



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

NATIONAL WILD
HORSE & BURRO
ADVISORY BOARD

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Volume 1

Day 1 Meeting Minutes

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

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Wednesday, October 30, 2019

Welcome

Mr. Fred T. Woehl, Jr., Chair, Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board

Mr. Woehl called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and asked any Veterans to first stand and then asked all to stand and join in the Pledge of Allegiance. [Pledge of Allegiance]. Mr. Woehl turned the time over to Bryant Kuechle.

Rules of the Room

Bryant Kuechle, Facilitator, The Langdon Group

Mr. Kuechle, serving as the meeting's facilitator, introduced himself and reviewed the purpose of the meeting, when the public comment period will be held, and the rules of the room. Mr. Kuechle also reviewed the emergency exit procedure in the case of an emergency and the location of restrooms. The rules of the room were as follows:

1. Seating is available for attendees. Anyone needing or wishing to stand will stand in the designated area behind the seats. All attendees are to stay in the seating or standing area at all times, unless addressing the Board during the public comment period.
2. Speakers and other attendees will not approach the dais at any time without prior consent from the Chair of the meeting.
3. Media will check in at the door and will be guided to the space designated for cameras.
4. No attendees will be allowed to place microphones, cameras or other equipment in the space set aside for the Board meeting.
5. All attendees will show mutual respect for each other and for speakers and Board members. This includes refraining from using cell phones or talking while the meeting is in session.
6. If anyone disrupts the meeting they will be asked to leave or be escorted out.
7. Those wishing to address the Board will sign in at the door. Speakers will address their comments to the Board, while seated at the designated speaker table. Generally, speakers have about 3 minutes each and are asked to finish in the designated time to allow for the maximum number of individuals to express their viewpoints.
8. Attendees wishing to provide handouts to the Board will leave handouts with the BLM representative at the door. Handouts will not be brought to the speaker's table and no one will be allowed to approach the Board with handouts.
9. Within the meeting room, attendees may not display signs, placards, or other items that are likely to obscure the view of participants or disrupt the meeting.
10. The Board will not respond to comments made during the public participation period. This should not be interpreted to mean the members of the board agree or disagree with anything said.
11. The Chair reserves the right to comment on any factual inaccuracies that may be shared during the public comment period.
12. The BLM commits to maintaining these rules for the benefit of all involved and appreciates everyone's cooperation with these rules.

Introductions

Mr. Woehl asked the board members to introduce themselves (see Table 1). Newest members of the Board are Ms. Susan McAlpine and Dr. Vernon Bleich (joined via phone).

Table 1 - National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Members

NATIONAL WILD HORSE & BURRO ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS	
Board Member	Representing
Mr. Fred T. Woehl, Jr.	Public Interest (Equine Behavior)
Dr. Tom Lenz	Veterinary Medicine
Ms. Celeste Carlisle	Wild Horse & Burro Advocacy
Dr. Barry Perryman	Public Interest (NRM/Special Knowledge)
Mr. James French	Natural Resource Management
Dr. Sue M. McDonnell	Wild Horse & Burro Research
Ms. Susan McAlpine	Humane Advocacy
Mr. Steven Yardley	Livestock Management
Dr. Vernon Bleich (via phone)	Wildlife Management

Mr. Woehl introduced Ms. June Shoemaker and turned the time over to her. Motion to approve, seconded, unanimous vote in favor to approve the minutes from the July 10-11 Advisory Board meeting held in Boise, Idaho.

Opening Remarks

June Shoemaker, Acting Assistant Director for Resources and Planning

Thanked members of the Board for their time and service. Welcomed new members of the board, Susan McAlpine and Dr. Vernon Blake, and congratulated Mr. Steven Yardley for reappointment to the Board.

Key to the agency's success is the continued ability, and recent success, in placing animals in private care. Discussed the roles and responsibilities of the Board and mentioned to the public that the final recommendations are approved at the end of the meeting and provided to the BLM for review, response, and implementation throughout the year.

BLM Director Remarks

William Perry Pendley, Deputy Director of Policy and Programs – Exercising the Authority of the BLM Director

Pointed out that public land is at a crossroads. When asked “what is the most significant issue facing public lands?” answered, “wild horses and burros.” Spent significant time reading the report we are going to present to Congress. Evaluated carrying capacity. We know the population is growing. 60 percent of mares are pregnant. Expect them to give birth to foals each year. BLM hit a milestone this year: we adopted out 7100 horses and burros. 54% above what we had done the previous year. I complement my colleague Casey Hammond making it work and the hard work of the BLM. However, we can't adopt our way out of this situation. It is going to require a multipronged approach. We are already at capacity. It is going to require fertility controls and approved research. We must identify more contraceptive methods to make a real difference in discrete geographic areas. I am troubled by the attacks on academic institutions. We have to promote good science and urge the academic community to be of assistance to us. It is not compassionate. It is not humane. We can no longer continue to do what we are doing now. Some lands in the west will never recover. That stuns me. I believe in human ingenuity and believe that we can solve almost any problem that is in front of us. In addition, our actions are subjecting horses and burros to starvation, to lack of forage, and placing them in competition of indigenous species. We may even be in violation of the ESA by the way we are managing, impacting appropriated water rights, private property, and public safety. This is a huge issue for members of Congress and Governors. I am optimistic that we can solve this problem with wild horse and burro advocates. There may be a path forward, a compromise moving forward. Earlier, we had some burros slaughtered. When I heard about it, it appeared to be one person or one group doing this serial slaughter. Let's put out a reward and reach out to the animal welfare community to get us the information needed to stop this. We have 100,000 reward for information. I'm very pleased by that, people came to me, groups came together, these

are the groups that sue me all the time. It has gotten a lot of attention in the media. I'm hopeful that that kind of attention will help us educate the public on what we are trying to do. I'm eager to have the benefit of your advice and suggestions. I'm eager to work together to act in ways that are sustainable and meet the obligations.

Mr. Woehl commented that the Board agrees 100%. We have recommended things to BLM and they have agreed specific actions but they have not been implemented yet. We will work to get a list of priority items if you think that would be in line.

Mr. Pendley responded that our hands are tied by what Congress decides. I know the voices that I respond to and the American people out West that are affected by this. We have a statutory obligation to take this on.

Dr. Perryman asked what can you divulge about the report to Congress. What is the status?

Mr. Pendley responded that it is still in the drafting stage. I was not happy with some of what I saw. I am concerned about readability. I just didn't want us to send up the same things. Perhaps we can be more expansive. Make the dire presentation that we need to make. We can't sugarcoat this. I was there in the 80s with President Reagan. We're working our way on it because Congress has asked for it.

Mr. Yardley asked is there any concerted effort from the BLM to speed up or implement the gathers to bring the population down to where it needs to be?

Mr. Pendley responded that NEPA is a terrible burden for us. We are doing EAs on all of these gathers. We have to do an overall gather plan. We have to hire people. We have to acquire corral space. We are maxed out on corral space. We are creating some of our own problems. We are up against our limits.

Ms. Carlisle asked if the BLM has an image problem. For example, there has never been an educational mandate.

Explaining what is happening has always been a shortfall. I think it would go a long way if the BLM could communicate. Everything we do has an impact. Is the BLM looking holistically at public land uses to mitigate all of these issues?

Mr. Pendley responded that he had no idea of the things that the BLM does. I was blown away. Its responsibility is expansive, massive. Almost all agencies can focus on one issue. BLM has more, much more, to manage. If this was a report for a fire, I think it would read: 0% contained and spreading.

Dr. McDonnell expressed her appreciation of the comments regarding the need to support academia and get their support for research. Mr. Pendley responded that we need good science to make good decisions.

Dr. Lenz encouraged that the BLM recognize we are past the tipping point. Horses are very reproductively sound. We've been working on this for decades. It is unique, we have to have some novel application for wild horses. There is some great work happening, we'll see something in the next 3 to 5 years that is effective and thank you for being aware of this.

Ms. McAlpine expressed that she is encouraged, as a new appointment, and expressed that there are a lot of things we are going to have to think about. Mr. Pendley responded, I know the secretary is invested in this and wants to move as aggressively as we can with our partners. I look forward to your recommendations.

Mr. Woehl commented that we need all of the tools in the tool box. I want to complement your BLM staff, current acting chief, Mr. Rittenhouse, Mr. Shepherd and Ms. Waddell, work hard to make this program work. I want to complement you on them, and many others, and the choices they have made. I will tell you I am very impressed with the BLM employees. I want to thank you for coming.

Welcome to BLM Eastern States

Karen Mouritsen, Eastern States Director

Eastern States Area of Operations

- 31 States East of and Bordering the Mississippi River
- Approximately 10,000 Surface Acres
- 39M Acres Subsurface Minerals National Conservation Lands

Eastern States Program Areas

- Energy and Mineral Resources
- Cadastral Survey
- Lands and Realty
- General Land Office Records Automation
- Wild Horse & Burro
- Wildland Fire
- National Conservation Lands
- Natural Resources

General Land Office Records Automation

- The Eastern States' records collection is the largest collection of land title records in the world. We are the Secretary of the Interior's designated custodian of these historical documents.
- Since 1992, we've made more than 11 million land title records available to the public.
- The gloreCORDS.blm.gov website averages 154 million hits annually. It is one of the most frequented sites in the Federal government.

Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area

- Please join us at Meadowood on Friday, Nov. 1!
- Location for the Nov. 1-2, 2019, Wild Horse and Burro placement event.
- Three primary focus areas at Meadowood:
 - Recreation
 - Environmental Education
 - Natural Resource Management

Wild Horse & Burro Program

- Eastern States initiated the concept of online adoptions and now manages the BLM Online Corral.
- We place the largest number of animals into private care of all BLM adoptions per year nationally.
- Our crews in two District Offices host ~18 satellite adoption events each year.
- We manage two holding/pickup facilities:
 - Mequon, Wisconsin
 - Ewing, Illinois

Mr. Woehl asked about a holding facility in Jackson. Ms. Mouritsen responded that we this is still on the table for consideration.

Ms. Carlisle asked for details about the pilot volunteer program. Ms. Mouritsen responded that we are describing the volunteer assistance that we need at our events. Job descriptions of what we need will be on the government volunteer website soon. We still have our current volunteers.

Ms. McAlpine asked about burros coming from the West to events in the East. Ms. Mouritsen responded that when we have burros available and they are shipped to events in the east, they are all placed. We can find someone to talk about the burro initiative.

Mr. Woehl talked about how difficult it is to get horses in the East and that BLM and Board have worked really hard to get that done. We appreciate the hard work of your staff to get that done. I hear lots of compliments. You have done a good job up there.

Eastern States Wild Horse and Burro Program Overview

Krystal Johnson, WHB Program Lead

Ms. Johnson gave an overview of the Wilde Horse and Burro Program. The three main elements of our program that we administer are: Public Outreach; Satellite Events; and Online Corral. We have a lot of volunteers and people very dedicated to the program. Half of the animals offered on the Online Corral are picked up in Eastern States. Our new system to manage all of this is much more efficient.

Mr. Woehl asked about turnaround for getting horses to the East. Ms. Johnson responded that there is the paperwork, bill of sale, coordinating all of the transportation logistics, and then having our animals always rest in Elm Creek. The quickest turnaround is six weeks.

Dr. McDonnell asked about the number of people from eastern states doing private pickup or having a third-party private pickup. Ms. Johnson responded that they don't know a number but that it is possible for them to do this.

Mr. French mentioned that one of the primary recommendations has been to return many of the HMAs to AML. That is going to require that we process a large number of horses very soon. From your end of it, what challenges do you see on the Eastern States for processing? Ms. Johnson responded that they will do whatever they can to support that. We typically adjust our hours at Ewing to offer more.

Mr. French asked about 4H participation. Ms. Johnson responded that youth participation is at TIP challenges.

Dr. Perryman asked if they are having discussions about market saturation in the East. With this potential pending bubble of horses, we have 45,000 in holding now that are available for adoption. Are you having some significant, serious discussion on how to tap the eastern market? With the economy like it is, people are more apt to adopt. Are you having these discussions? Ms. Johnson responded that yes, we definitely know from analyses, one of our biggest potential markets is in Florida. Other big markets would be in Ohio. We are doing some targeted social media marketing efforts and working to identify where and then target those markets and evaluating locations for events, pickups.

Mr. Woehl asked if they will be increasing the number of adoption events. Ms. Johnson responded that we are definitely trying to move satellite events and finding facilities to rent to hold those events. We have released RFIs with zero response. It is hard to find new locations to hold events. If you know of appropriate arenas, please let us know.

Mr. French commented that it may be worthwhile to begin contacting local governments that have fairgrounds and facilities and to coordinate potentially holding events during other planned events at fairgrounds (i.e County Fair, etc.).

Dr. Lenz commented that we have learned that people that have horses tend to adopt more horses than those that don't. Hold adoptions in states that have high ownership of horses.

Ms. Johnson commented that Eastern States will have 2020 events scheduled by the end of December. North Carolina is one of the proposed locations.

BLM National Wild Horse and Burro Program Overview

Bruce Rittenhouse, Acting Wild Horse and Burro Division Chief

The BLM's Wild Horse and Burro program has three essential goals that we strive to achieve:

1. Have healthy herds on healthy rangelands along with other uses and resources occurring on these public lands.
2. Protect the health and welfare of the animals that are under BLM's care and therefore provided protections under the Act.
3. Place those excess animals that have been removed from the range into good homes where they will be humanely cared for.

Population Estimates

- Estimated wild horse and burro population: 88,090 animals
- National appropriate management level: 26,690 animals
- Total on-range excess: 61,400 animals

Population Surveys

The BLM's goal is to survey at least one-third of HMAs every year to produce annual population estimates and use a formula to predict the growth in the remaining HMAs each year.

75 HMAs were surveyed in FY2019 using "double-observer" methods, along with 6 USFS wild horse territories that are part of 'complexes' with BLM lands. Those areas are shown in dark blue for BLM, and dark green for the Forest Service. You can see that we covered a significant area with these methods, as we have since 2014.

This represents a major investment by BLM to monitor herd sizes across lands we manage, totaling approximately \$1.2 million or 2% of the budget.

After these flights, BLM works with USGS to conduct statistical analyses of the data. These analyses give local BLM managers the best scientific information to estimate populations to help them make decisions whether management actions are needed.

Gathers

- Gathers are still our best and only way we can make any meaningful immediate reductions in overpopulation.
- The number of animals that we can gather and remove each year is limited on the available holding spaces and our annual budget.
- Therefore, gathers are prioritized each year, and that's usually done based on our most urgent needs such as to protect fire rehabilitation efforts, and to protect critical wildlife habitat for big game species and species of concern like the Sage Grouse. Emergency gathers due to animal health concerns and animals trespassing on private lands are also considered priorities.
- In FY19, we removed almost 7,300 animals in 30 HMAs as part of our management efforts, more than half of the animals removed were from herds in Nevada.
- This year we're making a concerted effort to plan gathers over a multi-year period, so that projects that take repeated gathers, such as fertility control, can be planned for and supported.

Fertility Control

- The BLM supports the use of fertility control vaccines where they can be effective in slowing or stabilizing population growth. The two ways to apply fertility control is through gathering the animals, treating them and releasing them. We do that method when we can gather down to AML. The second method is through darting programs, primarily employing volunteers. This latter method is pretty time intensive and requires a lot of knowledge about the animals in the HMA.
- Currently there are 12 HMAs, which is nearly double the number of darting programs we supported just a few years ago.
- These darting programs incorporate new and innovative ideas. For example, BLM Oregon is working with volunteers and livestock permittees to treat animals – a win-win for all involved.
- The BLM is looking forward to working with Congress and other stakeholders to increase the use of fertility control as we move forward with reducing overpopulation and achieving AML.

Research

- The WHB program may be the only BLM program that actively is directly working with USGS and universities targeting research. The program has a research coordinator position, has a dedicated Research Committee composed and directly solicits and invites researchers to submit proposals. The main focus areas are:
 - Fertility Control – have several research efforts addressing fertility control including longer term vaccines, IUDs, spay/neuter, several others).
 - On-Range ecology – some of these are tied in with the fertility control research to understand if or how fertility control affects on-range animal behavior, and how that relates to the issues we have concerning public safety when animals move onto highways and private property.
 - Survey methods – Double-observer, remote sensing, infra-red, drones
 - Imagine yourself in a single fixed-wing plane looking out the window flying over these moving horses trying to count them.
 - These survey methods, which are common among wildlife surveyors, help us to build the most accurate population estimates we can and were recommended by the National Academies of Science.

Private Placement

Previous high placement figure of 7,169 was 15 years ago in FY05. Adoptions/sales declined steadily for ten years after that, reaching a low of 2,222 in FY14. Placements have grown steadily since then, with FY19 seeing the most striking increase of nearly 54% over the previous year (FY18).

The Program attributes this improved performance to a number of factors, including:

- Increase in the number of placement events held;
- Increase in the number of animals offered;
- Implementation of the Adoption Incentive Program (AIP); and
- Better marketing, which you will see in a later presentation.

Off-Range Holding

Targeted states for recent ORP solicitation: CO/ID/KS/MT/NE/NV/ND/OK/OR/SD/TX(panhandle)/UT/WA/WY.

Currently there are 35 pasture facilities in 9 states (including PORPs) with a combined acreage of (approx.) 330,000 and combined capacity of (approx.) 38,000. Current ORP/PORP population: (approx.) 36,500. Program currently preparing another ORP solicitation targeting the states of OK/KS/NE seeking ranches with capacity to hold 1,000-10,000 head.

Planned posting date is November 2019.

Public Off-Range Pastures (PORPs):

- Wind River Ranch, Lander, WY – 940 acres – 225 head capacity
- Deerwood Ranch, Laramie, WY – 4,700 acres – 350 head capacity
- Mowdy Ranch, Coalgate, OK – 3,500 acres – 350 head capacity

BLM held a total of 6 adoption/sale events at the Wyoming and Oklahoma PORPs in FY19 and placed a total of 134 animals. FY19 adoption/sale results per facility:

- Wind River Ranch, Lander, WY – 42 placed
- Deerwood Ranch, Laramie, WY – 23 placed
- Mowdy Ranch, Coalgate, OK – 69 placed

With the addition of the Kansas PORP, we expect to hold at least an 8 adoption/sale events in FY20.

Looking Ahead

- To reach a sustainable program, removals will need to continue and likely increase
- Increase the use of humane population growth suppression tools
- Look for new, innovative ways to place more animals into private care
- Maximize use of lower cost holding options (i.e. off-range pastures)

Mr. Woehl asked why Nevada adopted way beneath the average. Mr. Rittenhouse responded that they are too busy doing the work on the ground. Mr. French commented that perception is reality. Wild horses in Nevada don't have the same mystique, the same attraction. We are seeing them on the highways and other areas, and they have a bad reputation and all the issues that revolve around that. The public are seeing animals in poor health, this is not helping the situation. Of note, there are 2 million people in Las Vegas and there is not a robust program in the Las Vegas valley, perhaps there is an opportunity there.

Ms. McAlpine pointed out that despite the BLM's hard work, it looks like 30,000 horses were taken off the range, a little less than 12,000 were actually placed somewhere. This gives you a picture of the enormity of the situation. All of us need to step up and help with that.

Mr. Rittenhouse responded that, historically we've never been able to place as many animals that we have removed off the range. 48,000 animals overall. That is why, if we are going to move forward, we are still going to continue to have this surge, until fertility control can start to have an impact, but that is down the road. It is a process.

Dr. McDonnell asked, of the 7,300, how many were bait trap versus helicopter? Mr. Shepherd responded that it is probably 40% that were bait-trap animals, the rest were helicopter. We are using it more and more where we can see the damage from the animals. Dr. McDonnell asked if that was an increase. Mr. Shepherd: it is an increase in the number over the years, yes, but it was about the same as last year. That gather you are referring to lasted over 2 months. There were weather events, etc. Dr. McDonnell: Are you ready to comment on the efficiency of bait trapping? What do you think of

the future of bait trapping? Mr. Shepherd: It is extremely effective with burros, especially on private lands. It is one of those tools that we have and useful in specific times. Most successful with specific or limited resource. Otherwise it takes a while. Dr. McDonnell: What about cost? Is it less expensive overall? Mr. Shepherd: In reality, it is a wash. When you combine the two together because we have to pay labor and vehicles when contractors are paid by the animal.

Ms. Carlisle: Is there a way to compare gather methods with PopEquus, economically and ecologically, considering cost/benefit, desire, consequences, etc.? Dr. Griffin: PopEquus is still not available to managers, it has not been released. The tool can project herd growth over time and compare different treatment options. That also gives you the cost of gathering and holding animals. It is just not available yet. USGS is very protective until it has been peer reviewed. It does support the conclusion that it is not necessary to treat with fertility control until you are at AML. You just continue to have high growth rates. You can't get to that number until you get it below AML through a gather. We look forward to using that tool when it is available.

Mr. French: We have HAs that are not recognized under the law. Not only do those horses impact areas ecologically, after we've attempted to reach AML, they often migrate back. Are you including HAs in your population estimates? Dr. Griffin: Population surveys are done over an area, not necessarily an HMA. The survey area almost always goes beyond the boundary of the HMA. Those nearby lands are covered in the surveys. We have a total population size, and then tabulated within and outside the HMAs. Mr. French: Do you calculate AML for that same area? Dr. Griffin: Just within the HMA. Mr. French: there is seasonal movement of the horses. Dr. Griffin: those are the challenges that we face. Forest service land migrations are another challenge that we face when we do our population estimates. Mr. French: A set of protocols possibly need to be addressed. The data become skewed and it is important that we try and get an accurate look at it. Another statistical question, when extrapolating, are those estimates considering, for instance, if you have a drought cycle in one end of the state and above average precipitation in another. Dr. Griffin: I'm not sure whether annual variability is accounted for. Mr. French: perhaps in the double count you can just take pictures and then count them after the fact. Complete more surveys more often. You could create coalitions between wildlife agencies and complete surveys right alongside big game surveys.

Dr. Perryman: Thank you and your staff for the job that you guys do. It is rewarding but probably more often frustrating. In Antelope Valley, late season, late summer wildlife habitat for other species that migrate to this area to find meadow find it has lost 12-18 inches of topsoil that has been trampled. This area may never reach its ecological potential. We are seeing more and more of these examples where we have horse populations that are so high. How many gathers last year range wide, were gathers that were in response to T&E concerns (sage grouse, perhaps in combination with other). Mr. Rittenhouse: the gather schedule includes reasons for a gather. Wildlife habitat and T&E species are a priority. We rely on the States to tell us how/why they are doing a gather. Mr. Shepherd: we did four gathers because of wildlife habitat and T&E species, primarily sage grouse, except one for riparian habitat. Each of those gathers included multiple HMAs.

Mr. Yardley: As it relates to long term sustainability and maintaining a thriving ecological balance, regarding decimation that we see on the range from the huge number of horses on the range, and maintaining healthy herds on healthy range lands, how do you feel that these two goals are being met? Mr. Rittenhouse: they are not. Mr. Yardley: How much is it going to cost to restore a range to its prime conditions and how long will it take? Mr. Rittenhouse: I would say that in some cases it is going to take several decades. We see impacts from overgrazing, prior to the Taylor Grazing Act. We still those impacts in some areas with no horses. Horses in some areas are not meeting the goals. From the standpoint of recoverability, there will be no recovery in HMAs as long as we are over AML. Why would we try to revegetate? Mr. Yardley: Is that a downward spiral? Mr. Rittenhouse: Yes. I can't give you a cost estimate for range land restoration. Mr. Yardley: What would your response be to let nature just run its course? And what does that mean to you? Mr. Rittenhouse: That is contrary to what the act says. That is the short answer. That is a big talking point: let them be. That is not a pretty sight. The BLM from a humane perspective with our staff who care for these animals do not want to see them in those conditions. We will try to manage them as we can and achieve those goals. Letting nature take its course is contrary to what the act says. Mr. Yardley: How can we prevent this from happening in other areas? Mr. Rittenhouse: Until we can get to AML, we are going to see it more and more.

Dr. Lenz: Thank you. You are gaining ground and should be commended for that. Are you ever contacted by nonprofits or third-parties to take animals and take over the cost of maintaining those animals? Mr. Rittenhouse: We have been approached, but they have not taken the cost upon themselves. They can handle 30,000 or more, but they want BLM to

pay to care for those animals. We don't have anyone that has said they would take them and pay for them. Ms. Waddell: We send letters to organizations to see how they can get involved and find ways to help. We have a list of folks that we plan to reach out to. We are looking at a program that provides a way for people to donate and support. Dr. Perryman: There are some ideas floating in the public domain to create some incentives for 501(c)(3) entities to take on some of that responsibility. There have been talks about tax incentives, but it is going to take Congress to take that on. We may hear more about that.

Mr. Yardley: Bruce, could you describe quickly what some of the costs to doing an area rehab project and what the success rate is? Mr. Rittenhouse: Only example that we have would be fire rehab costs: emergency stabilization and burn recovery. At the last board meeting, we visited the Soda fire area. It has met the recovery goals to return the horses. We need to be aware when we look at things in a short time frame. The recovery is long term. I don't know what the unit cost for reseeding is. There are a lot of variables that make a restoration project very hard if not next to impossible.

Mr. French: How do we increase the interest from organizations? There are a lot of regulations and laws for international interest in adoptions, for example. There is a huge demand for western mustangs in western Europe. There is a perception problem. Mr. Rittenhouse: BLM has done business with MHF-like programs in Europe. They usually buy 30 to 40 horses and go through our standard process of approvals. We have sold several animals to the German Mustang Makeover. Mr. French: There are similar organizations in the Baltic states as well. Germany is showing an interest. There are regions that have an interest but no supply. I think it is an opportunity.

Dr. Perryman: What was an opportunity has now become a national disgrace. It is society's fault.

BREAK

U.S. Forest Service Update

Jacqueline Buchanan, Acting Director of Range and Vegetation Ecology, U.S. Forest Service

- Wild Horse & Burro Program Objective
- Facts & Figures
- Organization & Infrastructure
- Addressing the Challenges
- Highlighting Successes

USDA Forest Service has five individuals that are dedicated to the Wild Horse & Burro program. All others that get involved have other responsibilities but are utilized as needed. It may not be ideal, but it is what we have set up for now.

Challenges

- NEPA – Considering programmatic EAs as appropriate
- Funding – Comes out of our range management and vegetation ecology funds
- Litigation
- Partnerships – We are in this together. It is the public that cares deeply. Partnerships are critical.
- Rangeland health – There are impacts happening to a great extent. We have to look at how to manage and protect those horses and look at the rangeland and achieving ecological balance. We are committed to that.
- Feral/domestic horses – Tribal and other horses on the range. We are attempting to get better at responding quicker to emergencies and public safety concerns. The faster you can deal with something, the best chances you have to reduce the need for additional recovery.

Highlighting the Success

- Partnerships in the Carson National Forest
 - Collaborative wild horse management
- Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
 - Cooperative tribal domestic horse gather
- Modoc National Forest

- Gather and Adoptions

Mr. Woehl: There used to be cooperation between the Forest Service and the BLM. Back in 2014, they got separated, mostly because of budgetary concerns. We appreciate the hard work that has gone into this. We are looking forward to having someone in a permanent wild horse and burro position within the Forest Service. Ms. Buchanan: I had heard enough in conversations that there was some tension in the system. I would rather just put that on the table and recognize that we and all are committed to working together.

Mr. French: Thank you for the work that was done on the Humboldt Toiyabe. That had been litigated every time the Forest Service had tried to do anything on their own. It was a big step to take to work with the tribe and commit to getting something done. Are you depending on ground surveys? Are you doing your own aerial surveys? Are you relying on BLM? Ms. Buchanan: It varies by unit. We do both aerial and ground surveys.

Mr. Yardley: Do you know AML and estimates for specific HMAs? Ms. Buchanan: We don't have them in the packet, but we can get them for you. Modoc and Devil's Garden AML 402, current estimated at 1,800 animals. Mr. Yardley: How has that been affecting that rangeland health in that area? Ms. Buchanan: It's impacting it greatly. Any time you are running numbers over the carrying capacity, there is a negative impact, proportionate impacts. Mr. Yardley: How has that impacted permittees? Ms. Buchanan: We have voluntarily resource protection/non-use permittees. Mr. Yardley: There seems to be direct competition? Ms. Buchanan: I don't feel there is. The permittees and the people in the livestock industry are invested in long term sustainability. Private water rights have been maintained.

Ms. Carlisle: Shout out to the Carson field office, how they work together, and it is really good to see them implementing wildfire response training. Ms. Buchanan: He is passionate about trying to make a difference there. I do think that is a success story.

Mr. Woehl: Is population growth suppression being used? Ms. Buchanan: Yes, on Carson. I believe most of the PZP application is done with volunteers.

Dr. Perryman: While you were working with tribes in the Santa Rosas, was somebody capturing the process so that it could serve as a model for other areas? When you have HMAs surrounding tribal areas, when you reduce the numbers on the federal side, those horses that are crowded outside of HMAs will return to the HMA. If we don't include tribal horses in this whole planning process, we could be right back where we were. Did anyone capture the model you used in that negotiation and partnership? Ms. Buchanan: Yes, they have had robust conversations how they got to that point and trying to use it as a model for how to work with tribes. It can be a win-win, tribes get their horses, we reduce the number on the range, etc. We are trying to answer, "how can you move through the process quicker?" and, "how can we move into a gather quicker?" I think they are hoping it will help.

BREAK FOR LUNCH

BLM and USDA Forest Service Responses to Boise Meeting Board Recommendations

Bruce Rittenhouse, BLM

Jacqueline Buchanan, USDA Forest Service

1. Strongly encourage and recommend that the USDA Forest Service Chief and the BLM Director along with key USDA Forest Service and BLM staff meet within 90 days to discuss and resolve relevant issues and work together to jointly manage wild horses and burros on all designated lands. Approved. Vote was unanimous.

Deputy Director – Policy and Programs, Exercising Authority of the Director Perry Pendley and Chief of the Forest Service Vicki Christiansen met on Wednesday October 23. Outcomes of this meeting will be presented at the October 2019 Board meeting in Washington D.C.

2. Encourage and recommend that BLM develop and promote standardized training (e.g. Eastern States State Office pilot program) for all persons interested in volunteering to assist the Wild Horse and Burro Program. Approved. Vote was unanimous.

The BLM recognizes that volunteers are vital to managing public lands. Without volunteers, many critical agency functions would not meet public expectations. It is imperative that the BLM recruits, places, and retains a pool of highly qualified volunteers to assist with the Wild Horse and Burro Program. On October 1, the Wild Horse and Burro Program, in collaboration with the Eastern States State Office launched a one-year pilot Volunteer Services Program. The project has developed standardized operating procedures to maximize outreach to increase the pool of volunteer candidates across this 31-state area. Further, a consistent set of volunteer job descriptions have been developed identifying the roles and responsibilities of volunteers. After the one-year period, the BLM will conduct an assessment and make a determination whether to expand the program to additional states.

3. Recommend that BLM/USDA Forest Service develop a programmatic NEPA document for the application of all safe and humane methods of fertility control. Approved. Vote was unanimous.

BLM – While, programmatic approaches to completing NEPA are an effective tool to streamline the agency NEPA processes. at this time, the BLM does not intend to start a Programmatic NEPA document for applying fertility control, since in some cases (e.g gather operations) site-specific NEPA would still be required. Forest Service - At this time, the Forest Service does not intend to start a Programmatic NEPA document for applying fertility control.

4. Recommend that BLM/USDA Forest Service research and develop the appropriate programmatic NEPA document that covers management actions for wild horse and burro management that fall within the statutes and authorities of the Wild Horse and Burro Program. Approved. Five in favor, one opposed, Ms. Carlisle.

BLM – While programmatic approaches to completing NEPA are an effective tool to streamline the agency NEPA processes at this time, the BLM does not intend to start a Programmatic NEPA document that covers management actions for the Wild Horse and Burro Program, since site-specific NEPA would still be required. Forest Service - At this time, the Forest Service does not intend to start a Programmatic NEPA document that covers management actions for the wild horse and burro program.

5. In order to improve the health and adoptability of wild horses and burros the Advisory Board strongly encourages the BLM/USDA Forest Service to provide desirable equine conformation education and training by experts to all field personnel. Approved. Vote was unanimous.

BLM – Since the July 2019 board meeting, the BLM has had discussions with Board Member Lenz, Wild Horse and Burro Program staff, and APHIS Veterinarian Dr. Al Kane about designing a web-based training for BLM employees on horse conformation. When a training is finalized it will be offered to Forest Service staff.

Forest Service - This recommendation is inconsistent with paragraph 2 at FSM 2263.11(1): “Selective removal of excess animals or relocation of superior animals from other territories to improve gene pool is prohibited. The intent of the Wild Horses and Burros Protection Act is to manage these animals as part of the natural ecosystem.” Forest Service staff could benefit from taking training related to equine conformation as part of staff development within the wild horse and burro management program.

6. Encourage and recommend that BLM/USDA Forest Service remove, sterilize prior to returning to the range, or euthanize animals with serious acquired, congenital or heritable physical defects. Approved. Five in favor, one opposed, Ms. Carlisle.

BLM – The BLM’s current policy (IM-2015-070) outlines six reasons to euthanize excess wild horses and burros related to acts of mercy, health and safety. (1. A chronic or incurable disease, injury, lameness, or serious physical defect; 2. A Henneke body condition score of less than three with a poor or hopeless prognosis for improvement; 3. An acute or chronic illness, injury, physical condition, or lameness that cannot be treated or has a poor or hopeless prognosis for recovery; 4. An order from a state or federal animal health official authorizing the humane destruction of the animal(s) as a disease control measure; 5. The animal exhibits dangerous characteristics beyond those inherently associated with the wild characteristics of wild horses and burros; or 6. The animal poses a public

safety hazard and an alternative remedy (capture or return to a HMA) is not immediately available. The BLM has no plans to sterilize and return animals to the range having conditions described in the recommendation.

Forest Service – While humane destruction of those animals included in this recommendation who meet the regulatory definition of “old, sick, or lame” (36 CFR 222.60) is consistent with FS policy, this recommendation is inconsistent with paragraph 2 at FSM 2263.11(1): “Selective removal of excess animals or relocation of superior animals from other territories to improve gene pool is prohibited”, for those animals described in this recommendation who do not meet the threshold of the “old, sick, or lame” definitions. Forest Service interpretation of the intent of the Wild Horses and Burros Protection Act is to manage these animals as part of the natural ecosystem.

7. The Advisory Board is forming a working group to include key BLM staff to analyze modern, state-of-the-art, low stress, stock-handling approaches to gathering and handling of wild horses and burros with a report to be presented at the October meeting. We recommend BLM appoint this staff and fund any meetings necessary. Approved. Vote was unanimous.

The working group consisting of Board Members (Dr. Sue McDonnell, Dr. Barry Perryman, Celeste Carlisle, and Dr. Tom Lenz), BLM staff (Alan Shepherd, Holle Waddell, Scott Fluer, and John Neill) and USDA APHIS Veterinarian Dr. Al Kane had conference calls discussing BLM’s low stress, stockhandling approaches. A report of their findings is expected at this Board meeting.

8. We strongly encourage and recommend that BLM/USDA Forest Service review 43 CFR Subpart 4700 (Protection, Management, and Control of Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros) and 36 CFR Subpart D (Management of Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros) and update where needed. Approved. Vote was unanimous.

BLM – The BLM is in the initial phases of revising the 1986 Wild Horse and Burro regulations. These regulations have become outdated to reflect current management of wild horses and burros and at times impede management strategies and priorities. This rule making process is expected to take between 12- 24 months to complete and will include a public comment period when proposed rules are published in the Federal Register.

Forest Service – The Forest Service is currently in the process to improve its NEPA policies through Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM). EADM is a change effort that intends to reduce the time and cost of our environmental analysis and decision making processes to produce efficient, effective, and high quality land management decisions to accomplish more work on the ground and be more responsive to the public we serve. The reforms will identify ways to improve or eliminate inefficient or redundant processes, while maintaining a commitment to high-quality environmental analysis based on the best available science. Once completed, the Forest Service intends to review its regulations and directives for inclusion of the new process and update where needed those regulations and directives that are out of date.

Comments and Discussion on Recommendations and Responses:

#2

Ms. McAlpine: We would like to review volunteer position descriptions. Ms. Carlisle: We would like to document successful volunteer programs and review those. Ms. Buchanan: Forest Service probably shares some volunteers with BLM. We can learn from the BLM and the Forest Service, how do we better set up our volunteers to work with us now and in the future?

#3

Mr. Rittenhouse: For gather operations, site specific NEPA will still be required. Mr. Woehl: is this a change? Mr. Rittenhouse: we still have to do compliance for ESA and cultural for all HMAs, which is a 3- or 4-year process. Again, we still have to do site specific EAs. The Forest Service is not planning to do a programmatic EA, all issues would be difficult to cover.

Dr. Perryman: Why would we do this for anything? For oil and gas? For a RMP? Is it a question of budget, man-power, what is it really? Programmatic EAs is the greatest idea since sliced bread. Give me something else? Mr. Rittenhouse: We could do a programmatic assessment of all forms of fertility control, and it would cover that. But when we want to apply it, we would have to do an amendment for any modifications or changes, for the other things and tier to the other EA. Does that save us that much time?

Mr. French: I keep thinking that the BLM would have felt this was a godsend in terms of trying to streamline the process for gathers. We need to do it in a fairly abbreviated timeframe. When this came up, I would have thought this is what you would have jumped on. The BLM Director mentioned NEPA as a challenge. I would think that this would have been something that was welcome, to abbreviate from project to project. We could identify the issues just based on our history. I'm surprised. Mr. Rittenhouse: EA is myopic. We did a NEPA document for a helicopter gather. We have to go through the process again when we revisit the same area with the same activity in 5 or 10 years. Programmatic would address multi-year, subsequent gathers. Will cover population growth suppression tools as well so we don't have to go back and do those every time we take an action. We may have to do an amendment when we have to do a second gather. We would review that nothing has changed, looking to streamline NEPA to meet the needs on the ground. It is a hybrid of what we recommended. Looking to streamlining the process, sets the wide side boards but streamlining the process. We could use those tools in that HMA. Initially, the analysis for multiple years to get to an AML will take longer.

Dr. Perryman: If we modified our recommendation to address multi-year, multi-pronged approach to NEPA, would it be in danger of getting the same response? Mr. Rittenhouse: that is where the program is trying to go.

#4

Ms. Buchanan: The opportunity for us is one document that affects both USDA Forest Service and BLM, there are some efficiencies there. Regardless of the path that we go down, we can work together to find some efficiencies. Mr. Woehl: We felt this would help manage the program better, we don't want to impose anything on you. Trying to streamline processes. We are all about that.

#5

BLM has had discussions with Dr. Tom Lenz. Dr. Lenz's is preparing draft training to present to the BLM and evaluate that training in the future.

Ms. Buchanan: We see value in this training, understanding the conformation of a horse. It is a bit inconsistent with our manual, selected removal of excess animals to improve gene pool is prohibited. As part of the natural ecosystem. But yet, when we talk to staff, having folks who are working these programs, there is value in being able to discern that. We think it will be beneficial.

Mr. Rittenhouse: During the discussions that we've had, we want to make sure it is applicable in the field and management applications for animals that go into the adoption program and training program and when you are at a gather. Those are two desired applications of the training.

Dr. Lenz: We're looking to identify conformation defects that would lead to suffering and the likelihood of severe heritable defects that lead to pain and death. It will be a combination PowerPoint and Video training.

#6

We wouldn't euthanize for selective genetic traits. Mr. Woehl: If you have an area that is horse short, how do you select horses to move them? Ms. Buchanan: the clause is intended for selecting for adoptable traits, doesn't preclude translocating for genetic variability, viability.

Mr. French: Can you clarify how the Forest Service selects, or does not select, animals for removal and adoptions. Do you consider an animal that has a heritable defect? Ms. Buchanan: We will have a conversation about being in line and in sync, there are ways we can adjust if there is a good reason to. If it is within our guidance that we have, if we can, we would want to be in alignment. Mr. Woehl: How old is the policy? Ms. Buchanan: I believe it was in the 1980s. Mr. Woehl: A lot has changed.

Mr. Yardley: We're involved in breeding and based on conformation, color, quality in order to make our animals marketable, but they'll go on to satisfy the needs of our customers. It would be wise for BLM and Forest Service to revisit this policy and make changes if necessary. If we're going to gather more horses, and offer up more horses for adoption, it is counter intuitive to not do this.

Dr. Lenz: What are your comments on color? Ms. Buchanan: If you're a horse person, you look at the legs first. That was the conversation. Dr. Lenz: colors are trendy. People like pretty horses. We just need to make sure they are sound as well.

Ms. McAlpine: When I read it, I read it as trained court mediator. You are not removing them to another place, to prevent a sever conformation abnormality. I support what others on the board are saying. If you can revise policy, you would not be violating your own policy when I read it.

Ms. Carlisle: We are talking about two different things here. Genetics and genetic health are thrown around inaccurately. I think what the Forest Service is saying, we are not running a breed program on our public lands. I thought BLM was in line with that. I thought they were similarly policed, BLM is managing for genetic health and in favor of natural selection. The BLM is doing a fairly adequate job with the help of the lab. I just want to clarify, BLM and Forest Service were in line with the same management strategies. Mr. Rittenhouse: Our interpretation of this recommendation is that we are not going to sterilize animals that meet one of the six criteria out of an act of mercy. Mr. Woehl: the driving factor was genetic defects, we want to sterilize and return to the range. We have to have animals we keep be adoptable. That was the intent, to manage that and to take those genes out. Dr. Perryman: I was hesitant to vote for this, the only reason I voted for it, early on in the history of the program, these animals came from local ranches. Are animals that are have "genetic defects" being returned? Mr. Rittenhouse: that animal would be included in one of those six factors and are going to be removed from the gene pool. Ms. Buchanan: old, sick or lame is pretty broad. I don't think we are really that far apart. I just want to clarify as well, we weren't trying to pick colors, my concern centered around putting those horses back on the range. We aren't looking to euthanize animals, looking at trying to ease pain and suffering.

Marketing Presentation

Megan Olson, Assistant Director of Advertising, ABI

Lisa Condon, Senior Director of Graphic Services, ABI

Paul McGuire, BLM WHB Outreach Specialist

- Collaboration
- BLM WH&B Strategic Plan
 - Conducted kick-off meeting and follow-up meetings
 - Evaluated Great Lakes Marketing Information
 - Reviewed existing WHB marketing materials
 - Attended adoption events
 - Evaluated trends and existing communication landscape
- Strategic Plan Goals
 - Internal Communications and Branding
 - Audience Education: Getting the Word Out
 - Community Outreach
- Strategic Plan Tools and Tactics
- BLM WH&B Media Strategy Evolution
 - Campaign Report

Mr. Woehl: In the last several weeks, I've gotten a lot of emails over an action the board took in 2016. None of them knew anything about the adoption program. They thought the horses didn't go anywhere. If someone isn't really looking, does this stuff just pop up anyway? Response: We have a dual approach to marketing. We utilize the websites, so that we are reaching people in different ways. If you're online or on Facebook if you search for wild horse and burro, you could

be served our ad as well. We do demographic and interest targeting.

Dr. Perryman: I'm trying to understand this demographic. A segment of the market are spending 8 hours a day in social media. Response: It could be websites. It could be streaming, if you're on a mobile device. That amount has grown. It is a true representation of adults 18+ with that type of media. That is the first year digital spending has surpassed all other media.

Mr. Yardley: A lot of the public isn't aware of the amount of degradation on range lands. I was wondering if that is being incorporated, there may be an opportunity to educate and advertise? Response: We have provided some materials, and some PSAs and maybe address, we do try to improve perception and educate as much as we can. There has been discussion about additional videos to help with that. We have a few short clips that are located on the website.

Ms. Carlisle: The adoption program has been inconsistent in the past. Marketing for it and having the momentum with Ms. Waddell and the program has been productive. What about maintaining that for the long term? Response: We work very closely with the team so that we are implementing our current campaigns. We fully intend to continue the program, to run the campaigns, evaluate them, and constantly improve upon them. They are incredibly cost efficient. We are able to promote so many more events than we used to be able to. Combined with the messaging that we have been able to put together. We want to continue and the data, we are seeing success. That doesn't mean that we won't continue to evaluate and modify as necessary. We may see new mediums, etc. Setting it and forgetting it is not our model.

Mr. Woehl: Are you still using other mediums? Response: Yes, grassroots, on the ground, print. Based on the success we are seeing we will continue with them. Definitely planned to go forward with them. It is a continual work in progress. Constantly looking where we need to make adjustments and additions as needed, it is budget dependent.

Ms. McAlpine: Has there been any estimation on the cost of this program, versus or based on the number of horses that we are adopting? Response: We have a cost per adoption that we can calculate, we will pull together a statistic for you.

Mr. McGuire: With each event at the district level, there is also local advertising that goes on. Whatever costs of the ABI piece is a sliver overall, but a tremendous bang for your buck. Ms. McAlpine: It would be nice to document long term based on where we are today. If the costs have dropped, then obviously it needs to be looked at. Mr. Woehl: We can't attribute just advertising to our adoption success, it is the result of a combination of things.

Dr. McDonnell: I'm fascinated with all the data you get back. Can you link individual adoptions with advertising efforts in any way? Response: Not really, but we can implement pixel tracking to see where they go once they get to the site. I know that Mr. McGuire has some results from the local level. How did you hear about us, etc.? Great lakes marketing, other grass roots analyses. We are just seeing the actions taken through the digital media. Dr. McDonnell: I do spend an hour a day on Facebook, most of the posts I see have to do with horses. Mostly, ponies that I have adopted and people sending me pictures. I saw one ad for the UC Davis event. Response: We implement geoparameters, expanded reach, limit geography. There are some geographic parameters that prevent you from seeing those ads.

Mr. Yardley: How much of the increase in adoptions *do* you attribute to this? Response: Some of that data is starting to come through. Seeing results how people are hearing about programs. The best we can do is look at overall placements that have increased. Mr. Yardley: What is the target age? Response: Domestic horse side, they target women, 35 to 50 and their daughters. Do we have any idea of demographic? Response: Roughly 75% women, age 40+.

Ms. McAlpine: Who has responded to the ads? Could we use a questionnaire or checklist on an application for adoption? Response: Our role is to put the messaging out, the effort on the ground. They ask people to fill out comment cards. I'd have to look at their information, and they do enquire about how people are gaining information. These are through digital ads. Based on some of the research, from these other partners, that people are seeing the ads.

Mr. French: With regard to trying to determine the demographic and regional areas you target, is there some sort of evaluation to determine if that has shifted, how do we capture that? Response: That is data that is pulled from campaigns. We incorporate those cities within our targeting. In Ocala, we also use a lot of data in terms of geolocation. When we were looking at the data coming from campaigns and social media, we were still able to see that men were responding at a higher rate to digital display ads. Then we also look at specific events and rely on results from the field. We'll incorporate

that into the target. Mr. French: If we're going to utilize this information, later we are going to be talking about ecotourism that want to see horses in their natural environment. Regionally, taking advantage of that interest that folks have shown in the past. That is not necessarily on the table at this time. In Colorado, it is a big deal. In order to get our message out there, but actually involve communities in ecotourism concept is probably something that we ought to look at down the road. We could target demographics based on regions. In some regions of the country, it could be completely different. Trying to groundtruth that using this kind of data. Response: Our Hispanic media strategy is representative of that, we have adjusted based on testing in that market. We do look at regional differentiators that could affect our campaigns. Our public off-range pastures, opportunities for folks to come observe. That is an avenue that we can take in our advertising.

BREAK

Board Working Group Reports and Discussion

1. We need to come up with some recommendation for national AML. 25 or 30 years go. With an over abundance of horses, AMLs may be a lot lower now.
 - Question for Mr. Shepherd: usually when an RMP is completed, there is another AML assessment in those?
 - Mr. Shepherd: not completely. Generally, the AML is affirmed or confirmed in an RMP. The specific, the holder of it, to actually change or update would be done with an implementation decision which is based on resource monitoring data and carrying capacity through an implementation decision and confirmed in a new RMP amendment.
 - It has been updated, at least confirmed through an implementation process. Based on the planning documents that we have currently, the AML that Mr. Woehl is referring to, is still pretty accurate with respect to the planning documents.
 - Mr. Shepherd: you have to do it on an HMA or HMA complex level, because you are going to want to look at how they interact with adjacent areas. That is also where you can make decisions on changes to the boundary of the HMA. An HMA, long term, is in the RMP process, and it is stated that you are going to maintain the status of the HMA or revert back to HA because of any limited resource, such as a long history of emergencies for example. There are lot of parameters that need to be assessed. The RMP is your umbrella.
 - Some of these areas that we have been looking at, the resource damage is so acute, are not going to come back, but the areas surrounding, the resource damage is not as acute. Until we get to AML, we don't know what we have. It may be less than what the older documents may indicate. This is an informational thing. I don't know if it is necessary, but at least we know that a reassessment, we know what is actually out there. Planning documents are updated over time.
 - Mr. Shepherd: it comes down to the resource monitoring. That information, population sizes. All of those pieces of the puzzle have to be assessed. It is all through that monitoring data.
 - Mr. Woehl: I don't think that range can handle even a ¼ of what AML is now. Low AML isn't sustainable as well.
 - Dr. Perryman: Yes, but the assessment can't be made until you take the pressure off it to see what you have. If the grazing pressure comes off it, plants have a chance to respond, you can measure the density, the production as a baseline for responding to removal of that heavy use. Same for other animal species. If they weren't trying to defend something that they feel is valuable that is a competing resource. It is something we need to think about, and I don't know what the language would be for a recommendation.
 - Ms. Carlisle: We think of AML as some static number. There is this rolling assessment region by region, this is happening already. Are we taking into account that things are changing?
 - Mr. Shepherd: Is AML still appropriate? We've never reached it and haven't been able to collect the monitoring data when we've been within the target population. As we progress, if we are fortunate enough to get to AML, that is when the field work begins to collect that data. In some areas we can do the assessment and reevaluate the status of AML, but in most areas, we're not ready, because we can't monitor how it changes once at AML.
 - Dr. Perryman: When you have lots of animals, their diet preferences change. If you have 500 animals, and

the original carrying capacity was 200, they are eating things that normally they would not eat. How does that play into the carrying capacity? Something that they would only eat in a drought situation. There is going to be some degradation, different species, crowding effects, etc.

- Mr. Yardley: Although we don't know what AML might be moving forward, we have long-term trends on the range: what was the range like in 1976 compared to what it is like now. What was the vegetation type, what is it now? We can make some pretty accurate and informed decisions based on that information. Their diet changes. But the reason it changes is because the more desirable plants are gone. It's already gone. Sagebrush, cheat grass is all that is left.
 - Mr. French: My impression of this is more of a timing question. We are making some significant management changes. We have had over 2 million acres burned since 1976 in northern Nevada. That dramatically impacts productivity for everything on the ground. We have had a significant move from HMAs to HAs (adjacent to HAs) that have added more pressure on the range. Pioneering populations from Rocky Mountain Elk that we didn't anticipate in the original RMP. Throw in T&E species. I think that is indicative of any place that has horses on it now. I would say that horses by themselves are not going to trigger any new management planning. We just completed an RMP, before that, it was 30 years since the last RMP. We have an RMP amendment for greater sage grouse. It did not deal with any other management. Do we need to reassess? This is a major component on the land. If we are going to assess HMA and HA boundaries, allotment evaluations, this might be the time to kickoff another planning project to reassess priorities on the ground. This might be the catalyst to start.
 - Ms. Carlisle: It isn't just horses that matter. We have changing conditions on our rangeland. Forage quantity and quality are changing. Of course we can exacerbate that, but this is what I am trying to get at. This is a holistic management issue. But because we aren't acting, the wild horses and burros that we federally protect are suffering. They are just an indicator species. So is everything else. We are the WHB Advisory Board, not supposed to advise on how to fix everything. We are not going to come up with any recommendations for everything.
 - Ms. McAlpine: If you are talking about plans that were developed 30 years ago, and things have changed (i.e. overpopulation) it is really important to reassess.
2. Some of our legislators have not seen wild horses. Encourage the BLM to have a field day with Congress and Senators to see Antelope Valley.
- Dr. Lenz: some of them don't know much, some do. Invite them and their staffers that do the work behind the scenes. Ensure that we have a high number from the eastern states. The western states are often aware, but the eastern states may not be. Should be a recommendation with specific request for eastern states. Mr. Rittenhouse: typically, we don't really do that. Folks in Nevada specifically have been on the ground and know the issues. State directors could invite others and would work with legislative affairs in the Washington office. We have held tours when they requested to come. Maybe the board could act as intermediary. Seeing all aspects of the program, they can participate this week on Friday at the adoption event.
 - Ms. Carlisle: I'm confused about the staffers. Who initiated that? Mr. Rittenhouse: They did, as they get asked to participate in appropriations. Dr. Perryman: We will rely on legislative affairs to tell us what can really be done.
3. The number of horses per state office that was adopted out. Wyoming has 1 HMA but was number 4 in the number of horses adopted. If we could come up with some way to encourage state participation with D.C. support for the placement of animals in good homes through the adoption and sale programs. We need the support from all states. Perhaps recommend that they recognize those top states, perhaps an incentive program.
4. Sterilization is an issue. We need to use every tool in the tool box. Know that BLM will not use surgical.
- Ms. Carlisle: I would like to hear Dr. Griffin's presentation. Is it time to redirect? Get out of those points that are always going to be divisive. Look for those techniques that are going to be able to be applied by folks that are not particularly skilled. It's like bashing heads. We should move and go another direction because we have some things that are happening in specific areas.
 - Mr. Woehl: PZP is not the answer. It can be used. Do you feel that 45,000 can be treated with PZP?
 - Ms. Carlisle: No, but my response does not mean PZP only. There are other solutions.
 - Mr. Woehl: We still have to gather those horses.
 - Ms. Carlisle: Gather, treat, release. There is a different treatment schedule for some horses.

- Mr. Woehl: It's almost impossible in some of these horses.
- Ms. Carlisle: It is not as logistically feasible in other cases. We could scale up faster than we could scale up for other methods of sterilization. I recognize that sterilization is one of the techniques. I am advocating for other techniques that are available. There is modeling done that by using PZP-22, if you were gathering and removing every 3 to 5 years. We are trying to find solutions that are somewhat palatable. I'm advocating for prioritizing things that can happen quickly with a broader spectrum of people that can implement them.
- Mr. French: Can we agree that the with a recruitment rate of 20% or thereabouts. We know that we have an annual capability on the BLM to gather 14,000 horses a year. With that being the case, there is no way we can gather our way out of this. What we have done is we have tied our hands again. Getting around recruitment level. I'm not saying across the entire spectrum of the population. I don't see PZP or GonaCon being a viable option mainly because of the vastness of it. We can't even gather enough. With the implementation of the BLM's protocols, in the near future, it is going to be harder to catch horses from the air. It is going to be difficult at some point down the road to use aerial methods to gather. I don't see it as being a viable way of controlling recruitment. Somehow we have to limit recruitment to get on the downside of that population.
- Dr. Perryman: That is an absolute impracticability when you have 40,000+ mares on the ground. Once you get to AML, then other methods start making more sense. Any of these contraceptive methods, that is not going to happen. There have to be massive gathers in order to make this happen. So a combination of these big gathers, so that we get to a point where a combination of contraceptive and gathers can be used to maintain. BLM has a capacity issue for gathers. That has to increase so that we can actually have the ability to gather more animals of our annual recruitment. None of these methods make any sense until we start approaching AML.
- Ms. McAlpine: I empathize, advocating for horses and burros, I take a little different position. I firmly believe that dying of dehydration and starvation is not humane. I need to step back and decide what is best for all. We need to address this issue immediately. Ms. Carlisle hit it on the head. We need to come together and give up our favorite idea for what is best for the animals. It is not going to be pretty, but neither is dying of starvation.
- Dr. Lenz: Let me give you some facts. Spaying mares is not unusual. We spay mares for many reasons. We geld stallions for many reasons. It is not unusual to spay mares. There are 4 or 5 different ways. Each has benefits. The advantage of culpotomy, it can be done in 15 to 20 minutes, it is easy to teach, and it can be done in the field. From a medical perspective, it is not inhumane. I don't think it is the answer. I think it is one of the tools we have. Yes, these decisions have to be made by people that know what is going on. That is unfortunate. We have to always think what is best for the horse, not what is best for an organization. I think spaying is indicative.
- Ms. Carlisle: I want to clarify. I know that contraception will not get us out of this. Where we disagree: waiting for AML to begin implementing contraception. I understand the logic and reasoning for wishing for that. This has to be implemented alongside the gather/removals and is better than it is to wait until we reach AML.
- Ms. McAlpine: Is spaying any more or less dangerous than foaling? Any more or less painful?
- Dr. Lenz: Complication rate with spaying is 4%. Includes infection, intestinal problems. We have drugs that you can get about 36 hours of pain management. These are all risk-benefit decisions. I don't know.
- Dr. McDonnell: When we say complication, it can be something very simple and very temporary. The death rate during ovariectomy is very low. Been so disheartening to me, the misinformation on this topic has to be the worst on every topic. It is so clear, reproductive specialists know this. So sad to see, upsets a lot of people. From stress and pain, I would recommend culpotomy. At the moment, we have to get it down by removals long before we can get to fertility control.
- Mr. Woahl: There isn't any way to gather and store that many horses. We don't have the long term holding.
- Dr. McDonnell: We're not going to gather, spay, and return to the range for a while.
- Mr. Woahl: What are we going to do if we gather them?
- Dr. Perryman: I'm more optimistic about long term holding. I don't think we have a choice. I think it has to be a combination of the two. If we are talking about 40,000 mares.

- Mr. Woahl: When are we going to make the first step.
 - Mr. French: We have to address what is on the ground first. What the public decides what they want to do with those animals down the road is the other issue. We have have laser like focus on the issue at hand.
5. Transfer responsibility to tribal authority of tribal horses on public lands. Partner with them. Collaborate. Some kind of cooperation and contact a couple of the major horse holders in the tribal world to coordinate with them.
 - a. Tribal horses are not protected under the act. Recommendation would need to be framed in how we manage and how BLM horses are impacted.
 - b. Figure out with tribes that we need to work together, for the benefit of both agencies and the horses.
 6. Entertain a rewrite of the regulations to allow for international adoptions. The things we should look for and assurances where folks have a similar interest in horses that we do.
 7. Following the act that brought this whole thing to fruition, I don't think it has been followed in its entirety. Discuss more as a group.

Adjourn



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

NATIONAL WILD
HORSE & BURRO
ADVISORY BOARD

20 F St NW Conference
Center Washington, DC
20001

October 30-31, 2019

Volume 2

Day 2 Meeting Minutes

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

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Thursday, October 31, 2019

Welcome

Mr. Fred T. Woehl, Jr., Chair, Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board

Mr. Woehl called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and asked any Veterans to first stand and then asked all to stand and join in the Pledge of Allegiance. [Pledge of Allegiance]. Mr. Woehl introduced the new director of the Mustang Heritage Foundation (MHF). MHF was on the mall in Washington D.C. on Tuesday and Wednesday and had approximately 275 and 150 people, respectively, go through the trailer. The MHF 2020 plan for travel and getting the trailer to strategic locations is pending. Mr. Woehl turned the time over to Bryant Kuechle.

Rules of the Room

Bryant Kuechle, Facilitator, The Langdon Group

Mr. Kuechle reviewed the rules of the room:

1. Seating is available for attendees. Anyone needing or wishing to stand will stand in the designated area behind the seats. All attendees are to stay in the seating or standing area at all times, unless addressing the Board during the public comment period.
2. Speakers and other attendees will not approach the dais at any time without prior consent from the Chair of the meeting.
3. Media will check in at the door and will be guided to the space designated for cameras.
4. No attendees will be allowed to place microphones, cameras or other equipment in the space set aside for the Board meeting.
5. All attendees will show mutual respect for each other and for speakers and Board members. This includes refraining from using cell phones or talking while the meeting is in session.
6. If anyone disrupts the meeting they will be asked to leave or be escorted out.
7. Those wishing to address the Board will sign in at the door. Speakers will address their comments to the Board, while seated at the designated speaker table. Generally, speakers have about 3 minutes each and are asked to finish in the designated time to allow for the maximum number of individuals to express their viewpoints.
8. Attendees wishing to provide handouts to the Board will leave handouts with the BLM representative at the door. Handouts will not be brought to the speaker's table and no one will be allowed to approach the Board with handouts.
9. Within the meeting room, attendees may not display signs, placards, or other items that are likely to obscure the view of participants or disrupt the meeting.
10. The Board will not respond to comments made during the public participation period. This should not be interpreted to mean the members of the board agree or disagree with anything said.
11. The Chair reserves the right to comment on any factual inaccuracies that may be shared during the public comment period.
12. The BLM commits to maintaining these rules for the benefit of all involved and appreciates everyone's cooperation with these rules.

Table 1 - National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Members

NATIONAL WILD HORSE & BURRO ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS	
Board Member	Representing
Mr. Fred T. Woehl, Jr.	Public Interest (Equine Behavior)
Dr. Tom Lenz	Veterinary Medicine
Ms. Celeste Carlisle	Wild Horse & Burro Advocacy
Dr. Barry Perryman	Public Interest (NRM/Special Knowledge)
Mr. James French	Natural Resource Management
Dr. Sue M. McDonnell	Wild Horse & Burro Research
Ms. Susan McAlpine	Humane Advocacy
Mr. Steven Yardley	Livestock Management
Dr. Vernon Bleich (via phone)	Wildlife Management

Online Corral Demonstration / Live Event

Krystal Johnson, Eastern States WHB Program Lead

Adopt a Horse is a website launched over 15 years ago that allowed the public to adopt a wild horse and/or burro online. Historically it served as a bidding site for the online events only. The National Operations Center (NOC) is responsible for operations and maintenance of these systems. Eastern States Office oversees the daily operation of the system.

Demonstrating our new Online Corral, we are nearing the end of development and are looking for sign off on the authorization to operate. Today I will show you several features from the potential adopter/purchaser view as well as our internal users. I want to highlight the ease of use, connectivity to system of record, as well as the pay.gov portion.

Adopt A Horse:

- Outdated technology
- Inefficient, requires more effort and duplication of data to add animals to the site
- The Online Corral replaces the Adopt A Horse website.

Animal search feature enables potential adopters or purchasers to find a specific animal and save those searches to receive notifications when a match becomes available.

Pay.gov and Collections Billing System (CBS) connection enables customers to pay in full on the site.

The connectivity between the Online Corral and the Wild Horse and Burro Program System (WHBPS) database increases efficiency and maintains data integrity.

- Pulls individual animal details
- Collects applicant's information and history
- Populates Private Maintenance and Care Agreements and Bills of Sale

Great Lakes Marketing, Advisory Board, and internal gap analysis all highlighted the importance of the internet adoption site. The current site is outdated and the rebuild is a priority for the wild horse and burro program. The rebuild includes many new features to make the site more user friendly both internally and externally as well as streamlining our process. The site makes it easier for potential adopters or buyers to select animals and search for exactly what they are looking for. Adopters or buyers will also be able to submit and sign their applications, agreements, bills of sales and payments electronically.

- Searchable-Faceted search for locating available animals
- Efficient-Automation of application processing, PMACA creation, and fee collection
- Modern-Focused on the user experience both external and internal users
- Accurate-Syncs with WHBPS, eliminates redundancy in completing adoptions and sales

- Consistent-Links to current wild horse and burro information on blm.gov

Mr. Woehl: These are available for the adoption incentive program? Ms. Johnson: Yes. You could choose to purchase or adopt. Information is provided for the difference between adopt and purchase.

- Other features of the animal gallery: freemark, species, color, age, species, gender, height, disposition, video (animals that video associated with them).
- Animal details: starting bid, number of bids, listing type, height, necktag#, freemark, capture area, etc.
- Online corral system will maintain your application. When you go to the gallery, it will sync up with the animals you are approved to adopt, i.e. burros, etc.
- Mapping feature.
- Electronic signatures.

Adoption Application: we have received your application and are in the process of reviewing it. Even though they are electronic, we still have to review them all. I can see the status of my application. Once the admin begins reviewing it, status will update. When applications expire, you'll be emailed prior and can resubmit without having to submit an entirely new application. It will keep a running list of all of the applications throughout the life of the system.

Mr. Woahl: What happens if I arrive and I don't want the animal? Ms. Johnson: If I bid online and go to my pickup and decide that the animal is not a good fit, you can select another animal or let us know and we'll refund your money. Mr. Woahl: How much is the shipping? Ms. Johnson: There are no additional shipping fees to a pickup location.

Mr. Woahl: Typically, it is 2, 3 or longer weeks before I can go pick it up. Ms. Johnson: A timeframe for an Online Corral event is typically: 6 weeks before an event to see which corrals are able to participate. Public affairs will select animals they want to participate. Photograph, video, publish the animals online, week long online event, once the event ends, 1 week to 2 weeks to finalize payments and select pickup options, put together shipping and logistics on how to get animals where they need to go and some rest stops along the way, etc.

Ms. McAlpine: If I don't pay within the 5 days, do you go to the next highest bidder? Ms. Johnson: yes. Ms. McAlpine: Is there a search for tag number or the freemark? Ms. Johnson: If we have an adopter and he/she was the high bidder and they aren't going to pick them up, they can pass on the animal and the admin gets a notification and then they can reoffer it to the next highest bidder. It doesn't happen that much. You can contact us if you want to remove.

Dr. Perryman: Is there a feature in the program if you get into a bidding war, do you get a text or an email? Ms. Johnson: If you are outbid you get a notification. We also have a high bid/proxy bid. Dr. Perryman: Is there a buy it now price feature? Ms. Johnson: We have the capability to do that, we haven't been using it with our competitive bids.

Mr. Yardley: Is this tied in so that when there is a live event? Ms. Johnson: Online Corral, when we select the animals, they are separated from the rest of the population. We don't want to end up placing an animal when others are bidding.

Mr. Yardley: Is the incentive program for burros as well? If that money would be better spent just on horses because burros are just more adoptable. Ms. Johnson: The costs the same. Mr. Yardley: There is a big void for pickup in the northeast. Ms. Johnson: It mirrors our satellite event schedule.

- Other option, if you knew that you were really interested in a horse from a specific area, you can save a search. When we add any animals from that location, you'll get an email notification of new animals. They can select how often they want to see those notifications. They also set up to see when they have an online event beginning.
- Pay.gov interface
- Conclusion - The Online Corral improves our ability to place animals by:
 - Reaching a broader audience
 - Providing better customer service
 - Increasing internal efficiencies

Dr. McDonnell: If you were going to apply for the incentive, how would that work with the online corral? Ms. Johnson: When you are on the online corral, if you choose that you want to adopt this animal, it will take you through the adoption application, submit it, reviewed and approved. Once you have been selected you can choose whether to participate in the incentive. It will show what your selection options are. That way, when you go to pick up your animal, that paperwork will be ready.

Ms. McAlpine: What about the TIP program? Can they use this site, or is that separate? Ms. Johnson: We have not been offering that on the online corral. They have different resources to work to find the adopters to be able to show. We can offer trained horses from the online corral. MHF has a website that has all of the trainer information, they have a social media site, etc.

Mr. Woahl: Great improvement from the last system. I've looked, this has been incredible.

Mr. French: Based on the feedback, this is going to be a game changer for this program as far as getting horses into homes. They talk about the gene pool. Some of them are more desirable than others. It is in the best interest in the horses and the program to maintain that interest.

Dr. Perryman: Will you release to a surrogate? Ms. Johnson: Yes, as long as all of the payments and the hauler, pickup has an approved trailer.

Mr. Yardley: Someone bids and the auction is about the close, 3 seconds before, someone bids, does it knock back the time. Ms. Johnson: It actually ends at the time, so whoever is the last person to bid will get it.

Dr. Perryman: Minimum quality to the gene pool, we shouldn't be thinking about moving a bunch of chrome studs. We need to be selecting for conformation and viability. 10 years from now, something else may be in vogue.

Wild Horse and Burro Program System (WHBPS)

Meredith Kueck, BLM WHB Specialist

Version 1 deployed September 21, 2007, beginning transition from WHBIS as the program system of record

Version 2 deployed December 2009, completing transition

Internal system, can only be used by individuals with a BLM PIV card and log in on BLM network

Developed to record:

- Census and gather event information and results.
- Information about herd lands, such as decisions and population estimates.
- Adoption event information and results.
- Data to track individual animals removed from the herd lands (from removal through private ownership or death), including history of health and medical treatment, locations and transportation, adoption, titling, and sales.
- Information about adopters and buyers to facilitate the adoption and sales processes (including inspections applications, approvals, titles, and bills of sale) and to enable tracking of animal and adopter/buyer history.
- Information about BLM offices, facilities, personnel, and contractors involved in the WH&B Program.
 - Calculates and tracks program accomplishments
 - Adoptions, sales, transfers
 - Feed days
 - Census
 - Gathers
 - Compliance

PCMB represents WHBPS users and makes recommendations for the benefit of the program

- Representatives from Herd Management, Facilities, Adoptions/Compliance/Titling, national program rep, branch chiefs

Quarterly updates with corrective and enhancement tickets – prioritized by PCMB

Currently transitioning to WHBPS 3.0 – browser enhancement

Developing mobile field apps for improved program support

Syncs with OLC and eGIS – animal locations and facility locations mapped in eGIS

Links to field office information, links to specific animals.

Dr. Lenz: Keep animals up to date? Ms. Kueck: We ask which shots they have been given. Dr. Lenz: Do you require specific ones? Ms. Kueck: We give them recommendations, yes. Dr. Perryman: Could require at least what USDA requires. Dr. Lenz: Perhaps this is a guideline. Ms. Kueck: if they are not “up to date”, we can have that conversation. Ms. McAlpine: Is breeding prohibited? Ms. Kueck: No.

Disposition: adoption history, strikes, can see everywhere an animal has been

Timeline: overview of the all of the actions. Capture, when it was listed in a group, all there. Gather, vaccination, prep, EIA test, adopted.

Ms. Carlisle: Does this program talk to the adoption program? Ms. Kueck: It is all the same system. If I change something here, the adoption program pulls data from the same database. Ms. Carlisle: Can it be linked to OLC? Ms. Kueck: We are looking to add edocs with the option to add the edocument that you can upload. For an application, or a copy of the mpa that someone provides us. They can just print that out.

Mr. Woahl: volunteers help us old people get through this. This is incredible, didn't know this. Ms. Kueck: we can track compliance, private care, etc. and can look it up easily. The adoption numbers that you have been seeing have been pulled from this system.

Mr. French: On the compliance check side of it, I have had folks that have had mustangs in possession a little more than a year and wondered if they were ever going to get a compliance check, do we have a way of prioritizing? Ms. Kueck: There are just so many adoptions, mandatory compliance checks are randomly generated. If someone wants it, they can just call their local office to sign off on their compliance checks.

Ongoing Research and Management Applications

Dr. Paul Griffin, BLM WHB Specialist

Fertility Control Research

- IUDs, Vaccines, Sterilization, Modeling

Other BLM-funded Research

- WH&B Welfare
- Movements, Genetics, Behavior
- Reduce WHB-Vehicle Collisions
- Improved survey methods

GonaCon

- EPA approved, dartable. Best if hand-injected.
- Can prevent estrus cycling; mares may act pregnant
- Primer dose has ~40% foaling rate reduction for 1 year
- Only ~30% reduction in 2nd year
- After booster dose by hand, efficacy goes way up:
 - 100% foaling reduction for 1 year
 - AND ~85% reduction for years 2-4 (at least)
- Already in use

Oocyte Growth Factor Vaccine

- Vaccine against two egg maturation proteins
- Incomplete follicle development
- Combined vaccine with weak adjuvant halted estrus:
 - 10 of 10 in 2018

- 9 of 10 in 2019
- Pasture trial for 1-dose version

IUD (Intrauterine device)

- Silicone IUDs
 - For 'open' mares (not pregnant)
 - 19 Mares living with fertile stallions
 - 75% of 'Y' shaped IUDs stayed in > 1 year
 - 100% contraception with IUD in place
 - No damage to uterus
 - Return to fertility
 - Field trial?

Gelding

- Effects of Geldings in a breeding herd
- Pre-treatment collars: August 2016
 - Gather and gelding Fall 2017
 - 27 studs gelded and returned
- Observations of all age and sex classes
- 2018-19 Gelding behavior similar to fertile stallions

Future Research & Applications

- Field trials for new methods
 - Adaptive Management
- Update WHB Research Strategy
- Request for Proposals in 2020

Discussion:

Dr. Griffin: Mares cycle with IUDs. Mr. Yardley: Do they have they progesterone with an IUD? Dr. Griffin: Yes, when they inserted the IUD and a shot of progesterone, long enough to let the IUD settle in, higher success when they did not. Mr. Yardley: What about an IUD infused with progesterone? Dr. Griffin: Possibly. Mr. Yardley: There are IUDs that are similar and they are infused with progesterone and are not put in as long. Dr. Lenz: 5 to 14 days after they foal. You have to do something to tighten the cervix, they come into heat 5 to 14 days after. Dr. Perryman: magnetic IUDs, what do we know about them? Dr. Griffin: We have been approached with these, a small number of two different sizes were attempted, and they did not stay in at high rates. We know from the inventor they are successful in domestic animals. There are some very clever designs. To us, that is the essential element. Mares breed with stallions. Unfortunately, the preliminary data, when they were used with stallions and mares they fell out. Until we see prelim data that show they work in the conditions we need them to, we are going to be less enthusiastic. Inventor seeking research opportunities in Australia in animals that are breeding.

Mr. Yardley: Has there been any break throughs on preliminary sterilization where it can be done non-surgically? Dr. Griffin: Yes, received information about a method to block and scar, which is a nonsurgical method and appears to be very successful, been done with a small number of animals. That would be the nonsurgical method we are aware of. Mr. Yardley: Is that fairly easy, something that could be done in an on-range corral, similar to gelding of a stallion? I feel like there is a need for permanent sterilization that is not as invasive, recovery of the mare, effectively done in the field as humanely as possible. Dr. Griffin: Yes, we are looking for sterilization methods of all types. How long it takes and in what settings it can be done, probably requires a squeeze shoot with some kind of standing sedation. Anywhere from 15 minutes to 45 minutes. In our country, it is a small number of people that can do it yet. If it becomes a popular method, there are other minimally surgical methods that also have potential. Mr. Yardley: What do you think those are? Dr. Griffin: Anything that would limit the fetus from staying in uterus. Mr. Yardley: GonaCon can be administered during pregnancy, what are the effects? Dr. Griffin: No effect in horses. There is the potential for vaccination to lead to abortion if it is administered in the first 6 weeks of pregnancy. Mr. Yardley: At that stage in the pregnancy, if the foal is going to be aborted, it is the least pain to the mare.

Ms. Carlisle: Seems like we are on the cusp of some new ideas, the BLM would not be able to pursue all of that. Dr.

Griffin: All of the projects listed here are fully funded. There was a big influx in FY15. That typically happens when we look at the budget and management has an opportunity to look at priorities. Dr. Lenz: Have you looked at the National Academy of Science proposal? Dr. Griffin: Yes, we tried to do a project along those lines and were limited through litigation. That is another potential method that has not been tested. Anything that would seal the oviduct could be blocked through heat, laser, or glue.

Dr. Bleich: Recommendation for funding a line item for research to consider this next funding cycle. I would think that given the effort thus far, it is something that should be pursued. Dr. Perryman: DO you now have a new set of research priorities? Dr. Griffin: It is in the works. It will be an update to the 2005 research strategy. We have discussed what those priorities would be. Finding long-term contraception and sterilization methods. Other things include health of the animals, there are other priorities. Having better long-lasting fertility control. We are seeing so much damage on the range, we need methods to slow growth once we get to AML. We don't think fertility control will get us there.

Dr. Perryman: A combination of gather, treat, release is the only way to do it. Developing a research priority is going to be necessary. Litigation, was it based on a NEPA procedural aspect, or was it with the method itself of some kind? What intervened? Dr. Griffin: There were not serious criticisms of the methods, it had to do primarily with first amendment access to the viewing area.

Mr. Yardley: It is saddening to me, when you consider the amount of range, ecological disaster, misinformed groups that don't understand the problem as it arises on the range. Considering the range degradation, the effect on mares and foals, has there been any research on early term abortions? Dr. Griffin: Not that I know of.

Ms. Carlisle: I haven't seen research on year-round cycling using PZP. Didn't see any behavior changes from mares treated in PZP. I also don't know that there is year-round cycling. Dr. Griffin: You are right. We are getting a better presentation of how PZP works. Repeated doses of PZP can see changes in the ovaries so that some don't cycle. There could be a variety of results depending.

Dr. Lenz: Do geldings acquire mares and take over? Dr. Griffin: Yes, those that have been gelded at 3 years old or older still acquire a harem.

Dr. Perryman: What is the modeling timeframe for PopEquus? Dr. Griffin: You can specify, the presentation is 10 years. Dr. Perryman: We basically have to have a reset of this whole thing based on the resources that we have. When we do get to AML range wide, we have to manage these horses from that point on, otherwise 10 years later we will be in the same boat we are in now. We are talking about a management paradigm change, which includes contraception and removals to try and maintain the capacity of these habitats.

Mr. French: I have to agree with everything Dr. Perryman said. I have made my living in resource management. Resetting the whole process of trying to manage, we have been managing other resources for decades. A lot of the techniques are going to try and set management priorities based on population trends. I'm wondering with regard to setting the management priorities, what is the frequency of the surveys? Under big game, groundtruthing reset occurs twice a year. What is the reset on terms of those trends? Dr. Griffin: We try to survey each AML at least 1 in 3 years. There are some HMAs surveyed every year because of court order. In some states they aim for every other year. That is to say that the whole HMA gets surveyed. Where the local specialist says, there may be other data to include, complete coverage, so there is no subsampling. It is very intensive. We only started doing these analyses in 2013, some before that. We need to have consistent methods so you can look over time. USGS is analyzing those. 20% for horses is pretty consistent. It is phenomenal. They have it. There are some other areas with PZP and some geldings their annual growth rate is closer to 12%. Population still doubles in 6 years at 12%. Exponential growth is a real beast, these animals, have extremely high and very high adult survival rates; foaling rates are high; and if there is one thing we can do to slow those rates down, anything at the age of reproduction helps. That exponential growth is going to stay very high. If there was a vaccine to delay the onset of puberty or a foal IUD that could slow things down.

Dr. Bleich: You mentioned the effort to try and survey the HMAs, does that apply to burro HMAs? Dr. Griffin: It is our goal to try and survey all about 1 in 3 years. Logistics and funding dependent, applies for all. Set through IM.

Mr. French: With regards to the survey protocols, is that done with fixed wing? Dr. Griffin: Locally specific. For big grasslands where visibility is good, fixed wing. Two engine fixed wing, higher visibility. For areas that have more topography, it is more typical that we would use helicopters. Depends on topography. For fixed wing we can't go below 500 feet. There were a couple other questions regarding photography. For any group that is larger than 20, we take a photo and then compare to what is recorded on paper. Required for above 20. We also try to complete a complex of HMAs at the same time. We have been flying the tri-state survey area together since 2012 for example.

Dr. Perryman: Have you had any conversations with DoD with their latest declassified inventory technology that they use on the battlefield for intelligence that could be transferred over? Dr. Griffin: No, but I would love to learn more. We do work with the Navy, they helped us try out a large drone with infrared technology. We weren't using the best sensor and it didn't help in a desert. But yes, we are collaborating with the Navy. There is room for that in the future.

Mr. Yardley: Natural Regulation Theory? Dr. Perryman: Yellowstone operated under that guideline, amounts to animals are allowed to go and do whatever they do, they are subject to the vagaries of population buildups and crashes, the swings of the pendulum are very large. We are mandated to maintain and manage multiple use, so therefore, anything that gets in the way of mandated, legal management is not consistent with our mandate. Consider the Central Park example. We have public lands. It doesn't work to just let it go back. We have the ability through management to keep the pendulum from swinging too far, we are mandated for that. Mr. Yardley: the very old, the very young, are the ones effected the most. When I asked earlier, when there is a limited source of feed and water, these are tough situations that require tough choices to be made. It is sad that we have let it get to this point. We are facing an ecological disaster. I hope as we make recommendations, we can keep those circumstances on our mind.

Advisory Board Discussion

Dr. McDonnell gave an update from the Low Stress Handling and Comprehensive Animal Welfare working group.

Ms. Carlisle: In looking back over the protocol, the part that was impressive is that is comprehensive. The idea that we are looking at the entire program from on-range to off-range and everything in between is exciting. Establishing SOPs is exciting and glad to be a part of that. It is a positive process, reinforcing techniques that are working well and new techniques and making sure that people on the ground are trained.

Dr. Lenz: I think one thing we discussed was for looking into low stress handling procedures that are being done in the cattle industry by strategic placement of people and is something that we should look into and get a little more understanding.

Dr. Perryman: Commend the BLM for what they have been doing so far. There has been a lot of time and investment. We are not trying to reinvent the wheel. What new things are out there that may have some application for WHB management including from on-range to off-range and delivery. It is a good time to take a look at that so that everyone understands that the Advisory Board are trying to stay up to date and implement as much of it as we can that is practicable.

Dr. McDonnell: One of the key aspects was to have a national coordinator position. Dr. Kane has been attempting to fill that position. There is a hiring freeze, they have been unable to move forward with that. Setting of SOPs on this scale. That position will be critical to moving things forward. We'll be crafting a recommendation along those lines to the extent possible.

Mr. Woahl: Until after we hear public comments, a couple I would like to talk about. We have all seen mares in holding, if over a period of time, they would be easier to manage and treat. We could trade out the mares. Complete fertility control on them, and then when we gather mares in the field, swap them out. The herd numbers would remain the same, but the reproduction numbers would not. Something I'd like to talk about. Dr. Lenz: I wonder what effect it would have on the mares. They have been put in a situation with a lot of forage. Then you take it and put it back on the range. Stallions are going to divide them up. The feed they have is going to be different and sparser. What effect would it have on those mares? As far as body condition. Dr. McDonnell: I don't think there is a research answer. Thoroughbred mares do just fine and can adapt if she had originated there. These are mares that would have been born in an HMA, they would have less difficulty. I don't think anyone has looked, the long-range productivity they figure it out pretty quickly. They would

have difficult start with behavior. Mr. Rittenhouse: this is an interesting concept. We are already trying to reach out to a solicitor, may require a legislative change.

Dr. Perryman: I would be hesitant to move them back on the range anywhere, sets a precedent from moving off-range to on-range again? There is some ideas and concepts floating around and moving long-term holding onto areas that don't have horses. Once they are off the range, they need to be off the range. If we leave viable herds, reproductive herds on the range, we'll figure out how to deal with them on the back end. We may not want to go down that road.

Mr. Yardley: Long term sterilization, where they originated, transferring back and forth in the process. And it is their home range, there is still a learning curve. They don't know where the feed is, they don't know where the water is. Mr. Woahl: You are saying gather, hold them, return them? Mr. Yardley: No, sterilization in the field so that they can be gathered, treated, and returned within a day or two. Dr. Bleich: Any such proposal would set a precedent that would be very dangerous and would have severe political ramifications for our management objectives. Dr. Perryman: Animals learn where the feed and water is from their peers and from their mothers. If you take them away from that and it is not very long, maybe they can adapt and figure it out and remember. When you bring sheep, they come home and they are in bad shape, but it is stressful environment and probably unnecessary. It would be marginal, this idea of precedent, I don't think we want to go down that road.

Mr. Woahl: Recommendation where we can influence, advise, for the BLM to increase their budget on research for fertility control. I know that is something borderline. It is our recommendation that BLM increase or pursue an increase or do whatever they can to increase funding. Mr. Rittenhouse: I know that if there is research that is promising, for whatever it might be, they will evaluate that and if it has value and will help solve the challenges we are facing, we will fund it. Mr. Woahl: Is your funding sufficient then? Mr. Rittenhouse: no comment. It would not stress the budget or impact the budget. I don't know if research has been affected by that. Some of that is now ending. We are continuing and there have been some new projects that are coming online. Oocyte growth research is relatively new, showing promising results. Some of the initial trials have shown promising results. Some of the IUD things they have modified and changed. Research that has not been affected, we are done with it. Research is going to be a big thing moving forward. I think we all get frustrated because it takes a long time and we want to make sure we have the data and information to support it. We can fund things into the future. I want to emphasize from the board's perspective the challenges we are facing. Dr. McDonnell: from an academic funding standpoint, there will be people that come up with ideas, but there are a lot of people waiting for another RFP. There have been a lot of questions from equine experts, they ask all the time, when is the next RFP? Both the unsuccessful and successful have produced a lot of interest. NIH research looking at other species. That is where the oocyte depletion study came up. I would encourage to either have another RFP, or make it widely known that you can submit a pre-proposal to let you guys know that there are ideas and that they are welcome. Dr. Lenz: Do you have a research line item? Would it be beneficial? Mr. Rittenhouse: Stay away from the budget side of it, continuing research, RFP of proposals, there would be that support. Research has to address the key management issues we are dealing with now. We have a fair set of priorities. Mr. French: I think it would be a mistake to send a message to Congress or the folks that are deciding fertility control research. It is a hinge pin for long term management. The other side of it would include a line item in the budget. Population inventories, an immense lift on the part of BLM to fully implement an inventory protocol on HMA and HA that is affected by horses. In order for that to be effective, we have to be able to go in every 3rd year or so. By putting forward a recommendation from this board that would encourage BLM to develop budgets to support that kind of research down the road. Mr. Woahl: I don't think we can advise on budget items. Having this talk will let them know what our approach is. We need to increase research in several areas. Dr. Perryman: Help them reinforce their priority list of research. If the board's priorities are in line with BLM's, encourage them to continue to do contraceptive and survey. Mr. Woahl: I don't think we can mention budget, if we just encourage the BLM to focus research in contraception and survey techniques would coincide. JF and BP will draft something.

Dr. Perryman: Cooperation between BLM, Forest Service, and tribal entities. Mr. Woahl: Need to be specific on tribal lands adjacent, probably need to name individual tribes. Dr. Perryman: General statement and key contact individuals that we can share and they can move from there.

Ms. Carlisle: Comprehensive Animal Welfare Protocol, the others we mentioned. Making the process easier for established programs that are much like the MHF in other countries in order for that interchange. Mr. French: We lasered in on what would be beneficial regarding the language approving international adoption or transfer opportunities. I have

some language that I would like to bounce off of you. Encourage BLM to identify, foreign and domestic, outside of the U.S. that would include transfer opportunities that exist within the U.S. Work programs, border patrol, law enforcement, park service, etc. Has to do with education and opportunity. Ms. Carlisle: There will be fear of horses slipping through the cracks, trying to see that this recommendation that is not going to large number of horses, facilitating relationships and streamlining a bureaucratic process. Mr. French: Try to maximize that interest and get the horses into places where it helps celebrates the horse itself and we can take some pride in it. Mr. Woahl: We need to be clear and concise, I think it is a good idea, finding them good homes and doing something like this would be good. Mr. French: In my conversations with Mr. Rittenhouse there was opportunities from the transfer side of governments that have interest. It would give us an opportunity to touch bases with organizations. Opening the door for large horses for purposes where we don't have any idea. Dr. Perryman: Good to be clear and concise. There are going to be groups that misconstrue, write it as well as we can with the intent. Mr. French: I think adding an intent statement would probably clarify some of that.

Mr. Woahl: How can we best approach legislators, or encourage BLM to visit with legislators and invite them to do field visits and to view operations? Response: through Legislative Affairs. Mr. Woahl: We could form a working group to work with BLM to ensure that interested legislators would have opportunities. Ms. Carlisle: Could a working group facilitate and then invite BLM WHB specialists for those regions to provide tours? Mr. Rittenhouse: we may be pushing FACA, if it is a quorum of the board, public would have to be notified and available to attend. The key is that it is originated by Congress, BLM will not solicit.

LUNCH

Public Comment

A public comment period was conducted from 1:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 31, 2019 allowing individuals and individual representatives of groups the opportunity to address the Board.

Brianna Schwartz

Good afternoon, for those who don't know me, I'm Brianna Schwartz and I'm the government relations policy person for the American Wilde Horse Campaign. I'm here with my colleague, who will speak later to represent the campaign and our over 800,000 supporters. With my time, I want to focus on fertility control, and I will start by just laying out some things that you already know but stating the obvious. Specifically, to the ovariectomy procedures. There are several things standing in the way, Congress, both the House and the Senate sent a letter to the BLM saying they do not approve. They want surgeries abandoned. Recently, earlier this week, vets sent a letter to the secretary as well, and that was in lieu of the AVMA and AEPA statements and it shows that there's controversy on this issue which is a factor that has to be analyzed in NEPA. There's also been recent polling that shows over 80% of Americans don't approve of this procedure being used on their wild horses, that they are paying to be managed. And I will state the obvious, there are lawsuits against there and there will continue to be. The American people do not want to see this happen. Federal courts have struck it down. Celeste brought up yesterday there's also scalability issue. You don't have enough vets to do this on a management level. And looking specifically at the Warm Springs horses who have all had their foals, there's no way for the BLM to quantify accurately the risk that will happen when this procedure is performed on pregnant mares. Because most mares that are coming off the range are in some form of pregnancy. Thank you. So what do we focus on? What we have today, which Celeste brought up yesterday, dartable options. Those are in your tool box now. They are used extensively on the range by BLM's own personnel, but BLM is not funding those programs. BLM listens to you guys. You can have them support their own programs. There's a wild horse specialist in Oregon that has to get private funding for her program. Ask BLM to spend more money on darting so that the herds that are easily accessible, the herds that have volunteers or staff that want to work on those herds can get taken off your table and you can focus on the critical areas. It doesn't matter what side of the aisle we are on, male, female, party, it really doesn't matter. People want to see the horses humanely managed and I want you to keep that in mind when you make your recommendations. Thank you.

Bonnie Cole-Harcter

So I want to make a few points here. So I have listened to you, and I hear that you want to take down horses and burros to lower AML. I'm concerned because I have looked at the AMLs and I will send this to you. I have looked at the AMLs, and it looks to me like 148 of your 160 horse herds and 30 of your 33 burro herds will be below genetic viability. Using your geneticist benchmark in the BLM book, the benchmark of 150 minimum with 50 effective breeding animals. I know we are all just moving from herd to herd, but the they are to be sound. Is this a good management practice to have 148 of

your 160 or 30 of their 33, to be below genetic sustainability. Then I hear you want to sterilize your mares. Well, the mares will behave -- you suggested they will behave like geldings. So then where will they fit in, in the stallion bachelor bands? In the family bands? Or in isolation? We don't know at this point. Behavioral units are important to consider for survival of our wildlife, and the wild horses and burros are part of our wildlife. So if you don't know, is that also good management? Wild horses and burros cause, you said, dirt and not noxious weeds. Well, I want to go back 100 years. Why did the Taylor Grazing Act come into effect? Overgrazing of what on our public lands? And then you go to western watersheds and you look at their pictures. Picture after picture of dirt and noxious weeds with what in the picture? Livestock! On our public lands. And there are no horses in these areas. So it's not just the wild horses and the burros, in my mind, that causes dirt, and these noxious weeds. We also have to consider all the players on our public lands. Now, I want to ask you, where are our geneticists on the advisory board? I think it's important to have the geneticists, because they could give us some ideas in terms of, you know, what -- what numbers or what makeup should we have so we ensure -- really do ensure the health of the wild horses and burros. And then where -- where are the behaviorists? You are a behaviorist, and to speak to the research, the effect of the behavior units for survival on the range. So we need to address that. What -- if we're going to do something, what's going to be the behavioral effects? And then the last -- the last part, where are the rangeland biologists who can speak to the space, the fencing needs so that if the herds need to intermix, they don't get bumped because of the fences.

Mindy Pless

Good afternoon, I'm very happy to be here. My name is Mindy Pless. I live in the plains, the fabulous Commonwealth of Virginia. In the plains, it's like going back 100 years, and I am one of those people that every other week, every other day, I am out there on the forefront with my neighbors, my land -- my other landowner neighbors, combatting the suburban sprawl. What is most important to us is the land and the horses, okay? It's the same thing out in the West, with the mustangs. You have 26 million acres, and 80,000 horses. Okay? Where I am, I'm a taxpayer, a big taxpayer. So I'm here to present what I feel -- and I'm speaking for myself and the many people who could not be here today, the horse lovers, okay? He with want these horses to remain wild and free and in the \$1.31 an acre for the cattle, I think we need to relook at some of this land use. We need to move some of the cattle and sheep away. I looked at the numbers that you had. I'm a businesswoman also. I'm not in this business for horses. No, no, I need a real job to support that. That's a hobby, and we will talk about that later. You need to take the allotment that we're not going to pay for no more helicopter removals, no more sterilization, no more fertilization. No, these horses will live the way they are. You will take the taxpayer money and you are going to reallocate that money to some of that cattle and sheep land, all right? We will open up the grasslands to the horses and I want that land to be conserved, preserved for horses only! And the burros, okay? And this is not for just me, because I'm not going to be here that much longer. That's for 100 years from now, 200 years, and that's for forever because this law was enacted back in the '70s. And it's been amended a little bit. We need something more solid and it's to stay that way for eternity. Thank you very much.

Adam Pugh

Mr. Chairman and board, my name is Adam Pugh, I'm the natural resource policy specialist at the National Association of Conservation Districts. I am one of those millennials who looks at a computer screen about eight hours a day. (Laughter) So as you know, conservation districts work with millions of cooperative landowners, and operators to help them manage, protect, land and water resources on private and public lands in the United States. Our members are devoted to conserving natural resources on all landscapes across our nation with proper stewardship of the land. We fully recognize our western rangelands have their share of unique natural resource challenges specifically when it comes to the over population of wild horse and burros. It's critically damaging to the ecology of western rangelands causing severe problems for native plants and animals. Some of the pictures we were shown earlier today and yesterday, it would take hundreds, if not thousands of years for that land to recover. NACD recommends and supports common sense ecological sound rangeland management practices to ensure healthy wildlife and rangelands are preserved for future generations. Per the BLM's own data in 2009, there were roughly about 37,000 wild, free, roaming horses and burros on public lands. As you guys know, we have seen that number increase to about 88,000, which has resulted in the degradation and the health of our western rangelands. This has left the health of our animals, in very poor condition in which they often faced starvation and dehydration. It was said yesterday that we need to focus on HMA by HMA while looking for solutions. There's also mention that we need to give land managers access to all tools in the tool box. Well, the good news NACD, we support doing both. We need to take the handcuffs off of local land managers to I can make the best decision for that area. We recognize that fertility control alone will not reduce the numbers in the time frame to protect the health and the range where numbers are triple, quadruple that of the natural carrying capacity of the land and the Pop Equus demonstration we

saw that kind of come into fruition on that. A full list of our recommendations were included in our written testimony. At the end of the day, we need to rely on peer-reviewed science for the best management of the land and the horses, and not necessarily rely on emotions and feelings to make these determinations. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to address you and the rest of the board today. Thank you.

Linda Greeves

I felt I could not sit back. This is first time I ever publicly spoke. So you have to bear with me a little bit. NEPA is a public right and the taxpayers are who fund all of this. We have the right to have input in it. And we do not want the special interests path forward. It is a path to extinction for our horses. We need to put our environment and our public before special interests. You talk about dealing with facts but then the academy of the science report has been ignored for the most part and other common sense solutions have been as well. And the decade -- in the past decade, we had several advances in science and they also have been for the most part ignores. Horses are Native American. We now have DNA proof of that. That needs to be looked at. We have several places all over the world that are bringing horses to regenerate the land that has been destroyed by livestock and other things. We need to look at that. Here we allow all types of domestic animals to spread invasive plants and illnesses. This is damaging the range. The BLM aids with water projects and allowing fencing which affects many species not just the horse. It costs us millions of dollars a year to have the cattle on range and most importantly we lose our wild and this must stop. The grazing fees are at an all-time low. I know my rent has not gone down in the last ten years. We have horses on less than 15% of BLM land, while livestock are on most of it and the damage is across the board. That's common sense, you know what's happening. So until livestock is removed, we should not be looking to place all the blame on the horse. AMLs are -- are under 30,000 for horses, but over 1 million for cattle. That's another math problem. The AMLs are arbitrary and unscientific. This numbers about the same as when they were protected because of the drastic drop of over 1 million horses due to humans. They needed to be saved but now we are pushing them back to the extinction levels. We have over 30 years of PZP documentation out of Assateague Island. The Assateague and Chincoteague Islands have the same birth rate. It's a viable option for smaller places where we can get to the horses. This needs to be started now. Every year that we don't dart, we have more foals on the ground. And experiments the sterilized mares is barbaric. They will be pregnancy next. It's not in a veterinary office with sedation with a dough mess tick horses. You are here to help the public lands and not of your own agendas and special interests. By allow wildlife, including wild native horses to recover is critic am. You are dealing with an educated and emotionally mature public. Please don't insult us. And I was insulted by some of the comments yesterday. Thank you.

Kim Earhart

Good afternoon, board. I first, before I speak on the topic that I'm going to speak on, I want to say that every wild horse advocate that has spoken to far, I agree. And I support everything that they have said. I'm going to talk about one aspect, which is predominantly fertility control. Okay. So I'm going to read so I don't go off the HMA and ramble. My name is Kimberly Earhart, this is my fifth year in attendance and to comment before this advisory board. I'm a wild horse and burro advocate, also advocating for wildlife and healthy rangelands. As all of these living plants and animals are indivisible, none can survive in the wild without the others in. My desire to help solve the humane management problems we are facing regarding the mustangs, and to be a part of the humane solutions we all seek, I attended the PZP training course, bought my darting rifle and looked forward to volunteering for the BLM as a fertility control field darter and documenter. It is a good -- it is so good to hear the wonderful work being done in the areas of adoptions, and BLM partnerships with incredible nonprofits such as Mustang Heritage Foundation and others. But we all know, or at least should, after 50 years, the BLM is not going to adopt or round up their way to AML. More currently -- more of currently available, humane and publicly acceptable tools need to be simultaneously combined and implemented. As the wild horse and burro specialist deems most practical for success in their HMA. One of the most important of these combo tools is fertility control and now is the time for the BLM to fully fund the most promising research Dr. Griffin educated us on, so that BLM will be ready and poised to act with these studied and perfected vaccines. The BLM cannot afford to delay this research or the data applications and results it will supply. After a roundup that reduces the herd to low or high AML, that's the essential time to implement fertility control. I hope that there's not a repeat of when the BLM asked Dr. Jay Kirkpatrick to develop something that would limit or stop reproduction in wild horses. He did it. And the BLM never really fully implemented or used it as it was intended to be used. That has been successful in the primary pool, to control on HMAs, zoos and sanctuaries.

Stephanie Schnider

First of all, I would like to thank you all for your expertise and your input. I realize this is a very complex situation and I

highly respect both sides. Seeing that there's a lot of intelligence and information coming from both the advocacy, as well as the BLM and political -- so-called political side. Setting aside the obvious reasons, and important role of the mustangs and of the development of our country, there are a myriad other reasons why we must do better in their protection and care. With our political climate as it is today, unfortunately, we are dealing with other circumstances that affect public perception of government agencies and offices. And that is something that we can't be terribly surprised by, that there is a general distrust of government agencies and special interest groups, such as fracking. We hear this in the news all the time. Fracking and oil and this and that and all of these special interest groups and the immense power that they have. And that's often unfortunately something that the public fears is behind some of the motivations when it comes to government agencies. That being said, we all have to pull together and come up with solutions that work for our wild horses and set aside our agendas and special interests and things that we may feel may not be the right course of action. We have to work together to find the best solutions for them. A few suggestions after hearing and doing some of my own research and just come up in my own mind as a citizen of this country, that is very concerned about this issue, I -- I see the fires happening in California, and it was mentioned yesterday by Mr. Pendley and I just felt that fire prevention is a place where we could use wild horses and we haven't tapped that potential. The second arena is ecotourism. I called a ranger yesterday at Assateague Island and I asked them how much is their ecotourism doing and what is their -- how many people are they seeing? They see 2.2 million people a year on Assateague Island. Not all of them may go to see the horses, but a large percentage thereof. And I think that is something that is a completely untapped resource for our western states. California is still being my favorite state, as that's where I'm originally from. I'm currently in New York and I'm an adopter of five horses, that I adore more than anything else in the world. And I want to see what is the best thing for them out there and not just my questions that I had. Quickly I can get there. There was a mention of euthanasia in old, sick and aged horses. I would like to know what the age limit is on that. We haven't mentioned climate change very much in our discussions on how that affects the land and as an herbalist and botanist, I understand that that has a dramatic impact on our lands and that should be accounted for, rather than scapegoating everything on to our horses. I'm all done. Thank you very much.

Ginger Fedak

We appreciate the efforts to publicize and increase adoptions and certainly are impressed by the online adoptions program. So kudos to that. Thank you for acknowledging in a couple of your begrudging comments that wild horse and burros are not the only impact on our public lands and there are other possible uses which may contribute to range degradation. Yet, you say you are the advisory board for the Wild Horse and Burro Program and that's what your job is to address. We understand the mandate for multiple uses on our public lands, and that is usually the go-to explanation as to why the HMAs have been reduced by over half their acreage since the 1971 act endeavored to guarantee these lands for wild horse and burro use, and that is also the explanation as to why the horses and burros must be brought down to low AML, to allow more resources for the other uses. However, when livestock outnumber wild horses in inappropriate numbers, on the small percentage of public land afforded to the horses, that they must then share with livestock and other uses, it would seem to us that your real job as the wild horse and burro advisory board should be to champion for the cause of wild horse and burros and defend the rights to their fair share of their guaranteed habitat. We submit that you cannot have it both ways. Claiming that the mandate is for multiple use, where the other uses get the majority of the resources and then scapegoat and blame the horses and burros for all of the range degradation that occurs. Most of us here are not of the ilk that scream at you, leave them alone and do nothing. We understand that it's not realistic and there must be workable processes to manage the numbers to self-sustaining levels for the good of both the horses and the range. But along with managing the other multiple uses. We simply disagree upon the methods. Ms. McAlpine, these horses are not dying of starvation, and thirst. If you think that advocates are okay with wild horses and burros dying of starvation, rather than being rounded up, you have either misunderstood something or have been given the wrong information. Yes, there are some areas where these animals have been fenced off of their prior legal lands, where their water sources have been and they must go searching for water where it once was, and is now fenced off. We will suggest instead of looking at the same old photos of sick or aged horses that are thin, we invite you out West to see for yourself, the health of these resilient and resourceful lands, yes, even in Nevada. BLM data itself shows that the horses brought in during roundups are an optimal body score condition. We understand and wholeheartedly agree on the concern which Mr. Yardley termed an ecological disaster, however, we seem to disagree on the cause. Of course, climate change enters into the equation. Mr. Yardley is a cattle rancher. You do not like to hear this but the science has shown over and over and over again that cattle and other livestock do far more damage to our ecosystem than any other factor. Please read up on the research from western watersheds project. Thank you.

Tammy Pearson

Good afternoon. I'm Tammy Pearson. I'm a county commissioner from Beaver County, Utah. I'm also a cattle rancher and farmer, grew up in agriculture. I grew up raising animals, I'm very familiar with range conservation, range habitat, and the life and the health of livestock and animals in general. We have our share of horses that we raise, and enjoy. We own a ranch on private property with also BLM and state land. We are -- we are tasked with the management of that, and we feel like that is our responsibility to protect and conserve that. As a cattle rancher, we spend probably two months at a time on a particular pasture. We rotate. We move to the next pasture. That original pasture is rested for the next ten months. And probably more during the next year on our rotation. So those lands are allowed to heal. The difference between livestock grazing and the horses, horses are there 24/7, 365, and the only management part of them is wherever the feed and water, is they can travel. So in my mind, and as a county commissioner, our rural counties, we have -- our county has 7500 people. We have miles and miles and hundreds of thousands of acres in our county, and it's -- it's what keeps rural people in rural America, is the public land. So public lands in our county is 77% of our county. That's what BLM manages, 10% is forest. We have no horses on Forest Service. Everything is on BLM. We have about five or six HMAs, the majority of those HMAs are almost 400% of AML. The horses are traveling outside of their HMA, they are doing heavy impact on other -- on other parcels including private property. We have been at about a seven-year drought. We have huge impacts on our water and riparian area. The advantage between livestock and wildlife are with the increase in hunting or whatever on wildlife, the wildlife groups and the ranchers and the state have put a lot of money into water -- water resources and developing that. I personally spend all winter out there cutting ice for cows and horses and I don't see anybody else out this cutting ice, but me. We haul protein tubs and mineral, trying to supplement. We had some really, really hard winters and with this drought, there's no vegetation there either. All we're asking. We love the horses. I probably have more pictures of horse than anything else. We just need them down to appropriate management levels. We appreciate your help and your service here on this board. Thank you.

Janet Lynch

My name is Janet Lynch and I'm here in my private capacity as a citizen who is concerned enough to come down here at Maine at private expense to speak about these issues. I wrote to this board last week about my specific concerns and opposition to surgical sterilization using the -- especially the ovariectomy via colpotomy so I won't repeat that here and I refer the board to my comments which I will sent in. And I hope that you read them. I'm particularly concerned that under the recently appointed Acting Director Pendley, the BLM is planning to remove equine on an unprecedented scale in a doomed effort to improve rangeland quality to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance, the bureau must reign in livestock grazing to environmentally sustainable levels. Without doing so, they have no hope of reaching thriving natural ecological balance, because livestock vastly out number horses on these lands. Mr. Pendley opened yesterday's meeting saying that he's very troubled by the wild equine issue, and he went on to cite improbable rates of growth in the population. He then admitted that he has no expertise in the field, as an attorney. I do agree with Actor Director Pendley when he said we have a statutory obligation to take care of the land, unfortunately accelerating removals of wild horse and burros from our public lands without addressing livestock grazing is doomed to failure. If the goal is indeed to take care of the public lands. Mr. Pendley has a demonstrated contempt for the public lands and as recently as 2016 said that the founders intended so sell off those lands and as an attorney he has numerous conflicts of interest which should disqualify him from his current position. He -- he also relevant here has said also as recently as 2016 that the multiple use mandate indicates that it is -- he said it's supposed to be for ranching and other extractive industries. From fact, the multiple use doctrine is clearly defined in the 1976 federal lands policy and manage act, enumerates a road range of uses including recreation and wild horse and burro habitat. I refer you all to my written comments about use of PZP and my concerns about arbitrarily low AMLs, but I would like to finish by saying that the BLM's reckless plan to move forward with an unprecedentedly vast roundup and removal operation of wild equines at public expense will do much harm to these animals and cost taxpayers millions and will do nothing to over grazing, and nor will it help BLM to comply with the multiple use, which contract to Acting Director Pendley, industry for private property, and profits but is rather exactly what it says, a multiuse mandate for the benefit of all Americans whose legally protected interests in our public lands go far beyond the ranching and extractive industries and include protection of wild equines. Thank you very much.

Debbie Gonzales

My name is Debbie. And I was raised in a small town in the southeastern corner of Colorado. Engrained in any ethos is support for our next generation of agriculture leaders. My family buys land at our county junior livestock sale and we are part of the state fair and generalized stock sale buying group. This year, I was struck again by the size of the market steers at the sale. The largest weighed in at 1,519 pounds, and the reserve grand champion weighed in at just over 13 pounds. And the tiniest steer weighed in at a mere 1,050 pounds. Now, I could tell you in Colorado, we raise 'em bigger and better.

But that would only be partially true. We raise ember. Now for the bigger part. The predicate for mustang removals should be revisited. Over the last 40 years, there's been a 30% increase in cattle rates. Daily forage requirements for a cow average about 2.2 of body weight. Current forage use on public lands has not been analyzed in light of larger animals and climate considerations. Therefore, when you see five head on the range, they are eating for almost eight. Throw in the fact that ranchers often self-report the number of head they graze and five head are eating for nine, and nine are eating for 15, on drought-stressed grasslands. Mustangs have always been blamed for everything that goes wrong on grasslands since White man came west. In the mid 1800s, stockmen released up to 40 million cattle on grass islands. The plains were an estimated 2 million mustangs had lived for century without destroying the grazing. And, of course, the mustangs are held responsible for the sudden depletion of the grasslands. I think it was Toinby who said those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it. So here we are. Again, people who don't know our history, and are repeating the same mistakes over and over. Accurate head counts for our animals are possible. Our satellite images have an imaging revolution -- resolution of 5 to 6 inches. And they are perfectly capable of photographing the larger animals on our western grasslands. We need the mustangs in our future to help replant the grasslands and the startling and significant collapse of domestic horses. And a quick question, last fall's meeting, at the last fall meeting, in Salt Lake, this was a recommendation to work with our veterans on darting mares. What happened to that recommendation? Thank you.

Callie Hendrickson

Good afternoon, chairman and board members. I'm here today from Rio Blanco County, Colorado which is the northwest corner. We are home to the Piceance-East Douglas, where there should be approximately 235 horses. Today our county has 1150 horses. We are over four times the number of horses that there should be within the county. So sorry, Nevada, we're moving in your direction. If we fin down this direction, we will have 2 you no horses by 2023 and yet our county, truly depends on those public lands and the rangeland health and the watershed in which the livestock, the horses and the recreational depend upon. My first year serving on the board in 2012, there were only 37,000 horses on the range. So we all -- many of us at that time were very concerned we were headed down the path we are at today and we are here at 88,000 plus this year's foals. We heard Director Pendley that, the horses are big the threat to the rangelands in the west and I don't disagree. He talks about there will be 15 years and \$5 billion to get us back to where it's a sustainable program. I'm pretty confident that those figures and that time frame is based on nonlethal management. We too would absolutely like to see the overpopulation crisis solved without horses being euthanized or sold without limitations. However, we are realistic, and recognize it's going to be nearly impossible given the current overpopulations and the exponential growth that is occurring. There's only one way that this will be possible, and that's if Congress truly provides 130 million a year for the next number of years. 20,000 horses a year are removed. All fertility control is used, including permanent, and the NGOs step up and help pay for holding all of those excess horses that come off the range, perhaps could you get private companies to provide contributions with tax incentives, but I will tell you without the feel good solution, is not implemented within the next year, you will find there's no solution big enough or enough money that can be thrown at it to solve it without lethal options. I strongly encourage everyone to get on board to take this opportunity and get it taken care of before we do have to implement the lethal options and it's coming quickly. So thank you.

Gary McEwen

Good afternoon chairman, my name is Gary McEwen. I'm first vice president of Nevada association of conservation districts, representing Nevada's association of conservation districts. Conservation districts in Nevada and throughout the nation are local governmental entities with statutory recognized authority and responsibility for locally led conservation across ownership boundaries and diverse partnerships. Yesterday Mr. Rittenhouse stated that looking ahead, BLM needs innovative ways to place more animals into private care and maximize use ever lower cost holding options, IE off-range pastures. Given the current congressional offerings of off-range holding costs consume approximately \$52 million or 60% of roughly \$80 million given to the Wild Horse and Burro Program fund. We believe that public/private partnership are an innovative way to place more animals into private care and maximize use of lower cost holding options. We assert that novel, public/private partnerships based on incentives could address much of the long-term care of excess horses removed from the range. We propose the advisory board take the public/private partnership concept highlighted below and pursue it. Excuse me. The basic premise of this public/private partnership is for Congress to create a green tax credits and charitable contributions that provide a funding mechanism to incentive ... other nongovernmental groups that already expressed an interest to BLM to assume the care of excess wild horse and burros. As has been stated at this meeting, caring for wild horse and burros is expensive and without governmental funding some of type, is a barrier to participation by these entities. A tax credit-type incentive could provide beneficial to all parties involved, while benefiting the natural resources we all cherish. The cost per animal and contractual basis for long-term care are already known and in place

throughout existing BLM agreements with private sector. Contractual conditions could guarantee proper care, additionally conditions for receipt of tax credit funding based upon live animal inventories would ensure maintenance of animals in inventory and eventually upon natural attrition and the need for subsidies. We believe a public/private partnership funded through a mechanism such as this is one of the innovative ways that Mr. Rittenhouse is looking for. We also recognize that neither the board nor the BLM can petition Congress for tax credits. However, the public and Congress can be urged to consider this idea, the board and BLM can be supportive of the concept and provide crucial components for development and implementation. Thank you.

Mary Counsel

Hi, everyone. My name is Mary Counsell and I'm with the American wild horse campaign. I'm here to speak out against the path forward. Although many trumpets support of the plan by HSUS and ASPCA it was developed without input from any groups actively engaged in managing wild horse and burros on the range. The majority of them oppose it. The roundups and removals of 130,000 wild horse and burros over ten years will reduce wild horse and burro herds to just 27,000 animals. That's the number that existed when Congress passed the Wild Horse and Burro Act to protect wild herds because they were fast disappearing from the American scene. The result of these massive removals were nearly triple the number of animals in holding with only a one-year ban on slaughter and no guarantee of lifetime care. Blatantly absent from the path forward, this advisory board's discussion is consideration of these facts. Assertions of over population are based entirely on AMLs that the NES called not transparent, unsupported by science and not amendable to change. Wild horses are dwarfed in number and habitat by private livestock who have a much greater negative impact on grazing land. Forage allocations for commercial livestock versus protected wild herds are grossly inequitable. According to the NES, roundups and removals fuel higher population growths are expensive and unproductive. According to the BLM's own gather reports, horses coming off the range have body condition scores of 3 to 4, which translates into good shape. Instead of this plan for extinction, the BLM should implement the following humane and sustainable solutions supporting by most Americans. Adjust the current AMLs to allow more viable horse herds and provide a fairer allocation on designated lands. Prioritize PZP over roundup and not wait until AML is reached because that's nothing to happen. When necessary, conduct incremental removals so as not to overwhelm adoption demand. Fund projects such as water restoration to improve range management and allow wild herds to better habitat and protect mountain lions that can control the wild horse populations. Thank you for your time.

Barbara Sunblade

The Bureau of Land Management's director said that wild horse was were the biggest problems facing the public lands in the west. How is remotely possible when they are not present on 88% of BLM-managed lands? The BLM director's wild horse fixation, species extinction, near constant wildfire and wide spread doubt are a few dangerous and William Perry Pendley might consider instead. Oh, and cattle. Recently, a back door plan or should I say deal was created primarily by lobbying agribusiness, cat and dog organizations and a sanctuary, what could possibly go wrong. The path forward claims it protects wild horses. It does not. No funding is specifically designated for fertility control oversight, and nothing that prevents spaying, et cetera. There are no restrictions on how the BLM can spend the money and so the agency is free to spend all of it in pursuit of its long standing goal to reduce wild horses to extinction levels. Radical population suppression plan, the outdated surgical colpotomy spay is rarely performed on domestic horses. The National Academy of Sciences explicitly advised the BLM not to use this surgical procedure on wild horses due to the risks involved. Performed on wild horses in a field setting, what could possibly go wrong? This agenda will run the program and our wild herds to collapse. This plan is entirely put in place to benefit the cattle industry. In addition to bragging rights, no-doubt the so-called advocating organizations are benefiting as well. In the dog and cat organizations think they can find enough homes in rescues for the horses and burros, they are sadly delusional. It's not viable on a large scale or appropriate. The so-called nonlethal bill language prohibits slaughter for a year, but the plans makes the horrific outcome, with tens of thousands more healthy horses. The unprecedented mass roundup and removal of healthy horses with helicopters, ripping them from their families and homes on our public lands incarcerated at taxpayer expense and no guarantee of funding for their safety or long-term care. With this plan all of our wild horses will end up on dinner plates. What could possibly go wrong? Pretty much everything. Thank you

Katie Kreska

Thank you. Members of the board thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today about what we see as the most critical components to any Wild Horse and Burro Program. My name is Katie Kraksa. The BLM's job as Bruce wisely noted yesterday is to protect and manage our nation's wild horse and burros. We want to help with that mandate which is

why as many of you know, my organization has been involved in efforts to find humane, sustainable, nonlethal solutions to wild horse and burro management. But to make these solutions possible, to continue to work across the aisle and find common ground, and most importantly to instill a sense of trust in the agency, we urge you to consider the following. The BLM must commit to a nonlethal approach, continuing to push for the tools to kill horses is deeply devices, creates distrust and erodes public support for this program. This snot and will never be part of a productive solution to this issue. The BLM must implement an effective fertility control program nationwide. We understand that this is not going to be easy, nor is it going to happen, overnight but the scientific community, and the public and Congress have been urging these readily available and highly effective methods with be implemented in a meaningful way. Removing animals from the range without simultaneously treating those out there is like bailing water from a leaking boat, rather than plugging the hole and the BLM must strictly adhere to their comprehensive animal welfare program which handling animals on and off the range. And I want to commend you for increasing equine adoptions. We look forward to continuing this pattern in the future. We are in a rare and fleeting moment. True bipartisan initiatives such as on polarizing issues are not often reached on Capitol Hill. One thing that everyone in this room can agree on is that this program is in dire need of a change. More of the same is not the answer, which is exactly what we will get if the divisiveness and the gridlock continues. This amounts to doing nothing. And doing nothing is a choice. For the sake of these iconic animals, we must use this opportunity to shift the management paradigm away from removals and warehouses to humane, anxiety management with fertility control. The tipping point we are at has spurred up likely stakeholders and interest groups to for once push in the same direction for a humane path forward. I encourage all of you and the agency to do the same. Thank you.

Joanna Grossman

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. My name is Dr. Joanna Grossman and I'm with the animal welfare institute, a national nonprofit founded in 1951. Given the limited time, I wanted to focus on the BLM's proposed ovariectomy via colpotomy experiments. The proposal released in May marks the BLM's fourth attempt to proceed with controversial mass surgical sterilization experiments and coupled with the welfare risks are enough to give even a casual observer of the situation and the project's troubling history serious because. Numerous lawmakers have expressly criticized the push to move forward, despite significant opposition and the national academy science and the fact that two major academic institutions terminated partnerships with BLM to oversee the experiments. I appreciate the chair's recognition during yesterday's discussions that Congress does not support, and the scaling up such a strategy. Indeed federal lawmakers have been clear in their desire to see the BLM pursue proven, humane and scientific supported fertility control projects with respect to the colpotomy experiments as recently as May, two weeks before the new EA was issued it would have an immunosuppression. The decision to backtrack on this strategy, in view of the scientific consensus is that they offer an appropriate management tool and one that's available now is disconcerting. Earlier this no, AWI commissioned a national survey through the Harris poll and found that 77% of Americans oppose the BLM conducting surgical sterilizations. Similarly, a letter to Secretary Bernhardt signed by dozens of veterinarians across the country outline evisceration and hemorrhage problems, and holding corrals and what are essentially non-sterile conditions with minimal post-operative care. As the veterans not only notes, not only is ovariectomy via colpotomy more risky it's more risky than the techniques in rare circumstances where a ovariectomy is clinical necessary. The board is aware of NES's recommendations and due to a number of concerns including lack of independent observation, as a methods to curb growth on the range. While we are understand that BLM's desired employ methods beyond vaccine we hope they look at intrauterine devices, and other options. For FY '20 the House and the Senate and interior appropriations committees have included direction. Such explicit direction from Congress should not be necessary, but it represents persistent problems. AWI notified the BLM of the practices during the Warm Springs roundup that appeared to violate the policy and during this roundup, 32 horses including one foal that died from capture shock. Numerous horses were euthanized for suspect rationales such as angular limb deformities, including club feet. Unfortunately the unique stretches caused by helicopter roundups can contribute to these unnecessary deaths and injuries. We urge the agency to rely on watt and bait trap gathers, when the decisions are made to remove wild horses from an HMA.

Linda Kemp

Hello, my name is Linda Camp and I'm a master watershed steward and I have a position that is a volunteer position with preserving American wildlife. Wild horses have economic value, as a fire preventative tool that has proven to be effective with science-supported evidence. Wild mustangs are ecological mowing machines, fast, moving native grazer, eating dry grass and bushes that start and spread wildfires. Captain Simpson, the wild force horse brigade expert has documented that even the – they even clear dead branches off the bottom of trees, helping to stop wildfire. He recommends using the horses BLM have in holding pens and you are gathered through roundups and releasing them into remote areas as herds.

Scientific evidence agrees with this. Restoring wild horse and burros' habitat that was taken from them will advance this use. Wildfires are very damaging to the watershed, which is quite obvious, causing destruction. Past the fire with mud slides, floods, scarce plant life, causing soil loss. Wild horses have shaped the west prior to the arrival of invasive livestock that have damaged the land and the environment. Losses in human life are unforgivable. So why are our wild horses not being used to help prevent these wildfires. Modern science establishes that horses regenerate the land contrary to what special interest groups and profit-seeking individuals are presenting or perhaps believe. Science has classified equine a keystone species, partly due to the free-roaming instincts, fast-moving digestive system that spreads seeds and fertilizes the land. The horses have upper and lower teeth that enables them to be the ideal native grazers for the environment. When horses are restricted by humans or held in two of a small of a habitat, they can do damage. The world has recognized the science but part of the United States have ignored the science-based facts. I urge you to ask BLM to use the science-based facts to improve our water sheds, our environment. Help with the tools for preventative wildfires and manage our wild horses. Thank you so much.

Dale McCloud

Good afternoon. I want to thank the advisory board to having this meeting. I though it's not an easy task to work on. I want to point out some things to you. Mr. Perryman, yesterday you said the phrase "do something different." Remember that? Do something different. I think you were talking to Mr. Rittenhouse at the time. So I'm going to suggest some different things for maybe we can all do. Number one, don't refer to the killing of healthy horses as euthanasia, because it's not. Euthanasia is putting a suffering animal down. Killing a horse or burro that is healthy and wants to live is slaughter or killing or maybe murder, but not it's not euthanasia. They do care how long they live because they wouldn't run from a wildfire or a helicopter or a wolf. All animals want to live. Do something different. So we're going to talk about gathers or roundups. Foal deaths because of a roundup or acute deaths because of a roundup are not acceptable. There's no reason for that. So foals and mares with foals or any horse, actually, maybe an older horse exhibiting difficulty keeping up with the herd should be allowed to fall behind. And if that means that horse goes back to freedom, so be it! If he can't be gathered at a little later date or maybe the next day. Acute deaths of horses during roundups are not acceptable. Broken necks, legs caught in the bars of a panel. And determination as far as what caused that and further preventative methods should be employed to stop that from happening again. I suggest we form a subcommittee of only wild horse and burro advocates to use the main committee as an educational tool for us. Educate us. Teach us the problems. But let's just the advocates of the horses and burros learn about it. Maybe we can make suggestions to you. Mr. Rittenhouse, you put on the board yesterday, looking ahead. You had number one, removals need to continue and likely increase. And since you also presented that 31 HMAs are at AML, we certainly don't have to gather them any longer from this date forward. We should be able to keep them and manage them correctly. I look forward to making sure that that happens. Two, you also put on the board, increase population birth suppression tools, I hope you designate one or two people to look into the latest and greatest suppression tools. You said look for ways to place more animals into private care. Our media girls talked yesterday, that's great, but how about newspaper ads. How about US today? How about television ads? Maximize the use you said of lowest cost holding options off range -- of off range pastures. Let's open up the solicitation period. Why can't it be six months or eight or all year long? Okay. Allow some states that maybe aren't in the west -- maybe they have 1,000 acres in Pennsylvania. And get this book! Everybody. "Our Lands" by Christopher Ketchum.

Leah Biondo

Mr. Chairman, please excuse my laptop here. I haven't gotten my eight hours in today. Good afternoon, my name is Leah Biando providing testimony on behalf of the society for range management. Of the only 26 policy positions that we have founded since its founding in 1948, two of those deal with the management of wild horse and burros. The society believes in the practice of multiple use values on rangelands while maintaining basic soil, water and vegetation resources. The society supports use of wild horse and burros in accordance with the wild horse and burro of 1971 and in the numbers that they existed in when the law was passed. It specifies management to provide a thriving ecological balance and we interpret that to mean that long-term sustainability and productivity must be the primary consideration in devising policy for management purposes on rangelands, including the establishment of proper numbers and management levels for wild horse and burros. Rangeland health standards and guidelines are equally appropriate for all herbivores. Wild horse and burro populations increase rapidly and their numbers expand beyond herd management areas and exceed ecological carrying capacity, unless the excess animals are regularly removed. Overstocking of horses results in deterioration of vegetation, soils and water sheds and leaves the potential for invasive species. Serious conflict with wildlife and other domestic uses have resulted. We support changes in laws, policies and administration to effectively and economically manage wild horse and burros and reduce conflicts with other uses and maintain long-term sustainability of rangeland

resources. To that end, we recently signed on in support of a collaborative four-pronged approach to wild horse and burro management which I'm sure we will hear more about later. It will combine increased gathers and increased contraceptives and adoptions and private land donors to coordinate care. However, we are concerned with the last portion and also concerned with the lack of accountability. According to the BLM's 2018 report to Congress, the agency contracts with 30 private landowners, located primarily Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma to handle the long-term care and maintenance of over 35,000 horses, unfortunately the tax taxpayer has no assurance that the private land supporting these 35,000 horses under sound ecological status. We believe that the above section of the act should be amended to include the sentiment that excess animals should be contributed to a private landowner in an owe could logical region with stocking rates and rangeland health conditions accredited by a certified range management. This third-pert approval by a CPRM would mean there are sound management practices and are not degrading the productive status of wild horse and burros. Your role as advisory board members ensures our range LAN resources. Thank you for your time today.

Keisha Sublecheck

Good afternoon, my name is Keisha Sublecheck an on behalf of the Humane Society of the United States, we appreciate the opportunity to address the advisory board. First, and foremost, we applaud the BLM for achieving record numbers of adoption this past year. While adoptions are vital piece of the puzzles as others have pointed out, we are not going to adopt our way out of the problem. Heil the HSUS and the HLSA, determine different on range solutions for the management of wild horse and burro what urge the BLM to use the fertility till control tools it currently has available like PZP, PZP-22 and GonaCon, and slaughter and lethal methods will not be allowed by the American public, nor will the use of surgical sterilization techniques that have not been proven to be safe, humane, logistically feasible or economically viable as a management option for wild horse and burros. As BLM reported, in FY '19, BLM only treated 800 mares on 16HMAs. There's no way that 80 to 90% of the mares were treated on any of those HMAs would be necessary to curb population growth. The BLM needs to start implementing those tools in a more holistic and effective way on range while researching additional humane fertility control methods. The HSUS is partnering with Purdue University to develop a longer lasting easier to administer fertility control vaccine that's safe and humane. We look forward to sharing that research with the agency and this board. The HSUS and HSLF are committed to protecting wild horse and burros. We will continue to work with the members in both chambers of Congress and with the Bureau of Land Management that the BLM engages all interested stakeholders in the process of implementing the strategy and that additional strategies are pursued to allow for a path forward. Thank you.

Penny Jackson

I'm Penny Jackson. I'm here from the beautiful state of Florida, where as you may know, we have many formerly wild BLM horses. And some of the best trainers and rescuers. We must preserve the last of our wild lands and wild creatures so they are not lost forever. We need to uphold the wild horse protection act. This must be the priority of the board, the BLM and other agencies involved. Wild horses are not a threat to public lands. This board should be advising the BLM on how to best protect and manage, including stop the aggressive increased roundups. Stop using overpopulation as rationalization for the roundups. Wild mare sterilization is not a viable or credible option. The public will not accept it. Scientific assessment and the genetics of remaining wild horses and on carrying capacity of the HMAs, also should be enacted and a moratorium on roundups until that is complete. Such AMLs on science not arbitrary figures below genetic viability. Realistically review the adoption process and we need alternatives for the holding pens. Look to those with successful models and practices. Some of them have been here today and yesterday. As I government brat, raised here in Washington, D.C., I was taught to respect our public servants and the role of our government and protecting our public interests. This board has the role of advising an important government agency on programs, charged with the protection of public lands and wild horse and burros. You have the ear of the public officials. I will was startled yesterday to hear the characterizations of our public, some of the terms that were used. It was noticeably clear in this meeting that most of the board members here feel wild horses in the form of livestock management problem. Wild horses and burros are not livestock. They are wildlife. Please consider a paradigm shift. Our public lands belong to the people, not to the cattle industry, mining interests, developers, more citizens like me are becoming aware. I think you are going to see more of our voices. We love sound science and data. We can find a better way. Thank you for hearing us. And thank you for this child from a long-time public service for all of your service, your tireless work and I wish to acknowledge and honor the wild horse and public lands advocates here for their longstanding commitment to preserve our wild horse and burros: And for efforts to educate the public.

Ethan Lane

My name is Ethan Lane. I'm the vice president of government affairs to the national cattlemen beef association. Currently I serve as chairman of the national horse and burro rangeland management coalition. Our coalition is comprised of 18 national organizations representing over 10 million Americans, including sportsmen, livestock producers, state and local governments, resource management specialists, professional and managers and others concerned with the management of the horses in a common sense and ecological sound way. Our members of the individuals most closely tied to the land. They live in these communities. Their livelihoods depend on them. Putting on my hat for a minute as the chief lobbyist for the cattle industry, I would be remiss if we didn't address of the recitations here today of the comparison between horse grazing and livestock grazing. The simple fact is. Livestock grazing is managed and it's dealt with on a yearly basis hand in hand with BLM and US forest service. None of those things are true in the horse debate. It's because of that misinformation and the unhelpful political debate that my group, as well as the national horse and burro rangeland management chose to engage in a broad conversation with advocate groups that otherwise we may not see eye to eye with. Over the course of the past few years that group has produced a document that you have heard much about today, and will continue to, the path forward for the management of wild horse and burros. This is a really critical moment to seize on an opportunity to take action on this issue that is supported by reasonable stakeholders, across the spectrum. There are always going to be those on both sides of this debate, that do not like the idea of compromise. But we simply cannot continue to pursue a course that avoids the obvious conclusions that we have to find common ground on this issue. Our proposal to repeat does include large gathers, targeted at densely populated HMAs, treatment of those gathered horses and burros with population growth suppressant tools and relocation of horses and burros in holding facilities and those taken off the range to large cost effective facilities funded through public/private partnerships and promotion of adoption in order to bring down those holding costs for those -- for those horses. None of the proposals actions that we're advocating are new authorities for the BLM. We're simply presenting a path forward that provides some support from a broad range of responsible stakeholders to manage these horses properly, because as I have said to this advisory board before, we are at an event horizon. These horses are at a point where the best available science tells us we will not have the tools to get control of this problem the next year or two to get control of this problem. So I appreciate your time and look forward to hearing the rest of this comment. Thank you.

Alex Kappert

Good afternoon again. Again, my name is Al Kappert, the new executive director of the Mustang Heritage Foundation. I'd like to reiterate what our mission is and share that with you guys. For those of you who don't know, the primary mission of our foundation is to create and promote programs and activities that provide information, and education about wild horse and burros, elevate their image and desirability and provide opportunities to become involved in the wild horse and burro experience. In addition to that, we worked to secure adequate numbers of caring homes for excess horses and burros. Working in partnership with the BLM, which we greatly appreciate. We had some great, great results, very pleased to report that in fiscal year 2019, that just closed out, we were able to place over 2,600 animals in long-term private care. Saving the taxpayers over \$131 million. So very, very, very happy with that. Having personally adopted a couple of horses and a burro, I know that these programs are great. It's been great for myself and my wife. And I really look forward to our aggressive goals for 2020. We have got about -- or our target, excuse me, is 3,150 placements. We have got a great demand, great avenues for getting horses adopted and burros. As long as we can continue getting the funding, we will continue to get them new homes. Thank you for your time and dedication.

Ann Souders

Hi, my name is Ann Souders and I'm from Paradise, Texas, first I want to address you as just plain old Ann from Paradise, Texas, who is a great adopter and must thank enthusiast. And someone said do something different. That's what I want to do right now. I want to thank each and every one of you for what you do, and how you help change lives, probably more than you even know. And as Ann with America's mustang and the Mustang Heritage Foundation, I have the blessing of seeing many people's lives changed through a wild horse. And it just doesn't get better than that. So I want to thank all of you. I want to thank Holle' for helping us get the trailer here. I want to tell you all how much I appreciate you coming through the trailer and seeing what we have done, and what you have done with all of your hard work and efforts, and making this available to people to be educated and to know, and I want to tell everybody thank you from the bottom of my heart, for all of you coming and being there and listening. It takes all of us agreeing to disagree over the love of the wild mustang to help them and so I'm speaking for Shikoba from Divide Basin and Hawk from salt wells and my great curly Comanche, because of you, they are finally free in Paradise, Texas, and I can turn them loose out there right now and they would run and buck and probably fart and toot and run around and play, but I guarantee you at 6:00, they're looking for momma! They are ready to go to Paradise. So as a girl who grew up watching my friend Flicka, I have

come full circle here today. Fighting you before as gathers, now I'm blessed by gathers, to have my mustangs free, and to have them at my house, being able to explain to people what we do, and why. Do I agree with everything? No. Am I here to help make it better? Absolutely! That's our goal. That's what we have to do. And to get to see people's lives changed every day, because of a wild horse, to see veterans come full circle, to see our youth in the makeovers grow up and graduate from college and be veterinarians, because of the hard work and effort they put through doing a makeover, and if have you not been to a makeover, shame on every one of you! And I will tell you there's an adoption Friday and Saturday in Lorton, Virginia, and I would highly recommend you be there because in the tool adopting horses and you should be too. So thank each and every one of you for coming and being there. You are always welcome in Paradise, Texas, to come and see my mustangs. I can talk mustang all day long.

Jackie Peterson

Good afternoon. My name is Jackie Peterson from Massachusetts. I'm a citizen of the United States and a fairly new wild horse advocates. I have become aware of the issues the wild horses are facing. I believe the issues are exaggerated by certain groups of people to meet personal agenda. This has created a perception that the wild horses are a problem. The solutions presented today are extreme and dire for all of our current wild horses. They are threatening the species longevity. Adoption programs may appease certain people but it does not appease me. I'm sorry for the person who spoke before me. They should be left alone and remain wild. What I keep asking myself is where is all the compassion in all of this? Where is the compassion to the wild horses. As their choice, I oppose solutions that involve any type of removal from the wild lands. I would prefer to see solutions that address the horse's need while preserving the species, the let's get rid of them or they are in the pay mentality has got to stop. Let me introduce you to cougher. She lives in the Reno, Nevada, and she's part of rocky's band. Jimmy is her grandson. Yes, copper is a grandmother. She has lived in our public lands all of her life. She has raised a family and is with them every day. It is all she knows. The land and their family. Today she's free. I'm here to be her voice and the voice of all wild horses who reside on our public lands who have come under threat, by certain administrations. I seek a compassionate approach which would steer towards alternate discussions and solutions of perceived issues and in an effort to connect with copper, from this room, I will ask all of you in this room to look at copper and look into her eyes. And for a moment, just please close your eyes and visualize, standing next to here, out in the range with her family, and you see the wild, the wind blowing through her hair. And the beautiful mane. Now look next to her and see her daughter and her grandson. And take a few deep breaths and keep breathing. May your breath become one, as you feel the warmth of her body, and let the rhythm of her breath and your breath become one and keep breathing. Be one with her. I ask again, where is the compassion? I ask that compassion be added to back to the wild horse management programs to ensure that the perpetuation of the species in the natural, wild, natural environment. Thank you.

Miriam Sullivan

Hello, everybody, my name is Marian Sullivan and I'm here representing myself and our wild, free, roaming horses and burros. I'm retired after working many years with private concerns and department of Army. I'm animal friendly, and I'm a horse owner myself. I'm very concerned about BLM's comments made on 10 July 2019 at the Boise, Idaho, meeting, BLM meeting. The discussion of international sales and adoptions made abroad to wit, a German private buyer would bought several of our wild horses and shipped them to Europe in crates. They stated that such sales adoptions are made without monitoring and/or oversight of any kind. Of our wild horses and burros. As many people may know, horses -- horse meat is very popular in Belgium, Italy, France, Germany, Japan, et cetera. And I'm sure that BLM is quite well aware of this fact also. Our wild horses sold adopted to European countries will most probably end up at slaughter houses. Such sales adoptions are sickening, horrific, stressful and cruel to these innocent dear souls at best. If these adoption sales don't work out, the European buyer cannot return the horse to BLM. I further believe that crating up and shipping any wild horse is uniquely cruel and animal abuse and seems like malfeasance to me on the part of BLM. And worse, there is no protection and/or oversight. All sales adoptions of our wild horse and burros including shipping abroad and/or outside of the USA should cease and desist and be investigated now. This activity is extremely troubling and shameful at best in my opinion, and as an American citizen and taxpayers, wild horse and burros should be left alone to live in peace on our US public parklands. It should be done now, and that cattle and sheep for-profit industry should never be a ratio of 100 cattle to sheep to one horse.

Bob Bolton

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement. My name is Bob Bolton a member of the Public Lands Foundation. I'm here representing our members who collectively have thousands of years of experience managing natural resources on

public lands. No one in the foundation receives pay for foundation work. It has taken many years to get to where we are today. Years of suffering on the part of wild horse and burros, years of seeing increases in the permanent loss of productivity many of our public land acres, years of negative impacts on small businesses, years of negative impacts on native wildlife and seemingly years in the future of having spent billions of dollars to warehouse horses and burros coming from herds that keep reproducing at rates that double their numbers every four to five years. It has taken years of work to come together to develop a proposal that if properly supported by the Congress, can bring an end to the disparate interests. Return to freedom, and the national horse and burro rangeland management coalition. The latter has within in a wide variety of interests such as the wildlife society the national cattleman beef's association and the national association of counties among others. The House and the Senate are understanding of the critical nature of the wild horse and burros numbers and are particularly understanding of the every and the wide-based support that went into the proposal to solve the problem without using lethal methods and instead using a broad-based program of gathers and fertility control, to achieve appropriate population levels. The House proposes an increase of \$6 million for what might be a pilot effort and the Senate proposes \$35 million. The public lands is a member of the afore mentioned coalition and worked to solve the wild horse and burro problem. That will not succeed with pilot levels of funding. \$6 million is inadequate to are gathering enough animals treating them for fertility control and housing excess numbers off range and for reapplication of fertility control where needed. Funding must be more like the \$35 million the Senate has proposed if there is to be sufficient progress. A significant investment at this time will avoid what is now an existing billion dollars commitment to warehouse horses from becoming a multibillion dollars commitment. We are asking this board to use its influence to urge the BLM and the Congress to the significant dollar investment in wild horse and burro management to correct the problems that define the BLM's horse and burro program. Thank you.

Ryan Yates

Again thank you all for what you do and I again appreciate all of your patience, and listening to the comments here today. American farm burrough federation appreciates being able to provide comments to the wild horse and burro board. Thank you for your time and dedication to finding relate solutions to the Wild Horse and Burro Program's challenges. Farm bureau is the largest farm organization, representing producers of virtually every commodity in every state of the nation, as well as Puerto Rico. We represent nearly 6 million families. It specifies wild horse and burros can occupy public lands and that they shall be in a thriving, natural ecological balance, in addition the BLM and the forest service are required by law to manage and balance multiple uses of public lands including wildlife needs timber production, energy development, recreation, et cetera. Horses and burro currently roaming the western landscape are not native to North America. These animals are descended from domesticated breeds brought to North America from Europe. They have a demonstrated ability to grow at 18 to 20% per year, wide spread and overabundant feral horses and burros wreak havoc on the rangeland by overgrazing native plants exacerbating the invasive species and outcompeting with ungulates. There's a large cost for the American public. Currently federal horse and burro populations are three times the appropriate management level as determined by the Bureau of Land Management. Without effective management actions, horse and burro populations will double within the next four to five years causing the rangeland ecosystem to further degrade. Horse and burro over population will continue to cause a disruption of fragile lands including elk, mule deer, big horn sheep, sage-grouse and others. Several stakeholder groups including animal rights groups, farm and large stock organizations including the farm bureau and local government entities have come together in a collaborative manner to recommend a bath forward proposal which includes a suite of recommended solutions to this crisis. This effort culminated for increased funding for the horse and burro program and is currently be considered. We would like to reduce federal horse and burro populations to AML and increase the fertility control managers to manage the on range population and eliminate off range populations currently held in costly holding facilities and thank you for your time.

BREAK

National Wild Horse & Burro Advisory Board Recommendations

Present: Ms. Susan McAlpine, Dr. Sue McDonnell, Dr. Barry Perryman, Ms. Celeste Carlisle, Mr. Fred Woehl, Jr., Dr. Tom Lenz, Mr. Jim French, Mr. Steven Yardley, Dr. Vernon Bleich

1. The Advisory Board recognizes the value of and supports ongoing research and funding of humane long-term fertility control and permanent sterilization as viable tools in our quest to achieve a thriving ecological balance by achieving and maintaining AML.

Approved. Eight in favor, one abstain, Ms. Carlisle

2. The Advisory Board supports and endorses the AAEP and AVMA policy statement dated October 28, 2019 and recommends that the BLM and USDA Forest Service implement the strategies therein to the extent allowed by law.

Approved. 7 in favor, 2 opposed, Dr. Perryman and Ms. Carlisle

3. The Advisory Board strongly encourages USDA Forest Service and BLM meet with relevant Tribal authorities and BIA where there are BLM/USDA Forest Service wild horse and burro management challenges.

Approved. Vote was unanimous.

4. The Advisory Board recommends that BLM continue to implement the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program as planned, including (1) filling the national CAWP coordinator position, and (2) implementing the training necessary to move forward with animal welfare audits for gathers and for all off-range care and handling. We also encourage expansion of the Program to include animals on-range as well as in off-range pastures.

Approved. Vote was unanimous.

5. The Advisory Board encourages BLM to continue and expand HMA population surveys and the collection of population baseline data.

Approved. Vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned.