

Dear Senator,

The purpose of this letter is to provide information for consideration when it is time to mark up and cast a vote on Interior Secretary Zinke's budget requests made on 21 June of this year. Citizens who oppose his requests which affect America's wild horses and burros are making phone calls daily to members of the Appropriations Committee and others, expressing their objections and requesting alternative action. The BLM's self described purpose is to "manage public lands for the benefit of all Americans". As taxpaying, voting Americans we do not view the recommended slaughter and likely extinction of an American historical icon of "benefit to all Americans" - present or future. We do not believe the 115th Congress should choose to be the one on whose watch these horses/burros disappear from the American landscape, not only for now but for future generations as well. Such a choice, especially if made based on inaccurate or incomplete information, is particularly concerning.

We disagree with the financial savings rationale provided along with the proposals. Specifically the request to authorize the BLM to kill healthy wild horses/burros and to also allow the BLM to sell those animals "without restrictions", both of which are currently prohibited by law. Secretary Zinke described the current methods as "*unsustainable management*". The most notable and often repeated reasons provided for this unsustainability are the lack of effective, safe, and affordable population control, concerns for overgrazing (environmental impact), and encroachment by horses onto cattle rangelands. The following Myths vs Facts will hopefully provide helpful information to dispel or minimize those concerns.

I respectfully request you deny Secretary of Interior Zinke's request to authorize the BLM to kill healthy wild horses/burros. I also request you deny any effort to insert language that would authorize the sale of those animals "without restrictions". "Without restrictions" opens the door for sale directly into the hands of kill buyers with their direct links to Mexican and Canadian slaughterhouses, the meat destined for foreign countries. There is currently and has been for decades, a prohibition on both of those activities.

Very Respectfully,

MYTHS vs FACTS

FERTILITY CONTROL

MYTH: Managing wild horses with birth control vaccines won't work, it's unsafe, it's too expensive. (When introducing his effort in the House to lift the long-term prohibition on the destruction of healthy wild horses/burros, Representative Chris Stewart of Utah declared about fertility control "it simply isn't practical"; "the logistics of trying to identify studs and to manage them and actually do what's necessary for them and the need for repeated inoculations, it just simply hasn't worked." Mr. Stewart was misinformed - fertility control vaccine for wild horses is used in mares (females), not studs (males). And it does work.)

FACT: Efficacy

- The National Park Service has used the Billings, MT, manufactured and distributed PZP vaccine for nearly 30 years to safely and effectively manage the wild horse herd on the Assateague National Seashore
- Herd size has been maintained between 80 and 100 horses
- PZP programs have helped reduce and even curtail removals across the West in the Pryor Mountains on the Montana/Wyoming border, McCullough Peaks in Wyoming, and in the Spring Creek Basin and Little Book Cliffs areas of Colorado
- BLM spends less than 1% of annual budget on fertility control
- BLM spends millions on roundups/removals in an attempt at "population control"
- These methods scientifically proven to stimulate remaining horses breed *more*
- Accordingly, the National Academy of Sciences has requested the BLM to shift their strategy to something proven to work for population control!

FACT: Safety

- Administered via remote darting of mares
- Social structure of wild bands not disrupted
- Does not require inhumane, costly helicopter roundups/removals
- Millions of tax dollars saved annually compared to current "*unsustainable*" costs
- One study to determine PZP health safety factors was conducted between 2002-2006 by Gary Killian and Nancy K. Diehl J. O. Almquist Research Center, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA; Lowell Miller and Jack Rhyan USDA APHIS National Wildlife Research Center, Fort Collins, CO; and David Thain Division of Animal Industry, Nevada Dept. of Agriculture, Reno, NV
- Study resulted in findings of positive fertility control with no ill effects.

FACT: Cost

- Each vaccinated mare requires two initial doses with follow ups at approximate one year intervals. Each 0.5ml dose is \$24
- The PZP is mixed with an adjuvant for maximum effect. Each 10ml vial of adjuvant costs \$15 and contains between 18 and 20 doses
- Contrasted with BLM's acknowledged remove and warehouse "population control technique" which now supports more mustangs in government holding facilities than in the wild, this one example of fertility control is vastly more affordable
- Long-term holding costs consume a large portion of the Wild Horse and Burro Program's annual budget - focus mainly on roundups, removal and, warehousing
- In July 2017, the agency estimated it would cost \$1 billion to care for the animals over their lifetime (perhaps 20 years)
- When the choice is made to "warehouse" with its accompanying expenses for roundup costs, transport costs, feed costs, removal of severely ill and dead animals, etc, it's easy to see why that method is "unsustainable"
- An economic study published in *Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine* said BLM could save \$8 million over 12 years by using PZP in one herd management area (HMA) alone and there are nearly 200 HMAs in the United States
- Increased use of PZP in more HMAs would save hundreds of millions of dollars
- Best of all, unlike roundups and removals, using the vaccine would actually help, as necessary, control wild horse populations!

OVERGRAZING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT)

MYTH: Public lands are overwhelmed and being destroyed by wild horses

FACT:

- Wild horses are present on approximately 17 percent of BLM rangelands
- BLM allocates less than one quarter of rangeland forage to wild horses
- BLM allocates more than 75 percent to privately owned livestock
- A 2013 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) study indicated there was no science-based rationale for this allocation/management system
- GAO reports and the NAS contradict BLM claims that horses are destroying critical habitat, competing for grazing lands, and overpopulating
- When arguing wild horses damage Western grazing lands, the BLM ignores the millions of head of private livestock it allows to graze on those same public lands!

MYTH: Wild horses are to blame for range degradation

FACT:

- Creators of 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act recognized the wild horse as an "integral component of the natural system"; vegetation thrives in areas they inhabit - the Great Plains were once a "sea of grass" where wild herds roamed
 - Range conditions in steep hilly areas favored by horses exhibit less disturbance than in lower areas frequented by cattle - why?
 - Cows have no upper front teeth and graze by wrapping their tongues around grass to pull it out; if the ground is wet, roots and all are removed preventing it from growing back
 - Horses have upper and lower incisors, they graze by "clipping the grass," similar to a lawn mower which allows grass to easily grow back
 - When foraging, cattle do not cover large areas; their 'pull out by the roots' style destroys areas where they do graze ruining them for native wildlife
 - When foraging, horses roam; their "landscaping" leaves behind many plants as forage for others
 - According to cattlemen resources, sufficient forage for beef cattle is on average 30 pounds daily, consumed in those smaller areas
 - According to livescience.com, adult mustangs eat 5 to 6 pounds of forage each day over their larger territory
 - Food consumed by wild horses does not thoroughly degrade in its digestive system. Consequently, these horses "replant" over a widespread area byproducts of its own forage as seeds pass through its system un-degraded
 - These roaming "landscapers" contribute to the build up of the absorptive, nutrient-rich humus component of soils which, in turn, helps soil absorb and retain water upon which many diverse plants and animals depend.
 - Additionally, because horses wander farther from water sources than many ruminant grazers, they serve as fire preventers. These widespread, "landscaped" areas have less ground fuel (grasses and brush); less ground fuel means less fire; less fire means less fire suppression costs in addition to less loss of property and endangerment to human and animal lives alike. An unexpected benefit!
- Water quality in streams extensively used by cattle has fewer nutrients and the streams themselves exhibit signs of bank erosion and damage to nearby plants/trees, according to a 2001 United States and Russian joint study
- Cattle tend to gather around water sources and remain there causing extensive damage

- Horses tend to drink and move on leaving behind hoof prints, clean water, overhanging branches, and no signs of bank erosion
- Wild horses should not be scapegoats for range degradation that is primarily caused by private livestock
- Environmentalists have determined in Nevada, home of the majority of America's remaining wild horses, the herds have little impact on the ecosystem compared with the hundreds of thousands of cattle that also roam federal land
- The Western Watersheds Project acknowledges "the main cause of degradation of public lands in the arid west is livestock use and not wild horses."

ENCROACHMENT ON CATTLE RANGELAND

MYTH: Wild horses take away grazing land from cattle.

FACT:

- According to a June 2012 Congressional Research Service report, fees were charged for grazing cattle on approximately 160 million acres of BLM land and 81 million acres of Forest Service land
- Based on 2013 figures, approximately 40,000 wild horses populated some 31.6 million acres of federally managed land
- Over seven million head of cattle grazed on these rangelands
- Free roaming wild horses and burros can be found mainly on government designated HMAs in 10 western states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming
- Wild horse habitat has been reduced by several million acres since 1971 by BLM
- The BLM has insured "*unsustainable growth*" of its own management program.

There is one other factor to consider. Killing horses or shipping them to slaughter requires them to be managed via roundups and removals, costing millions of dollars and placing the government in the horse slaughter business. A national poll conducted this year shows 80% of the American voting public strongly opposes horse slaughter. These findings are consistent with polls done years ago; public pressure to preserve wild horses so strong in 1971, the U.S. Congress voted unanimously to approve the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act. Americans' love of wild horses has not diminished. Please respect American taxpayers' and voters' wishes. Choose to continue protection of our wild horses/burros and return them to their own rangelands. It is economically and efficiently possible to manage them humanely instead of relegating them to a footnote in American history.

