

**Bureau of Land Management Responses to
National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Recommendations
from the October 2017 meeting in Grand Junction, Colorado**

Presented to the Advisory Board at the October 2018 Meeting in Salt Lake City

Recommendation #1: That the Wild Horse and Burro (WHB) Advisory Board have their next meeting in Washington DC and present their most recent recommendations, including those presented in September 2016, to agency officials. Tentatively to be scheduled early in the calendar year, but before the middle of March 2018. Motion carried 7-0.

BLM Response: The BLM seeks Board input on identifying future meeting locations and dates. The BLM considers the Board's input to ensure that future meeting dates and locations maximize the attendance of WHB Advisory Board members, senior BLM management and staff, stakeholders and public while still being cost effective. The BLM considered having a spring 2018 meeting in Washington DC but selected Salt Lake City Utah for reasons of cost and access to the field. This meeting was cancelled due to not meeting the 30-day meeting notice requirement.

Recommendation #2: Phase out long-term holding over the next 3 years and apply that budget to on-range management and adoptions. Motion carried 6-1

BLM Response: The BLM does not have the capacity to implement this recommendation since it would require the BLM sell or euthanize the approximately 35,000 animals currently in long-term holding over the next three years. Refer to the BLM's response to the Board's Recommendation #1 from the September 2016 Elko advisory board meeting.

Recommendation #3: Create funding mechanisms to maximize adoptions and or sales, especially through successful programs, and to include international adoptions and or sales. Motion carried 6-1.

BLM Response: The BLM continues seeking innovative and creative ways to increase private care placement through adoptions and sales. For example, the BLM has developed an Adoption Incentive Program that provides \$500 to adopters at time of adoption and \$500 to adopters at time of titling to help defray their costs for humane care of the animal.

The BLM received authority from Congress to transfer animals to Federal, state, and local government agencies for use as work animals. The BLM has developed policy (BLM Instruction Memorandum 2018-052) and began communication and outreach efforts. No authority at this time exists to directly transfer wild horses and burros to private, non-government entities nor outside of the country.

An international program is being considered as well to place animals into other countries for the purposes of humanitarian aid or economic development.

Recommendation #4: Increase WHB funding for reversible fertility control by \$3M in FY 2019. Motion carried 6-1.

BLM Response: The BLM is currently partnering with several research institutions to support new research into additional fertility control methods. Some of these methods show promise but have not been tested on horses on the range. BLM continues to use, and hopefully expand reversible fertility control methods (PZP and GonaCon vaccines) if it can be effectively and efficiently administered, to reduce removals and achieve and maintain AML. Reversible fertility control does have limited applicability such that it works best when HMA's are within AML and the animals are easily approached for darting.

Recommendation #5: BLM will immediately (within the next 3 years) follow the WHB Act and remove excess animals from the range to achieve AML. Further, BLM will use the help and assistance of all state and local agencies, organizations and individuals in achieving AML. Motion carries 6-1.

BLM Response: With on-range population levels at approximately 82,000 animals and having finite off-range holding space, removing large numbers of animals, especially over consecutive years, is currently not feasible. Unless, the BLM receives legislative support that increases placing animals into private/public care through adoptions, sales and transfers or increases future BLM budgets to support acquiring additional holding space, this recommendation cannot be achieved in the recommended time-frame.

In April 2018 the BLM, through the Secretary of the Interior submitted a report to Congress titled "Management Options for a Sustainable Wild Horse and Burro Program." This report outlined four options to move the program towards achieving and maintaining the appropriate management levels across the program. These management options rely heavily on achieving AML quickly which included developing partnerships with our stakeholders and public.

Recommendation #6: Maintain AML by using fertility control to slow population growth at levels where removals equal the adoption demand. Motion carries 6-1.

BLM Response: After AML is achieved in any one particular HMA or HMA complex, temporary and/or permanent fertility control can be effectively and efficiently administered, to reduce future removals and help maintain AML. With most HMAs or HMA complexes well above their AML, though, it will take many years using only fertility control to reach AML. Permanent and temporary fertility control alone will also not be able to achieve AML at a national level.

Recommendation #7: Adjust AML where appropriate. Motion 7-0.

BLM Response: After AML is achieved in any one particular HMA or HMA complex, BLM will assess the need to adjust the AML and make other multiple use decisions following in-depth analysis of rangeland monitoring and population inventory data collected over three to five years (in accordance with the procedures outlined in the BLM's 4700-1 Wild Horses and Burros Management Handbook) as part of long-term management and land use planning. The goal of any adjustment of AML for an HMA is to have sufficient water and forage to manage herds at the minimum feasible level to maintain their free roaming behavior.