is there adequate contractors and equipment and facilities available to handle those numbers of horses?

Ms. Waddell: So I think what we believe is that we are nearing capacity at about 25 to 30,000 animals. Scott, you can totally grab the mic. But we're looking at 25 to 30,000. And obviously the larger issue isn't necessarily the contractor availability, it really gets into space availability, and funding availability. And so yeah, we were really impressed with this number and we were trying to continue operations that parallel the report to Congress and the information strategies that we have put together over the last several years in efforts to try and achieve AML in some herd management areas where we will be able to maintain those in future years.

Mr. French: And then one real quick follow up question. And it comes from my presentation yesterday to you having to do with one of our recommendations coming off the board. The trigger for determining whether or not there's an emergency at hand, obviously the condition of the horse is one of the triggers of the horses also in range conditions in terms of thriving ecological condition is another trigger. I'm curious as to whether or not there are other triggers involved in this and whether or not, for instance, endangered species impacts would be a trigger in and of itself to trigger an emergency gather. And I'll give you where I'm headed with this. In northern Nevada, for instance, we have a teeny species Lahontan cutthroat trout with the drought conditions that we're observing right now in Northern Nevada, the impacts to riparian areas and remaining stream populations has been significant enough to where we have gone from 18 existing populations down to seven. And I'm curious, at some stage, I'm wondering whether or not the impacts to a teeny species would trigger an emergency gather like that.

Ms. Waddell: So a short answer, and I started to open up my book because one of the documents is a new instruct, well to revise instruction memorandum that is in your notebook regarding gathers. And one of the lists there is criteria in order to identify emergencies and there is a list of them. So private landowner, nuisance, there's several of them on there. So yes, to answer your question impacts wildlife could also be one of the requirements or criteria that would be included in emergency gather request.

Mr. French: Yeah, and I am sorry. I understand that. I'm just wondering if one of those standalone. Whether I guess I didn't put that question together very well, but we a standalone, for instance, if we've got an AML of 200 horses, I'll just grab a number outta the year on a HMA and we're observing a collapse in T&E species, but the vegetation doesn't necessarily, or the AML the numbers doesn't necessarily trigger a capture. How do we deal with that if the only animal that is impacting those riparian zones are horses at that point? Is that enough to trigger an emergency gather?

Ms. Waddell: So I think it could be, I don't want to say yes or no because obviously there have to be several considerations that are made when we're talking about an emergency gather. And that includes what is the plan schedule and what other emergencies may be a higher priority for whatever reason. But I think it would be part of the consideration.

Mr. Yardley: So my question is, and maybe Holle' could address this, what is the long-term sustainability of these large gathers? We talked about the available space and talked about the amount of horses that are gathered up, and then you take into consideration that these wild horse and burro herds are continuing increasing, doubling about every four years, and they're already about four times the appropriate management level across the BLM. What is the long-term sustainability of these gathers and maintaining space for them along with getting horses down to the appropriate management level?

Ms. Waddell: I didn't hear the entire question. Can you repeat that Steven?

Mr. Yardley: I just would like you to address the long-term sustainability of these wild horse and burros gathers. We talked about available space and available resources for putting these horses in long and short-term holding facilities. Considering the amount of horses that are on the range, and also the amount of increase that we have nearly doubling every four years and also with forces already being about four times over AML. What do you feel like the long term sustainability of these large gathers is for drought light conditions and for other emergency gathers?

Ms. Waddell: Okay, I think your question is whether or not how long before we would need to regather potential areas that we gathered this year. Is that what I'm understanding?

Mr. Yardley: Well, and I think just the overall sustainability if high numbers, can they even be maintained? And what are the other parts of the plan that--

Ms. Waddell: Yes. Yeah, for consistent so out years, the answer would be right now we have, I think we mentioned yesterday, we have nearly 64,000 animals in corrals and in impostors. And so when you're looking at additional capacity, there would have to be a decision made. Are we going to acquire additional space? We would need to in order to remove

the same level of animals in any one year. Otherwise, right now, no. At some point, removing 19,000 animals and being somewhere near 64,000 in corrals and pastures fiscal year 2023 president's budget request did not account for any additional acquisition of space. So I think yes, Steven, if we had additional funding and we're acquiring additional space, then we could continue. But I think that's a question that leadership is looking at. At what point do we start talking about making some substantial changes to that gather, remove, and hold kind of way of doing business?

Dr. Jenkins: Yeah, thanks and thanks, Holle'. Let me add a bigger perspective. I think to answer Steve's question about the holding side of our operations and the sustainability of that holding side for corrals and pastures. Over a recent 20 year period, the figure that we spent on corrals and pastures is I think around 730, 40, 50 million over a recent 20 year period. We project, if the costs remain the same as today, with these levels of removals over the next 20 years, the costs will approach \$2 billion. So if you're thinking of sustainability in terms of dollars and with the dollars that we currently work with year by year, the answer is no, it's not sustainable in the long term when we're looking at that level of expenditure. That's a blunt answer to that question. Holle's was more nuanced than mine.

Dr. Bleich: Yes. The real question in my mind, being someone that deals almost daily with issues of resource availability, is how many more horses and burros can BLM accept into its existing corral and pasture program without exceeding the caring capacity or the absolute number of burros and horses that you could have in captivity at any one time? I mean, now are we at 90%, 95%, 60%? Can you shed some light on that, Holle'?

Ms. Waddell: Yeah, no problem. I believe our capacity of corrals and pastures is about 78,000. Oh, oh, I don't even see Meredith out there, but I believe it's about 78,000 and we're sitting somewhere near 63, almost 64,000 animals in corrals and pastures.

Dr. Bleich: Okay. So there's some leeway in terms of existing resources?

Ms. Waddell: That would be maximizing, yes. That'd be maximizing all of our space. And Scott actually has another response or an additional response.

Mr. Fluer: Well, no, just to add to that, yes, you're correct, Holle'. 78,000 was 64,000 in those facilities. However, as we're seeing the drought now, it's starting to impact those areas where we hold a lot of our animals on pastures, which makes it more challenging. So to say that there's a balance there that we can fill those pastures up, it also drought impacts that ability to do that. So we monitor and carefully monitor our pastures to assure that we're not stretching those forage resources too far.

Dr. Bleich: Thank you very much. Very informative.

Dr. Lenz: So Paul, what's annual attrition rate of the horses in holding from natural death and euthanasia if they develop lameness problems or something?

Mr. Fluer: I think our pastures, I believe that attrition is about 3%.

Dr. Lenz: 3%. It's about the same as domestic horses.

Mr. Fluer: I guess so, yes.

Dr. Lenz: Okay, thanks.

Ms. Waddell: And one other thing to add there, Dr. Lenz, I don't know if I'm on, but what Scott was saying is true, and one of the challenges we've also seen that David was just alluding to is also increased in some of those costs, right? Inflation is also now impacting our pasture. So not only is drought but inflation, and so some of those costs are higher, they're still less cost effective but those numbers are definitely climbing.

Ms. McAlpine: With this conversation that we've having today and the board has pretty much had all week long. From my perspective, BLM and Forest Service really need to take an organizational assessment of what's been going on and to develop a responsible long-term solution to this situation. BLM's responsibilities under the act ought to provide healthy ecosystems essential to remain management of these animals and healthy herds. So it's far past time, and I'm not blaming any individual, this has been going on for 20 years. It is long past time from being reactive as we are now, to becoming proactive and working quickly to start to resolve this problem and move into a system of humane management and wise ecological ecosystem management. Thank you.

Mr. French: I'm wondering is there room for expansion, long-term holding facilities? Is the bureau actively looking for additional long-term storage contracts similar to what you have right now to expand that capacity? And then secondly, is there support for that in the budgets as it stand right now?

Ms. Waddell: So the answer to both of those questions is no. No, there is not additional funding in the budget to support new offering pasture or offering corral acquisition. And there is not a plan, we don't have an open solicitation at this time. And that's kind of... Susan, I hear your point and I got to tell you, there have been several ask also from Congress that there be a long-term sustainable plan. And I'd be happy to receive any type of ideas from anyone other than please put together a long term sustainable plan, you know about it. We've looked at many different ways. We've launched other ways to place animals into private care. How do we outreach and communicate to the public that this is a challenge and look at ways to do business a little different? So yeah, please, in addition to that recommendation, throw out a couple of potential ideas that would be helpful. Thank you.

Ms. McAlpine: Okay, and in my mind, it really is an organizational issue. And again, nobody in this room is responsible for this. This is historic and 20 years in the making and then just magnified by drought and economic issues. And so I am really saying yes, we, this board do our best to try to brainstorm. As a matter of fact, Ursula and I had a conversation yesterday while we were out walking that will come up later about what we were talking about. But it really does mean the organization itself. And I know it's government and I know you have legislative requirements and I know people lobby and I know, and you're right, it's going to be a massive effort and undertaking, but it needs to be done and everybody needs to think outside the box. And our legislators need to hear this. Which is mostly why I'm saying this not for you, because I know you all know it, but there are aid sitting in offices listening to some of this in some cases. It's going to be a massive undertaking, but under the act, BLM is required to make sure that that multiple use provision, is withheld or not withheld, upheld, thank you, and that our bottom line is healthy herds, healthy ecosystem, multiple uses. And right now we are not there, we are not anywhere near there as far as upholding that act. And we struggle with our charter too, because that's what our charter is telling us to look for here is an advisory board as we talk to you and make recommendations. So I appreciate the struggle, it needs to be said publicly to anybody who happens to be listening to this. So thank you for receiving it in that manner. And again, understand all of the staff out there. This is not against anybody. It's happened for 20 years, something went wrong in the organization and it may require an entire organizational restructuring, rethought, which isn't our role. But you guys need to start to think about that. Where in the history did it go wrong? What happened and why did we become so reactive which you have to be when we should be proactive and looking out to 2040, 3001? So thank you.

Mr. French: I want to finish up my follow up question on this if I could. But given the fact that we all accept the fact that there's, within four years the populations that were remaining after that we took those 19,000 horses off the ground this year, within four years we're going to double that population. Again, that's remaining on the ground. So we have an ongoing, I just want to state that for the record. I'm preaching to the choir here. But the bottom line is too, is that I can remember in Grand Junction, Colorado, the first meeting I went to on this board, we had a quite a skull cramping session in terms of thinking out of the box because we actually had the exact same conversation and set of concerns that you just outlined. And so we're full circle back here at the same spot. Here we are standing here again, 19,000 horses in long-term care, but we're still having the same issues on the ground. We went to Washington DC as a result of thinking out of the box. That was one of our recommendations. Let's get... Because I'll just say it for the record, I'll probably won't be reappointed to this board as a result of it, but this problem belongs to Congress. I'm going to say it, but you guys can't, but I can. This belongs to Congress. They had the choice, they made the choice to tie your hands. They made the choice to defund the program. They made the choice to turn a dark or a blind eye to the problem on the public lands. They have responded to a very, very vocal group of people who have a different interest in management of wild horses than many of

us on this board having to, as it applies to public lands and ecological health. Having said all that, there were... I'd like to go back some maybe in the future and go back and start looking at some of the recommendations that were made from this board when we were thinking out of the box. Because there's a lot of things that Congress has done to you that has a limit or limited your ability to, for instance, adopt horses. The notion of that we can't adopt horses outside of the United States, that we can't export horses to for instance, Europe and I heard immediately heard folks jumped on me about, well, the French eat horses. So consequently we can't leave the country with them. I would remind the board that probably the biggest Mustang makeover going is in Frankfurt, Germany. And those people absolutely adore Western and they're willing to pay \$7,000 for a Mustang, I've got a daughter-in-law who's a German national who owns three mustangs. And she said there is a huge population in Europe that would dearly love Western mustangs because they're considered the holy grail of horse ownership to that group of people. Because of somebody's opinion, we have lost that ability for that kind of management. Not just one example, I don't think anybody's is interested in euthanasia just to reduce populations. I don't think anybody is interested in that. But I do think we need to open the door for placing horses in places where they can thrive and place the horses in front of people who truly appreciate them on their surface. So I'm grand standing here, but the bottom line is is that I think we're full circle on this argument and this discussion again. And I think we need to crack this thing open, we need to start talking about thinking out of a box, not for us, but for Congress. And they're going to have to get out of their comfort zone and they're going to have to start thinking about what the long, that goes back to one of our recommendations. What does plan B look like if you choose not to respond to what your subject matter experts are telling you on the ground out there right now, this is what plan B looks like. And we saw it last year, we buried a lot of Plan B horses that died on the public lands. I think it's time for us to actually make that kind of a recommendation again, if we need to, I know we're not supposed to, as BLM employees, we're not supposed to lobby Congress, but somebody needs to start talking, have an adult conversation in terms of what plan B looks like. And I'll just leave it at that. Thanks.

Ms. Carlisle: I'm going to remind everyone that we have six more recommendations to get through. And so I'm going to let Vernon and then Dr. Lenz, oh, and then Dr. Perryman, and then we are going to move on. Thank you. Vern, go ahead.

Dr. Bleich: I want to say that Susan and Jim said it very, very well. I'll repeat what I said yesterday and I'll repeat it again especially because I just heard the statement that there may be congressional staffers watching this. And this is a mess that Congress created and it's a mess that can only be fixed by Congress. Your bosses are those responsible for the situation that the Bureau of Land Management faces with respect to the management of horses and burros on public lands. You have so tied their hands that it is impossible to achieve the intent of the 1971 Wild Horse and Burros Act. Please let your bosses know. And I know that I won't be reappointed because I have voluntarily resigned from the board. So that doesn't concern me, but that message needs to be sent to Washington DC at the highest levels of the effect the elected officials. Thank you.

Dr. Lenz: Well, conversations come around to the point I wanted to make earlier when Susan brought this up, and that is there are options included in the Wild Horse and Burro Act that the BLM cannot utilize because the Congress won't allow them to. So this isn't a BLM problem, this is a Congressional problem. And I understand how Congress operates and so I'm not very optimistic that'll change. But I think BLM personnel and wild horse and burro personnel know exactly how to resolve this problem. And I think they've done an outstanding job, especially over the last year or so. But this is a congressional problem, this is not a horse problem.

Dr. Perryman: I'll be brief. Number one, I would remind the board and anyone looking or watch again on our speed today, the animals that were gathered last year essentially is only the reproduction from last year. We have not paid down the debt. All we've done is pay the interest. And so the problem still exists and it's still the same problem that we had at this point in time last year. It hasn't changed, it hasn't gotten better. It's still the same problem. Now, in 2018 a peer reviewed paper was published that I know the authors. And let me just read something to you. This is something that was kind of an out of the box thing, but I'll just read a couple of sentences from it. One potential means to generate private sector funding for the ownership transfer of animals is to create tax saving incentives through charitable contributions and transferable tax credits directly linked to the care and maintenance costs on a per animal basis. As an example, for each individual animal, a qualified citizen or advocacy group officially takes under their control, they would receive a transferable tax credit equal to the per head annual cost of care and maintenance based on a current market value of the animal. A group or citizens could then either keep or sell the tax credits to a person or entity with a tax liability. There are ways that Congress could work to develop tax liabilities and tax credits that would offload the cost of the taxpayer, cost to the taxpayer, to the



private sector, to NGOs and other 5013C type corporations that would be interested in getting involved in this effort. So there are ways to do that and I think it's time to resurrect that idea again. I think we talked about it briefly, maybe 2, 3, 4 years ago. And it's kind of with the hiatus and things, things have kind of fallen off the radar. And so I think it's time to start thinking about private sector funding and all of that that goes with it, tax credits and whatnot. And that would've to be Congress, they would've to be intimately involved in that tax credits that would allow someone, a foundation or any group, a philanthropist, individual philanthropist to purchase tax credits that would offset things that they need and that money would then go to the actual care of long-term holding for some of these animals. And I'll book in that and I'll be done, I'll book in this and I'll be done. If we go another year without additional funding to continue this gather process, we go another year and then we go another year, I mean, we're not back to where we were, we're farther down the road than where we were. So Congress has got to pay attention to this now. And I know many of them do not want to, there are other things that are on their radar in their districts, but this is something that our public lands are at stake here. And with our public lands as they go, so goes our wildlife populations, so goes our watersheds, so goes our air quality, so goes all these ecosystem services that are associated with public lands, they go with them. And we've got to redirect our attention back onto funding these gather processes and long term holding to get us back, to get us in a position where we can then manage these HMAs in a way that is more sustainable. So there you go.

Mr. Kuechle: I'm going to jump in here. We were into the time that was designated for the BLM Forest Service program updates and we haven't taken a break yet. So let's take a 10 minute break, we'll come back at 10 o'clock and we can reassess how we're going to move the agenda forward after that. So we'll return at 10 o'clock. Okay, welcome back everybody. Let's pick up where we left off. Just a reminder, we are kind of well into our next session time for the BLM of Forest Service program updates. I think the agency representatives can tighten those up a little bit, but to the degree possible, we ask the board to tighten up the next, getting through these next six recommendations. Celeste.

Ms. Carlisle: Thanks Brian. Board, I've had several requests to tighten it up. So the rules of the game are now in 15 minutes. Whatever recommendations we get through is where we need to head off into new territory. Each person will be allowed one comment about recommendations and you have two minutes max and you don't have to say anything. So with that, we're going to launch into recommendation number two. Board recommends BLM identify two HMAs, one horse and one burro and Forest Service identifies two to three territories to implement a comprehensive gather contraception program based on the best population models to meet established AMLs and demonstrate successful planning/management outcomes. Turn it over to BLM.

Ms. Waddell: Yes, thank you. I was trying to go as fast as Celeste, okay. The BLM currently has 14 herd management areas with gathering contraception based plans focused on field darting. Similar plans are being developed in additional herd management areas by the states through the environmental analysis process. These programs are part of the long-term strategies, often in the form of 10-year gather plans. Additionally, the headquarters Wild Horse and Burro Program has recently proposed a fiscal year 2023 gather schedule that focuses on catching treating to temporarily holding as necessary to apply boosters and releasing animals into herd management areas that are at or near high appropriate management levels, which identifies at least 10 herd management areas where gather contraception programs could be implemented to maintain appropriate management level.

Ms. Carlisle: Thank you, board any comments or questions?

Dr. Perryman: We'll speak more of this later.

Ms. Carlisle: Yes, thank you Dr. Perryman. Recommendation 3. Thank you, Holle'. Oh, thank you, Mr. Oliver.

Mr. Oliver: Thank you. So we recognize the importance of contraception to be able to achieve our AML moving forward, having 20% of the wild horse and burro population we have 20% of the problem as well. So what you're seeing on the BLM, we're seeing that as well at that reduced level, working close with the BLM. We don't have some of the authorities that the BLM has and the opportunities, but like I said before, we've been working real close with them following their lead and some of the things that they're doing in the strides they're making. We are currently including in our analysis moving forward for our territories, the opportunity for contraception and what that means as part of the larger program. So



we have the Hebrew territory right now, that's going to be our next one that's coming out that is going to have this discussion. We're also going, taking a step back, the double devil area that we have on the Modoc. Actually, they're well on the way to that AML level. We got another couple gathers coming up this year, next year that hopefully will get us there. We didn't have a contraception plan in place when that was developed, but they're in the process of developing a plan specific to maintain that AML once we're able to reach it.

Ms. Pearson: I'm going to keep this short and sweet, but considering the last recommendation that we talked about and the impending impacts On-range, I think that we are really missing huge point with the contraceptive on the ground. If we continue to ignore the opportunity of contraceptive on-range, the population explosion is just going to keep going. So we really need to focus on this hard.

Ms. Carlisle: Dr. Bechert, did you have something? Okay. All right, I'm going to move us on to Recommendation 3. And thank you Holle' for that response and Mr. Oliver. Comprehensive and standardized gather preparation and evaluation brochure and onsite presentation should be developed by BLM to be shared with the public observing gathers. This presentation would include, but not be limited to normal physiology and behavior for horses and burros. What is going to happen and when during the gather, what the end result could be, process for debriefing and include a process for immediate debriefing of participating public post gather.

Ms. Waddell: The BLM accepts and is excited about this recommendation. Excited is not in there, but I added that. The BLM is in the process of issuing a solicitation for additional public affairs support for Wild Horse and Burro gathers in fiscal year 2023. And the BLM intends to have such a product developed through this upcoming contract. Furthermore, the BLM has recently published a gather observation protocol document that outlines what is expected of public observers during a Wild Horse and Burro gather operation. Public viewing and education about Wild Horse and Burro gathers continues to be a top priority for the BLM. And so I mentioned this a little bit yesterday that we're looking forward to doing some of that proactive outreach and communication to the public as to why are we doing this kind of at a second grade level. Teachers could use it in the classrooms that explains Wild Horse and Burro Management.

Ms. McAlpine: I just wanted to follow up on that because as a former 4H Horse Program leader and an acting 4H Horse Program specialist, that is awesome and essential and we had similar programs in Massachusetts that were just incredible. So thank you for that response to that recommendation.

Ms. Carlisle: Moving on to Recommendation 4. The board recommends pursuing alternative non-cash incentives to ensure a high standard welfare for adopt wild horse and burros.

Ms. Waddell: In May and June of 2022, the Wild Horse and Burro Program conducted a series of three workshops with a diverse set of Wild Horse and Burro stakeholder groups to discuss various ideas for possible modifications to the current Adoption Incentive Program, including a non-cash incentive option. A non-cash incentive might take the form of a reimbursable voucher for certain goods or services thought to be necessary for the proper care of an adopted wild horse and burro, such as veterinary services, training, feed, tack, equipment materials, et cetera. This would not be dissimilar to the gilding vouchers the Wild Horse and Burro Program currently offers individuals when they adopt an intact stallion or cult. While the guilty voucher model might be easily replicable as an incentive, it possesses certain shortcomings. Unlike a cash incentive, a voucher based incentive would necessarily limit adopter's choices for how they can use the money. Not every adopter may require much of any veterinarian care for their Wild Horse and Burro in the first year. They may or may not intend to pay for professional training, rather they may plan to train the animal themselves. They may or may not need additional tack equipment, materials, et cetera. Such limitations on how adopters can use the incentive money would likely limit the appeal of the Adoption Incentive Program with a corresponding impact on overall adoption demand. The Wild Horse and Burro Program continues to engage agency leadership on the merits of this type of Adoption Incentive. And we also discussed a little about that yesterday. And Paul McGuire, the acting deputy, will be doing a presentation tomorrow.

Ms. McAlpine. And then I would suggest that also since we've been talking about this quite a lot and probably will be thinking of a recommendation, just sort of enhance some of this, that we keep this brief, brief, brief and also forest service needs to weigh in.

Mr. Oliver: Sure, thank you. So we again, don't have some of the authorities that BLM has to allow them to do some of the incentives that they have out there. Obviously the non-cash incentive is where we need to focus and what our opportunities are to do that. Recently we've done a transportation incentive on the Modoc and the Double Devil corrals out there very successful. It's opened up a lot of doors and opportunities for us. We're looking at our future and where we fit in the program here. BLM has been talking about the Off-range opportunities they have. It had been an easy out for us for a long time. We had horses, we talked to BLM, they said, sure, bring them in. That's not the case anymore. They're to the point where they need to save their space for the issues that they're facing right now. So that kind of put that back on us to step up our look at how we manage. They've bailed us out for a long time, so not just in the program that they've got going, but we look at some of the issues that they face with that long-term storage. So we have fewer numbers, I think we have more opportunities. So we're really opening the door. What are the options? What are opportunities that we have out there and what does it look like? Obviously we're going to continue to work with the BLM, we can't go our separate ways. No matter what happens, we're going after the same group of potential buyers and adopters and we don't want to be in competition. We want to see how we can enhance the process and get as many of those horses out as we can. So, thank you.

Ms. McAlpine: So this is a personal appeal and it ties back to Dr. Perryman's suggestion to a past study and recommendation about these tax incentives. Mr. Oliver from Forest Service just happened to mention that in the very, very near future, if not right now, things like the Adoption Incentive Program and placing horses in long-term care are going to become critical. So if any legislative aids happen to be listening to this, and I know my state senator and congressmen usually have their aids, I would appeal to you to help if not us, the board or BLM develop the proper legislative wording. Because when I spoke to my legislator about this three years ago, he said to me, great idea, come to me with a legislative suggestion. I have no background in writing that. But I think it's time and I'm hoping somebody's aids and some senator or congressman will help us and help BLM with this issue. And let's get going with this tax incentive for advocacy groups to help support this program and end this travesty of overpopulation and degradation of our range lands and ecosystem because the act says in perpetuity and we are at the tipping point.

Ms. Carlisle: Thank you. I'm going to move to Recommendation 5 and 5.5. I'll just read them together, they're short. Recommended that board members attend Wild Horse and Burro activities in order to gain a better understanding of how all portions of the program are implemented to utilize them to educate and communicate with outside stakeholders and that BLM utilize and involve board members based on their individual experience on an ongoing basis.

Ms. Waddell: The BLM agrees and plans to coordinate opportunities for board members to visit Wild Horse and Burro Program operations including field trips in conjunction with the meetings throughout the year. I also am supportive outside of the meetings. This will allow board members to gain an understanding of both the On-range and Off-range parts of the program. Board members currently serve as liaisons to the research team and the CAWP team, which we greatly appreciate. The BLM will continue to engage and involve board members in developed teams to assist in discussions and outcomes of program operations.

Ms. McAlpine: I'm sorry, I'm laughing because I'm usually pretty quiet and I'm usually the last one to raise my hand. But as a liaison and I was asked to serve as a liaison by BLM to the comprehensive Wild Animal. Wild Animal. The comprehensive in Wild Horse and Burro welfare. I lost it. I've lost it already this morning. Anyhow, I cannot say how helpful it was during the interim when we had three open positions. Jerry, here she is, CAWP when I can't remember all the words anymore. And again, I want to thank staff at BLM and Jerry, who was quite gracious when we were appointed as liaisons. It was critically important during that almost year period when our board was down to six members to have that communication on an ongoing basis. I think Dr. Bechert, or was it Tammy, mentioned it the other day. It really helped us save this advisory board, so thank you.

Ms. Carlisle: Thank you. Okay, Recommendation 6. Sorry, I lost my place. In order to improve the Wild Horse and Burro Program's efficiencies and coordination, especially the ability to respond to emergency situations, the board recommends that an outside non-government third party, or for example, non-government third party be retained to study, identify, and make best practice recommendations for systemic improvements in the Wild Horse and Burro Program.

Ms. Waddell: In the fiscal year 2022 Appropriations Act, the Secretary of the Interior was directed to establish a task force with representation from the Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Geological Survey, and any other bureau the secretary deems appropriate to focus on achieving a sustainable program through aggressive non-lethal population control strategy.

Dr. Perryman: Has this task force met?

Ms. Waddell: Yes.

Dr. Perryman: More than once?

Ms. Waddell: Yes.

Dr. Perryman: This is not a hearing, this is not a congressional hearing.

Ms. Waddell: Yeah, so the taskforce has met and there was some great dialogue that occurred and I think I will pass it to Dr. Jenkins for more information.

Dr. Jenkins: Yes, they have met and they've started to discuss this program. Of course there wasn't a lot of expertise amongst them, so they have to spent a lot of time educating themselves about what the issues are. And after the second meeting, I don't believe there's been one, a follow up meeting after that. So I don't have much else to report on that task force at this point.

Dr. Perryman: Who is in charge of herding the task force?

Dr. Jenkins: I believe it's Laura Daniel Davis at the ASLM, Assistant Secretary Lands and Minerals office.

Dr. Perryman: At BLM?

Dr. Jenkins: No, in the Department of Interior.

Dr. Perryman: Oh, Interior, oh yeah.

Ms. McAlpine: My question is simple. If a task force of this magnitude of need is put together, why were subject matter experts not included in that task force where I can tell you from practical experience, it can take 2, 3, 5 years to develop enough knowledge to make logical decisions.

Dr. Jenkins: There were subject matter experts that were invited to come in and speak with them. But my point was that a lot of these higher level executives need a lot of education to figure out what their charge is. And we're still waiting for direction from that task force so we can help them further their own objectives under the secretary's direction. Thank you.

Ms. Carlisle: Final recommendation. The board recommends that BLM leadership direct BLM state directors to comply with national strategic Wild Horse Burro Program plans and standardized data collections methods.

Ms. Waddell: The BLM has formed a focus group that's comprised of state and headquarter leadership to explore options and benefits of a strategy that include both removal and or an emphasis on fertility control. The focus group will review funding levels and risk factors, inflation costs, holding availability, et cetera, approved gather schedules, overall projections and leaders intent to propose ways to make meaningful progress in fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024. The state representation will in turn be advocates with their peers and staff help message decisions and build consensus. In the end, the group will emphasize actions that will advance healthy herds from resilient, healthy landscapes. And Dr. Perryman, the focus group has met several times. It's going well. Great conversations, great discussions, but it's a hard task. We're in a year with a continuing resolution, so we don't know what that funding level's going to be. We also have the challenge of space availability and we want to be extremely cautious about moving in towards plant gathers when we know there may be some emergencies. So we want to be cautious and continue the discussion.

Ms. Carlisle: Thank you. I think that's a really fantastic first step. And Commissioner French.

Mr. French: I'm going back through my notes talking about this recommendation and what not we were talking. And it comes from my experience and the reason I bring this to you right now is that as it might be something you want to talk about when you meet the next time. If you look at other agencies who are charged with managing wildlife and whatnot on the same real estate, there is a protocol in terms of setting up an annual inventories, whether it be aerial inventories or whether it be on the ground that most of the time in the Western states annuals aerial inventories. I asked for this initially because of some of the problems that we had observed in Northern Nevada in terms of underestimating wild horse herds in HMAs and HAs that was pretty egregious for a while. And it was mainly because the bureau didn't have the capacity or the protocol to actually do the inventories that were necessary to bring them up to speed year in and year out. And I maybe we talk offline on some of that. But bottom line was, is that it appeared to me that having some sort of protocol which allowed for inventory work maybe every other year to try to capture what's going on with those horse numbers is probably would be beneficial to the bureau in terms of capturing either high recruitment levels or high mortality levels year in and year out so that you have a better idea of what's there. That was the law behind it.

Ms. Carlisle: Commissioner Pearson says nevermind. All right, thank you everybody and thank you to the BLM and Forest Service for really, really clear answers. They really help us to move forward. So at this point I'll turn it over to Bryant for anything before Forest Service does some presentations.

Mr. Kuechle: No, I think we can roll right into that. So I'll hand it off to Holle' for the BLM program update unless she's going to hand it off to somebody else. And then when that concludes, we'll shift over to the Forest Service.

Ms. Waddell: Right then, thank you, Bryant. Yeah, I'll hand it over to Chuck if Forest Service wants to go first. That way we can roll right into the BLM budget update.

Mr. Oliver: All right, thanks Holle'. Teresa will be giving our update today.

## **Forest Service Program Update**

***Dr. Teresa Drotar, National Wild Horse and Burro Manager, USFS***

Dr. Drotar: Okay, Forest Service does have a Wild Horse and Burros Program. That's something that we need to let a lot of the people out there know, because oftentimes we get forgotten. Next slide. Forest Service... Okay, Forest Service has actually 53 wild horses and burros territories that were identified in 1971. 34 of those are active. We have quite a few number numbers you can tell that have been put on the inactive status because they no longer support wild horses or burros where they were. 23 of those active territories are joint management areas with BLM. Sometimes depending on who has the greater number of horses on those joint management areas, Forest Service will take priority and sometimes BLM will in some of those. With the wild horses and with the Forest Service, we have a different structure than BLM. The regional Forester and the forest supervisor are in charge. They're the ones that allocate the money and we don't have quite such a pillar of authority that's good and bad. The good part is, is out there on the forest we have certified range management specialists that are really good at monitoring the ecosystem, which is I think more than what BLM's Wild

Horse and Burro Program has. The bad thing is, is if they have a major fire or something, the Wild Horse and Burros Program may not get the funding that year that they need out on that forest. Next slide please. Currently we have an anticipated AML on all of our territories for horses of about 2100, but we're currently at approximately 9,800. So you can tell that we are way over AML just like anything on BLM. Burros, we have about 1200, so we are about four times over what we should be with the anticipated growth rate about 20% a year, just like any place where these animals exist. So that is not vastly different than BLM except that our numbers of course aren't quite as great because we consider about 20% of the wild horses out there are Forest Service. Next slide please. We have two corral systems. One is the Double Devil's Garden that is in the Modoc National Forest in Northern California. There is a capacity right now of about six to 750 horses. We hope to get, if we ever get money that can be expanded to accommodate up to 1500 horses, which we do need that, especially because BLM is getting in very high capacity for themselves and so they're not going to be able to accommodate our horses. The Double Devil's Garden has done a very good job of the horses that they gather being able to place those. They have an over 90% placement rate, however you can figure the math, some of the very older horses that are very difficult to place. You end up with eight to 10% that are there for a year or more and that is 90% is really good or 92% placement. But the rest of them will continue to add up and so we need to figure out something to do with those older unadoptable horses even when we have a high placement rate. Bloomfield, New Mexico, we also have a set of corrals. They are not as full most of the time. The capacity there is maybe 400 horses depending on how you measure it, maybe closer to 250. Those are mostly used for the horses that are in the immediate area down in New Mexico. We do transfer some horses and burros as well to those corrals and they have a cooperative that helps place them as well. But it's a much smaller number of animals. We're trying to develop a couple of other facilities that will be quite small but will accommodate horses off of our Oregon territories and also Arizona territories where we would be able to gather and hold our own horses. But those are still in the works and of course need funding. Next slide please. What we do at the corrals, we no longer put the freeze brands on the animals for several reasons, mostly welfare. There has been research that showed that there is significant stress to animals if they are either hot or freeze branded. And BLM also uses the implantable microchips, but we rely strictly on the implantable microchips to identify individual animals. The advantage of the microchip is it's a lifetime thing where a freeze brand, depending on the coat and age, you may not be able to read that. Something that was put in place when they are yearlings by the time they're 12 years old may be indecipherable whereas the microchip is there. And that is another one of the incentives that we provide for our adopters is we pay for the transfer of that microchip number to the new owners. So that is all taken care of when they get titled to their horse, they are identified for life. Next slide please. Some specific territory examples of what's going on. Up at the Modoc National Forest where the Double Devil's Gardens are, they expect to reach AML by 2024. They are currently in a gather situation, which is why none of them are here in the room because they are trying to remove up to 500 horses this year and then next year a similar number and hopefully again reach AML by 2024, which would be a great accomplishment. The Black Bear Burro Territory is in a whole different situation that's down in southern California. The forest has no money. They're way over AML, the burros are getting on the highways and getting hit. So they're looking at different things in trying to partner with BLM. When BLM can gather corral facilities for just trapping, then they will be moving those, but there's a major budget problem down there. Jicarilla up in New Mexico is darting contraceptives on those territories that has its own challenges in some areas, but it's not as challenging down there. The Inyo is in California and Nevada right on the border. They're in the process of doing a new territory plan, a new NEPA. It was quite out of date what they had. The steering committee that they had designated in their old one no longer exists most of those. So that's true of many of our territories. This is just one example. Region four also, they have multiple census flights. Region four is Nevada and Utah. They have where most of the horses or multiple census flights are scheduled in 2023 and moving forward with new territory plans on them, about half a dozen of the territories there. So that's the type of thing that's going on within the Forest Service territories. And of course we see the consequences. What I'm showing you here is a riparian area. This is not caused by cattle. This is strictly horses. And so the damage is extreme to the environment. This is up in California. Hopefully by getting to AML some restoration can go on in areas like this. Also, of course we have sage grass in some of our territories and down in New Mexico. This little mouse is an endangered species. So we have those that are the same between the two agencies. And then of course the animal welfare is a huge issue, particularly where it's been really dry. We have had documented deaths from starvation and also dehydration that is expected to increase if we can't remove animals, we have animal welfare issues. So we do use helicopter gathers where it is possible. We do have areas the one up above is a helicopter gather up in California. Down below is an example of a territory in Oregon. Doesn't have a lot of horses but it's very wooded and so census flights are very difficult because you can't see the animals and also helicopter gathers are useless. However, we do a lot of bait trapping and we have cooperatives down there and in other areas that help with that. So it varies as to what we do use. We are looking to use more and more bait trapping and different kind of low stress ways to remove horses and burros also as we can. We have coalitions, some we're trying very hard to develop



more with the tribes. Dr. Francisco is a native and is very helpful in trying to move that forward. We also have ranchers, we have wildlife officials and advocates. We have advocacy groups that are involved in helping with some of the placements and also in some of these things. And we even have some recreation groups that are interested in coalitions. And that is one of our goals is to develop those and to find others as we can. It's not always easy with the structure that we have. We do have training capabilities. This is a picture of one of our, we have a 4H up in California, 4H training group where we give young horses yearlings and weanlings to some of the 4H kids and they've got 90 days. And it's very similar to what was already described with BLM. It's amazing what some of these kids will do with these young horses. Many of them, they end up adopting them but if they're not, they're very adoptable. So that is a very successful program. I'm trying to expand it more nationally. It would be great if we could have 4H groups in the east coast that participated in this and I think it would be very enjoyable for the kids as well as helpful for the agency. And then of course we have adult training organizations similar to the Mustang makeovers, but we don't have quite as robust that we call mustang makeovers. And then the horse that you see there on the trail, that is a former wild horse that we are trying to develop a training program within the Forest Service. This is in developmental stages where we train horses to go back to become our stock and saddle stock that we need on the forest. Many of these forces, the only way you can get into different places and if we can train our own from our own lands, it would be a great way to go instead of having to purchase. Any of you that have tried to purchase trained horses know that the prices have gone up exceptionally? So that's another avenue for training that we're really trying to promote. And then contraceptive use. PZP is used in some territories. The darting program primarily in New Mexico has been using PZP in some other territories. Many of our territories are not strictly range. We do have some that are close within the forest and it's very difficult to dart animals from a distance. But we are doing what we can. GonaCon if it's administered properly, shows a little more long-term promise. And so we're moving towards GonaCon usage. And some territories we're looking at as was mentioned with BLM treating mares that come in and holding them for long enough to give a booster and then releasing them back to the territory so that they have some contraceptive on board. And we're very excited in future solutions, things that are in the pipeline that aren't available to us yet. We desperately need other solutions, other vaccines that will give us a longer term contraceptive use. So we're looking and hopefully going to begin those sometime in the future as well as monitoring equipment. This is another thing that I have asked multiple times, a long term implantable chip that you can get some kind of monitoring in more than six feet away, maybe 10 years down the road. But I'm going to keep pushing at it until we get that because we have to be able, if you're going to be giving treating animals with contraceptives on the range, you need to know which animals you're looking at. Many of our horses are plain, dark brown or bay horses, there's no being able to tell them one from another. So that is another very important part if we're going to be able to use contraceptives on the range. So the goals that we have in front of us, number one is obtain funding for our Wild Horse and Burro Program and actually develop more of a distinct program that we can actually move forward. It's been ignored for too long and the longer it gets ignored, the worse it gets. So obtaining funding and recognition that we have a program is one of our goals. Working towards achieving AML as I said, one of our big territories in Modoc, they're looking at having AML in two years. We hope to be able to do that in more places, increase our cooperative relationships and our partnerships. That is a real goal and something that we're moving forward increasing the scientific solutions for monitoring and population control. And I added one that it didn't come up on this version. Another thing that we're struggling with that is draining what budget we have is the difference in training the public the difference between little W and capital W wild. We have horses on some of our forests that are not the original described progeny of the horses that are the capital W from 1971 but have been turned out or have been and released and then continue to do what horses do or come over from tribal lands that are small W wild. And we need to educate the public in the difference between those two so that when we're starting to gather what are really unauthorized livestock, that we don't get the pushback on those because they are treated differently than the original wild horses. And those are the main goals that we have for the Forest Service. Thank you.

Ms. Carlisle: Questions and comments from the board? We'll start with Dr. Lenz.

Dr. Lenz: So it was a good presentation and I support the use of microchips. But I'm curious if I found a horse wander down the road and I scanned him and got his microchip number, what I find that in the data mar or home again or the National Horse Microchip Registry?

Dr. Drotar: Yes you would. That's one of the things, any horse that we microchip that's like I say an incentive for the owners, we transfer it to them or it is listed.



Dr. Lenz: So you all entered into the national database?

Dr. Drotar: Correct.

Dr. Lenz: Good, great. Thanks. Related question, have you had any difficulties with brand inspection, different brand laws from different states and the movement of animals across state lines that may may require actual brands as opposed to chips? I support the chip.

Dr. Drotar: We have not. And oftentimes we deal with the brand inspectors, that's only in the Western states of course, and we notify the state vets if we're moving because we do move animals like from California that have not even been processed to our corrals in New Mexico, for example. And we notify what we're doing with them and no, we have not had issues with that.

Ms. McAlpine: Thank you for the presentation and thank you for mentioning the issue with drop off horses. It's a really serious issue and I know they do intermingle with the true wild horses and burros in many of our states. And with regard to the reservations, I also understand that that is a problem with reservation horses moving in and out of BLM and Forest Service lands. So thank you for mentioning that and have any collab... What about collaborative issues and collaborative groups coming together with the reservation and trying to solve that situation?

Dr. Drotar: We are working for towards that. As you know the tribes have decades, years, hundred years of abuse and so are reticent oftentimes to deal with the government. So yes, we are working to try and find those solutions and to start those dialogues and you're absolutely correct. I mean, we have horses that... because their problems are similar to our problems. Horses are, especially in the last few years with drought and whatnot and especially in the southwest, are released onto their territories as well as our territories and they're not always bordering. So yes, we are trying to work very diligently to build those coalitions, but there are challenges and we are trying to face those challenges.

Ms. Carlisle: Thank you Dr. Drotar very much. BLM budget update for fiscal year '23 is up next.

### **BLM Budget Update for Fiscal Year 2023**

*Ms. Holle' Waddell, Division Chief of the Wild Horse and Burro Program, BLM*

Ms. Waddell: So before hopping into the actual presentation today and going through our update, I just wanted to remind everyone of the legal authorities for what BLM is responsible for and that we're guided by numerous laws passed by Congress that are signed into law. But for purposes today, the two most important pieces of legislation are the Wild-Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. Both of them were signed into law until the 1970s and they provide BLM with the legal authority to manage wild horses and burros on public lands as part of our multiple use mission. Next slide please. So under that legal authority provided by law, we at the BLM have one main goal that guides all of our actions. We want to manage the healthy herds and wild horses and burros on healthy public lands. And that means managing them as an integral part of the natural system as required by law. And this includes considerations for other plants and animals that share those public lands. Next slide. Oh, thank you. So how's it going? You might ask and it's a lot of what we're talking about today. And how are we doing? And as it stands right now, our most recent estimate shows that more than 82,000, our March population numbers show that about 82,000 wild horse and burros are roaming on public lands. And these populations do grow quickly and can double in size every four years if not managed as you know. And you can just imagine the stress that that type of growth rate would be putting on the herd and the resources that they need to survive. And that's a lot of what we've been discussing yesterday and today. And though this represents the second consecutive year where the population has declined, we are still more than three times over the sustainable population level or what we call the appropriate managed level or AML. And while we're pleased that that population has been declining, we have a lot more work to do. The chart on the left is showing that there are still more than 55,000 wild horses and burros on public lands and with most of those animals living in Nevada, which is the dry state in the country. And we do know that other states and areas are also being impacted by the drought. In addition to the chronic overpopulation, the drought continues to be a major concern for the BLM. And this slide shows drought

conditions as of September 13th, which is courtesy of the US Drought Monitor. On this map was also shown earlier during the Arizona State presentation. But what is different about this particular map is that we've overlaid wild horse and burro herd management areas in the black. And in the green, we are showing the Off-range pastures as well and where the majority of those access, where those animals are. And as you can see that most of the horses live today, they coincide with more the severe drought conditions that's indicated by the darker shades of red and orange that are on this graph. And these are real life conditions that these animals are enduring and that shows the importance of reducing that overpopulation. So we believe that the animals have the best chance of surviving drought and the effects of climate change if the herd is at or close to appropriate management levels. So just sitting in this for a moment, these next two slides are going to show you some of the images that I thought were important for illustrating the challenges that we're facing with overpopulation and drought. It's consistent with our conversation yesterday. And Tammy, I believe it was you who said, let's tell the story good and bad, right? We can talk about successes all day. That's correct. And overpopulation causes that overgrazing and coupled with drought just as drastically impacted range and land resources such as the Triple B complex in Nevada, which is where that vegetational exposure is located in the photo on the left. And this land was clearly impacted by overgrazing and drought and there's not much for the animals to eat in that photo. Similarly to the animals that are on the right or clearly in poor condition, which is a result of a lack of water and food caused by drought and overpopulation as well. And we've conducted emergency gather operations in both herd management areas in recent years in 2021 and again in 2022. So burros are not immune to the impact of drought as well and we can see that there's an increase in public safety concerns when they wander into towns or on the highway looking for food or water. And like these seen outside of the Chemehuevi in California. It has become more and more common for animals to venture onto private property or onto highways in search of food and water because they've depleted what was available to them on the public lands and in their herd management areas. And I think we've talked a lot about that today as well. So how have we been trying to address this challenge, this challenge of drought and these impacts? This year we increased our operations across the board to reduce over population and slow population growth. So some of this information that David mentioned this morning in his remarks regarding the number of gathers and removals and fertility control treatments that were applied though these are just preliminary numbers. As of September the BLM had removed more than 19,000 animals and we talked about that. We gathered over 20,000 of them in order to get those wild horse and burros and they were from overpopulated herds and this is a record number, he stated that earlier that we've ever removed. And likewise, BLM conducted more fertility control treatments than we've ever done in one year beating the number that were treated even in 2021. And even in that year in 2021, we doubled what we had accomplished in 2020. So it may not be exactly where we want to be, but there definitely are some increases in the number of treatments that are being done and more herds approach as they approach appropriate management levels. And as we bring more contractors online to help conduct cat street and release gathers, we expect treatment numbers to vastly increase. And we've been working on other program improvements this year by standardizing the protocol for public observation and gathers. So we're clearly communicating what's expected of the public when they are attending those gathers. And if we haven't gotten you a copy, I'm not sure if one is in the binders, if not, we'll definitely give you guys a copy of that gather observation protocol document. But we've also released a solicitation for more contractors to assist us in our gathering, treating and releasing. And particularly for those herds that are not really accessible for ground guarding, we're just not feasible there. And unfortunately the solicitation was protested, so we haven't been able to move forward just yet. But that's just yet, we hope that this will lead to, that we'll definitely be able to move forward with that particular contract quickly this year. That's solicitation quickly this fiscal year. Well, we've also released a grant opportunity and noticed a funding opportunity that I spoke about yesterday and where we hope to build and more effective public-private partnerships to dart animals in the field as well as any partnerships and support for other program operations. And finally we made some major moves on research, including publishing a strategic research plan and issuing a call for new research projects, which you'll hear more about when Dr. Griffin does a presentation tomorrow. So Off-Range. As of September 16th, we did place over 7,000 and Davis remember this morning talked about 7,500 wild horse and burros into private care and that was through adoption sale or transfer. And those continued to be a three year streak of place in more than 5,000 animals into private care. This board remembers not too long ago where we were barely placing 2000 animals into private care. So we have seen an uptick in that. And of course we couldn't accomplish this high level of private care placement without the support of our partners. We have great partners like the Mustang Heritage Foundation is one of them, and John talked about them earlier today as well as other programs like the Adoption Center Program. And you can see that nearly half of all the adoptions have taken place through the Adoption Center Program as the table shows the differences here. But we're pleased with the success. And I know that's not a fun term and I know that there's some disagreeance there, but there's a lot of work and effort that's been put into continuing to try to ensure that we're placing animals as well as we possibly can. And then I talked to you a little bit yesterday regarding the revision to the Adoption Center Program policy that was issued in January that did talk

about increasing the number of compliances, so it makes it mandatory for those adoptions and animals, and then within six months. And we'll talk a little bit more about some of those changes to the policy. So we continue to provide lifetime care for adopted in unadopted and unsold animals. And you can see that the vast majority of the animals that are off-range holding facilities are on pastures which is more cost effective, which you talked about in a better quality of life long term for these animals. But inflation cost will be impacting animals also in Off-Range corrals as well as Off-Range pastures. So beyond the numbers, I want to go over a few other accomplishments from our Off-Range branch this year. Some of these are also identified in your binders. We continue to be amazed on how successful the online corral placing animals in private care is going. You can see the nearly 850 animals found homes through the online corral, which offers animals for adoption via competitive bid, kind of like eBay, right? But for horses. I mentioned the Mustang Heritage Foundation partner earlier on the previous slide, but as you can see here, they're responsible for nearly half of the animals that were placed into private care last year. And that also many of those animals are trained animals. And I think that's important to note. It's truly an amazing accomplishment for partner. It has been going extremely well. And offering pasture proposals are still being evaluated from this solicitation that was released in fiscal year 2021. And this is not for lack of trying, this should be revealing for everyone regarding how much time and effort goes into, from the start of the solicitation until animals actually arrive at a new facility. So it's important to plan ahead when we're trying to increase our offerings holding capacity, if that's the decision that's being made. And also supported by funding. A few years ago, we also provided kind of a cycle and a steps and process for you all for the Off-Range holding to give you an idea that a decision isn't made today and then animals arrive 30 days later, that it is at least an 18 month process from the time that we open up a solicitation until animals will be arriving at the facility. And so finally, as most of you're already aware, we undertook an evaluation of the Adoption Center program this year and looking for ways where we can better secure health and safety of adopted animals. And you'll hear more about that effort tomorrow from Paul, but definitely will be taking any questions. Again, he's the acting deputy division chief for Off-Range operations and he'll be giving that presentation again tomorrow. We can talk anytime. Thank you. As a whole, the national program also issued four new instruction memorandums, IMs, and instruction bulletins since the advisory board met last summer. And you should also have links to each of these in your book, or you should have IMs in your book. The first, it's a little small, I hope you guys can see it okay. But the first was issued for the gather planning, scheduling, and approval. And we talked a little bit about some of the criteria being in there regarding emergencies. And so the IM overall just outlines how we plan, schedule and approve gathers and provides information, outlines a process for developing and approving the gather schedule as well as for requesting emergency gathers. We also reissued the Adoption Incentive program policy with several major changes that included raising the adoption fee to \$125 for animals participating in the Adoption Incentive program, requiring compliance inspections to occur within the first six months of animals being adopted and requiring a veterinarian or BLM officer to sign the title eligibility letter prior to the incentive being paid. And that's an important fact. Sometimes I think people believe that title is immediate at 12 months and automatically the animal's titled, that is not true. An adopter must apply for title. So they have to complete a title eligibility letter. And if you are participating, if the adopter is participating in the Adoption Incentive Program and they're required now to have a BLM official or a veterinarian certify that title eligibility letter before sending it in. And that is reviewed by BLM staff and is what is needed in order to receive the incentive. So these changes were identified after the internal review of the program last summer and also in the fall. And as mentioned previously, we will continue to evaluate this program with the help of the public and also our stakeholders. And I'll obviously let Paul go into more detail tomorrow about it during his presentation. Also, something you will be hearing about from Dr. Paul Griffin tomorrow during his presentation we'll be that we issued an information bulletin to publish the 2021 Wild Horse and Burro strategic research plan. And it lays out our priorities and goals of ongoing research efforts. And finally, we also reissued the IM to renew our policy for utilizing the authority provided by Congress to transfer animals to other government agencies for use as work animals. I always get tongue twisted with that. But this policy was helpful when we're working with other agencies like the border patrol, for example, to provide animals for their needs. So I'm kind of rolling into the next topic, Celeste, if that's okay or do you want to take questions now? It's up to you.

Ms. Carlisle: Let's have you get through with budget in case questions sort of overlap.

Ms. Waddell: Okay, sounds good. Thank you. Okay, so this slide shows how the BLM spent the budget that was allocated for the Wild Horse and Burro Program. And I want to stress that this preliminary information is just as of September 15th because obviously when we were preparing the PowerPoints and preparing for this meeting, the year had not closed out. So we'll definitely have final expenditures that once they're compiled, they'll be posted on our website in the coming weeks. So as you can see from this pie chart, and I hope you can see it okay. Okay, I'm not going to read from it, I'll just do my best. That the vast majority of our expenditures continue to be caring for unadopted and unsold animals and our

offering to facilities. And I think that when it's the purple and the green, I'll just let you guys look at it. But those two pieces of the pie is the vast majority. Expenditures in those categories, they continue to remain high in the coming years and as we provide lifetime care for unadopted and also unsold animals. And so what we've been focused on for several years now is moving more animals from higher cost corrals to lower cost pastures when it's determined that they don't have an adoption demand or a sale demand. And so this helps keep the holding costs low and provides better outcomes for the animals as well. And I do want to make a quick mention that the population growth suppression cost. I know that it looks small on this particular pie chart, but I want you to be aware that many of the fertility control costs this year were associated with gather operations. So for example, we conducted several gathers this year that included both removal and fertility control components. And so most of those costs were associated with capturing the animal, which you can see in the JJ slice of the pie for gathers. So I know that's confusing concept and I'm happy to answer questions about it. But obviously when you're spending money you can only spend money in certain ways and so it's difficult to conduct a gather operation that's primarily for achieving AML. So those costs, they gather contract time and attendance, many of the other costs associated would be focused on achieving AML is difficult to split that out to fertility control. So if a gatherer is primarily for fertility control, then all of those costs will be associated with KF, which is the fertility control, what we call program elements. And I don't want to give you a budget lesson, but it can get a little complex. So anyway, so while it may seem we only spent 1% of our budget on population growth suppression, the true percentage is higher based on that fact of the hidden cost being in some of those other program elements. So finally I want to end on the president's budget request, and this request was 453.1 million for the program. And the budget request will continue to support On-Range operations that'll hopefully curtail overpopulation across the west with the major focus being on fertility control for herds that are at or near appropriate management levels. It will also continue to allow us to care for animals that are currently in offering holding as well as work to increase placements through our adoption and cell programs. And this includes maintaining support for the Adoption Center program as well. The President's Budget is not final, we are operating under continued resolution and we have a certain percentage of funding that we are allowed to spend and that funding level is at 137 million, which was our fiscal year 2022 funding level. So on that note, I want to thank the board for your attention. I appreciate you all listening and I know you've been preparing questions, I've seen lots of people writing things down, so I'm happy to take all of your questions and if you have more specific ones, there's staff here also that will be able to support some of those responses.

Ms. Carlisle: Thank you very much. I'm looking around giving folks a chance. Ms. McAlpine.

Ms. McAlpine: I just have a question about a comment that you made earlier, I don't know if it was this year or last year. There was some high ranking political comments mentioning that the border control mounted program was going to be defunded after the infamous strapping incident on the border. So do you know if the BLM Border Patrol Mountain Program is still being funded?

Ms. Waddell: As far as I know they are. We have transferred animals this year. I would have to ask Meredith, I think it was, I don't remember 20, was it 20 something animals? I'd have to ask the question as a how many, but as far as I know they were still functioning. Welcome.

Dr. Perryman: I have a quick question. How many doses of contraceptive product is this budget planned for for this next fiscal year?

Ms. Waddell: So we haven't outlined exactly the number of treatments. Obviously it's this Wild Horse and Burros focus group that's been meeting. We've been having conversations about the, we have a couple of proposed gather schedules that also have a population growth suppression components to it. So we're talking about all the tools being in the toolbox. And whether that that includes sex ratio adjustments or treatment, whatever that might be, they are listed. So we haven't identified exactly how many because it's going to depend on which direction we go.

Dr. Perryman: But there is money in the budget for product purchase?

Ms. Waddell: Yes.



Dr. Perryman: So how did you develop,? I mean, was it a zero base budget? Was it a historical budget? I mean, you have to base it on something, right?

Ms. Waddell: Yeah. And the president's budget was a little more challenging because we are anticipating the inflation at our Off-Range corrals and our off-range pastures to nail you down a a number, right? We always really start at 2,000 is our number that we say, okay, are we going to be able to meet 2000 treatments? And can we do it if we're focusing on a gather schedule that is primarily to achieve AML? So we're going to be looking at planned gathers. Or is it going to be more strategic where we're looking at some of the smaller and taking a snowball approach, or are we going to take an avalanche approach to gathers? There's several pieces on the table and we were talking about a budget. Although population growth suppression is a priority, so is feeding and caring for the animals that are already in holding. And so that honestly is what is taking precedence in our budget.

Dr. Perryman: Right, I understand that. I mean that's what I want to know. What did you start with? So 2,000 that's the answer. So that's fine.

Ms. Waddell: Yeah, and let me clarify and I'll have to ask because I think the number may be 2,500 that's in the president's budget. Because you know that was released months ago. That obviously was released months ago. Robin, am I right at 2,500? Is that the number in the president's budget request? To the mic please. Okay, and while she's coming up Dr. Perryman, I'll say that obviously the budget comes out, I think it was released this year in like April or something like that. It was a little late, but... Oh, and no offense to anyone who's watching, but it was late.

Dr. Perryman: No it was like, just go ahead and say.

Ms. Waddell: But in it obviously we're looking at, this is before we had conversations about inflation costs. And when I tell you that we've had some of our pasture contractors that are like, Hey, I have a drought certified letter here and I'm going to need to make some changes to cost. And we've had that also in offer range corrals that wasn't considered when we originally did that budget, as well as the gather numbers as well as some of our adoptions. I mean, all of those things are now challenged. As to what's going to be priority and it's got to be caring for those animals. Okay, Robin, go sorry.

Ms. Parton: Yeah, so we have almost 1700 in that one gather schedule.

Ms. Waddell: Okay, and in the gather schedule., but what was in the president's budget like the one that was printed?

Ms. Parton: That was 1700?

Ms. Waddell: Okay, thank You.

Dr. Perryman: Okay, no, and I understand that. I mean, and if we go on a continuing resolution, everything's going to change as well. But that gives us an idea anyway of what the plan is. And one other thing that I just would mention is I've often wondered, and I've never gotten a real answer and I've just asked people in the field over the years, one of the bureau does not have their own horse herd like the forest service does in order to do field reconnaissance and monitoring, range monitoring and such that. That may be... I realize you have to have an infrastructure to keep them and feed them as well, but we're already doing that. But sometimes I think it makes sense as a range land scientist, sometimes you just have to get out there on a horseback and just look at stuff and maybe that's an opportunity, I mean, it's not going to solve all of our big problem here, but it might be an opportunity to utilize some of these horses that we have just like border patrol and police departments and other things. It may be something to consider in the future. So I'll leave it at that. I'll yield back.

Ms. Waddell: Yeah, I'm not sure who you asked because I'll tell you that we do. We have lots of field specialist that utilize walk horses that have been gathered that are in some of our corrals that have been trained at some of our correctional facilities and they're back in the corrals working animals. So that does happen. And they're used on gather operations at times as well. So we do utilize those wild horses.



Ms. Carlisle: Commissioner Pearson and then Dr. Lenz.

Ms. Pearson: Okay, you mentioned in your report that you're looking for collaborative efforts and cooperators on certain programs. So would increasing or ramping up the fertility treatments, the On-Range treatments where possibly are limited by the budget but could we work in some sort of program maybe with the state of Utah or somebody like that that's willing to help fund maybe the fertility treatment itself and cooperate with the housing because I know there's a structure there and a timeframe that you have to meet with the boosters and that before you re-release that treat and release, right?

Ms. Waddell: Yeah.

Ms. Pearson: So is that something that the bureau would be willing to look at?

Ms. Waddell: Yes, absolutely. So any organization or individual that would be interested in responding to that notice of funding opportunity, field darting or darting program or fertility control treatments, all of that will be part of that. We definitely are looking forward to those collaboration efforts.

Ms. Pearson: I think one of the ones that Utah was proposing is that yeah, subsidizing it but looking at specific gathers, right? And to avoid future gatherers would be to gather a few extra horses while the equipment's there, while they're already there. So like another a 100 head off of maybe the three or 400 head that they were gathering and then help subsidize that program to treat and release that extra bunch. If you're looking at that, that's another a 100 head next year that you're going to skip on the productivity that you're going to avoid on this four years or five years of doubling the herd, the population growth. And so I think we need to focus really hard on that. And if there are groups, because I understand the helicopter gathers, I understand the feasibility and already have in the animals in the crowds. Darting is very time con... I mean, you get...

Ms. Waddell: No sure it is.

Ms. Pearson: And where we're at it, it's not even remotely feasible because you're talking about hundreds of thousands of acres and maybe one person can dart 10 horses in a day or something like that.

Ms. Waddell: I'm willing to walk 100,000 acres. Yeah, no, but for sure, I mean, we would be wanting to look at that proposal and I would encourage people to respond to the notice of funding opportunity because often we receive kind of unsolicited proposals where there's not a notice of funding opportunity. And so we receive proposals and we have carved out kind of a process and time to receive these. So please take advantage of it. And because it's a note, it's a funded opportunity, we have the flexibility to engage in dialogue with the proposal if we have questions or need clarity on those things. It's not the same as a contract, right? It can be kind of handled more like a partnership and a collaboration versus a contract for government services of some sort.

Ms. Pearson: Thank you.

Dr. Lenz: So in the parts of the country where you have your holding pastures, hay costs due to inflation, diesel fuel and droughts gone up 40 to a 100%. So if you all taking that account when you're setting your budget that it's going to be way more than it was last year.

Ms. Waddell: No, Dr. Lenz, because when we did the budget, it was last year. The federal budgeting process doesn't happen on October 1. It happens almost a year before for the current year. Anytime in federal budgeting you're working in three budget years at a time. And so no, the drought wasn't as bad. There was still a drought, but it just wasn't as bad and we didn't have the inflation. So when we planned that budget, that's what I was explaining to Dr. Perryman, sure we had great sites on nearly 2000 animals. But that's going to change just like we had sites on continuing a 20,000 removal number over the next three years. That's the operation that was aligned in one of the reports that we submitted to

Congress. That's no longer possible because of the realities of funding and the emergencies as well as now these increased costs that we're anticipating. I'm sorry, not anticipating that we have, it's not even anticipation

Dr. Lenz: But especially in Kansas and Oklahoma, the hay cost are unbelievably higher than last year if you can even get it right, right?

Ms. Waddell: Right.

Dr. Lenz: So that's a little worrisome. Okay.

Mr. Yardley: Can I just comment on what Dr. Lenz just said? Last year we were paying, two years ago we could have gotten three-way hay, which is a green hay as much as we wanted for \$100 a ton, this year we had to pay \$280 a ton. Last year we spent more than we'd ever spent on alfalfa, which was around \$280 a ton because it's higher in protein, higher in nutrients. This year we spent \$360 a ton. So when you take all of that into consideration, and two years ago we were paying about \$200 a ton for alfalfa. So like it's astronomically increased. So I know it's difficult because of when the budget is determined to take those things into account, but they are real world problems with real world numbers that you have to take into consideration. And that's all. Thanks.

Dr. Bechert: Thanks. My comment is along the same lines. When I was looking at the budget that you have for this year, it seems like we're barely treading water, keeping your head above water. Over 60% will go to maintaining horses. They'll undoubtedly be more emergency gathers. And so very little is available, if any, to really deal proactively with the crisis that's out there now. And I know your hands are tied because of the budgeting process, but I wonder, has anybody created a budget that's like a wish budget? So if we were to really deal with the crisis, what would it cost? What would it really take to treat the animals that you've gathered? You're removing some. We know the process that needs to be implemented, but what would that actually cost? And then I don't know if there's a process like emergency appropriation to deal with that because we're just going into a hole here.

Ms. Waddell: Great question Dr. Bechert. And we haven't done kind of the bigger, if we could have everything for a day, probably since 2020. But we definitely could do that exercise. We provide David often with kind of, if we wanted to do everything, every gather, here's what it would cost. And then the idea about holding those animals but obviously we don't have the space too. And so we could do the exercise, I mean, because we have the numbers, but if inflation continues to grow, I mean, then it would just immediately expire. The funding, the funding plans or whatever came out of that particular wishlist budget would become null probably like within months.

Dr. Bechert: Yeah, I guess you'd have to build inflation into the budget. So real time, this is what it is next year, this is what it would be. But it seems like that would be really helpful.

Ms. Waddell: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Carlisle: I'm just going to jump in here to add to this conversation that Dr. Bechert is exactly right. That that is the sort of planning that has to occur in order to plan strategically and outward and to plan comprehensively. So all the parts of the program that need to scale up together, scale up together. But if the agencies are constrained by an annual budget that you have to just, and you only are allowed to plan just for that, then we never get to a point of achieving that. And I know a lot of us have been struggling with how to look for ways to change that and examples we've talked about it already, just examples of other longer term funded programs and how to get towards that. So I just wanted to recognize that. There's a step before being able to do that and they're both really necessary.

Ms. Waddell: And I don't recall if we ever provided, I think we sent the board the report to Congress because that was the 20 to 25 year projected outlook about what this program looked like and what we would need in order to ramp up and achieve AML within 20 years. And so that's the last time that we've done that exercise because you can imagine the workload that goes into that, in that anticipation and kind of building. And so we have the spreadsheets, that's what I was

heading to is yes, we have kind of the basis information that we can plug in numbers as of today to pull together that budget and then it goes where from there. I'm very mindful about my team's time and energy and work that they already have to accomplish to do what we call work that immediately dies and flaws flat. It's just not effective and it's not helpful. And so what we've been focusing on are ways that we can start changing the conversation internally and externally. How can we let people know that there's a challenge without always saying we need to gather? We know we need to gather, but it's a bigger issue we need to be addressing overpopulation and talking about the impacts of overpopulation, not just on wild horses and burros, but on the other wildlife and the vegetation and all these things. Those are conversations that have been happening internally within BLM... Oh, I hope it's okay. I said that David, but they're not, I didn't give them a script, but I thought somebody turned the music on me. But yeah, so we're trying to change the internal conversation first and then start moving outward externally.

Mr. French: I ask these questions only because I just don't know. I'm falling back on county commissioner setting budgets myself for a county which is far smaller than what you guys deal with, but bottom line is the concept's exactly the same. Is there a mechanism in place for you to augment your budget down the road based on what we had on there? Does that require you to start now? And I'm guessing there has to be with if I compare it to the county budget cycle, any department that asks for an augmentation has to give a justification for it and they have to get at it pretty fast after they realize they're going to be a shortfall. Is that something that you guys deal with as well? I'm guessing--

Ms. Waddell: Yes. Yeah, we do have an opportunity and usually once, so we'll continue on through this continuing resolution until congress passes and appropriations. And so in each one of these phases, myself and Scott, Paul and Robin have the amazing job to start looking at what are the priorities right now, right? What are the priorities? And if emergencies come up, how is that going to impact our percentage overall about of our allowed spending? And so we'll be constantly making adjustments during the continued resolution. Then once appropriations is given or a full year CR, whichever one that may be, we'll go back to the table about that funding level and say, okay, how much have we spent to date? And now what are their priorities? And if there's more money available, then that's great because we have probably, I don't know, Robin, four different budgets at different funding levels with different types of operations that we have just in the back pocket, just in case we get a little more, we can prepare for getting a little less and then we can be right in the middle at the president's budget. And that's how we're kind of balancing right now while we're on this teeter totter.

Mr. French: Sure. I'm wondering and and I kind of, I was hoping that you'd have that answer, because you never know of the federal government. I'm wondering if we've had quite a conversation with Congress in terms of starting with the path forward and starting with the briefings from this board and the bureau, obviously your program back to Congress because they've been interested in progress and whatnot. And we outlined very specifically what plan B looked like in other words, if we didn't accomplish the things that we outlined within the context of those reports, that we could expect certain negative consequences on the other end of it. And I'm wondering if in the process of developing an augmentation justification that actually reporting to Congress before the train wreck and in terms of this is based on the challenges that we've inherited with inflation and with what everybody's dealing with in terms of budgets right now. Short of this much money on an augmentation, this is what we could expect to happen in terms of horses on the public land. I'm just wondering if that, and if that's something. Obviously I don't know what your access looks like to Congress at that stage and I'm wondering if there needs to be a partnership with regard to that as well.

Ms. Waddell: So great question. And we have had an opportunity over the last year to sit in front of and have briefings with four corner staffers and some appropriation staffers. And that's a little unique, right? And so we've definitely taken those opportunities to talk with them about the interconnectedness of this program and it falls right in line with this external communication. How do we communicate and have a conversation about this program that's just not about just gathers and not about just holding, but the bigger picture that you can't resolve one part of the program without impacting another. And then the effects that's just in the program, and then the effects of the other uses on public lands. That's a bigger issue. And then comes climate change and all those other things. But yes, I think we have begun to have that opportunity to have some dialogue, present some information. Where it goes from there, I have no idea, but we are constantly answering questions from office of management and budget appropriation staffers for corner staffers, congressional inquiries. We provide information, very thorough communication. Thank you Jason, for all his consistent language about this program. And so I'm feeling better about that because before we weren't having any communication and we've also heard from Director Stone Manning about encouraging more of those conversations. So she's on board,

David's on board, and we're having the dialogue. I just don't know where it goes. I don't know how it's presented to the people who are voting and making the decision.

Mr. French: I say that on to set up for my final comment, and that is, we've talked about collaborations here quite a lot. And this is an opportunity for collaboration for those people to have the same interests we do with regard to ecological condition of the public lands as well as the horse populations. And I think all hands on deck, this is a big deal. This could really turn into a really big deal depending on what budgets do in light of all of the inflationary pressures out there underground. And I think this is a great opportunity for us to see if we can get more than one voice back to Congress, is what I say.

Dr. Jenkins: Yeah, just a little bit more perspective from, my perspective on the budget and what we can do and the question about building a wish budget that Dr. Bechert suggested. So right now, we build a budget in the sense of this is what we have and this is what we can do with it. The question is, this is what we need to achieve and maintain AML and stop feeding the pasture pipeline. My goal is to make pastures and corrals as holding facilities obsolete. How do we stop feeding that money pit? That's what we need to figure out, how to stop feeding that money pit. So in a way that was what our report to Congress set out over a decade plus to do. Our problem there is that our assumptions in that report proved problematic. Our assumptions about budget were problematic, our assumptions about environments proved problematic. And what we're part of our struggle is when we talk to appropriators, they bring back the report to Congress and we have to reeducate them that our assumptions about that report proved wrong. And we need to rethink that report because of those assumptions that empirically have been proven wrong. The task force that we mentioned before is going to be a key in some of that advice to Congress about budgets. That task force, as I said, I haven't heard where it stands now, but I think that's going to be an important part of it. And then the foundation that I mentioned to you earlier that the secretary had recently convened is also going to be important because that could be a lobbying force. And there, as I said, the Wild Horse and Burro Program is one of their four main emphasis in the next several years. So I wanted to put that in front of us, because for me, that's the sort of broad perspective that I bring to this. And again, I think our goal is to get rid of pastures and corrals is holding facilities and make environments stable enough to hold stable populations of horses. And then you've all been suggesting some ways to do that. And what Paul's been talking about are the struggles and the complexities of our budget process. And that in some ways get in the way of those big goals. And that's just the nature of our life here, right? Anyway, I wanted to provide that larger perspective from my point of view.

Ms. McAlpine: And a little bit earlier, Holle' you said and mentioned the term thinking out of the box. So my little brain is spinning and it's working on suggestions that Dr. Perryman had made and comments that Commissioner French has made. And obviously I am no tax expert, but we need somebody to volunteer to be that or somebody within the administration to say, yeah, we can help with this. There are organizations who raise millions of dollars every year with the intent to save wild horses and burros. And perhaps there is a way for, most of them are nonprofits. so a tax incentive itself probably wouldn't help, but it may be a way to work out a program or collaboration with some of those organizations or maybe individuals with significant savings, we'll put it that way, who could work collaboratively with the Wild Horse and Burrow Program, and I'm including Burros again, to purchase contraceptives. And I know you want pastures to go away, but in the meantime, we're going to need some purchase that land and donate it to BLM for some sort of tax exemption. It could be buying and purchasing hay feed and donating it to BLM for the intent purpose of helping resolve this crisis we're facing right now and working towards what Dr. Jenkins had just mentioned that everything levels out and works well. Might be the foundation, it may be the task force, but it's another, not thought through by any stretch of the imagination, but out of the box. Could we make that happen? because I'm sure there are many wealthy individuals who would also be willing to be part of this, have their name it's the, I wish it was Susan McAlpine donated 475,000 acres of land to build. That's not going to happen. Maybe 92 someday, but not 407,000. But anyhow, just another... I just want to keep on bringing it back to suggestions that came up that may be forgotten in different conversations.

Dr. Perryman: Yes, Madam Chairman. Context is always everything, right? And just to sort of put this in context, put these inflationary pressures in context. No one, at least I would like to think no one would ever suggest that the horses and burros that we have in long-term holding facilities, no one would ever suggest that because of inflationary pressures, we would cut their rations. I mean, that's ridiculous. Nobody would consider that. So we're not going to... I mean, we're going to feed them as we should. We're going to feed them. And if that inflationary pressure reduces the amount of money, the amount of funding that we have to continue managing these herds on On-Range, we're doing the same thing. We're not

feeding them, we're not treating them appropriately, we're not treating them humanely. So even though someone would never suggest that we cut the rations for Off-Range horses, that's essentially what we would be doing when we start talking about priorities, that's going to be a priority is feeding those horses in Off-Range facilities. So how does that compare with feeding animals that are On-Range? That's the question when you go to people, if you're talking about budget augmentations, those kinds of things. The question is, which animals do you want us to not feed? I mean, that's the bottom line. And I realize that it sort of puts... That's not a popular thing to ask, but that's what we're talking about here. Which group of these animals are we not going to feed? And the answer to that question in my mind is we're going to feed all of them. We're going to figure out how to get this thing done and if we have to pull animals off the range because there's no feed there and get them Off-range so that we can feed them, we've got to do that from a humane standpoint. It has to happen. So that would be my argument when you're talking about, if I was sent in to talk to some staffers and the task force or whomever the appropriators may be, that's the question I would ask is which one of these group of critters do you want us to feed if you're going to withhold funding? So there I've said it. Thank you.

Ms. Waddell: So Dr. Perryman, thank you for that and thank you for that bluntness and the directness because it's really interesting. I've talked to staff about this and I'm sorry David, if this is going to be unpopular, and sorry Jason, if it's a sound bite. But if there are any... He's afraid. If we have animals in our off-range corrals or pastures die at a rate that is uncomfortable to the public, there is outcry, right? There's Facebook, there's social media there's someone beating down David's door and phone calls and emails about that. About the welfare of those animals and the mistreatment and the fact that they have all died. But you're right, the animals that are on the range, that's exactly what's happening here, is that there are animals that are dying off due to overpopulation and other environmental impacts. But I don't see anyone beating down David's door. I don't hear the 8664 number ringing off the hook about those animals. What I do hear is them demanding that we stop helicopter gathers and no longer remove animals from the range. And I guess I would ask the question, why?

Dr. Perryman: I agree, but I would also say that there are some humane groups out there that are concerned about this. They are there and I think they're more than willing to assist in this appropriations process. I know they are and they're out there and they're willing and able to do it. So it's, yeah. Yes, I yield that.

Ms. Carlisle: I'm going to just jump in here before I pass it off. And just another friendly reminder to whoever's listening that unless we create true ally ships, I mean true ally ships and get out of our rooted position that is driven from valid places. I need to make that very clear. But unless we begin moving the conversation away from who has a greater right, for lack of a better term, to exist on those public lands and move that conversation more towards comprehensive ecologically driven management alongside people we have been at loggerheads with for eons, we will continue this same story. We all know that, but I just want to firmly restate it. We all know that, but now we're in a far worse place that is only trending in that far worse direction. So a spirited plea to get involved in really positive ways. And if you don't know how to do that, reach out. There's a lot of folks trying to figure out how to make that participation more meaningful and more positive and lay down arms or we won't get there.

Mr. French: I couldn't agree more. I just wanted to add to some of the comments that were made. because you're spot on Holle' as well, and I know Dr. Perryman, I couldn't agree with you more and your comments. One thing we didn't talk about is that when we're talking about animals, which ones we're going to feed is the wildlife populations. because they're going to die right alongside the, they are dying right alongside those horses. And that has been missing from this conversation for years. And one of the reasons I applied to be on this board had to do with the wildlife resource because horses and burros will out compete the wildlife resource almost every time. They have that capability. And it's been my observation as a wildlife biologist for 30 plus years that when you start seeing dying horses on the range, just look a little bit closer because of wildlife has died just ahead of them. So thanks.

Dr. Bleich: I'd like to echo what Barry and Jim just said. And Celeste, I want to thank you for your plea because that's where we need to be. We need to fix things and the wildlife is going belly up just as the horses are. And I have never heard a person in a public comment, or I guess I have heard one or two over the last several years talk about wildlife suffering at the hands of horses. Horses suffer, but wildlife doesn't. And by suffer I'm talking not as individual animals, I'm talking as populations and the death of an elk is fully acceptable, but the death of a horse is not to many of the public that address this board. And it is just incomprehensible the situation that exists. And again, it exists because of the



legislation that we're burdened with. And again, that falls to Congress. It was a great idea in 1971, something came along that was a great idea. In 2022, this is all not such a great idea anymore and I hope the staffers are listening.

Ms. McAlpine: Part of my background is being trained by the state of Arizona to be an official court ordered mediator. And I mediated for several years in justice court in Mojave County. And following up on Ms. Carlisle's comment, you can answer the question when I finish, how much does BLM appropriate each year for legal defense? And you can answer that at the end. But in the end, my plea is for the organizations who file multiple yearly legal challenges to BLM actions to find a way to do exactly what Ms. Carlisle mentioned, to find a way BLM sets up a program of mediation somehow so that they can meet in the middle. And everyone works towards helping us resolve this crisis humanely and in the best interest of all of the things we've all talked about now for what, two days? We've been here for two days already? But anyhow we need some mediation in this lawsuit issue. Thank you.

Dr. Jenkins: I don't have an answer to your legal budget question. I think that's changes pretty dramatically year by year, depending on what's been filed and who wins and who loses. So I can't give you an answer off the top of my head.

Ms. McAlpine: Yeah, but you can guess it's probably significant.

Dr. Jenkins: I don't know the scale, I actually don't.

Ms. McAlpine: Okay, it's not \$10?

Dr. Jenkins: Not this year, Susan. Not this year.

Ms. McAlpine: Last time I paid an attorney in Phoenix or Scottsdale, Arizona, it was 400 and some dollars per hour divided into 15 minutes sections, so it's significant. It may not be in the total budget, but it's significant. And my point in bringing it up is, listen, we could use that money for a much better purpose, whether it's contraception, buying land for pastures, resolving this and truly save wild horses and burros rather than sitting in front of a judge in a courtroom.

Ms. Pearson: Okay, I'll hop in here. Is that on? Okay. I've said for years that this is possibly going to be the most harmful damaging eco disaster caused by man in the history of our modern world. A lot of it is coming from Congress, a lot of it's coming from lawsuits and different things like that. But there's a huge misunderstanding that when livestock people come here and talk about the impact of the horse, that we're only concerned about our own interests. We're on the ground 365 days a year. Like I said before, we maintain the water on all those allotments, we see the impacts to the wildlife. That's what brought me to the table to begin with. It was not because I was worried about whether or not my cows could go out there. I could see the impacts to the springhead, to the riparian areas, to the water and then the grazing areas and the grasses and the natural resources that are there for all animals. Specifically, wildlife I think probably has a higher priority than anything does. But as far as the livestock go, myself as a manager, we're in pastures a certain time period, like maybe two months out of the whole entire year and a specific pasture and then we rotate. And then, because I try to be a good manager, I leave 50% of the forage and we leave. But the horses are there, like you were saying, 365 days a year and they kind of cherry pick. They move here and back and forth and they eat the best of the best and then they move on to the next and the wildlife are kind of left with what's left. And I 100% agree with you. When the range is gone, the top soil's gone, the soil is gone, the last one standing is the horse. Everything else is gone before. And so I think when a livestock producer talks, it's always the cow versus the horse, and that's not where I'm coming from. It's absolutely not... My biggest priority is the landscape, the water resources and the impacts that all animals have on that ground right there.

Ms. McAlpine: Celeste can't see me, so I'm going to jump in for a second to go on with that Tammy. You and I had a conversation yesterday as we exited. I have and am a horse owner. I have many friends and relatives who are horse owners. And there's a common misconception out there about the horses. And I've heard it many times and seen it published many times. My horses, when they graze, pull up the grasses by the roots when they're playing games and they're grazing around. And it is often said that it's the cows who pull up and prevent those grasses from growing again and again on the range land. And I asked you yesterday and you answered my question, and I don't have the answer for

elk and deer, I'm not a wildlife expert. Can the cows that are on the range, under the Multiple Use Act actually pull those grasses up by the roots so that they can no longer grow?

Ms. Pearson: No, they should not be able to. Barry can answer that better than I can..

Dr. Perryman: Any grazing, I mean, we've all heard of the tragedy of the commons, right? Any grazing animal, if not managed appropriately can exert enough pressure over time to create a situation where grass plants just cannot create enough tissue, they don't have enough photosynthetic tissue to maintain themselves over the long haul. It doesn't make any difference whether it's zebras or wild beast or domestic cattle or horses or sheep or anything. If they're not managed appropriately, if they're just left to their own design, there's going to be big pendulum swings in populations over time. You have big die offs and you have years where populations increase and so you have these big swings in populations in native systems. There's really no such thing as an unmanaged system. It's either passively managed or it's managed actively. And so what we try to do is, because as a profession, because society wants certain goods and services from our public lands, from our range lands, we manage them in a way that helps them be resilient and resistant to changes. Whatever those changes, however they may come, whether they're floods or they're drought sequences or grazing sequences from native ungulates or domestic animals, we try to manage them in such a way so that they're resistant, resilient to change. And anytime one of those components, and I've said this many, many times, we have three groups, and I think I mentioned it yesterday, we have three groups in the United States on our public lands of large grazing animals. We have domestic animals. We control all three components of the grazing process, the science of grazing. We control the timing, the duration, and the intensity of that grazing process. We control all three with domestic animals. With wildlife, big game grazers, we can't control when they're out there, when we turn them out, they're out there 365 days a year. But we control the intensity of grazing through hunting tags, populations get high, we issue more tags. If the populations get low, we reduce the amount of tags. But with horses, what has been going on in burros in many cases over the last three or four decades is we don't manage any of those. We can't manage the timing and the duration, but the intensity, we haven't been able to manage those because of truncation of the gather process in many cases. And so the animals just continue to reproduce and continue to reproduce. And you get to a point where they exert so much pressure on the resource base that the resource base cannot manage that overload. And so it doesn't make, to say this, it doesn't make any difference what species the animal is. If they're not managed appropriately, you're going to have these issues. That's just the bottom line, and that's why we're where we're at in this whole process. And it's not to say it's not occurring on every HMA, not occurring in every HMA, but we have a large majority of HMAs particularly most of them are situated in Nevada where ground zero for much of this. We have gotten to the point where we have lost topsoil, we've lost the ability of some of these ecological sites to maintain themselves over time, and they're never going to, essentially never. A 1,000 years is a long time, it takes a long time to build soil. And so we're up against it. And that's a long way to answer your question. But any animal that is not managed, their populations are unmanaged, will get you to this point. And it just so happens in this case that horses have been the management issue. It's not the horse's fault. Horse bear no blame in this. Congress bears the blame in this. So there I've said it.

Mr. Kuechle: I just want to quickly interject. We have 15 minutes before we need to wrap this up. I'd like to wrap it up in about 10 minutes because we have a few announcements we need to make before we go to lunch because we'll be immediately going to public comment too.

Dr. Lenz: So just a short comment, and I agree with Dr. Perryman, but to answer your question. Sheep, goats, deer, elk don't have upper incisors, right? So they eat by grasping the grass with their tongue and pulling their head up and they cut it off with the lower incisors whereas horses do have upper incisors. So theoretically they could eat grass close to the ground. Although if you overpopulate with any of those species, I think the thing that people frequently forget is elk and cattle and some of the other wildlife are grazers, they primarily eat grass, whereas goats, sheep and horses also eat leaves, twigs, branches and bark off of trees. And so that's one of the reasons that horses, when you get in a situation where you have really bad forage, horses will out survive the others because they'll start eating leaves and bark. So that's the main difference between the species from eating perspective.

Dr. Bleich: Quick question.

Ms. Carlisle: Go ahead Vern. I would like to say something as well at some point, but Verne let's have you go because you're on Zoom.

Dr. Bleich: Oh, okay. Just a quick question for Dr. Bechert or Dr. Lenz. At what point do diminished body resources or body fat reserves begin to affect reproductive output in horses, if you will? At what point do females begin to fail to ovulate or to carry a fetus through term?

Dr. Lenz: Well, I think you get down to robotic conditions score two. If you're looking at a scale of zero to nine, zero would be death, nine would be butterball fat, but around two, maybe three in some cases. There's other things that they in account we see in horses that are athletic performing like race horses or show horses, even though they're in good flesh, they may not ovulate or develop follicles because that's the first thing they cut out when their stress is reproduction. So I suspect that animals that are traveling back and forth quite a lot between water and vegetation or whatever, may cut back a bit even before they get down to that very low body condition score.

Dr. Bechert: Yeah, and I can add to that, you've seen photos of these mares with folds and they're just skin and bones, so a rating of two is pretty low, but it's also important to keep in mind that it's not as energy costly to get pregnant. It's actually more costly to lactate and raise that foal.

Dr. Bleich: Sure. I was just curious wild horses in general relative to the native ungulates here in North America and we clearly see declines in ovulation rates and in particular birth rates, which obviously relate to ovulation rates and ultimately recruitment rates though when resources are diminished enough relative resources per individual, and I would expect the same to occur in horses. But I just had no idea, I have no idea what a rating of two might translate to in terms of percent body fat and that was really what I was looking for. You get down around 3% or so in some of these native species and reproduction is affected substantially.

Dr. Lenz: Yeah, some of those images you see, some of the pictures that you can see their ribs and their hip bones, they're about there where they're not going to quit ovulating, they're going to quit producing milk.

Dr. Bleich: Thank you.

Ms. Carlisle: I want to just backtrack a little bit and just note that Dr. Lenz tells a good story about how different individuals, it's going to be very difficult to get them to agree on what their standard of appropriate welfare is. My idea is never going to be his idea, is never going to be her idea. And I see some of that in this going back to the whole cow versus horse thing that has been ongoing since the act was established. And that there isn't actually a lot of peer reviewed journal data to compare directly who's worse when you're comparing apples to apples, one animal one day, one patch of land, but that's not how our public lands work. They aren't one animal, one day, one patch of land. It isn't fair so to speak. But that's also because the comparison is not direct. So I just want to recognize that. But what's also really important now beyond that, beyond who is going to get behind what idea, and that's going to be different for all of us and for all of the different stakeholder groups. But beyond that, the reality is that all of the uses on our public lands, we can't expect them to be maintained in the ways that they were 50 years ago. So again, this goes back to why I keep thinking that we have to develop these allyships and find the common ground and those areas that get really rough. Yeah, we got to talk about them then we got to find where the commonality is to work from. So we're all in trouble.

Dr. Lenz: This is a short comment. I agree with that. I mean, one of the biggest problems you have in dealing welfare is based on your background and where you grew up in the country versus urban and a number of different things. Your opinion, what constitutes good welfare is dramatically different. If we look at veterinarians, we tend to look at health and production efficiencies and we consider that good welfare. Some groups consider good welfare that the animal can exhibit species typical behavior. So if you had chickens, if they could free range, then that's better welfare, right? So it's really, really difficult. But one comment there is research that shows that if you provide cattle and horses poor quality forage, poor quality, that horses will thrive over the cattle. I mean, that's a fact. There's a lot of work that's been done in that area.

Mr. French: With that, I'm going to finish that conversation. As a wildlife biologist, I can tell you, and it's been my experience over 30 plus years in Northern Nevada, on every example when I saw horses in trouble and going into a winter, coming off a winter arrangement, every time I saw that we had a collapse in the mule deer population, in the pronghorn population. And that didn't even include the other sagebrush obligate species that we don't survey. We saw that happen generally speaking, three to four months prior to seeing the crash in the horse population every single time, not once in a while, every time.

[BREAK]

## **Public Comment Period (2)**

### **Mary Koncel**

Hello, my name is Mary Koncel and I'm a program specialist with the American Wild Horse Campaign. I'm here to comment on the Forest Services mismanagement of our wild herds with an emphasis on the Devil's Garden Horses on the Modoc Forest. Quite bluntly, the Forest Service is failing the wild horses it is tasked to manage under the Wild Horses and Burros Act. Besides allowing up to 24 horses to be sold a day to an individual, it has no agency-wide system to vet adopters or buyers, and no means to track these animals once they've been placed. Because the Forest Service doesn't freeze brand horses, they can't be easily identified in kill pens and prevented from entering the slaughter pipeline. And it rarely, if ever, conducts compliance checks on adopted animals. Regarding Devil's Garden, right now, the fifth roundup in five years is taking place, bringing the total number of horses removed to almost 3000 in order to reach an unscientific AML of just over 200 horses on a quarter million acres of federally designated wild horse habitat. Each operation costs at least \$1 million, thanks to American taxpayers. At the same time, the Forest Service refuses to implement PZP Fertility Control and Management is dictated not by science, but by local ranchers most notably the Modoc County Farm Bureau, just to preserve subsidized private livestock grazing for 3000 cows and sheep. Once again, thanks to American taxpayers. After brutal helicopter roundups, Devil's Garden horses suffer from the questionable care at the Forest Services Double double corrals. Every year, truckloads of horses are shipped across the country without proper screening of adopters or buyers. Many horses also die after breaking their necks in lake during sorting or logging. Other deaths include seven horses euthanized after being diagnosed with pigeon fever, a treatable infection. Nine horses euthanized after contracting salmonella at a layover during a massive forest service transport to Florida due to poor biosecurity and 11 stallions eviscerated during gelling in a month and a half. Last year, two foals were killed by mountain lion in the holding pens and four more colts were eviscerated during gelding on just one day. Important two is that the majority of Devil's Garden horses are sold many for \$1. And please don't believe that Forest Service horses are starving on the range. The average body condition scores of Devil's Garden horses are consistently between 4.5 and five.

### **Grace Kuhn**

Hi, my name is Grace Kuhn and I'm the Communications Director for the American Wild Horse Campaign. The BLM's Current Management program is not much different from the brutal Mustang practices that Congress intended to stop by passing the Wild-Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. And it is persisted despite many critical reports over the years, labeling the program as costly, inefficient, and ineffective in managing the nation's wild herds. As the program's annual budget has skyrocketed from 20 million in 2001 to 137 million in 2022, the agency has publicly promised reform, but has continued to pump millions into an endless cycle of roundups and removals while spending less than 1% of its budget on the scientifically recommended and more humane option fertility control. Pressure from the livestock industry could be a reason why it continues in this way, considering the preventing of births on the range through fertility control would stem a flow of profits. You see, every horse born on the range rounded up and removed is making livestock operators a lot of money. It's a federal gravy train that's putting millions in the pockets of cattlemen to round up wild horses with helicopters and store them by the thousands in feedlots. In fact, recent analysis show that over the last 10 years, cattlemen have received 89% of contract funds doled out by the BLM and Forest Service for the Wild Horse and Burro Program. It's not just the cattlemen that are flying the helicopters and running the holding facilities, but it's also who are calling for the removal of these iconic animals from Western public lands. The BLM has this tagline that it rounds up wild horses in order to obtain the thriving natural ecological balance. But if you look at its roundup schedules over the last several years, you will see a trend. The same herds are being targeted. Take for instance, the wild horses that live in Iron and Beaver counties in Utah, Sulfur, Bible Springs, Tilly Creek, Four Mile, Blon Wash and Frisco nearly every year helicopter descends on these herds, remove them and add them to overburden holding facilities. Why? Livestock grazing. In the environmental assessment that was grounds for the removal of the horses in the Bible Springs Complex this year,

the BLM clearly states, "Both Iron County and Beaver County commissioners have contacted BLM requesting the removal of wild horses." The BLM even lists the impact analysis area as the 16 grazing allotments that overlap with wild horse habitat. You don't have to take my word for it though. Advisory board member Tammy Pearson knows this well after she is--

**Bryant Kuechle:** We're going to request that we do not make any personal attacks or personal comments. We have a no tolerance policy for that. So we're going to go ahead and move on to our next commenter, that's Jani Shivley and Janet Fitch will be on deck. So Jani, I'm going to allow you to speak and you can unmute whenever you're ready.

### **Jani Shivley**

Hello, my name is Jani and I live on the Outer Banks. I don't belong to any organization or anything, but I live on the outer banks in North Carolina where we have Spanish wild Mustangs and I was just hoping that possibly I could maybe make a suggestion to help these horses. It comes across my newsfeed all the time and the wild horses that we have are Spanish mustangs and they are a treasure here. We have people that we're obviously, if we're at the ocean and people come here just to see the wild horses, it's against the law to come within booty feet. There's a heavy fine that comes with that we have the Corolla Wild Horse Fund that also watches out for the herd. Obviously if people get too close to them, they have to be removed to the herd, removed from the herd because their diet is not the same as like a regular horse, especially living at the beach. I just feel like there's got to be a better solution. We take care of our horses here, people watch out for them, people come to see them because they are iconic and they are a treasure. And I would hope that we could do the same thing. I don't know if you could maybe contact the Corolla Wild Horse Fund for maybe solutions on how they manage a herd or. I believe our herd is around 125. I know that's a lot less because we're a barrier island, but I can't even imagine what those horses I grew up with quarter horses and I can't even imagine the fear that those horses face with the helicopters chasing after them. And I just, the way our herd is here, they live peacefully and I would hope that we could do the same thing for those horses there because they deserve that and they deserve the same treatment to be there just as much as the cattle or the sheep. There's tons of land available, so I would just hope that somebody could contact the Corolla Wild Horse Fund to find out solutions, how they manage the herd how they watch out for the herd. I don't know, I just would hope that we could come to a better solution than putting them in roundups and small pens and then sending them to slaughter as so many end up which is horrific to me. But anyway, that's really all I wanted to say. I just wanted to, since I live somewhere where there are wild horses and that we treasure them and people love them. People love to come see them, so maybe you could do the same there. Thank you.

### **Janet Fitch**

Great, thank you so much. Good afternoon. My name is Janet Fitch and I'm a resident of Contra Costa County in Pinole, California just north of San Francisco. First, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to join you and share with you my thoughts and concerns about wild horse and burro management on US government land. I'm here today as a concerned citizen and volunteer with the American Wild Horse campaign and as a concerned citizen with a passion for protection of all animals. I believe that the Bureau of Land Management can improve the way it manages its funding and resources to protect wild horses and burros. There are better ways to help preserve these beautiful and wild animals than with the predominant usage of helicopter roundups. This practice is incredibly severe on the welfare of these animals and have proven to be deadly on many occasions again this year. I was disappointed to learn that less than 1% of the Bureau Land management annual budget for another year was spent on humane wild fertility control with the vast majority of its budget spent on feeding horses and holding and on the helicopter roundups. I would urge you to reconsider this and increase the usage of humane fertility control. I understand that wild herd management is a huge job. To this end, it's promising to see the new notice of funding opportunity, and I hope this will be utilized to develop more collaborative partnerships with nonprofit organizations and significantly increase the use of fertility control vaccines. With nearly 64,000 wild horses in holding facilities, it is clear that a systemic change is needed, and I would ask that you make this your top priority. The current processes are not only detrimental to the wellbeing of these beautiful animals, they're also not sustainable at all for Americans. In addition, I'm very concerned about the cash incentive that is provided via the Adoption Incentive Program. There is a clear link to slaughterhouse pipelines and the unanticipated consequence of people profiting off of the US government through this program. I ask that you seriously reconsider the cash incentive and move to a different type of incentive that will not attract profiteers. In light of these concerns, I ask that you invest more in the in the wild management using humane fertility control vaccines to take advantage of collaborative partnerships to improve the management of local herds and to reconsider the cash incentive of the Adoption Incentive Program. The vast majority of Americans value wild horses and burros on public lands. They deserve to be protected and preserved as part of the



western landscape. Thank you again for the opportunity to share my opinion with you. I appreciate all that you do and are doing to consider the humane and respectful treatment of these magnificent beings. Thank you again for your time and attention today. I appreciate it.

### **Ashley Hemmerel**

All right, thank you. My name is Ashley Hemmerel. I am simply a citizen of the United States of America and have an incredible passion for the beautiful wild horses of America. What I've seen over the last several years is the complete disregard for them off the land due to mismanagement from the Bureau of Land Management, the US Forest Service, the federal government, in conjunction with many livestock companies like Couture Livestock, who lists on their website have captured over 150,000 wild horses. All I'm asking is for humane management of these beautiful species. There are millions and millions of cattle and sheep taking over millions of acres of public land. All we are asking is to hold space for the minimal wild horses that are left. What is there under 200,000, they deserve humane management. Contracting these livestock companies to chase them with helicopters, the Adoption Incentive Program is leading them into slaughter. Anyone can pay \$150 to take a wild animal. People are hurting for money right now. We need a better solution and I highly encourage everybody to listen to and partner with the horse advocacy groups and find a better solution. And that's all that I'm asking. Thank you.

### **Jennifer Foley**

Thank you. My name is Jennifer Foley, I'm a person with a conscience and a concern taxpayer not affiliated with any group. I want to address a necessity of wild horses, the horrific helicopter roundups and the failed AIP program. What is happening to our nation's wild horses and burros is absolutely appalling. The way the BLM is managing our nation's wild herds is truly horrific and most definitely not how the law is supposed to be followed. These animals are supposedly federally protected and they're eliminating them from their land using unsuspecting taxpayer money. I do not want my hard-earned tax dollars to be given to anyone to adopt a wild animal. They belong in the wild. They're keystone herbivore and their presence on the landscape enables many other species to flora. They replant through their manure much of what they eat, unlike cows. Their presence also helps to prevent wildfires as they can graze deep into the woods and graze down foot brush like invasive cheek grass, which is highly flammable. In 2020, BLM's high management level for Nevada was only 12,811 wild horses and burros. This equals 1,223 herd management acres for individual equid. That is a grievous mockery of the Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act, which stated the legal lands of wild horses and burros would be devoted principally to the horses and burros welfare and benefit. The helicopter round ups this year and moved up during fulling season. This was despicable. The images of pregnant mares and foals being run on hard terrain and even slammed to the ground by grown men was horrific. I can send you the videos if you don't believe me. In Colorado, the BLM said they were not separate foals from mothers. Immediately after they were interviewed on the news, there were horses being rounded up at the Pekinese Basin and were chased Hard by helicopters and 45 were killed. Horses being whipped and prodded in the holding pens was also horrific. Seeing a helicopter targeting a burro and flipping it over while it was running was absolutely appalling. Why did the BLM just euthanize 22 wild horses at Celstine's Roundup in Oregon for being older blind with no veterinary proof when most were Carmelo Mustangs and the Sky Dog Sanctuary was willing to take them. The public does not trust the Bureau of Land Management to truly consider the welfare of these animals. What is going on with the Wheatland BLM facility? Seven months is a really long time for a strangles outbreak. We would like to see the vet reports because this is a perfect example of horses that wouldn't have died if they had been left alone on their land. We need to stop the AIP. 60,000 Wild Mustangs and Burros in a BLM holding pen that can't all pass inspections or understaffed and fully managed or leaving horses suffering. At least a thousand horses in the last year have been sent into the slaughter pipeline through AIP. 20 Mustangs ran through World and Auction with six went to Stroud Oklahoma Kill Pen. Their titles show they were all AIP. There is multiple families that are doing this on purpose. They're adopting as many as they can multiple times. They're getting shipped to sludge found in the slaughter pipeline and they keep doing repeatedly and no one's stopping them. Why are taxpayers paying a thousand per horse to adopters costing us up to 130 million this year and their wild Mustang be adopted by multiple families over and over again and end up in slaughter pens?

### **Margaret Jessel**

Great, thank you so much. My name is Margaret Jessel and I live in Boulder, Colorado, born and raised. I'm speaking to you on behalf of myself and many other horse and burro lovers and owners here in Colorado. I have no scientific expertise. I'm not a rancher. I don't own a sanctuary. I'm just a tax paying citizen whose expertise lies primarily in the criminal and juvenile justice systems where I represented victims of abuse. I attended child autopsies. I have seen the

worst of humankind in treatment of other humans, but nothing undid me quite as much and after 36 years of that as watching the way the animals were treated by the contractors with BLM. The flipping over of a baby donkey, the flipping over of fowls hog tying, dragging, it's just not going to improve BLM's image in the mind of the public, which I think is a big problem. I've loved horses all my life, I've ridden all my life and I have gentle babies. I've seen abusive animals and participated in the reviewing of Colorado's animal cruelty statutes. As many of you maybe know or maybe you don't know, Governor Polis sent a letter to BLM requesting a pause in the gathering to determine if there were more humane ways to accomplish BLM's goals. I'm not aware that he received a reply. I only recently became aware of how animals were being treated on BLM Land because I only recently joined any kind of social media. And I did read federal legislation and I have read BLM regulations, as an attorney, it's mind boggling that there's so little enforcement. There's no accountability that we know of, that the public knows of and maybe there is some, and I've heard a little bit about that yesterday. But when the public perception is what it is, BLM is the bad guy. The advocates who are working on behalf of these horses and burros are the heroes. And BLM has a lot of work to do to change public perception. Colorado's animal cruelty statute fits exactly into why what goes on in these roundups. And the Cremellos being euthanized, that was ridiculous and needs to be challenged. I'm running out of time. Yesterday there was talk about bad actors former registry. I can help you do it.

**Bryant Kuechle:** Okay, thank you for the comment. We're moving on. We're going to go to Linda Greaves and then Erin Phillips is on deck, and that will just FYI, that concludes our online comment period time. There were two more people that signed up that did not appear. So if you did sign up for this today's comment period and you have not yet gone to the Zoom link, please do so now if you still would like to provide comment within this comment time. So Linda Greaves and then Erin Phillips is on deck. So Linda, I've allowed you to speak. You can unmute and begin when you're ready.

#### **Linda Greaves**

Okay, I can barely hear you. My name is Linda Greaves. I'm in Washington DC and I am a citizen activist with Save Our Wild Horses, a Grassroots Group and volunteer with several other organizations. We keep hearing about range damage, and in fact, the vast majority of BLM land is failing range standards, most of which do not have horses on them, but do have livestock. See the common thread? Where there are horses on the range 70% or more of the forage is allocated to livestock. Field DIM does have authority to have livestock removed due to range conditions. This needs to happen more. Livestock come out during the critical growing periods when forage for all wildlife is needed to grow and sustain them for the year. So spending millions of our tax dollars to eradicate the wild horses is just to play to cater to special interests. The act states that horses are be considered as principle users. A responsible use of funds would be to work on water projects, range cleanups, and on working on repopulate and replace the 25 plus million acres that have been taken from the horses. We now have mitochondrial DNA that proved the native horses are actually descendants from our horses 10,000 years ago. So they are native and they are a keystone species. This is easy to research at this point. Programs around the world are using horses to regenerate the land look into Rewilding Britain and they've done a fantastic job on their site and what they've done. We are stuck with an archaic mindset. And this mismanagement needs to stop. Horses are rounded up and some are cherry picked to be returned while family bands are destroyed. I was just out there at a roundup and many of the horses were treated with birth control, sex ratio skewed. The strong families are no more. Young mares were being pursued constantly. The stallions are more aggressive and advanced stallions are challenged nonstop. Most HMA, AMLs are so low that they are not genetically viable anymore. The double dosing of GanoCon is sterilizing mares and we all know that. And stallions should never be gelded as it ends a genetic line, and it only takes one stallion to cover all the mares in an HMA. So the only reason for this is to give someone a gelding contract. If you want different groups to come together, we need to have people on this council that are open to science, listening to others like those who have spoken here, and we'll be speaking and all have the land and the wild horses best interests at heart, not special interest pockets. We also need to have access to all aspects of the program from roundups to holding to include vet reports which we used to have. This is missing in most cases. By disrespecting us we have built a wall and this needs to be bridged. There are many of us who have put aside our differences are coming together and are looking for real solutions for our public lands. We would love for you guys to join us. Thank you.

**Bryant Kuechle:** Great, thank you Linda. Okay, so Erin Phillips is up next for the online comment. That's the last person that we have, I believe here on our list that is registered and is present. After that, we'll shift to the in-person comment. So the first name I have on my list for in-person is Melissa Strickland. So Melissa, if you're here, I just want to just a heads up that after we conclude with the next online comment, we'll set this table up over here to my left to provide in-person comment. Okay, Erin, I am unmuting you. You're allowed to speak and begin when you're ready.

**Erin Phillips**

Great. Thank you. My name is Erin Phillips and I am a Mustang rescue, a trainer, photographer, and advocate. I own and operate a Mustang rescue in Springfield, Georgia. I live near the Cumberland Island Wild Horses herd, which numbers around 200 horses on 36,000 acres and is never managed. These horses are thriving in their habitat. First, I want to say that I do not support helicopter roundups, the Adoption Incentive Program sterilizing wild mares or adjusting the ratio of stallions and mares in the wild. Not only are these management tools unnatural, but they are flawed inhumane. Early this year, I rescued an older Mustang who was a stallion in the Anarchy HMA in Utah just the last year. He was captured along with 312 other mustangs who were in pristine condition because the Bureau of Land Management said there was a lack of forage and water. Yet only eight months later, at least 1500 privately owned sheep were released on the anarchy range. Could the Mustangs truly have been removed due to a lack of water and forage or was it because the BLM had underlying reasons that the public were not aware of? I understand that the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Mustang and Burro Act calls for the herd management areas to be managed for all uses. But when 80% of Americans want our Mustangs and burros free, that should clearly override the percentage of people who want livestock instead. Ranching on public lands is detrimental to the ranges since the west is very arid. In areas where the cattle have overgrazed and bare soils exposed, there's a stronger likelihood for a severe dust storm to occur. Additionally, this ranching uses that much of our water sources degrades rivers, eradicates streams and has put several aquatic species on the endangered and threatened list. Because of stream destruction, thousands of wildlife suffer from lack of water and vegetation due to the presence of cattle and sheep. Yet ranching on our public lands is allowed to continue even though it does not benefit the American people. Only one of the 10 states that Mustangs occupy is listed as a top 10 states that produce the most beef. For the past two years, I've been managing a database for the prior Mountain Wild Horse herd. The BLM has made an incredibly bad decision in not allowing volunteers from the Cloud Foundation and prior Mountain Mustang Center to dart the mares with PZP. I have seen the darting record for the past several years, and the BLM personnel is doing a poor job with selecting mares to dart. Mares should be darted within two weeks of folding, yet many prior mares are darted when they're in full. For example, in 2021, eight mares darted were already in full and four of those mares fold again this year. Also, within the last couple of years, 10 mares over the age of 10 who have never folded regarded by the BLM. I know these seem like very few horses, but the prior herd is small with about 30 mares being darted every year. And thank you for listening.

**Bryant Kuechle:** Great, thank you Erin. So that concludes our online portion for this comment period. We're going to shift over to the in-person. As I mentioned, Melissa Strickland is up first, and then we have Britney Thomas on deck, so we'll get that set up. Okay, is Melissa here? Nope? Okay, how about Brittany Thomas? Wayne Johnson. Sandra Force. Okay, and then after Sandra, we have Katie Kraska. So Sandra, the countdown timer will begin up here and you can begin speaking then and then just ask that you conclude when the timer is over or before that.

**Sandra Force**

Thank you. Hi, my name is Sandra Force and I am at Eugene Oregon. I represent two groups. One is a Facebook group called Wild Horses BLM and Logical Solutions. And the other is I am a border director of the US Wild Horse and Burro Association. Now I am here representing adopters of horses primarily, and we have one thing we would like to see changed. There are other little things, but this one is the Off-range holding corrals that are contract centers and horses seem to go in there and then we don't see them for 2, 3, 4 years through the adoption program. Prime example is the Oregon horses this past year that came off from the Barron Valley Complex, went to Fallon. There are a huge group of people who want to adopt the Coyote Lakes horses, but they aren't coming up for adoption. So what we would like to see is a change of a maximum of 18 months policy that those horses hold there and anything that's adoptable in 18 months gets moved into the adoption program and offered to the public. Yes, I realize those people have contracts to have X number of horses in their facility, but that should not be the primary care issue. I drove down here from Oregon just because I wanted to drive through the HMAs, look at places and stuff, and it's scary out there. And don't let people tell you that it's cattle because there are very few cattle running between the Oregon border and the Nevada border to Arizona. I have never driven that route that I have seen that few cattle. I have never driven that route that I have seen that much nothing. I mean, sage brush, no grass, not even cheek grass, it's gone. No wildlife. I'm a firm believer that the wildlife is in direct proportion to the horses and we aren't seeing the wildlife, so that gives me some scary thoughts on that. I support the Bureau of Land Management's Adoption program, been dealing with it for 45 years. Think that you people are doing as good a job as the government gives you the opportunity to do. Thank you very much.

**Katie Kraska**

Hi everyone, my name is Katie Kraska as most of you know. I'm the Director of Federal Legislation for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. And since I started working on this issue, I've been privileged to be a part of many conversations with the board, with the BLM, DOI, Forest Service and state stakeholders to find workable humane solutions to Wild Horse and Burros Management. I'll keep this brief as I know you hear from me already quite often. A few years ago, an unlikely group of stakeholders achieved what many thought impossible. We came together around common goals to shift wild horse management away from gridlock and reaction to productivity and prevention in order to avoid an impending crisis and the mass killing of our herds. But what does prevention mean? It means using science to steer decisions and to inform management with reliable modeling, to employ technologies that will humanely slow population growth and break the cycle of removals in stockpiling animals Off-range. Breaking the stakeholder gridlock and finding a path forward gave Congress the confidence to increase funding for the program to chart this new direction. And we're now amazingly in 2022 and the BLM's programmatic budget is set to have nearly doubled since we started down this road just a few years ago. To achieve sustainability, the Wild Horse and Burros Program's budget is going to have to increase no matter what. We know this, whether the agency changes tack or continues on with the status quo. But this funding is tied to a desire for a new direction for the program. One that balances population growth with fertility control and adoptions with removals. The point that I want to make with my time today is that implementing this change cannot wait. Prioritizing prevention has got to happen now. We have good data, we have good tools, we really have to start using them. Congress and the public want to see broad use of fertility control to start bringing the program closer to sustainability and allowing removals to scale down. If management continues as is, the programmatic budget will continue to swell, as will the On-range population and as will the Off-range population. The only thing that changes this reality is fertility control implementation at meaningful levels on the range. The longer that we wait to start using these technologies, the more money we spend in the long run. Of course, each individual HMA will require different management considerations, but at a national scale, we cannot afford to put this off any longer. Thank you. Additionally, if the BLM is going to remove horses from the range, those animals need to be protected while in their care and when placed into private care. This is essential not only for the wellbeing of the animals the agency is charged with caring for, but also for confidence from the public and continued support from Congress. We appreciate the BLM's work to start to turn the ship, but we still have a very long way to go in a very short time to get there. Thank you.

#### **Simone Netherlands**

Dear board of directors, thank you for holding the meeting here in Phoenix and thank you for having people be able to comment online, sign of progress. I am the Founder and President of the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group and I'm here to sort of proudly brag about our program. In 2015, the Forest Service was about to remove all of the Salt River wild horses. A ginormous public outrage occurred largely due to us. However, we've worked very, very hard on positive solutions. So what I'm really proud to say here today is that in 2021, we had two folds on the Salt River. And in 2022 we have one. We have a population of 438 wild horses at this time. And at the height of our population there were 463 Salt River wild horses. So we've gone from 463 to 438. And so we've accomplished a lot during that time. We have great working relationships. We have over a hundred volunteers and we have seven different programs. So our programs don't only include lowering a population. Our programs include real care for the wellbeing of these wild horses. And we enjoy enormous public support and public success because we're taking a different route. All of our programs are geared towards the wellbeing of the horses. And we believe that our PZP program is so successful because of the dedication of non-profit volunteer. We pay no one a dime, including myself. We are dedicated people, we love every visitor that comes to visit the Salt River Wild Horses. So our programs are always geared towards the wellbeing of the horses and that's what makes the difference between the public support we have and the public support the BLM enjoys, which is none, almost none. I've been coming to BLM Advisory Board Meeting since 2004 and it's an atrocity that it's basically the same and the same that it was back then. So it's time for change. The comments you're getting, you've heard them all before. You know exactly what the public is about to say. Make higher AMLs, more humane actual management. So I'm not here to regurgitate the same message, I'm here to say start listening to the public.

#### **Debra Saari**

Good afternoon, members of the Advisory Board. My name is Debra Saari, I'm a 40 year resident of Arizona and a volunteer with Salt River Wild Horse Management Group. For decades, we spent taxpayer funds rounding up wild horses and putting them in holding pens. This is harming the reputation of the BLM and is not supported by the majority of the public. We are happy to hear that the BLM is talking about fertility control, but it is heavily underutilized and underestimated. In meetings such as this, we hear all the negatives about wild horses. But with Salt River Wild Horse Management Group, we come from a different angle. It's an angle where the BLM and the forest are frankly lacking. The



secret ingredient is dedication and love of wild horses. I myself am a director of our care facility. We have rescued Salt River horses from manmade situations such as fencing, cattle guards, canals and traffic. We also rescue orphan foals and senior wild horses can find a good retirement with us. At our facility, our wild rescues run together in a bang structure just as they would in the wild. Of course, the boys are gelded. We are on one of the only programs. We are not the only program in the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group. In addition, we have a field team, darting team, road patrol team, fencing team, and an environmental cleanup team. Some of our volunteers are here to explain more about the great success of our PZP program. Our PZP program has a 99% efficacy. We can make a difference. In closing, I would like to see more positive talk about wild horses. They are an important recreational resource and loved and cherished by the public. This is one of the reasons why our organization is highly supported by the public. We encourage the BLM to enjoy the same public support that we do by recognizing wild horses and burros have a place in America's public lands. Thank you so much for your time.

### **Chris Becker**

Okay, my name is Chris Becker, I moved to Arizona nine years ago. What actually brought me to Arizona was a trip here to see the Salt River horses. And I realized that Arizona held together on all of their history, including the horses and I decided that was the place for me to raise my family, my grandkids. I've been a volunteer with the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group for the past five years. Coming to this advisory board meeting today and hearing so much negativity about the wild horses when the truth is that the wild horses are not by any means all negative, it's a little disheartening. So let's talk about the value of the American wild horses. They're highly loved and cherished by the public. We hear this every day at the river. People who travel far to come and see what we do with these horses. They are valued as an American icon of the old West. This actually translates into tourism dollars. This fact is often overlooked by the BLM. Tourism opportunities should be valued, developed and talked about. Wild horses sell hotel rooms, camera equipment, real estate and kayaks. The same cannot be said for a jumping mouse or the little grouse. In addition, wild horses have a positive influence on their environment. As we see daily at the Salt River, they keep the underbrush vegetation down, which creates more accessible areas and paths to the river. In areas where they're no longer allowed, we see major overgrowth and the wildfire danger increases. They are also the cultivators of the Mesquite forest by eating the seeds and providing a fertile environment for growth, which in turn provides a friendly environment for the other wildlife that lives in the area. As a mom of four and a grandma of 16, I hope that you will open your hearts. Here are the please for a more humane management program for all wild horses. Respectfully, my advice would be to include working a little on the reputation of the BLM. I would like to be able to talk to my grandchildren and their children and when the BLM is mentioned have it be a positive for the horses and for their lives. Thank you very much for listening to us today and thank you.

### **Rick Blandford**

Good afternoon. My name is Rick Blandford, I'm longtime resident of Phoenix. I'm part of the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group and a wildlife photographer. And the biggest thing I would like to emphasize is more use of PZP. As part of the darting team, we made a huge difference in how many foals are born. You've already heard the numbers, I'm not going to go into that. And I also, I spend about five hours a day out in the wild observing horses and it seems very positive to me the fact that that's made on the herd. Previously we had, maybe during the breeding season, during birthing season, we might have five or six foals born per week and now we're getting one per year or maybe two. It seems like I see a lot of the funds are for PZP are being shot off to the roundups as emergencies occur. I just read something about a huge amount of horses being rounded up in Utah and Nevada. And it sounded like the funds were going to be pulled from the PZP program to help with rounding that up. My suggestion is we hit that really hard with PZP and stop the future growth so they can be managed from a little normally. Thank you.

### **Joseph Yannuzzi**

Hello. Okay, my name is Joseph Yannuzzi and I'm going to just be brief because most of what I had prepared for you today has already been gone over by the people that have spoken before me. But I would like to say that sometimes in life you learn a lesson at an early age, my father trained race horses. He was a very humble and compassionate man. We didn't have a lot of money, but none of his horses, whenever they suffered from maybe colic or a twisted intestine or they were lame or whatever, they got the best of care no matter what the cost was. So all I wanted to say here today was my father had no money, but he always found a way to make a better life for his horses. Never sold a horse to slaughter. When horses could no longer run, he made sure they found a responsible home with responsible person, made a good riding horse. And what I'm trying to say today, if he could do that with little or no money and he can assure his horses that he



trained, owned, and loved a better life, an organization like the BLM with a budget of millions of dollars should be able to do the same thing to take care of the horses in their care. So that's all I want to say today. If someone can do it with a few dollars, take great care of their horse, a company like yours with millions of dollars, please stick with the PZP. Try to limit the roundups. And one of the key factors I had here that a lot of my cohorts have already discussed is the fact that the multiple land use grazing with the cows and livestock and all that impacts the wild horse, as we know it impacts many negative situation. That's another thing we'd like to address. If it is all possible, it would be better if we can limit the amount of grazing by cattle because of the negative impact on the herd. If we can deal with that and deal with that in a humane, compassionate way, that would be great also. And that's all I have to say.

**Bryant Kuechle:** Okay, thank you all, all the commenters today, both virtually and in person. So that's going to conclude this public comment period time. We do have another public comment session scheduled for tomorrow. We're up for a break, a 15 minute break so we'll come back at quarter till. We'll see you all back here then.

[BREAK]

**Bryant Kuechle:** Thanks everybody for coming back. We're going to go ahead and get started with Jerry Bert talking to us about the Comprehensive of Animal Welfare Program. There's have been a lot of updates we're really excited to hear your report today. And Dr. Perryman will be here shortly, but go ahead and get started.

### **Presentation on Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program**

*Ms. Jerrie Bertola, Wild Horse and Burro Program Lead, BLM*

Ms. Bertola: Good afternoon. I'm very excited to be here to be able to give you guys some updates about what's been happening in the last year with the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program. I would like to thank Ms. McAlpine and Dr. Lenz for the time and the support that they have put into this. Ms. McAlpine has been able to be with us on a couple different assessments and Dr. Lenz was able to join us earlier this week. It's very beneficial for us as a team and to move this program forward more. So I appreciate that and wanted to thank you. The Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program or CAWP is a very important part of the Wild Horse and Burros Program. It's so important for Congress as well that in 2021 and 2022 and the Omnibus Bill, they gave specific direction to the bureau that we shall continue to abide by the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program. So in these next few slides, I hope to be able to show you how we have been doing that in our plan for how we will continue to do that. I want to give a little background update information on what the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program or the CAWP is. It is comprehensive applying to all management activities of the Wild Horse and Burros Program by safeguarding the wellbeing of the wild horses and burros by ensuring humane treatment, adequate care, and handling with care and compassion. The care and compassion is a portion that we stress with our BLM staff. It's important and we need to focus on that. It's a formal program, it's not just a philosophy or a general code of conduct. The purpose was to reaffirm and demonstrate the agency's commitment to humane treatment of wild Horses and burros by standardizing longstanding BLM practices and giving further direction, guidance, training and requirements for BLM employees, contractors and partners. So far in policy, we have included standards and training requirements for gathers, Off-range corrals, transportation and adoption cell events. In the future, we plan to have standards and training requirements for on the range, Off-range pastures and following placement into private care or adoption of wild horses and burros for our compliance program. A little information on our training that we've been able to complete. We have had training through DOI Talent, which is our departmental training place for wild horse and burro gathers for a number of years. We were able to update that in just last week. The new version is available for BLM Partners contractors to be able to take that for the wild horse and burro gather section. But we have also been able to train our different corrals, our adoption staff, our partners and contractors for Off-range corrals, transportation and adoption and cell events. Over 257 times training has been attended since October of 2021 when we began the training for those. We've provided 15 different training opportunities. With the assistance with some of our state leads, other members of our CAWP team, we've trained over 400 people virtually, including partners at our prison facilities and inmates. We should be having very soon hopefully by mid-November we will be able to have the training for Off-range corral's transportation and adoption of sell events available through DOI talent. So it's available daily. An update on the rating system that we're using for our assessments. When we began our first gather assessment in 2021, we thought we had the rating plans set up onsite. We very quickly learned that that system was not going to work. And we have been using a system that is also used by the safe quality food as a rating system. It gives a descriptor word as well as a rating percentage. This seems to be

working fairly well for our assessments and we have a goal of good or excellent ratings. Very similar to what they use in the industries on any audits that would be completed through animal industry and animal agriculture. So that's kind of what rating system we came up with and that we have been working forward to date. We've been able to complete 11 gather assessments. I think it's in six different states and we have an average rating of good 95%. This is where we want to be. This is what we're striving for as a group as far as our ratings. So we're pretty pleased with what how that is coming out with our rating system Oh, let's see, March of this year, we were able to start our Off-range corral assessments. We have completed assessments on 17 different Off-range corrals and our average rating is good, 88%. This does not include the facility that we were at earlier this week, but we're still in that good rating category. And so we're sitting in a good situation, we feel as far as what's happening at our facilities. For adoption and cell events, we had hoped to be able to get to three of our adoption events. Unfortunately, due to other conflicts, we were only able to attend one adoption event and our average rating is good, 89%. This will be that we hope to focus on more in this fiscal year of '23. Our Off-range pastures, I wanted to go into a little more detail on this one and walk through the process that we have for the CAWP. And our first step is once we have policy set in place, our standards is what that is in our policy. We then train our staff, our contractors and partners on what those standards are before we ever start into the assessment phase. So we are in the position right now that our Off-range pasture standards are in our routing process for signature. Hopefully those will be signed and in place the early part of fiscal year '23. And then we'll begin the phase of training our staff contractors and partners. And in that training piece, it also takes and uses... From learning, we learned that we need to train ourselves as a team and work through our assessment tool that we develop and make sure that our assessment tool is designed correctly before we start the formal internal assessments. So that's part of our training that will take place. Once we complete the assessments, we then document share and we learn from that. So we will bring that information back. And for gathers and for corrals, we're at a place where we can start gathering that stuff up and looking to see whether or not our assessment tool is really designed right. Are questions being asked correctly to get the information that is useful and the data that we would like to be able to extrapolate from that. So that would be the next step. This step-by-step process creates a continuous feedback loop that we are certain that will improve and strengthen our standards and procedures as we move this program forward. So our pastures will be the next one that we will start working on once that instruction memorandum assigned, we'll be able to start moving that piece forward more actively. On the range. We had hoped that we would be in a position to be telling you the same thing that are on the range standards we're very close to being ready for an instruction memorandum. When we started discussing this, some of the things jumped out to us that was very important. And as a team we felt like we need to make sure that we are taking the appropriate steps to develop the standards in a manner that balance animal welfare and land health. If we don't have healthy range lands and a thriving natural ecological balance, we are seeing that in the condition of the animals that we have on the range. We want to help have standards that can be used by filled staff to help before we're in these situations where we're seeing horses in poor condition, range lands that have been severely utilized and riparian areas that are degraded. So we are working slowing back to make a better product in the end. So that'll be something that will take step by step. The other things, some of our key people in getting these standards developed have been on gathers and in the field. And so we needed a timeframe when they could also participate and make valuable contributions to the team in moving these standards forward. The next one that we'll hopefully be working on is, I'm really excited about this one too because it brings a whole bunch of different pieces of the program together. And that's after placement at an adoption event, our compliance program. We are hoping to be able to link those to our compliance handbook and give further direction to our BLM staff on compliance and the things that just to add another layer for them, what to be looking for, what are we looking for? But also as an adopter that they would have information, this is what BLM means when they say this. So we're hoping to start drafting those very soon. So in fiscal year '23, we have some pretty big goals, but I feel like if we're not challenged then why do something. So our first big goal is to finish our initial assessments of our Off-range corrals. We now only have four of our major corrals left and hopefully by mid-November we'll have those assessments completed. We need to look at what's going on with that assessment and come back and potentially be able to describe how often we need to do a repeat or how often we're going to be doing assessments on our Off-range corrals. And we're hoping that we can be able to make a recommendation sometime after the first of the year after we have that information. We're hoping that we can get to three to five, somewhere between three and five different adoption sell events in fiscal year '23 and hopefully be able to see some of the different parts of the program and what's working in different parts. Each of our adoption teams do things slightly different, what can we learn from each of those different adoption teams and be able to make the adoption program and system better. Pending the gather schedule, we'd like to get to five gatherers in fiscal year '23. If they're happening multiple gathers at the same time, sometimes we're able to set up a structure to where we can see multiple gathers in the same given week, just depends on what our gather schedule is. But pending that schedule, we would like to try to achieve five assessments. For Off-range pastures, we would like to start those initial ones and somewhere around

10, a little more than 10, just depending on how fast our standards are published. More internal stuff that we would like to work on is some of the training for our Off-range pastures and to develop some animal handling training. This could be training that's applied to either BLM contractors or partners and actually give people the opportunity to do this. This is what we mean when we're saying this. This is what we're looking for. This is the kind of movement you should be thinking about when you're trying to move animals. So that's a big task that we're hoping to work forward on. And then for policy development, one of the things that hasn't been one of the large components is foster care, but we do have some of our different fac filled staff and states that are asking how can we set something up for foster care? They're not in adoption, they're not a facility, so what should we do? So we'll be looking at developing standards for foster care and then working to move those standards for after placement into private care, that compliance component together in fiscal year '23. So how do we do this? How do we keep things moving forward and what are our next steps? For gathers, our next step is to update our assessment tool. We know after the 11 assessments, there are things that we have found that we need to update. There's things that are not as straightforward as we would've initially thought. And there's things that when it was originally designed, we didn't think about. So we need to update that and then we need to be able to conduct more assessments to make sure that we've got it right and that we can keep moving those pieces forward. For corrals, we need to finish those initial assessments of those four facilities that we haven't made it to yet. We also want to take that time after we complete that to review the process with the team, and then a larger team with state leads facility managers and the program. How is it working? How can we continue to make that better? Dr. Lenz, Ms. McAlpine, those would be conversations that as liaisons we would be able to hope to have some of that with you as well. We're probably going to need to update that assessment tool, fine tune some of the questions and make things really clear. And then come up with that recommendation on how often we're talking about 23 or 24 facilities, but when we bring pastures into this, we've got 44 of them. How do we do all of this and how often? So those are things that we're hoping we can be able to make recommendations to the division chief on what we can accomplish. For adoptions, we would like to complete some mock assessments. We learned from the corral piece that we just started. And it would've been nice to have had a sample run with us instead of the real thing the first time. And while we have done one assessment on the adoptions, we need to do a couple more and make sure that, again, that our questions are asked or being asked the right way. And then we need to be able to contact some team assessments. For transportation, the standards are in place. Portions of that are picked up through gathers and through the corral piece, but we haven't just done anything specific to transportation from point A to point B, from one facilities to another. So we need to look at doing that and what that assessment tool would look like. And then for Off-range pastures, we need to get the first the IM finished, we need to finish and make sure that we have assessment tool that we can test. And the training's going to be smaller for the BLM but a heavy lift for the contracting end of it. So we need to be able to make sure that we have opportunities and ways to train people because we know it's not going to be available online overnight. It does take time to get to that step. And then hopefully this fiscal year we'll be beginning those internal assessments. And then our last one on how we're going to do that is to start drafting those standards for private placement and that compliance piece. So those are kind of our next big steps for this fiscal year. And I'm ready to go forward, sorry. And does anyone have any questions? I'd be happy to answer any questions.

**Discussion Regarding Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program Update:**

Ms. McAlpine: Jerry, I want to say thank you for the courtesy that you've shown us and as a liaison to the CAWP Program. I'm going to recommend that my peers here, Dr. Perryman and our chair, Celeste Carlisle chat with you about this POP EQUiS program. That's an actual assessment tool, is that not? Tell her what it is.

Ms. Carlisle: Yeah, it's not an assessment tool, it's population modeling. But I do have a question that sort of lines up with that. But let me let Dr. Perryman go first because I need to formulate it.

Ms. McAlpine: Okay, and where I'm going, Barry, is what's in your brain that would help Jerry, I know Tammy's going to leave, that would help Jerry. It's a tremendous amount of work that she's done with her team this year and having a background in instructional design and evaluation and assessment of adult programs, not necessarily horses. You've done a tremendous amount of really uphill work, so good luck and congratulations. But Barry or Celeste, if you can help her with that, figuring out what needs to be done, that would be great.

Dr. Perryman: You must be tired.

Ms. Bertola: I think I'm on trip number 19 in a year.

Dr. Perryman: Oh boy, it's a lot of work that's been done and I commend you on that. My question, and that's really all I have is a question at this point. And that is the, for the On-range assessment. And I know that the document hasn't been vetted yet, the details and a lot of times you don't want to talk about details until you want to think things through before you open your mouth. But can you give us an idea of what directions you maybe going in in terms of welfare for On-range animals? What directions? At least the directions that you're headed maybe. Could you inform us on that maybe?

Ms. Bertola: So we had a list of standards and we thought we were going in the right direction. And when we sat down and really started going through them, it was like, oh my goodness, like there's so much that is so far out of control of the field specialists. And some of the things that they were concerned about is that, is this truly, is this more of a management issue or is it a welfare issue? And so we stepped back and is what we have asked Holle' for us to allow it to do is to develop something that comes more along the lines of the standards of Rangeland Health. How we would formulate those to look and see and that's kind of where we're at. We don't even have a draft at this point, but how do we link the two of them together and how do we not see horses that are in poor condition on the range,? How do we do that? So I've explained this to a couple of different parts of our program. We're not really sure what that looks like today. And we have only had those initial conversations, but we have backed away from the typical standards that we have for gathers and for the corral's transportation and adoptions at this point. So it might look somewhat different, but trying to use those fundamentals of Rangeland Health and some of the ways that we are thinking it might be more of a tool for the field opposed to a tool from headquarters. But that's just our initial thoughts right now.

Dr. Perryman: Hence my question. I'm not sure how you would do it either. I haven't thought about it much, but I'm really not sure how you would go about it either. But I would caution that, be careful when you're talking about the Rangeland Health assessment. That's an initial tool, it's not something that you base decisions, land management decisions on. There's a caveat on the first page of that that says you're not supposed to use it this way. And so just the concept is interesting, but as always the devil is in the details. And that's a tough one to take on. So I encourage you to continue to think about it and work on it and we'll see where it goes.

Ms. Bertola: Thank you. You may be getting phone calls from us.

Dr. Perryman: Sure. Thank you.

Ms. Carlisle: A couple things. First of all, the public has always been concerned with and is part of the reason behind the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Protocol Program, historically being thought of as something that needed to happen on an agency scale. And then for a long time, essentially your position was vacant. So we are really all glad you're here because it provides a mechanism for moving forward. Also really excited to see the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program thought of as that sort of living document idea that we all strive for. That it is not an end all be all, it's this framework that drives you all and is continuously refined. And so that leads into this question, which is two parts and I think has to do with what Ms. McAlpine was getting at. How we document and capture all of this and then talk amongst the people who need to know after and you still have a long way to go with the internal auditing development and figuring out how your teams work and getting it really dialed in. And then you guys are like, okay, we think this is pretty good and this is how the system is used. Then at some point in time I feel like there was discussion or the intent of the agencies were that. Then the next phase of that is bringing in some external assistance with that. So that's part one of the question which I'll wait for your answer on and then I'll lead into part two.

Ms. Bertola: Yes, part two for us would be those external assessments and we're not there yet. The way that we have it designed is that they would be using our assessment tool, they would be assessing the same way that we have been. So obviously we need to refine some of that so we can give them a product that they could then use for that. I do think that we'll be going down those steps maybe next year, but that's kind of maybe just depending on how that goes. But that's going to take some more steps to get there and how we do that, whether it's an agreement or a contract or that type of stuff to bring somebody else in to do that type of stuff. So that is the plan. Initially we had thought that we may be in that place this fall, we're just not there yet. The other thing that we've been really stressing after we do an assessment, if it's a gather or a facility, they can always go into a self-assessment. It can be the team there, it can be, you can bring different people in the neighboring facility, whatever, just double check yourself. Check and see what... And this has been successful on gathers and I think that's something that the facilities could then use. But it's basically, how are we doing? Are we achieving these standards? Yes or no? So that's another piece that we've been stressing.



Ms. Carlisle: And then the second part of that is tying in all of this reporting and communication between this is a lot of different layers and I know you're not there yet because you're developing these. This is going to be incremental. But in thinking about for example, you're assessing a gather and you have found category X is not being met. And so then what the procedure is to correct for that or to, I don't want to use the wrong word here. For there to be a consequence for that. And then how that reporting happens through the system so that... Let's say it's a contractor and let's use something that won't get anybody into any hot water. It's your contractor that brings water to gathers to make sure people have water. And they start bringing alcohol, they can't come anymore. So you're going to, that doesn't work anymore. What's the process for that? So that the public can feel like there are real hard lines in the sand that then the BLM is going to be like, oh, you're not meeting this and you have to. And within really tight constraints, there aren't a lot of people that can come and help you all out with these big things, be they gathers or putting animals into facilities, things like that. So I don't expect you to have a total answer, but just the thought of how to coordinate all this information and then to make it available to the public. It was really great, this sounds terrible, when the outbreak was occurring at Canyon City, that there were daily updates on the website that really felt like we could follow along and there was transparency in what was happening. Are there thoughts of that sort of component being built into the system?

Ms. Bertola So for gathers, like if we see something, we're talking with the core icing we can communicate. I don't have the authority because it's a contract to stop the gather or to stop that. That's gotta go through the contracting piece. So we have communication with our onsite core or the IC bring up the issue. And then it's their, it falls into their category on is this something that needs to be elevated to the contracting officer for further discussion? Is it something that the core can take onsite? Some of the stuff that I can think of corrective actions that have taken place is that the visual barriers have slipped and they've had to rehang visual barriers on some of the gates. And we can document that that corrective action has taken if it occurs while we're on site. The other step would be that if it's not corrected while we're there, a self-assessment could take place and that they could document that. Ultimately, it goes back to the authorized officer and that's even stated in our permanent IM for the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program. So we have been trying to educate all parts of it on how this would flow and I think Holle' might have some more to add to this.

Ms. Waddell: Yes I do. Thank you Jerry, great presentation. And as you all know, Celeste, you actually mentioned that that the deposition was vacant and so Jerry has really walked in the door with a blank canvas and that's what I tell her all the time is a blank canvas you have the charge and so you're building this program from scratch. And she and her team and Dr. Kane have done a phenomenal job. They've engaged other staff and field specialists as well and it's really been very supportive. And I had mentioned earlier about changing the conversation. And so we began changing that conversation and speaking internally about this. We've held workshops with BLM management down to field managers, district managers, everyone was invited, right? Let's have a conversation about this. The team is going to be coming out and conducting these assessments and they're going to be providing feedback that will be made public. Our goal is to be transparent about these assessments and communicate where we are not following our standards and also where we are. And so to your question regarding the contractors, the contractors do support certain operations and efforts that we do on the ground and some of those are a part of the standards. And so any of those violations or where they're not compliant with those standards, Jerry is exactly right, it goes back to the core and the contracting officer. And that's one of the challenges that we faced is being able to communicate to the contractors that this is an assessment and there may be some direction to correct some actions and also give a thumbs up and a pat on the back about doing things great.

Ms. Carlisle No, that's really helpful and I just want to make sure I'm clear I'm not calling out the contractors in particular, they're the example. But anything that is missed on an assessment, does the team then follow up with like, we're going to check in in a month or here's the resource to get this repaired or whatever?

Ms. Waddell: Yeah, and just a reminder that everyone has access to the training and also the standards and so you're right. Once the team finishes their report, that report is provided to the point of contact in that office. The managers are also invited to a conversation with Jerry and the team about that particular assessment and then that report is made transparent. And we have the CAWP website obviously and it's not very buried, that one you can find pretty easily. But it has a lot of information. We have put a pause on updating reports, we're working out a couple of details, logistical details, but our goal is to remain transparent about that. And so she identified a couple of other components of CAWP that she's still working on. And some of those are policies, some of those are standing, some of those are training and on the range is just, it's in the sky right now about exactly what that's going to look like. But I've encouraged her. David is very



supportive about remaining innovative in ways that we're going to be able to communicate the importance of the priority that the agency has set on animal welfare and what that looks like in all the parts of our program.

Ms. Bertola: If I can just add one more thing too is just the fact that our specialists in the field are having these conversations, how are we going to be compliant with CAWP? We might not have all the pieces, but it's really been elevated to the place where our field staff is like, okay, how do we do this? We might not have absolutely everything, it's not 100% perfect, but how do we make it a safe in the situation that we have and be able to implement as many standards as possible? So I think that's a huge step for our BLM staff and the seriousness that they are taking of this, I'm very impressed with our field staff.

Ms. Carlisle: Yeah, thank you very much. That's really good. And the general direction of empowering the people on the ground is really, really fantastic. Ms. McAlpine.

Ms. McAlpine: And I can say I had the opportunity to attend a gather and a facility assessment along with the CAWP team and it gave me an opportunity not only to take the tool and kind of go through the standards and see what it was and assess what I thought the school would be, compare it later with what the team came up with, but I also had the opportunity, and I'm sure Tom would confirm that too on the facility assessment. We had the opportunity to watch the team and watch staff talk and discuss different items that were on the assessment. And sometimes they would unfortunately point things right out. They'd say, well so-and-so isn't such and such. And he is like maybe the team might have missed it but they're really participating in this assessment process and trying to do the very best that they can do under situations that they may be understaffed, they may be underfunded, they may be in an older facility. So what Jerry says does happen and happens often.

Ms. Carlisle: This group tired? Anything else from you all?

Ms. Pearson: I really do want to tell you thank you though. This is a complicated issue and you coming in with the blank page and fresh eyes I think is impressive and I understand it's time consuming and frustrating. Everything that we talk about with this program is complex and layered and we do need to do the deeper dive to see where we can do better. We can always do better. But fresh eyes and a new perspective is always helpful, so I appreciate that.

Ms. Waddell: Thank you. And just to add to that, we have those tough conversations. We don't always see eye-to-eye as a team and we have those conversations. There's 15 of us and we're still all talking, we're still all colleagues and friends and so, but we've had some really difficult conversations and so thank you.

Ms. Pearson: Well, and just to follow up on this, I don't think there's a single person sitting on this board or that's in the BLM program or anywhere else who does not care personally for the horse themselves. I think we're all very passionate. I'm not here representing me, myself and I, I'm representing, I've always said you can't see the forest for the trees, you gotta look at the whole picture. I'm not just focused on one issue and when it comes down to it, it's back to the five Rs. I actually wrote it down this time because I can remember them now. I've always said this, but in all honesty we have to be realistic. We have to be respectful for all views. We need to be reasonable, we need to be rational, and in the end we have to be responsible all the way around. And I appreciate, like I said, I appreciate the whole program and everybody's perspective and their hard work going forward to do better.

### **BLM Demonstration of the Wild Horse and Burro Program System Public Reporting Application** *Meredith Kueck, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, BLM*

Ms. Kueck: Good afternoon everyone. My name's Meredith Kueck, and I am a Wild Horse and Burro specialist for the On-range Branch. And today I'll be talking to you all a little bit about our upcoming public reporting application. As I'm sure you all know, the Wild Horse and Burro Program does track and maintain a large amount of data that's relevant to the work of our program. That data is entered and stored into a database called the Wild Horse and Burro Program System, also known as WHBPS. Once that data is entered, it can be accessed through WHBPS itself or through another reporting system called the National-Apps Reporting System or NRS. See, I told you, lots of acronyms. And both of those systems are internal only to the BLM, so the public is not able to access either one of those systems. And until recently, the

program did not have a good avenue for providing data from our databases to the public. But that's changed with the recent introduction of the BLM reporting application, that's located at reports.blm.gov. That reporting application does provide us a platform for providing some public standard reports that we can create within NRS. So a big goal of the program right now is to get some reports up there that we're able to share with the public. Alrighty. Perfect. You're on the ball. Okay, so what are the goals and objectives of this program? The overarching goal of this program is to increase our program transparency by providing this data to the public. We want to provide some easy to use public standard reports that are generated from our data, specifically information that's frequently requested. We want to be able to provide that information for the public. We also want to improve public ability to find information on specific animals. So like you can see on the graphic on the screen here, if a member of the public has the freeze mark number of a horse or a burro, they'll be able to type it into this reporting system, hit okay and then get background information on that animal such as capture information, capture date, and then the current status of the animal. Is it in holding, is it adopted, sold, transferred, et cetera? We also do want to decrease some dependence on Freedom of Information Act requests for providing information to the public. Our program does get numerous, numerous foyer requests right now and that can take a lot of time for our staff to provide responses to all of those requests. So ideally, by providing some of this information easily for the public, we can reduce some of that workload for our own people in addition to the public benefit. What should the public expect with these reports? They should expect to see reports with frequently requested data. The reports I'm starting on for this application are mostly related to gatherers, private care placement, and animal background and information. These reports are based off of lawyer requests that we frequently get. So we do know that the public is specifically interested in this information that we're providing initially. Some information such as personally identifiable information or PII that can't be shared, that's information like names, addresses, and et cetera. The public should expect to see instructions for each report telling them what the report contains on how to run the report. And then the public will also have the ability to export these report results. So where are we now in this process? We're currently in the process of creating and testing reports on a test site. So each report has to be created within NRS and then posted on this test site so we can see what will this look like for the public? What will their results look like? Is there anything that we need to change or modify? In addition to that, we're creating instructions for all of these reports. The goal is to have our first reports available to the public by the end of 2022. I do want to insert a disclaimer here though, that our testing site is currently not functioning properly. So having those reports available by the end of this calendar year is dependent on that site being repaired, which will hopefully be soon because it's been a little bit and I know they're working on it. Okay, so with that I'll go ahead and take over. Perfect. And I just want to do a quick demo for you guys of what these reports will look like. So this is what it'll look like when you log into the reporting application. There are several other BLM systems that are already using this report.blm.gov. So we'll be adding the Wild Horse and Burros Program system to that list. And then once you open that, there will be a list of reports. Currently we have it broken down under four headings. I don't know that this is what it will look like when it does go public. This is just kind of what we're working on testing right now and finding the best look and the most accessible way to organize everything. So within these headings, there are several reports. What you would do is select your report. And then as you can see, it's not currently working. So this is our internal NRS site, but this is pretty similar to what the report will look like and that's awfully small. There we go. Is that big enough for everyone, okay. So it'll have a short description of the report so people know what they're looking for. This report in particular is about animal adoptions. And then we're able to search specifically by the admin state that completed the adoption and also the adoption date. So like I said, short description up here. This one in particular describes the admin states, like lists all of the physical states that are included in the Eastern states admin jurisdiction. So what you'll need to do is select from your filters. Oh, oh, there we go. So let's say that we're interested in adoptions that were completed in California. So we select California. And then we'll say we want information on adoptions that took place between January 1st, 2020 and January 1st, 2022. So these two filters here are mandatory. Folks will have to put some sort of information in there and each report will have mandatory filters. This one also has a couple of optional filters that you can include. For example, someone earlier today, I believe, asks specifically about animals that were returned from their adopters. So on this report, if that's what you're interested in, you can go in and say, I want to see specifically animals that were repossessed. But I'm going to take that back off so we get a little bit more data. We also have the Adoption Incentive Program on here. So you'd be able to filter specifically for animals adopted through AIP. So what we'll do then is hit okay. And then this is what our report looks like. There's information on each animal and as well as information on the adoption. So this is test data, it's all made up strictly for the purpose of testing, it does not mean anything at all. So yes, like I said, information on the animal and the adoption. And then folks will be able to export their results in Excel or PDF formats.

**Discussion regarding BLM Demonstration of the Wild Horse and Burro Program System Public Reporting Application:**

Ms. Waddell: Hey Meredith, really quickly, can you go to that column and just walk through the adoption outcomes kind of those dispositions? Thanks.

Ms. Kueck: Absolutely. So our adoption outcome is essentially, how did the adoption end? Is that animal still adopted? Is it titled? Was it repossessed, relinquished or reassigned? Those are options. And then the outcome date is, what was the date of that outcome? For the still adopted animals, that will be blank because they don't have an outcome yet. And I like that you brought that up Holle', because there will be instructions for each report describing the information that's included in the report as well as a description or definition of each of the columns that are included. So when people pull this information up, there's no question as to the results that they're getting and the information that they're looking at. So that's everything that I have for the demo for you all. If you have any questions, I'm happy to answer them.

Ms. McAlpine: So during the public comments, we've heard several complaints about the Adoption Incentive Program and the fact that people are taking inappropriate actions following the adoption through the AIP. So this reporting system, if complaints come in, as I hear it from you, and I adopt animals in a couple of different states and then they end up somewhere they shouldn't end up, could potentially be used to highlight abuse of the program, which would then result in some form of enforcement from the BLM program? And that's the question.

Ms. Waddell: I'll take that one, Meredith. So two things, so this is the public reporting. So this would allow members of the public, so instead of calling the 18664 Mustang number, someone could, if they had a freeze mark or adoption location and wanted to know information about it, then they could go to this public reporting system, put in that information and generate some type of report. If they didn't find what they were looking for or had questions or something like that, then obviously they can still contact us with those questions. But whether or not this would be used because it wouldn't bring up any adopter data like their name and that type of information. This is for freeze marking, it's going to show the animal numbers and kind of those situations, but not information regarding the adopter. So I would say for an investigative or something to take action, that still is the responsibility of BLM. And members of the public should still contact BLM so that we can take the necessary steps in the Wild Horse and Burro Program System that feeds information for this public reporting data. But it should be that we are taking that action to find out what happened, contact the adopter and take our appropriate steps.

Ms. McAlpine: Yeah, and I'm kind of thinking that too. I'm not thinking that the public can use this. But if you get multiple reports that even though it doesn't identify the individual, you can use it as a piece of the data to say, okay, let's investigate this. There's something here that we need to either discount or enforce. And then go whatever step further you go when you're in investigations.

Ms. Waddell: Oh, got it.

Ms. McAlpine: But I'm thinking of using it from the BLM point, not Susan McAlpine, the public.

Ms. Waddell: Correct. No, we would not use this system. This is strictly for the public to be able to access information that we already have in our existing Wild Horse and Burro Program System, our database. Does that make sense?

Ms. McAlpine: Yep.

Ms. Waddell: Okay.

Ms. McAlpine: And then the other big thing I've seen the chat to interpret the freeze brands horribly a dozen times. You are lying, I can't remember words this week. And so hopefully you've included that somewhere so that whoever it is that's using the system can actually interpret that freeze brand. And obviously the Burros and Forest Service is moving to microchips.

Ms. Waddell: Yes. So we will have an opportunity to link different pages and that is some information that we could put in a frequently asked questions or link to another page that angle code and how to interpret that. And we do also microchip all of our animals now. And so that is something else that we could put in here that you could search by microchip rather than free smart or both.

Ms. Carlisle: Yep, fabulous. Thank you, good job. Dr Lenz.

Dr. Lenz: So if that horse were to go through the incentive program and then it's titled after a year and transferred to the owner, does that, and I were to check up on that horse down the road sometime, would it show up as still adopted or would it show up as transferred?

Ms. Kueck: It would show up as titled. So in that adoption outcome right here, it would say titled. This is test data so I don't know, there's probably not very many animals in here that are titled. But that's what it would say and then the titling date would be the outcome date.

Ms. Waddell: Oh, sorry, I was just going to jump in. Dr. Lenz, where I guess they could be helpful is when people are saying, oh my god, this animal is titled and now it's been sold the very next day. This would help the public, well, deciphering that information.

Dr. Lenz: I would just, I don't know if it's a caution or it's just bringing it up so that you're cognizant of it if you're not already. In some of our rural states like Nevada and Wyoming, I don't need personal information. All I need is a county, an income bracket and an age or a gender and everybody in the state knows who it is. So like administrative state code, all right, we're down to the state now. A site code or an adoption facility, okay, I know where that is, now, who do I know that was at that play? You see where I'm going with it?

Ms. Waddell: Absolutely.

Dr. Lenz: So there's that balance between personal private information and information that's necessary to report things that need to be reported. So just be cautious of that and make sure that your information that you're displaying is not going to identify somebody pretty easily. Because like I say in rural states, it's easy. And we see this with surveys at university, everybody wants to do, the social scientists always want to do surveys and things. And we tell them, look, you gimme four questions and I can tell you exactly who you're talking about if you gimme the data. And I don't have to have a name, I don't have to have an address, I don't have to have a phone number, just those categories. So just be cognizant of that as you develop this thing further. Because if you don't, somebody's going to remind you, I think at some point in time if it's not so.

Ms. Waddell: Absolutely. I really appreciate that comment because that is one of the concerns with the development of this is that we absolutely do not want to provide any information that, again, anyone can be personally identified by. So it is something that we're very aware of. And as I'm building these reports, that's something that I'm actually building it around. So sometimes one report ends up being two just for the fact that we have to work around not providing that specific information.

### ***Closing***

Ms. Carlisle: I'll go ahead and kick it to Bryant for any housekeeping and then to you all for any last words before we close it out.

Mr. Kuechle: Let's see. No housekeeping. We made up a lot of time this afternoon so we're finished early, so that's always good news. We're going to start again tomorrow, eight o'clock. Promptly, we have again one public comment period tomorrow scheduled for 1:30 to 3:30. So it's a two hour public comment period. So we have double the entries for people that wanted to provide public comment. Those online slots are full. However, again, we do have some capacity for in-person if you're in town and in Phoenix. So other than that, that's concludes today's meeting. We'll pick up day two tomorrow at eight o'clock. Thank you.

Ms. Carlisle: Final words from Dr. Jenkins or Ms. Waddle?

Dr. Jenkins: Whoosh.

Ms. Carlisle: Mr. Oliver?

Mr. Oliver: So I will let you all know that I will not be here tomorrow, but I really appreciate the opportunity as we move forward to kind of start playing at this level and start putting it out there and getting the recognition that we are a part of that large program. And I will thank you all for the time that you've giving us in space.

Ms. Carlisle: Thanks for coming. And just one final word, thank you to the public for showing up to make comments, for showing up virtually to make comments. It's not always the funnest to participate in public meetings, but we do appreciate you coming. So thank you very much. Meeting adjourned.

**[Adjourn]**

### **Public Comment Period (1)**

*\*From October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022*

\*This comment period occurred on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at the conclusion of the advisory board subcommittee meeting. The transcript is included here.

Mr. Kuechle: Before we enter in the public comment period time, I want to provide a little bit of information to set this up and establishing ground rules for the public commenters. This is a public meeting of the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board. These are working meetings with specific times set aside for public comment. The board, the BLM, and the US Forest Service recognized the value of public input during advisory board meetings and appreciate the public's interest in expressing themselves a matter of common concern. To ensure a smooth meeting for all engaged, the following rules have been established for the public comment periods. In-person and virtual commenters must register prior to the meeting. Again, as I mentioned, those online slots have been filled. We do have some availability for in-person commenters. So if you are in Phoenix and you are nearing the training center, we will have an opportunity to provide in-person comment when we conclude the online portion. Commenters may sign up to provide verbal comment at one comment period only and may not reassign their slot to another speaker. Virtual commenters must address their comments to the board via audio only. Be sure to not watch on [blm.gov/live](http://blm.gov/live) while speaking on Zoom. That'll create some interference. So please, if you're live streaming and you plan to provide virtual comment and you're on the Zoom link, please turn the live stream off. Commenters will have three minutes each and must finish in the designated time to allow for the maximum number of individuals to express their viewpoints. Commenters must show mutual respect for everyone participating in the board meeting. Do not use unprofessional conduct or inappropriate language such as yelling or profanity and refrain from any personal attacks. So I will have my finger on the mute button and we will cut people off that violate any of those rules. Violating or disregarding any of the rules may result in being muted or removal from the meeting, as stated. The BLM and the Forest Service appreciate the public's cooperation to maintaining these rules for the benefit of all involved. So a few other items. So we will be calling... Speakers will be called in order of registration. And as I mentioned, if there's more people wishing to provide comment, written comment can always be submitted via email. Violating or disregarding any of the rules may result in being muted or removed from the meeting, as stated. The BLM appreciates the public's cooperation to maintain these rules for the benefit of all involved. The BLM will not respond to comments or questions made during the public comment period. This should not be interpreted to mean that BLM disagrees or agrees with anything said. The Zoom meeting is being recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, please submit your comments via email. Additionally, we will do online registrants first, then in person. I will announce who is up first and who is on deck. If you run short, time cannot be given to another speaker. If we have extra time, we will offer that up to any in-person attendees who have not already spoken. If you are here in person and you'd like to speak and you haven't registered, you can do that at the entrance. So when we do call your name, we'd ask you to state your name and who you are representing and your location. You'll see a three-minute countdown timer. I'll provide a warning as needed, and we'll control the mute as warranted. And once again, please be respectful, use good manners, and refrain from personal attacks or offensive language. So I'm going to announce who's up first and who's on deck. And again, this is in the order of those registered. When it's your turn to speak, I will click a button, allow you to talk, and then you can begin providing your comments, and you'll see that countdown timer of three minutes. So looking at our list here, Joanna Grossman is gonna be up first and Nina Jackel is on deck. So, Joanna, I'm going to allow you to speak now and you can unmute.



### **Joanna Grossman**

Okay, thank you so much. Well, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. My name is Dr. Joanna Grossman, and I'm the senior advisor for the Animal Welfare Institute. I wanted to highlight a few key priorities today. First, we appreciate the BLM's interest in reforming the adoption incentive program and the agency's engagement with stakeholders on this issue. We firmly believe that the BLM must move away from direct cash payments given the ongoing problems with adopted horses ending up in the slaughter pipeline. Non-cash incentives such as doctors for veterinary care present a viable means to encourage well-meaning individuals to adopt wild horses. The bombshell investigation published in The New York Times put a spotlight on a very real problem. One that like other slaughter scandals before, it has blight on the credibility of the program. We would also emphasize the need for robust compliance checks to ensure horses are placed at good homes. I also wanted to touch on the solicitations for proposals for on and off-range projects pertaining to the administration of fertility control, habitat improvement, educational opportunities, adoption compliance checks, and other areas. We are gratified to see the agency pursue these initiatives and work to foster partnerships. We strongly support the administration of proven and safe immunocontraceptive vaccines and are pleased to see that Congress is on track to include, for FY23, language directing the BLM to set aside 11 million of its overall budget for use of immunocontraceptive vaccines like PZP and PZP-22. We encourage the agency to conduct significant outreach to nonprofits and community groups in order to identify opportunities for collaboration. For example, AWI co-leads the Homes for Horses Coalition, a network of over 500 equine rescues and sanctuaries across the United States. We would welcome the opportunity to have BLM staff speak to our membership to better identify areas where groups may be able to assist. Additionally, when possible, the agency should maximize deadlines for grants, opportunities so that stakeholders with relevant expertise and sufficient time to navigate the process and prepare comprehensive applications. Lastly, I want to turn briefly to the Wyoming Checker Board situation. We're gravely disappointed to see the BLM release its final environmental impact statement announcing plans to move forward with eliminating herd management areas that are home to cherished herds. This comes on the heels of the largest roundup in US history as the agency removed a staggering 3,500 horses this past winter. A move that set the stage to eliminate millions of acres of designated wild horse habitat. Over 70,000 Americans signed a petition to the Interior Department opposing the sweeping removal. The one's proposed management plan is especially troubling, and near over 10th Circuits 2016 rulling that found that the agency had violated both the Wild Horse and Burro Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act in removing horses from the checker board by treating public lands as though they were private. We hope the agency will reconsider this extreme plan that would set a dangerous precedent for wild horse and burro management. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input today.

### **Nina Jackel**

Hi, thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Nina Jackel, founder and president of nonprofit animal protection group, Lady Freethinker. This summer, Lady Freethinker witnessed horses die at a helicopter roundup in the Triple B complex of Nevada, including a two-year-old MARE who died unexpectedly from respiratory pneumonia and compromised lungs and another horse who fell to the ground after missing the trap. Deaths and brutal injuries from helicopter assisted gathers are far too common. Our analysis found that at least 245 wild horses died as a result of the 20 helicopter roundups between 2021 and 2022. Many died following broken bones, snapped necks, lacerations, and heart failure. This death toll doesn't even take into account the hundreds of horses who died from disease like equine flu after being captured and packed into holding facilities or the horses who were slaughtered after being adopted out to the Adoption Incentive Program and sold at livestock auctions. Out of the 245 million acres of land, the BLM manages 155 million acres are dedicated to livestock and just 26.9 million acres are allotted for wild horses and burros. The BLM claims horses are removed in part to protect the health of our nation's public rangelands, but still allows 1.5 million cows to graze on federal land, devastating the environment. In the West, grazing is the most widespread cause of species endangerment and damages native vegetation, soils, and stream banks, and also contaminates waterways. One report found that livestock grazing on public land in the West emits over 12 million metric tons of carbon dioxide a year. That's equivalent to the emission of 3.3 million cars. Now in contrast, while horses play an important role in our ecosystem, research shows that the horses benefit their environment in numerous ways, including digging watering holes that benefit other weaker animals. And they can help prevent forest fires by consuming dry fire prone vegetation over vast areas of the West. By continuing to allow livestock to graze while cruelly and forcefully removing wild horses from their homes, the BLM is showing little interest in protecting public rangelands or the welfare of animals. I urge the BLM to do the right thing and stop the cruel wild horse helicopter round ups. Thank you.

**Conny Ahrend**

Hello, good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to provide my public comment. I'm Conny Ahrend and I'm speaking in behalf of the Wind Catcher Sanctuary and Corporation, a mustang sanctuary in the southern USA. Another year has passed and the BLM still seems not to understand that according to the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, its principle task is the protection of the wild horses and burros. This means to stand up for the legal rights as in living in the designated areas and not to have shared with any livestock. Removing them from their homeland and separating equine families was not the intention of that law. The so-called gathers are, in my opinion, still unnecessary and cruel, especially when done with helicopters. But what really is outrageous is the lack of respect for the lives of these animals and the unethical treatment by the BLM. Why do so many get killed by the BLM because of preexisting conditions? Being blind, half blind, having a club foot or being emaciated does not mean they need to be killed. Most likely, the eye problems are caused by uveitis, which usually is caused by a leptospiral infection. But even ERU, the equine recurrent uveitis, is not a reason for killing a horse. It can be treated. Do you know that every year, 30,000 new cases of blindness in US citizens is caused by uveitis? Does the BLM think it would be appropriate to kill them too? And by the way, how can a horse be chased for miles with a helicopter, and then lameness on all four legs or a broken leg is declared as a preexisting condition? I suggest to stop killing horses, and instead give them in sanctuaries where they get medical treatment and can outlive their lives peacefully. I'm sure many sanctuaries will happily take over all of the above described horses. A money incentive by the BLM in such cases would make sense to cover some of the measure costs. And then again, I demand to rethink your Adoption Incentive Program. First, no money incentives anymore. That just lures crooks and heartless people. Second, after the horses are titled, they have to keep the status of being federally protected for lifetime, and that no export without written consent from the BLM. Third, no sales of any wild horses or burros if the title is not accompanying them. Thank you for your attention.

**Rebecca Falk**

Hello, my name is Rebecca Falk, and I'm from Garden Plain, Kansas. You can hear me, right? Okay, so I'm not with an organization. I just really care about wild horses and burros. And I'm very, very sad and disappointed that helicopter roundups are still going on with our taxpayer money, while wild horses are getting killed. We've lost 300 wild horses this year due to roundups. I'm very disappointed about the Colorado roundups in the last couple years. 90% of Wild Horses in Colorado have pretty much disappeared. We've lost the same horse basin horses last year and the Douglas ones, they were very strong in my heart because I am from Kansas. I mean, I care about all the wild horses, but this one really hit me hard, so I'm very sad about that. I'm also very sad that we've already lost 300 horses, as I said before, due to roundups. They're not the way. There are other things that can be done such as fertility control. I'm not really for fertility control, but if it saves the wild horses to keep them on the range, then all for it. PZP actually is being done in Virginia Range and the wild horses have stayed there and not have been rounded up. Also, the Douglas horses were rounded up in over 95 degree temperatures. I called them this roundup quite a bit, and the BLM people said, they said they would not round these horses up if it weren't over 95 degrees. And this was in July and they still rounded them up in a hundred degrees. Pregnant mares, young foals, very sad. I know a lot of the mares probably did abort babies, unfortunately. We also, as before, 300 horses, of course this year, stallions broke their necks, and then, of course, foals got killed and stampeded by the helicopters. Also, after the roundups, of course, you speak about horses that have preexisting conditions such as blindness, which... So we go on to the Oregon one in the steams area, which is very hard for all the people in that area. They've really cared about the horses. They're looking for a special couple horses that they knew about such as survivor and some cremello's horses which they said were not blind or had maybe some other problems. They still haven't found these horses and maybe they were put down unfortunately. And actually a lot of sanctuaries would have take these horses in a heartbeat, which is very sad. So as I've said before, helicopter rounds are poor, unjust, and need to be stopped ASAP. Also, HMA since '20 have disappeared. HMAs race should be back to the wild horses, and 11% should be more for the wild horses, and cattle, sheep, and goats should get off the land. Thank you.

**Rick Karcich**

Yeah, My name is Rick Karcich. I'm from Centennial, Colorado. And for the record, I state the following, every part of our American public lands is sacred to us. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, every humming insect, and every wild horse and burro is holy in the memory and experience of the American people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of our American people. So when the great members of this advisory board ask us for our comments, they ask us to dig deeply into our relationships. How can money buy or sell the land, the warmth of the land? This idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and sparkle of the water, how can money compensate for this? Nevertheless, it is these attributes, the warmth and

freshness, which are priceless and which are threatened by BLM scapegoating wild horses and burros over the proven degradation caused by livestock. This, we the American people know, all things are connected. Whatever befalls are public lands, befalls the sons and daughters of America, regardless of political or legal posturing. Man did not weave the web of life. He is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. As a veteran, as a grandfather, as a retired engineer, I may live out my brief days as I wish. When the last wild horse and burro have vanished from the earth and their memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these prairies and forests will still hold their spirits and the spirits of the American people. We love our rangelands and our wild horses and burros just as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So we ask the great members of this advisory board and the BLM to love and respect our rangelands and wild horses and burros. We ask you to care for them as previous generations of Americans have cared for them. Preserve our wild horses and burros for all our children and all our future generations. Stop managing our rangelands for livestock. Stop the Adoption Incentive Program, which is nothing more than a slaughter pipeline. Thank you.

### **Amelia Perrin**

Fantastic, thank you. Hi, my name is Amelia Perrin, and I am the investigations manager for the American Wild Horse Campaign. For nearly two years, I've been investigating the consequences of the Adoption Incentive Program. Throughout this meeting, you're gonna hear the BLM tout this program as a sweeping success, all while actively ignoring the seamy underbelly of taxpayer fraud and wild horse slaughter. In the last 22 months, we've identified over 1000 wild horses and burros in slaughter auctions. Of those, 521 have been able to be identified by BLM brand. And we've confirmed so far that over 69% of these identified horses have been adopted through the AIP. These findings are just the very tip of the iceberg as many Wild Horses and burros are directly shipped across the border without ever being advertised. So the true number of AIP animals in the slaughter pipeline is likely much larger than what we've uncovered. If the sheer number of animals entering the slaughter pipeline is not enough to compel the agency to act, let's take a look at the taxpayer fraud and waste resulting from the AIP. I have identified over two dozen groups of related individuals who are adopting the maximum number of animals each, then receiving the incentive and sending their horses and burros right into the hands of kill buyers. Somewhere on their second or even third rounds of the scheme, one family of 12 adopted up to three rounds of AIP animals, raking in as much as \$82,000 of taxpayer money before sending their animals to the slaughter auctions. Let me repeat that. \$82,000 in taxpayer incentives, the AIP has created an animal welfare crisis that the BLM has failed to treat with the urgency it demands. But the BLM has a history of turning a blind eye to wild horse slaughter. It did so in the '80s when its fee waiver programs send thousands of wild horses and burros to slaughter. And again, in the '90s, when its own employees were complicit in selling mustang to slaughter. And again in the two thousands when kill buyer Tom Davis bought almost 2000 animals for slaughter. And now again in the 2020s, with this disastrous cash incentive program. So over the next few days, while you hear the BLM talk about success stories, record numbers of adoptions, happy horses and happy homes, I want you to think about the over 1,000 animals the BLM has failed. Even one wild horse in the slaughter pipeline as a direct result of the BLM policy is too many, but over a thousand? That's unacceptable. Last year, this very board recommended the banded in cash incentives. The BLM failed to do that. Members of Congress called for an investigation. The BLM failed to do that. Rescue groups have urged the BLM to meetings reform this program, so they're not bearing the brunt of the agency's bad policy. The BLM failed to do that. It's time for the BLM to learn from its past mistakes and take urgent action to address the crisis it has created. And in order to do that, it must get the cash out of the equation. So I urge this board to yet again recommend abandoning the cash incentives. Thank you.

### **Tammi Adams**

All right, thank you. This is Tammi Adams for the record. I have a few quick points that I'd like to address or submit to the advisory board today. First of all, you talked earlier about darting program and getting trainers. I know one of the things that's close to my heart as being a wife of a veteran, I'm hoping that you will look to veterans to help them be trained for the darting program. Have that part of the legislation are the rules, the policy that you establish. Number two, one of the hardest things we have as advocacy groups is getting through the appeal process for anything that has to do with A BLM roundup of any sort. There is a continuation of not making the law just and not making it available to all. This is one of those things that may not have a lot to do with the advisory board, but yet again, the BLM needs to understand that all advocates, especially those that are well-established groups, would like a seat at the table. Not just those that are incredibly financially backed, but all of us that have been involved for decades in this policymaking situation. My third and probably closest to my heart has to do with the CAWP program, the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program. Currently, I would like to bring to your attention, for example, that the Triple B roundup lasted for over 23 consecutive days. Within that time, the CAWP assessment team was there two days, maybe three. They filled their

report out before the roundup was even completed. I am requesting that the advisory board suggests to the BLM that a CAWP assessment team be onsite for every day of every single roundup. That should be staffed from the implementing field offices and it should be rotated. In order for the CAWP program to actually be successful, these assessments must have corrections made on a daily basis. I can think of one contractor in particular who continuously falls and fails, partially fails continuously the same elements every time, yet they are not corrected and this contractor continues to be employed. There has to be an assessment for when you have 23 desks, such as the Triple B, that no contractor should receive a 96% comprehension when they have people who are not trained and they have equipment failures. Please consider this closely to your hearts. We need CAWP assessments every day of every roundup. Thank you for your time.

### **Clare Staples**

My name is Clare Staples, and I'm the founder of Skydog Sanctuary in Oregon in California. Firstly, I'm again going to sound the alarm about the Adoption Incentive Program and the amount of branded mustangs landing in slaughter pens. Right now, at this very second, there are dozens of young mustangs shipping to slaughter from pens all across the West. And I watched three shipped to slaughter last night, signaling the very real desperate emergency we are now in. With rescues and sanctuaries full to capacity, we cannot continue to bear the burden of this crisis created by the Bureau. I urge you again to immediately suspend the AIP until further notice so rescues and sanctuaries can catch up and be the safety net that you so clearly have given up on being for these horses. We have brought you all the evidence you asked for. We have workshopped the alternatives. Now we ask again that you suspend the program. Secondly, I was extremely disturbed to see that the BLM euthanized 22 horses after the South Steens roundup, 11 of them being cremellos. It seems to be a long held belief of the BLM that the cremellos have blindness issues or may develop them later in life, and they euthanized them based on this premise. We, as a sanctuary, sat at a table with the head of the Oregon Barns Corral and the state lead and offered to take all special needs and seniors, and yet you choose to shoot them knowing you have an alternative. That is murder. Why do you refuse to work with organizations who want to help these horses and care about their lives? As well as which you are yet again conducting emergency gathers for many herds based on the current drought situation. We have a 9,000 acre ranch in the same landscape as South Steens or Paisley Desert, and we've also had water issues with ponds drying up and stream stopping, but we took the time to drill wells, which are now supplying water to our over 250 herd of rescued equines. Why do you not take these measures also on public lands to ensure the wellbeing of the horses and donkeys who live on them instead of going immediately to the only solution you seem to have in your toolbox that of rounding up the horses and stockpiling them on the taxpayer dime. It will be far cheaper to drill wells than to spend millions on roundups and holding pens for horses when you continue to let livestock graze the same land that is degraded and supposedly dry. Lastly, I want to know why so many BLM facilities are not open to the public, and the horses in these facilities made available for adoption. The Red Desert roundup in Wyoming in 2020 led to over 2,000 horses losing their freedom, but they still have not held a full adoption event at the prison. After much pressure, they did one offsite adoption for the senior stallions in that herd, and then two opportunities for invited parties to come and adopt horses in 21, and since, there are nothing. Other than 145 horses dying from a virus, they weren't vaccinated against due to short staffed. Open these facilities and let us help these horses and get them adopted. Thank you.

Mr. Kuechle: Thank you. So that concludes our portion of the online comment period time for those that joined us. So we will now shift to in-person. So if you're here, write in-person comment, please come forward.

### **Lynda Logan**

Hi, my name is Lynda Logan. I live here in Phoenix, Arizona. I volunteer with Advocates of Wild Equines, but I am here representing the general public. Due to unrelenting roundups, there are now more than 70,000 wild horses in taxpayer funded captive holding facilities, with these costs eating up more than half of the BLM's budget for wild horse and burro management. This is reckless spending and it circumvents federal law to protect and keep wild horses and burros on public lands in order to appease cattle and sheep ranchers. Millions of cattle and sheep who are not native species are replacing wild horses and burros who have been on the range since before the United States was even a country. There are serious economic flaws in the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program. It is simply not possible to properly care for the ever-growing number of captive wild horses and burros who have a lifespan of up to 30 years. Recent outbreaks of infectious diseases and stranglers in BLM holding facilities have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of horses. These disease outbreaks would've never happened outside of the feedlot conditions at the BLM holding facilities. Warehousing these animals for 30 years is simply cruel and unsustainable. The list of accomplishments handed out at this meeting includes BLM expenditures of 134 million taxpayer dollars. In my opinion, that is not an accomplishment. It's a whopping waste of taxpayer money. The BLM removes horses to allow taxpayer subsidized grazing of cattle and sheep who eat grass, erode the land, and leave their waste on the range. Congress has caved in and thrown more money at the BLM's

failed mass roundup strategies while the BLM operates with little accountability to the public or the Congress and its implementation of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act bastardizes the original intent of the law. The BLM blatantly ignores the fact that over 80% of Americans oppose the use of helicopters in wild horse and burro management. The American public has seen enough of BLM's supposedly humane wild horse gathers, which are really elaborate kidnapping operations that destroy strongly bonded families. Concerns over animal cruelty are dismissed as emotionalism by wild horse advocates despite the hard facts and photographic evidence to the contrary. The American people want wild herds of equine protected, not mistreated by the very agency entrusted to implement the Wild Horse and Burro Act. The American public demands that you do better. Thank you.