



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

NATIONAL WILD  
HORSE & BURRO  
ADVISORY BOARD

June 29-30, 2023

Volume 1

Day 1 Meeting Minutes

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

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**Thursday, June 29, 2023**

**Welcome and Call to Order and Administrative Announcements**

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

Mr. Kuechle welcomed attendees to the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board meeting and introduced himself and his role as a neutral third-party facilitator. Mr. Kuechle reviewed the procedural elements for public participation, stating that the BLM recognizes the value of public input and appreciates public interest in expressing themselves regarding matters of concern. He explained the process for registering to provide public comment, noting that there would be three designated opportunities to do so. Mr. Kuechle reviewed the day's agenda.

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

Ms. Carlisle welcomed the Advisory Board members (Table 1), staff, Forest Service representatives, and all attending by live stream. She called the meeting to order. The members of the BLM, US Forest Service and Board then introduced themselves.

<b>TABLE 1 NATIONAL WILD HORSE &amp; BURRO ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS</b>	
<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Representing</b>
<b>Dr. Tom Lenz, DVM</b>	Veterinary Medicine
<b>Ms. Celeste Carlisle</b>	Wild Horse & Burro Advocacy
<b>Dr. Barry Perryman, PhD</b>	Public Interest (NRM Special Knowledge)
<b>Commissioner James French</b>	Natural Resource Management
<b>Dr. Ursula Bechert, DVM, PhD</b>	Wild Horse & Burro Research
<b>Commissioner Tammy Pearson</b>	Public Interest (Behavior Specialist)

**Welcome Remarks**

***Mr. Brian St George, Acting Assistant Director, BLM***

Mr. St George: Good morning, everyone. My name is Brian St George I'm acting as the assistant Director for BLM's directorate-of -planning and resources. Did I get that right? I almost think I missed that. I said it in an odd way. I also serve as the designated federal official. I want to thank the folks that are supporting the meeting today. Really appreciate the hard work that they're putting in. I'm very glad to be here and to meet all of you. If you were here yesterday, you will know that this is my first term as Designated Federal Officer. I'm not even sure what all my responsibilities are supposed to be in that. Thank you for the grace that you all offered me coming up to speed. This is a really important opportunity for the BLM to engage with its partners in the Forest Service and with all of you on the board.

I want to thank each of you for your time and those of you who have joined us as well. You're taking time-out of your busy lives. I recognize that. You're making professional sacrifice perhaps to be here and I appreciate the effort you're making to address this pressing issue and facing the protection and management of Wild Horse & Burros. At breakfast this morning, a few of us had a contest over who is going to which outdoor store here in the Reno area.

A competition between our favorite outdoor store. While it was a good-natured joke, I think it's actually revealing of something important, the shared passion we all have for the outdoors and our public spaces. It's values and resources, not the least of which is Wild Horses & Burros. I know, you're serving particularly the board members, in a voluntary capacity. I want you to know how grateful we are for your involvement and interest in this important topic. This meeting comes at a pivotal time for us to ensure that we can deliver on our promise of healthy herds on healthy lands. There are many challenges facing public lands in the west. We're all very familiar with them. So it's really a pivotal moment as much of the American West is experiencing extreme drought. And we know that those conditions, we expect those conditions to worsen as we press deeper into the summer. Many places on public lands are already experiencing water shortages, reduced forage, and increase in wildfire activity, which will continue to exacerbate the challenges we're facing. And the animals we care about...Wild horses and burro burros. We share a concern with many of the public in attendance and many of you here on the board around the welfare of these animals that are in our care both in and off the range. The BLM takes seriously that obligation. I know we'll have some continued discussion around how we execute on that obligation to ensure the comprehensive care of those animals in our charge.

As a matter of both fact and law, the BLM is fully committed to that humane treatment and care of wild horses and burros on and off the range, including those placed in private care. We want to see this important resource persist on public

lands. And your help is critical in that. So I want to ensure that, as we continue through our discussions today, we're focused on what we have already discussed yesterday as some common sense solutions that we can agree upon and implement. That will help us achieve that thriving ecological balance on public lands. And our goal as always is to manage and protect healthy wild horses and burros on healthy public range lands and do that through a combination of management actions that will achieve that balance and achieve the important public engagement. Stakeholder Engagement that we're about to engage in today. I think with that I'll say thank you again to the teams that have helped prep us for today's meeting. I look forward to the discussion. Thank you, Celeste.

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

Ms. Waddell introduced herself and her staff and thanked members of the BLM team that are in the Wild Horse and Burro program as well as the technical team overseeing the audiovisual needs for the meeting.

Mr. St George recognized and thanked the team from BLM Nevada, he then handed off to the US. Forest Service representatives for introductory remarks.

***Mr. Charles Oliver, U.S. Forest Service***

Mr. Oliver: Thank you. Celeste. I just wanted to thank the BLM. They have the lead in this process. And there's an awful lot to it, as you can see. All the work that's been done to make this happen. So really thank you for taking the lead and doing the work you're doing and making it easy for us to come in and participate in this. Thanks for that. We have several of our folks participating in the meeting today. The Wild Horse & Burro program is difficult. And it takes a little bit of everybody from many parts of the organization for us to be able to keep our program on track and moving forward. I won't try to introduce everybody. There are several out there. There are a lot of folks participating today to understand better what the process is and how the committee works. And to hear some of the input we're getting from the public to help us understand the concerns. But I will introduce our team. Aside from myself, Director Jeff-- and assistant Director Eric Davis are participating with us here today. So, thank you. And briefly, would everybody else from the Forest Service stand up and be acknowledged please even though we're not introducing you directly. Some of these people have Wild Horse & Burro in their titles and some do not. But yeah, thank you all for being here.

Dr. Drotar then asked anyone else from the Forest Service to stand up and be acknowledged, she then thanked them.

**Welcome Remarks BLM Nevada**

***Garrett Swisher, Wild Horse Specialist, BLM Nevada State Office***

Mr. Swisher: Thank you. On behalf of BLM Nevada, thank you guys for coming. We appreciate you spending time here this week. It's appreciated to come out and see some of our lands where we're having issues with overpopulation and areas where we saw recovery from recent removal actions. On behalf of BLM Nevada, thank you for being here and welcome.

**Approval of Previous October 2022 Meeting Minutes**

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

Ms. Carlisle: We're going to go ahead and move into the first order of business which is the exciting approval of minutes from our October 2022 board meeting. Now we will go ahead and see if we have a motion to approve those minutes.  
Second

Ms. Carlisle: All right. All approved say aye.

Board Members: Aye

**Discussion: Responses to Recommendations from Previous October 2022 Meeting**

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

Ms. Carlisle: We are all aware that this is a cumbersome part of the meeting. The recommendations are available online. We're not going to read everything to you word for word. But we are going to go recommendation by recommendation just for the sake of if the board has any discussion points or questions about those responses. Give me a second, all right. Now, I do need to look at my notes. Our first recommendation last time around was centralization of the program question, emphasis on the need for long-term funding for the program. And asked that specific line item funding for the

Forest Service be considered. The response was that BLM is exploring this recommendation. And Forest Service is also interested in a shift. So, board, any questions or discussion points from that first recommendation? All right. I think we're all good there. Second part of that recommendation-- sorry. Second recommendation was to develop a tool in regards to reporting AIP issues and a 800 number does exist, and that the national information center that receives those calls does get that information to the appropriate field office and then a response on a case by case basis is considered or initiated. Forest Service's response is that they would consider development of a reporting system. Are there any questions from the board thus far? I would just, my question about this particular part is that, I think the public is very interested in maybe an additional step. We covered some of this yesterday. And I think that was good information to help us to craft how to move forward with that additional step. And I know that BLM is considering other options. And some of that input came from the public. I wanted to note that I don't think that issue is totally closed. And we're all good and we can move on. I think we're indicating that everyone is still trying to figure out what is the best way forward. And BLM is working on that. The second part of that is AIP specific. And the board recommending that the agencies use the stakeholder input and continue to address that issue. BLM's response is they are continuing to engage with the public. We had a conversation about it yesterday. Any comments about that portion? All right. Third recommendation was the importance of partnerships with the BLM and Forest Service to communicate with the adopters and review the processes and identify a person within BLM to support that initiative. BLM and Forest Service are both pursuing partnerships. Forest Service is engaged with university level talks where universities can assist with that. Any questions, comments about that? Holle'?

Ms. Waddell: Celeste, just something to add. This was really timely because we issued the notice of funding opportunity, looking for ways to renew and establish partnerships with organizations, universities, and others. One of the things that we had talked about was some type of program of some sort that establishes a knowledge base for adopters. And I'd hope that one of the organizations that submitted a proposal would be looking at that, how do they create an adopter list of some sort to share knowledge, community of adopters, I think it was called. And so that is something I think is still needed. We've had or heard from the BLM Eastern States at least, that they constantly have adopters that are looking for ways to connect. And so, they've established support groups which is awesome to share some information. So I'd encourage either past adopters and people interested in the adopting or current adopters to tap into those resources.

Ms. Carlisle: That is really excellent information. Thank you, Holle. We'll go ahead and move to number 4. That recommendation was BLM work with USGS to find which HMAs were helpful in the population modeling program. BLM response is they are working on that, actually a few workshops were hosted online for people to participate in learning about the population modeling program and there was an initial workshop at a conference to have users plug and chug through it, share their experience and reflect back to the team on what they did with the modeling or things to consider. So those things have happened and Forest Service is excited to begin to dig into it as well. Any questions about that... comments?

Dr. Drotar: And the developer of that modeling program actually, I met with him at a conference about a month ago. And he said that Forest Service had engaged more than anybody else. So, we have many of our forests that have been looking at that especially. We're in the process of developing territory plans and forest plans. It's been a useful tool for them. And they're trying to utilize all the tools. And that's one of them that's come up that they've been very engaged with.

Ms. Waddell: One other thing to add and point out to you all. BLM will be developing policy regarding the Pop Equus model that will be used as a planning tool. That's something we're hoping to get out the door over the next couple of months.

Ms. Carlisle: Fifth recommendation was for fertility control use with every gather operation and multi-year plans for individual HMAs or territories that considered fertility control use. BLM's response is that they have issued an IM, instruction memorandum which I'll have the BLM folks explain what that means. in terms of how their offices follow that information. And it did direct that all planning must include fertility control whether AML was reached or not, and Forest Service's response was the same. So, can you all explain what an instruction memorandum is, what that means, and then any response to that or questions.

Ms. Waddell: Absolutely, an instruction memorandum is policy and directs the field and staff on instruction within BLM within a certain task. It's informative and they are available to the public. So, you can go on BLM.gov. These IMs have been added to the electronic binder online. So, you can also see those associated with the board meeting. And we have a series that have been published this fiscal year.

Ms. Carlisle: Anything on that? All right. Give me a second, strangely my notes end at that point. And I need to double check and see if we have some more recommendations. If anyone else has that in front of them, that will be great. That was the last one? Okay. Then we are done with that. So, because we didn't read everything, word for word, we're ahead of schedule which is great.

Dr. Lenz: Um, I might have to go back to number 2 recommendation where you all stated that you had several workshops about the adoption incentive program. That there were recommendations from those workshops. Can you share some of those recommendations that came from your workshops?

Ms. Waddell: Okay. Yes, Dr. Lenz. I think we gave a little bit of a report out. And I'm going to ask Paul McGuire to come out or come up to the table. We went through some of the workshops in October at our last board meeting. I'll give highlights. We hosted a total of three of them if I remember correctly. In attendance we had members of the public, we had a facilitator, and we had several members or staff from BLM that also participated in the workshops. And we went through a series of dialogue which I thought was successful. We were able to talk about some of the statutory authorities and regulatory authorities regarding private care placement and adoptions specifically. We talked about title, compliance inspections, current processes that are in place for adopters and how they differ from the adoptions. And we took some of the feedback that came out of that workshop. In fact, we had our facilitators pull together a nice document that we were able to brief leadership about and provide recommendations on what we thought we would consider moving forward. Paul, anything to add?

Mr. McGuire: No, I think that's a good overview, Holle'. Yeah, there were several recommendations that came from those workshops. And we looked at all of that and kind of consolidated down to three or four. There were four, I think. I don't have them in front of me. Making quick notes. One of the key recommendations that came forward and was discussed at the last meeting was this idea of vouchers for vet care. For example, another one was allowing authorized officers a certain amount of discretion on who they may or may not adopt to or approve to adopt. And then possibly limiting the number of times that someone can participate in the AIP. Those were key ones considered. They're still being considered as we touched on the other day in looking at those, any of those recommendations we have to consider what impact that would have on the viability or appeal of the incentive program in terms of supporting adoption demand which is key for the reasons we discussed. So that's kind of an outline of what those recommendations were.

Dr. Perryman: Madam Chair, I have a question as well regarding this category number two here of our recommendations. One of my concerns, and I think certainly the board has been concerned about this over several iterations, and that is violations of the adoption regulation code requirements. And every year we get allegations, right, wrong, or indifferent, that all kinds of nefarious activities are going on with respect to the adoption incentive program. And we take that, I think, myself and the rest of the board in pastimes, we take those things seriously. And if they're credible instances, tips that are going on, they need to be investigated very quickly and very thoroughly. And so we heard some yesterday. We heard allegations yesterday. And allegations are allegations. But could you give us a little bit of an update on what your investigations discovered this past year with regard to the tips and allegations that were made with respect to these violations in the adoption incentive program?

Mr. St. George: Thank you, Dr. Perryman. Um, I want to be unequivocal that the BLM is aware and takes seriously any of these allegations. And at the same time, I think the agency recognizes that all aspects of the Wild Horse & Burro program can benefit from improvements, critical review and investigation into the facts including our private care placement and the adoption incentive program. So, we're aware of the allegations that certain titled animals were sold at commercial sale barns. And we have reviewed reports that other groups have produced. And simply put, we have found those allegations of mistreatment, illegal or improper activity to be unsubstantiated by the facts.

Dr. Perryman: Thank you for your candor.

Ms. Carlisle: I'm going to just chime in that I know that some of the frustration rests with not just the fact that animals may be titled rapidly. I think everybody understands that once an animal is titled, the BLM can't really do anything about it. Note though it's considered by law property. And that's hard for some of us to chew on and seems completely formal to others. That's always going to be the way it is. But I do think in the spirit of the adoption program, and I think the board talked about this. We don't need to belabor it. The board is also aware, and BLM is also aware that there's also a concern with the front end that the intention, spirit of adoption is that these animals are going to good homes. If someone's intent is to purchase that animal to essentially flip it, I think a lot of people would argue successfully that that's not a decent intent for an adoption program for America's wild mustangs or burros. I think that's where the hang up happens and we're continuing to work on that. BLM is continuing to work on that. I want to express especially to the public, I am aware of the frustration about how slow this seems to be happening. But it is happening. And I'll keep pushing. And I know others will. But certainly, we are aware and we are taking it seriously. I just don't want people to think, oh, good. That sounds good. We're going to brush that under the rug and move on. I want to extend that thought to folks and see if anyone else has something to say.

Mr. French: Madam Chair, thank you. I also wanted to ask for clarification on a question that has been leveled at me a number of times having to do with the availability of BLM staff for conducting compliance inspections. I know in northern Nevada there are folks that have never been inspected and have multiple wild horses in their possession. I know we spoke about this offline. And I wonder if you can share or identify that for us, Brian.

Mr. St George: I think we can. I'll go further on the points made both by Dr. Perryman and chairman Carlisle. And I'll turn to Holle' to help address your capacity question second if that's all right. Let me back up a little bit to this really important concern about animal welfare, the proper process of adoption and title. And indeed, our goal of finding good homes for animals. I'll go back to the third party we received. The reports chronicle in detail the domestic sale of titled animals. And that implies there's been an adoption process by which BLM honored its animal welfare by conducting the compliance check, ensuring the adopter has complied with the law, has proper intent to care for the animals in a humane way. That information essentially stops at the proper title of an animal which then conveys a private property right. And at that point, the animal is no longer protected by the wild and free-roaming horse and burro act. We have this important discussion of where BLM's authority begins and ends. And where BLM's responsibilities begin and end. And I think those things are different but complimentary. The reports we're looking at clearly indicate a chain of ownership where BLM no longer has authority. That is the animal was properly adopted, properly titled, and then sold as private property in a commercial barn. And BLM does not have authority over that sale if the adoption complied with law and that title complied with law, and the conveyance of ownership and private property right complies with the law. But I think to your point on our ability to conduct compliance and perhaps ongoing responsibility in addition to our legal authority should BLM be aware that an adopter received title, acted improperly or illegally, then the agency would have reason to find them in violation of the terms and conditions of title agreement and bar them from future adoptions. That is to us plain, simple, clear and we've acted on such situations. I think we can all acknowledge it is hard to assess somebody's intent. Right? But we do that. We have some mechanisms to attempt that. And that is in the adoption and compliance process. And Holle' maybe can touch ...or Paul can touch on the details. But as we are moving through the adoption process, we are investigating each and every adoption to ensure compliance. And Holle' if you want to pick up there, feel free. And moving through that process to ensure proper titling.

Ms. Waddell: Absolutely. Thank you, Brian. So there is a list of requirements obviously and standards when adopters are interested and they come to fill out applications. And Paul, I'll definitely hand it over to you to jump in and further explain in more detail. But there are a list of standards and requirements that our adopters are expected one to have even prior to adopting that animal. There's a list of terms and dos and don'ts and prohibited acts that adopters are certifying that they read and understand. And those are the expectations while caring for the animals under adoption. They have 12 months under adoption. I mentioned yesterday that adopters and BLM are in constant communication. If they have questions about what's going on, whether adopted through the adoption incentive program, they will be receiving a compliance inspection within six months of that adoption date. That could be physical or virtual. Obviously, the BLM official is going to kind of assess the situation if the animal doesn't look to be in good health, doesn't look like it's being taken care of, doesn't have the necessary water and feed and area for where it could exercise and walk. Then that's going to be taken very seriously. They have a conversation with the adopter and allow the adopter seven to ten days to make corrections.

And then they will do a second follow-up visit. Once the follow-up visit is taking place, the BLM official will then make an assessment whether or not this adoption should continue. They have the right to do that. And at any time, if there's a violation of the terms of adoption or prohibitive acts, we will repossess the animal. We take these things seriously. If we receive a phone call or information leading to a fact that an untitled animal is not taken care of, we take action immediately one hundred percent of the time.

Mr. McGuire: Earlier in her career, Holle' was a compliance inspector and did work on the ground. She knows it in and out. One thing I would highlight is that when these compliance inspections are done, the inspector goes out not with the intent of slapping a violation on the adopter. But it's to work with that adopter for the benefit of that animal. If the animal's thin, there will be recommendation about improving the feeding regimen and the timeframe to see improvement. If there's an egregious violation, there's not a lot of flexibility. But our intent is to work with the folks for the benefit of the animal. To your question, Mr. French, about capacity, it's certainly the case that offices have vacancies from time to time. And the HR process with the federal government, I don't need to tell you, is slow as molasses. It takes time to backfill. There may be occasions where you have vacancies. To the extent that the capacity permits us, we seek to fulfill our commitment to ensure compliance on all animals according to our policies.

Ms. Waddell: I was going to add onto that. We do also have compliance inspectors that are volunteers and we have training available where we train those volunteers to conduct compliance inspections and work with the BLM authorized official as well.

Mr. St. George: Thanks, Holle' and Paul. I was going to circle back to Mr. French, Dr. Perryman and chair Carlisle. Did we answer your questions?

Mr. French: I have a follow-up with Holle' on that. If there is a group of folks who have an interest in filling a gap, for instance for compliance inspections as a volunteer, how do they go about presenting themselves? At a local office?

Ms. Waddell: When Dorothea Boothe was here on staff, permanently before she retired, she was working on a volunteer program, more specifically for the Wild Horse & Burro program. Interested public can go to the BLM directly. There's a volunteer.gov, I believe that's still the website. We'll check that website so Dorothea, Serena or Jason, figure out if it's volunteer.gov. I know there are public opportunities that you can go online to see and there are specific volunteer descriptions. One of them being the BLM Eastern States comes to mind, looking for volunteer inspection officers for the Wild Horse & Burro program. And they have a great compliance program. They have many volunteers. They cover 31 states... a big area. So, they definitely offer training and keep a list of volunteers that they tap into for assistance and compliance inspections. Also, in the past we've utilized USDA veterinarians to assist in compliance inspections. Obviously, they've been busy over the years, but we have also used them.

Dr. Lenz: Also, every county and every city and every state has humane regulations and statutes. So even before or after these animals are titled, there's the option of contacting the local authorities, if you've noticed animals being starved or mistreated. There are plenty of laws in place to protect them outside of BLM. Do we ever see that happen?

Ms. Waddell: So it's interesting that you ask that question. It's one of the questions on the adoption application whether or not you've ever been convicted of inhumane treatment of an animal. It doesn't say horse, it says animal. Because you wouldn't be eligible to adopt a wild horse or burro. I encourage people where you have any type of information on mistreatment of a wild horse or burro, if you can you, find out if that animal is titled and understand the BLM's authority ends at the time of title. You can contact your local law enforcement. They will definitely take action.

Mr. Brian St George: I think we'd need to seek a little bit more input from our attorney advisors of how local ordinance and law around the care of privately owned animals intersects with adopted animals that still have the federal protection of the act. That's a little bit of gray space for me. The question of status of the animal adopted and still under the protection of the act or properly titled is a privately owned animal that would be subject to local law and ordinance.

Dr. Lenz: Right. I mean, part of my point is even after the animal's done gone, there's protection that they can utilize. It's not like they're thrown to the wind.



Dr. Perryman: I have an additional question, Madam Chair. If you take time and explain adoption is a process -- it's something done at this moment in time, but the adoption is a process. If you can explain that very briefly. I think it might clear up confusion as well because people get confused on what is adoption and what do you mean titling?

Mr. St George: Sure, we can rely on Paul to carry us through that. And your point is well made. We're using very precise language. And again, so I want to go back to the idea of, well, one, the words and the terms matter. The difference, the distinction between our authorities and our responsibilities also matter. I think what we're all saying, in all of this conversation, we still have a shared responsibility to ensure that we're executing properly on our authorities. Paul, could you talk through our authorities and the process of adoption leading to title?

Mr. McGuire: So, it is a process that begins when adopter places an interest and submits an application which is reviewed. There are criteria they have to meet based on two main things. Make sure they have adequate facilities to care for the animal. There are specific facilities we require they have, space, for example, fences that are high enough, that sort of thing. The second component is that they have adequate care and feed plan in place. So how do you plan to take care of this animal? You have a source for the right kind much feed and so forth. Those are outlined in the adoption application. On that basis the person is approved or disapproved. If they can adopt, they can adopt up to four animals at a time and keep them in care for a minimum of one year. I stress minimum of one year. The point is they cannot apply for title until after one year. Or sometime after that. And however long that takes, it remains in BLM's jurisdiction. If someone didn't submit the title application for two years, that animal has remained under federal protection that whole time. After one year, the length of time Congress established in the act, minimum length of BLM's responsibility, we talk about providing a good home. We want to provide good homes. Ideally, we would want them to be good permanent homes. Congress set a timeline. They said BLM's responsibility is one year or until title is issued after that. That's the process. And you're right. Once title happens that is a bright line. That's pretty clear in the act. At least in terms of how we read that, but that's where BLM's jurisdictional responsibility for that animal ends. And to the point, Dr. Lenz you're right. After an animal is titled, so if you were involved in abuse or neglect those would be the laws, you'd be subject to.

Dr. Drotar: The Forest Service does not out of our facility, we don't have a similar program to what the BLM's AIP is. However, otherwise, we're very much the same. The law is the same for both agencies. And I'd like to, you know, back up some of what BLM is saying as well as what we do. You still have to apply for the -- the person has to apply for the title. And after a year, in defense of people, it's their private property. And we have some very, very good repeat adopters that will train a horse and then provide, sell it to another home, another good home and then they're good adopters. We know they take good care of their animals. Just because it's not there for the rest of their lives, that's not what the horse world deals with. The horse world is fluid. Horses are the most, believe it or not, most exported animal in the country. And so that is a domestic horses as well as wild horses. After a year, that somebody doesn't keep it permanently in their home does not mean that they're a bad adopter or bad person. One other thing that, since we don't have as many boots on the ground that BLM does, Dr. Lenz, we do tap into the community out there that looks at animal welfare. Some inspections are done with close communication, pictures and everything else with animal care people that are out there and individual places, individual veterinarians, other professionals. We find that works well and is effective. We have certain areas, for example, the Devil's Garden horses are well known, so neighbors will see, oh, this person got a nice horse. Or they were able to sell this horse for a nice ranch horse. And we get other people coming to adopt the same horse. So we get repeats with those same professionals. And I think that works very adequately because, as you pointed out, even after they're titled, that doesn't mean that the welfare laws that exist are ignored. In my career I've dealt with many complaints as a private practitioner. Just because they're wild animals-- doesn't mean care is neglected. We have animals where people, the death of an owner, years later they're titled animal. We will assist them in finding another home. The professionals that work in these agencies care and go above and beyond.

Mr. Carlise: All right. Thanks, you guys, for that discussion. Um, are there any more wrap arounds to any of the recommendations? Or do we have more on that particular one? Before I move on. Bryant, do we need five minutes before... or are we ready?

## Agency Presentations to the Board

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

TABLE 2 PRESENTATIONS TO ADVISORY BOARD	
Presentation	Presenter
BLM Nevada Wild Horse and Burro Program Overview	Mr. Garrett Swisher, BLM
Forest Service Program Update	Dr. Teresa Drotar, USFS
BLM Budget Update for FY 2023	Ms. Holle' Waddell, BLM

### BLM Nevada Wild Horse and Burro Program Overview

#### *Garrett Swisher, Wild Horse Specialist, BLM*

All right. Thank you very much. My name is Garrett Swisher. I am the Acting Wild Horse & Burro Program Lead for BLM Nevada. Again welcome, everybody. This is just a general overview of our Nevada program. Our mission for the BLM is to manage public lands to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of future generations. I want to overemphasize the future generations there. In our Nevada Wild Horse & Burro program we manage more than half of the nation's wild horses here in our state. We have a large majority of public land here. We have 83 herd management areas and 77 herd areas. Comes out to 14 million, over 14 million acres of BLM lapped with 1.6 million acres of private land mixed in the areas. As of March 1, of this year, our current population is 12,811-- that's our AML. As of March 1, of this year, we are looking at 44,786, horses and 4482 burros. So in fiscal year 22, last year, this is our removal operations. The Owyhee complex, fall 2021 we captured 934, removed 531 and treated 162 mares with PCP22 and released them back. In the Fox and Lake Range, winter of 2021 we captured 82, removed 19 and treated 37 mares and returned them to the range as well. Nevada wild horse range winter of 2021-2022 captured 729, removed 523 and treatment 133 mares and returned them back. Continuing on for fiscal year 22, in the Pancake complex we captured 2,054, removed 2,004, and treated 18 mares and returned them back. In the Desatoya Range, we captured 200, removed 154. Treatment 38. In the Buffalo Hills summer 2022, we captured 380, removed 353, and treated 28 mares. In the Triple B complex, we last captured 1897, removed 1849 and that was a strait removal operation. In the Blue Wing complex which we toured on Tuesday, we captured 1022, removed 1008 and that was both burros and horses. In the Calico complex, we captured 863 horses removed 798 and treated 39 and returned them to the range. So as a total for FY'22, we gathered 9 HMAs or complexes. We captured 8,161 animals, removed 7,239, and treated of 455 areas with fertility control and returned them to the range. So FY'22, our adoption totals for the state 115 animals were adopted within Nevada events and facilities. 2,531 animals adopted from Nevada HMAs and HAs. 10 animals were transferred to other agencies such as Forest Service, or U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Cavalry, or other state agencies. We have horses in the New York Police Department. And the Washoe county. 698 animals were offered to the online corral. 356 were adopted. Our proposed gathers for this FY'23 which will start this Sunday, Antelope complex, we plan to capture 3107 and remove all of them. In the Reveille complex, capture 129, remove 76 and treat 27 mares and return to the range. Desatoya captured 80, removed 3 and treated 40 mares. Calico and Surprise complexes which will go into the California BLM as well, plan to capture 1255, remove 784 and treat 217 mares. In the BLM Nevada Wild Horse range, the plan is to capture 350, remove 138 and treat 106 mares on that one. As of now for FY 23, on our adoption side of things we have adopted 53 animals within our events and facilities. 1122 animals adopted that came from Nevada HMAs and HAs. Transferred 8 to other agencies and 133 offered to online corral and anticipating to add 500 by the end of the fiscal year. Census, this is one of our monitoring widgets that we go through. We try to perform census on a third of our HMAs and HAs every fiscal year. So just to give you guys an idea of how tough that can be, you can see this picture here, sometimes it's very hard to find those horses. So our counts are as accurate as possible. However, we do miss animals. It's definitely happening...it happens. We're not going to count 100% of the animals on the range. That's why we utilize USGS teams to analyze our results from the direct counts and come out with final information. We try to perform utilization on half of our HMAs and HAs every year. As you can see here, on the left side we call those utilization cages. We move those every time we monitor to give us what it should look like. You can see behind that, the impacts from the horses' burros, livestock, and uses of the range lands. We have two fertility control research programs going on at the moment. The first one is identification of appropriate single dose long lasting, and related efficacy of growth factor vaccine. This is testing for adjuvants. We're looking at which vaccine causes the highest immune response in nonpregnant mares. There are four adjuvants, we're measuring the antibody level, GDF9 and MP15 proteins cause. And monthly blood samples for one year.

Monitoring monthly antibody levels over three years. Monitor progesterone and antimalarian hormone levels, monthly ultrasound examinations on ovaries and uterus. The health of any foals born in the study would be monitored for four months or physical weaned. This is a total of 84 mares, 48 mares for one year, study of immune response to the 4 adjuvant types and then 36 mares for a three-year study of efficacy and untreated controls. Second study is improvement spay back vaccine efficacy and duration by injection site. We're testing contraceptive levels, pregnancy rate, immune response, hormone response and duration of spay back effects from vaccine administered in different locations. We're looking at spay back in the neck and spay back in the rump, also with saline controls. So, they're going to test blood samples biweekly from June through October of each year. And then they're going to assess the antibody levels, progesterone antimalaria hormone, conotropine, and estrogen. Mares are open in one year of trial. Fertility trials begin after the mares have a immune response and then after any foals are weaned. We have four adoption and preparation holding facilities here in Nevada. The Palomino Valley north of here, Indian Lakes facility, Fallon, a northern Nevada correctional center, and the Winnemucca facility outside of Paradise Valley. Any questions?

Ms. Waddell: I was going to ask Garrett to clarify, the studies... was the result for the request of proposals that the program put out 18 months ago? I wanted you to hit on that they are looking for the single dose. Because I think that came up yesterday in conversation. That was one of the efforts, if you wanted to say any more about that.

Mr. Swisher: Yeah, we're trying to find the best, longest lasting single-dose vaccine. That is our goal on these two studies. Thank you, Holle'.

Ms. Pearson: So, is there any indication on a preference?

Mr. Swisher: Not yet. One started May 31, one June 1. It's right on its infancy.

Mr. French: One quick question. You mentioned that you believe there was 115 animals adopted from organizations, I guess, as oppose to adoptions that came through the program directly. Is that-- the organizations, is that the prison training program? Or is there other programs that are out there right now that are operating within Nevada for that?

Mr. Swisher: I think the prison is the only one I know of. But Holle' or Brian, do you guys know of anything other than that?

Ms. Carlisle: I have a question about the fertility control application alongside the gathers. In the EA for the gathering, fertility control treatments, it blanket states fertility control will be used. Where is the planning or what do you all do office by office for an initial, primer, booster depending on the vaccine used per one, to three to four years? Is there a front loaded planning effort for that where the offices are tied to a schedule of we did this, this year and released them. But the success of the fertility control programs relies on the follow-up from then forward. Or are they just efforts to at least for the next year, you know they're potentially not going to have foals?

Mr. Swisher: So, we're kind of at the mercy of the national gather schedule as far as that goes. The Pine Nut HMA, the one HMA that has a darting program that is continuing on annual application in fertility control. Other than that, we're at the mercy of the national gather schedule.

Ms. Carlisle: I was going to ask, does the national gather schedule take that into consideration?

Ms. Waddell: Yes, I was going to ask Scott, too. He can't wait to get on the mic. Do you have a mic back there, Scott?

Mr. Fluer: We do, yes. Yeah, so like this year's 2023 gather schedule we went ahead and took that into consideration like I discussed yesterday in Nevada like the herd management area, they have been aggressively treating in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, four consecutive years in a row to address reproduction. We're trying to focus on maintaining those HMAs that are at or just over AML, at AML. We're trying to keep that fertility control going to keep those animals in their appropriate management level. So, we are taking that into consideration as well as trying to look at the larger areas, like Garrett mentioned the Antelope complex which is the largest overpopulated HMA in the bureau and trying to focus our efforts to whittling away from that and get them down to AML.

Dr. Lenz: Scott, when you vaccinate those horses, are you identifying the horses or microchipping them or anything?

Mr. Fluer: They are, yes. They're micro chipped.

Dr. Lenz: Good.

Ms. Carlisle: I wanted to say that fertility control programmatically is not easy. And I know this is sort of relatively new, not totally new, but relatively new territory for the BLM and Forest Service as well to begin trying to figure out how to do this programmatically, doing it one area by one area with partner volunteer groups is amazing. But it's part of the effort. And so, I just want to acknowledge that I know that figuring all this stuff out and really trying to get it going is actually complex. And none of you all signed up for this job, saying there will be fertility control jobs. So, there's a learning curve as well. It's great to hear about you all considering, you know, projecting that out in terms of the gather schedule and also you've hired a fertility control coordinator. I know you have held training within the staff to introduce the idea of fertility control and different types and how they're applied. That's new. So, I'm just super excited to hear that we're beginning down that path.

Dr Lenz: One more question. You know, the emerging technology for identifications in cattle as well as horses is facial recognition. Have you all looked into that at all? Because it's something that's gonna be coming down the pipeline soon.

Mr. St. George: I'm looking back to Scott. I can't think that we have. You know, one of the -- one of the interesting pieces of technology that we have looked at and considered is remote delivery of vaccines. But I can't say we've looked at recognition software. Right, Scott?

Mr. Fluer: Not to my knowledge. But we are looking at it differently like you say, Brian... different avenues of delivery. And you know, that's a challenge, right? We're talking wild animals. And every herd is a little bit different depending on the HMA and landscape. As you saw on the tour Tuesday, a large landscape, 2 million acres and even though we didn't see a lot of horses, I mean, just some really topographically challenging country.

Dr. Lenz: That will be interesting to see how that works out. But there's a lot of interest in domestic animals using facial recognition. Something to be aware of and perhaps start looking into a bit. Maybe a few years before that's available. But that's the direction that folks are heading.

Mr. Fluer: And I think as Holle' and Brian mentioned yesterday, we'll be adding a fertility control coordinator to the team. And that person's role will be to focus on starting new and innovative efforts in the field, assisting the field officers, the District Offices and start up programs, if you will. And trying different approaches. So, we're excited to get that position filled and that process started.

Mr. French: Thanks, Madam Chair. Scott, this is-- I wonder if you can answer a question having to do with how we prioritize management on HAs as oppose to HMAs. I know they seem to be kind of out there. Management side of things is interested around HMAs. How is the policy?

Mr. Fluer: That's up to each office. But, you know, based on each state, I should say based on their objectives and what they need to focus on, but most HAs are simply not adequate for carrying wild horses or missing one of the components of the habitat. Might be land pattern, might be lack of forage and lack of water. And a lot of the herd areas are focused on being managed at zero population.

Mr. French: So, the presence of private lands and holdings within those, does it have bearing in terms of how we manage those? The blue wing, for instance, in the-- that was an area that this-- there were serious contention with regard to private lands and holds.

Mr. Fluer: That's probably one of our biggest challenges, Mr. French. The checkerboard in a few states. Every section with private land and the challenge of wild horse and burro management in those areas. Like we see in the blue, those animals when they get in the HA, they're gathered and removed.

Mr. St. George: I wanted to do something maybe a little unorthodox. I'd like to ask Garrett a question. Garrett, yesterday in the subcommittee meetings, the board had a really robust conversation and some challenging questions about fertility control and how we're, the calculus we use in factoring in fertility control. We talked mostly at the national level and planning level. I wonder if you can take a second or two and help the board understand at a state level or local planning level how you're thinking about integrating fertility control in gather, removal and hold operations?

Mr. Swisher: Sure. So, the main purpose of fertility control obviously is to limit the foal rate on the ground, to slow the population growth rate so we don't have to come back, like Scott mentioned, four years in a row to achieve AML. We're trying to push it out. We have areas that haven't been gathered in several years to where we're way overpopulated. In those areas we're going to try to remove animals rather than set up a catch, treat and release program there. We want to work our way down towards AML before we implement those in areas where we're close to those are a great place to implement those programs. We can extend the gather cycle out. Not only does it extend, or help our budgetary process but also helps the health of the range land and the animals themselves. It honestly breaks my heart to see two-year-old mares having foals. That's not fair for anybody out there. The range land suffers because of that as well when the population rate is doubling every four years.

Ms. Pearson: I don't have a doctor before or after my name. I'm better at snide remarks or comments. So, what you're telling us, and I think it's very well understood here that fertility control management and administration's easier said than done.

Mr. Swisher: 100%

Ms. Carlisle: Last input of the day. My input is that we should do hard things. But I agree. It doesn't mean that it's going to happen without some fixes along the way. Anything else? Go ahead, Dr. Perryman.

Dr. Perryman: Yes. I would just like to say it is exciting and I am pleased to see this movement toward fertility control. I mean, it's obvious that the bureau and the Forest Service both are making this effort because it's all new territory to us. We've been talking about fertility control for a long time. Actually, getting it into the field is something altogether different than the idea and the concept. And so, these moves to start learning how to do it, start learning how to implement it, where to implement it, how to implement it, you know, what kind of, which, how many, all of those things are answered. It's hard. The planning process is hard. And so, it's something new for all of us. So, I commend both agencies for their effort to move in this direction. And I think most folks would agree as I said earlier, yesterday, that this is the common thread that's holding a lot of tenuous agreements and movements and support together. And so, it's very gratifying to see that, I think. So, I commend you and keep it up. Let's giddy up and go.

Mr. French: I'd like to say something as well. The other component that I'm impressed with is the robust effort to measure the effectiveness of it. I mean, that's no small thing either. That's a large project to be able to do that. But folks ten years from now are going to be talking about that study and the effectiveness under those circumstances with those populations. I think, you know, that tells me a lot about the-- we're not just checking a box with regard to fertility control. We're trying to determine whether or not what kind of affect we're having with it. Hats off to you.

Mr. Kuechle: We're slightly ahead of schedule. We'll take a longer break, 20 minutes and return at 9:45. Reminder for public comment, the virtual slots have been filled. You should have the opportunity to sign up and provide in person comment if you're here. And that public comment period time is at 1:30 today, after lunch. We will be back at 9:45. We'll pick up with the BLM and Forest Service presentations.

### **Forest Service Program Update**

#### ***Dr. Teresa Drotar, Wild Horse & Burro Program Manager, USFS***

I am Dr. Teresa Drotar. I'm the national Wild Horse & Burro Program Manager for the Forest Service. And I'm going to give you a brief update of what we've been doing this past year. First thing that we have to deal with a lot, we've touched on this earlier is we have a lot of public comments about organizations and horses that are not federally protected capital W wild. It takes up a lot of our time. And so, it's worth again telling the public and the people that are here for a horse to be a federally protected wild horse it's only what we recognized prior to December 15, 1971 when wild free-roaming horses and burros were in equity. Recognized as unclaimed wild horses at that time in specific areas. Anything that is out of that area or was released or not direct project any of those are not protected by either one of our agencies. And the reason I bring it up is because it does occupy a lot of our time even though we cannot protect horses that are not considered wild. So, within the Forest Service, we do have currently 53 wild horse and burro territories. We estimate approximately 9,000 horses within the Forest Service territories and approximately 1,100 burros. That means that we're way over AML in general. And of course, one area will differ from another. But the AML is about 2100 for horses and we have 9,000. And 300 for burros. So, we're way over in both species and areas. The other thing that we recognize are

joint management areas where we have BLM HMAs and U.S. Forest Service territories that are next to each other where the animals wander back and forth. Animals do not recognize fence lines or boundaries. So we have 19, 20, joint management areas. Twelve of those Forest Service has the primary number of acres and animals. So, Forest Service takes the lead when that is the case. Two of those, 50/50 BLM and Forest Service. So, there's not a direct lead agency and ten of those BLM has the majority of the animals and the acreage. This is national population control out there. Everybody's talking about the predators primarily the mountain lions. We have areas where the mountain lions are picking on horses. But the research shows, even though you have mountain lion predation, it's never enough to control the horse populations. We have here in Northern California some known horse specialists that have helped. They cut down the fallen crop, fallen survival rate, 1%, 2%. It's helped but not controlling the population. Other predators don't seem to be primary on horses in most areas. Also, nature has a way of dealing with whatever's out there. And this winter was a good example. The winter out here in the west, particularly in the mountains close to us was very harsh. So, there's a winter die off. That's going to occur in all wildlife species but certainly in horses, too. We don't know at this time, many of them how much that might have affected it. That's nature. Winter is one of those things that animals have to endure out there on their own. And of course, out here in the west, drought has been a huge concern. And drought whether we like it or not is going to limit the amount of water. And it's going to be a very harsh thing for wildlife. Off-- the horses we have off of the range, we do have a couple of Forest Service corrals. Currently we only have 115 horses in those corrals and the biggest one is in Northern California, about 600 there at one time. In BLM facilities, however, many of the horses particularly in joint management areas and overflow beyond has taken our horses all these years. That's one of the things that we're trying to step up and take care of more of our horses because BLM facilities are becoming full. And they don't have room necessarily for horses that are designated to our agency. Currently we have close to 1500 horses in BLM facilities. Those figures are as of May. It changes all the time. Horses move in and out for adoptions or training or long-term holding. Long-term holding pastures, we have-- we do not have any of our own. We-- there are a couple of ways to think about that. Number one, BLM as managed so many of our animals and we do not interfere. When they're in BLM facilities, BLM has control of those. And if animals are designated to long-term, they go to BLM pasture. There may be a day we need to contract our own. We don't want to be in competition with BLM with those contracts. We have approximately 1134 horses out there-- the age range is anywhere from four years to 28 years, the horses that are out there. We need money. We are always talking about needing money designated for the Wild Horse and Burro program in the Forest Service. Our funding is a little bit different in that the structure of the Forest Service, the operational management of Wild Horses and Burros is at the forest level. The foresters are in control of the management in each one of our areas. We approximately have again 1500 horses in BLM care. We need to have consistent funding because we need to be able to support those and quit relying on BLM to support those for us. We do have some facility expansion plans in place. And that we are hoping to get very soon if we can find the money. The Devil's Garden in Northern California, our biggest facility right now, houses about 650 animals. We have a hope of being able to expand to a capacity of about 1500 which would help a lot. The cost for that is going to be \$1.6 million. The Big Summit facility in Oregon, we have an estimation of about \$2 million. And we need corrals done in Arizona to manage the horses in that area. That's another \$2 million. So, if we can get that amount of money soon, it will help us a lot. The Forest Service program, again, we identified a need for about \$50 million a year would get to where we're holding our end of the management. We don't get that consistently at this time. But we have partners that have recognized that this need is out there and hopefully you're standing up for us. The Association of Fish & Wildlife and Public Lands Council are two of the partners that are trying to help us to obtain the consistent funding that we need to do what we like to do in managing the animals. We're working much on creative kind of funding sources. There are some cost share agreements out there that we would like to explore more of, get some local NGOs and what not to care for these animals and help us out. We're looking at using trust funds from timber sales. And hopefully, we get some of that that will help us with the infrastructure needs. We really need a separate budget line item where that goes into, so it funds just wild horses and burros. I'm going to go through each one of our regions where we have wild horses and burros and just a very brief update. The first one is region 1. We do not have ours divided into states like BLM. It's different the way the two agencies handle the infrastructure. In region 1, we have one herd. It is a joint management herd. BLM has the majority of the animals there. The Pryor Mountain horses. Many people heard about the Pryor Mountain horses. Currently the NEPA and territory plan that is a joint venture with BLM is being completed so that management can proceed. The other-- we don't have anything in region 2. What we've described as region 2, skip to region 3, Arizona and New Mexico. We have big issues with horses down there. This is one of the two regions where we have the largest number of our horses. We have none wild, capital wild animals protected by the state

instead. The state Wildlife Division is protecting some horses down there. So that's one of the reasons that it's important we designate what are federally protected and not federally protected wild horses. We have an active cooperative on the Carson force that-- and this is a picture. They help us with trapping especially with animals that wander off the at the onto private lands. They help with placement of animals. It's a-- we want more of those kind of things, good associations with nonfederal partners that have an interest in wild horses. There are a lot of tribal lands that border region 3 areas. We have a shared stewardship of animals going back and forth with the tribes. And of course, many of the news things that have been out there is unauthorized livestock not only horses but cattle. They have to put money, effort and a lot of public information out on the unauthorized livestock which takes a little bit away from what we can devote to our wild horse issues right now. The next is region 4, the second region where there's a joint number of horses. Region 3 and 4 have the same amount of wild horses or Forest Service lands. Region 4 is in Utah. As you heard from Garrett, even Nevada has the greatest number in the country of wild horses. So, that goes across both agencies. Accounts in region 4, region 4 works closely with BLM because many of the territories are management areas. Drought in that area is worse than any place else. So, drought is a huge consideration in region 4. And currently they're trying to pick up and conduct census flights, some of which had to be delayed a little bit so that we can get current numbers. That's one of the big things going on along with gather schedules and what not in conjunction with BLM and region 4. Our next region is region 5 which is California. I mentioned, Devil's Garden in California is our largest Forest Service facility that we hope to be able to expand soon to 1500 capacity. They do a great job. Other areas within region 5 were developing territory plans. We have issues in other areas. Mono Lake, you have seen news reports about that with horses that strayed off of the territory. Territory plans and NEPA and being able to deal with that is waiting for those to be completed. There are definite plans to deal with it. And there are other territories also in region 5 with mixed results. But everything hopefully will be moving forward very soon. So, sticking with region 5 and Devil's Garden, Double Devil's Garden the Forest Service we went out-- a couple of hours west of here. That's where we went and the public went out on the door of the HMA locally here. There are working partners out there that help make this work. Working on getting the middle section of the NEPA and the territory plan update. That is moving along very nicely. But that's working on being able to, one of the places we hope to be deal with fertility control once that is completed. They gather and trap every year since 2018 in had an attempt to reach AML and they're getting there quickly. They're down from 3,000 horses to 1300 horses. If they can bring in 500 horses a year, we should get to AML quickly. They're working at it very hard. One of the things worth bragging about, one of the ladies there, and we have one of them in the office, corral manager Charlie Johnson is here. And she has a 96% placement rate overall ages. And the average length of time that horses spend in the corrals is four to five months which is an amazing report. Certainly, if you get more animals, I suspect we'll see a drop in that because the market becomes more difficult the more that you have to place. But currently, some of the creative things they've done at Double Devil's Garden have paid off. Many profiting with some of the nonprofit partnerships that are there including some local government agencies that help with that. They also put together three challenges that showcase Devil's Garden young horses not just in California. There's one in Pennsylvania and the other one is in Montana. And is that correct, Charlie? Yeah, so we have-- those horses are, every area has a little bit make up of what the horses are. Me become popular around the country partly because of the work of Charlie. They also provide a lot of education to the public. And that is really important. If we're going to do wild horse management properly, the public has to know what's going on. And so, they're doing a good job over there. The other thing that they've benefited from volunteers. I mean, 10,000 hours in volunteer time since 2018 is amazing. So, there is a pattern for that. And hopefully we can continue that. The other thing that we have going there at the-- on-- research projects. I mentioned the mountain lions. Mountain lions cannot be hunted in California which is a benefit maybe to the horse program. The institute for wildlife studies have colors on the mountain lions there in the national forest. One of those is a great big male that seems to be a horse specialist. He's like 160 pounds. And does seem to predate on wild horses. But as their study proceeds, we'll be able to get more information on that. Another study that's going on, and Forest Service does not have the funds to give to the researchers. But if researchers have funding elsewhere, we certainly are more than happy and willing to cooperate. And one of those is a study that's going on with Dr. Jason and Wildlife Services which is a USDA agency. We're looking at the efficacy on stallions and looking at that for a couple of reasons. Number one, if you have horses getting old, especially older stallions going into long-term holding, it would be financially costly, and also from a welfare standpoint not to have to go through surgery and instead go through injections. So, looking to see if that is a possibility for stallions. Also, within that area, there is some predilection for hernias. If a horse has a hernia, it's a very risky thing for castration because those rings get large, and they can have major complications that can be fatal. If you identify one of those animals particularly in unhandled horses, it

can be very beneficial to have an essential-- without surgical operation. And also, for a-- which we see all over time. The other thing that we have, we are looking at doing in the Fall is treating some mares. They'll be older mares probably and monitoring those and being able to release those on the same area on the territory where they came from. Here, there are micro regions within the territory. Hopefully we can monitor a specific group of animals whereas trying to monitor the entire territory is mind boggling. You can't get the whole thing, wrap around a small area instead. Region 6, Oregon, plans to million dollars wild horse education center in Ochoco national forest. They have wild horses they trap when they can. This is one of those areas where trying to get a census is difficult because it's all wooded. So, when you fly over it, you can't see them. So, they're using innovative methods to try to get the census and trying to do a major gather with the helicopters, if possible, as well. They do trap the animals and place them. If they get a facility there that provides the education and ability for people to come adopt animals out of there, that will be a big move forward. There's the murderer's creek territory, that's another JMA. And that's in process. So, the contraceptives that Forest Service is interest is either currently or interested in applying in the future. There are places where PZP and a darting program down in New Mexico where that is an active means of trying to apply fertility control. Particularly in areas, the territory down there doesn't have all the trees and that helps a lot, you know, in the forested areas it becomes difficult in many ways. GonaCon is another, is of course, it's been mentioned contraceptive. We're looking at using that. And one of the studies that's going on is trying to gig out in it can be gym, what interval it can be given to extend that. Currently the protocol says it has to be after six months, minimum. Hopefully that can be pushed back so you can hold horses for shorter period of time if they have to have a booster. So, we're interested in using GonaCon. There are a couple of things out there that are being developed and maybe close in the future. We would consider using IUDs. Currently we don't have any use of IUDs on the territories. That is one of the things that's in the toolbox we hope for. And the new options, one of those Garrett mentioned that is being funded by BLM and is under research is, are in the pipeline. Yes, they're not there yet. But we're looking forward to when they are there. And all of the NEPAs and the territory plans being developed are going to be open-ended so that things we don't know about now, we will be able to use. We also pursue training. I mentioned the colt challenges and trying to expand that across the country to 4H and other groups that might be interested in getting youth involved in training and adopting wild horses. So, some of those have been very successful. Some of the videos of what these kids do with horses is amazing. And then they go on to be able to adopt them and/or return them and have those animals suffer high amounts because they're well trained. The other picture shows two horses that are being used on the Forest Service. And as pack animals and riding-- both of the animals in that picture were former wild horses but are being utilized in the Forest Service every day. So, the goals in what we're hoping to do, we want to use more contraceptives and do a treat and release. We're trying to look at the places where that is, makes the most sense and where we can monitor it and we want to ramp that up as much as we can. We plan to continue management on all areas, trying to reach that AML in different areas. And that, of course, varies from one place to the other as to the complexities and just like BLM. We continue to complete territory plans. Some of the plans are in the process of being updated. Others are looking at very soon being updated. Some of them are in place. We've continued to try to find all different avenues for adequate, consistent funding. And that is ongoing for all of us. We continue to try to again address the wild horse issue and what is designated as a wild horse to make sure that we, the public knows what animals we do have authority over. We're trying to build staff facilities so that we could remove the pressure on the BLM. The BLM again is housing 1500 of our horses and that takes away dollars from them. We are trying to build facilities so we can be responsible for our own horses designated as FS horses. We're continuing to nurture and develop the partnerships and ideas that come out in local areas that are innovative to develop the partnerships, they're interested people. Sometimes you don't though about that are on the ground. We try to continue and nurture those partnerships. This shows that, you know, the people that make this program work are these people on the ground. Some of the people in these pictures are here. Many of them are not. And their position description, some of them say Wild Horse & Burro on it. Some don't. We have range managers and staff officers and everything else. But what we can do does not work without the people on the ground. And so, within the Forest Service, there is a scattering that we have to say thank you very much for being out there and for caring about what goes on and for managing the horses that are out there on our territories. And that-- are there any questions for the Forest Service that one of us can answer?

Mr. Oliver: A side note on the budget, I know the committee has recognized and recommended from a budget standpoint that we have our own-- is anybody else hearing that feedback? We recognize the fact that we don't have a budget specific to manage our Wild Horse & Burro program. Right now, we compete with dollars from a range land management



program, watershed program, vegetation and ecology programs for funds to manage our program. You know, we've made every effort we can and still continuing to push back that we need a budget specific to manage. We do, Teresa mentioned some opportunities for expansion of facilities. We have to be very thoughtful in how we move forward with that. You know, if Congress one day said, here's the money you asked for, expand your facilities, are we able to expand facilities? We have facilities that we didn't have any bodies to manage to move forward. We have to step that forward to make sure whatever we do in the near term we're going to be able to manage in the how many. The big issue of us is not to have a chunk of money to manage but having a consistent money to manage for our program. It's been a struggle, but we continue to work toward being able to get funding on a consistent basis.

Ms. Carlisle: I have a question about funding. I know that we've all been working at trying to get a line item for Forest Service for management of horses. And you all have been working on it obviously. Does it feel like we're any closer to that?

Mr. Oliver: No. We're getting bits and pieces and getting recognition. But as far as that budget, we need, not the agency to recognize that we need Congress to recognize that and recognize it to the point where they're willing to commit for the long-term.

Ms. Carlisle: And are you feeling like Congress is beginning to recognize that?

Dr. Drotar: It's hard to judge.

Mr. Oliver: We're hoping that by getting other people to recognize that we need it, that it will have an effect, that we aren't-- we haven't enjoyed quite yet.

Ms. Pearson: I have a question similar to Celeste. Is your funding specifically, is it tied to the farm bill or do you have individual funding sources through Congress?

Mr. Oliver: So, there's nothing related to Wild Horse & Burro that comes from the farm bill. We have several different pieces of the farm bill that relate to the agency. But nothing specific to this. We did put in a request to the farm bill for funding for the program. But it hasn't gained any traction.

Ms. Pearson: So, you don't have earmarked specific funds for your Wild Horse & Burro program, right?

Dr. Drotar: No, we do not.

Mr. French: Thanks, Madam Chair. I have a quick question. One of the things I think that we-- one of the techniques we used politically to try to draw attention to the wild horse program within the bureau obviously had to do with the impending disaster that we were-- from overpopulation. And obviously we've been beating on that drum for sometime. And having said that, it goes back to your census program in terms of determining what's your population. Structure is, as well as your numbers are by forest. Obviously, no criticism here at all. You're challenged because of the terrain and the foliage that you're dealing with. Maybe you could enlighten me a bit on how you are determining what your populations look like and whether or not they're increasing or decreasing. And how confident are you with those numbers?

Dr. Drotar: Where we can, we use the double observer counter method. And we're very confident in some of those areas. And I brought up the Ochoco. They have used infrared which even the USGS said, it works. And that's, they have found that to be effective with the tree cover. The problem is that you have to have know cover as it's very cold for the heat signatures to show up. If you can heat it, if you can get your flight-- and can you have to contract with the people to fly and all that stuff. If you can get all that together, and they have, then you can use infrared technology. They have to deal with the factors to get that correctly. A couple of other places they have done old technology of taking a day or two on the ground and writing it and counting animals. It's not as statistically holds up as much as flying it with the double observer counter method. But it does work. And it does give some ideas. Some places have not had the money to do the census. So, there are areas that I will admit are, we don't know because of the lack of being able to bring that altogether. But using the different technologies that they have available and trying different things is in many places has done best we can.

Mr. French: Thank you for that. One of the things also that I've observed with Forest Service personnel that I've dealt within, Nevada's national forest, your range conservations are on the ground. They have a gut feeling what's going on. In my experience working with those people, they have been as close as you can get in terms of up and down in terms of populations, and can I will just say that it's-- there are going to be a lot of debates in Congress whether or not you need that funding or designation of separate funding category based on the sketchy data on their side. You'll have folks that will say that to you. But I will say, it goes to something that was mentioned here a few minutes ago. Having to do with the farm bill. And I think that's an opportunity right now, the farm bill that's actually in the hopper right now. I think it's a great opportunity for us to have that conversation independently, and I think from a standpoint of the involvement of this board and advocates for wild horses, this is the time to actually step up, not just the Forest Service. But this is the time for folks who have an interest in wild horse populations and their welfare on national forests. This is their time to stand up.

Dr. Drotar: We appreciate that. As Chuck said we did move forward and asked last year with supporting as to why we need the funding for the farm bill. But we haven't heard that it got traction at this point. But any sorted that we can get would be appreciated. Because one of the benefits being funded through the farm bill will be a five-year consistent funding. And you can't, you know, for example, I mentioned that we don't have our own contracted long-term pastures. One of the reasons for that is, if you're going to make a contract, you have to have consistent funding to say that, to that contractor, okay, for 20 years you'll be able to keep that horse or whatever. If you don't have that, how are you going to make that contract? And the farm bill would be a move forward.

Ms. Carlisle: Any more budget issues? I'm going to jump to another subject if not. In terms of 10,000 volunteers over a handful of years which is impressive. BLM has volunteers and working on expanding that program. And corral systems through adoption programs primarily. But there are challenges that come along with that obviously. Managing volunteer programs is a labor of love for sure. And it's definitely a time commitment, a big one. So, I'm really interested to hear Charlie, how are you doing it? It's really impressive and you have a community and then a community of interested parties around the Devil's Garden horses that is big and robust but fractious as many of these divergent groups can be. So, I want to hear a little bit about in, the organizational structure that supports that effort because I know it must take a lot of your time.

Charlie Johnson: Sure. And that's an excellent point. And I want to point out that 10,000 hours is a result of one volunteer. We have multiple volunteers that help in many capacities. But it is a labor of love. And I often joke, I only live five minutes from the corrals for a reason. And on my off time, my husband often says, let's go up to the corrals and check out this horse or that horse. So we view it sort of as a infrastructure roots family approach. And I don't say that lightly. I mean that, when we have orphan foals, my staff and I and specialists are the ones who take them home to bottle feed them in the middle of the night. Without our volunteers, we wouldn't be successful. It takes work and time but it's worth it. We are committed to that work. We have a small staff specifically on the national forest. We are building that. We recently increased our corral staff from three to six. Last June we brought on a wild horse specialist dedicated to territory management. Together we were able to collaborate with many folks. You saw Teresa's presentation, network of nonprofits and resources across the nation to support our staff and doctors. We welcome the opportunities to work with people to make a difference. It genuinely is important to us and our program. And that's how we're going to succeed.

Ms. Carlisle: I have more. In setting up many a network of the nonprofits that you have that sort of work along the edges to support the program, is Forest Service the overarching, I mean, when you have a network of a lot of independent nonprofits managing, messaging, expectations I mean, do you all have a framework that's set up for that? Or have you just been lucky?

Charlie: A little bit of both. When you talk specifically about messaging, it's one thing we've been discussing both at a local and national level recently is the need to have a public affairs person dedicated to that. Speaking specific from the forest level, we have been without a public officer for two years, have not been able to fill that position. A lot of that falls back to the plate specific for Wild Horse & Burro to myself and the Wild Horse & Burro specialist. But we do have an amazing support staff that also helps from the national perspective we discussed this earlier in the week to be able to be more communicative at this, we need that at a national level. That goes along with our ask for funding is we want to bolster this program not only locally but nationally as well. But again, Celeste, it's a labor of love to keep the networks

running. We have to stay in constant communication with those folks. We couldn't do it without the network that has been built and that's both nonprofits and partners and stakeholders.

Ms. Carlisle: I have managed volunteers in the past. I commend you. It's a big deal. It is a lot of time. When I think about broadening that out, especially in terms of BLM which is there, but they're also interested in broadening that out, having the support staff is a key piece.

Charlie: Absolutely. With our expansion hopes, that will include additional administrative support as well which is greatly needed.

Mr. French: Just to add on a little bit, too. I'd back up, the devil garden herd is well known throughout the wild horse program nationwide. I'm pretty close to a lot of folks in northern Nevada who they speak about that Devil's Garden herd separate from everybody else out there. It is definitely the cream of the crop in their mind. Having said that, I have to say that, as part of a stand-alone wild horse program budget, being able to promote what you have there, it would help with that as well. Because I think just all you have to do is get the word out on the street. And it will help your program along that line. As I said there's a lot of interest if had that herd. I had to say that.

Charlie: Yes, thank you for that. And we find that as well. I think that's where the 96% placement rate comes from because the herd does speak for itself. And we're appreciative that people see the value if the horses that we do. The I personally have five Devil's Garden horses, so I'm a little biased.

Dr. Perryman: Madam Chair. I think it's an appropriate time at least I think it is any I was, to just mention to the staff and the bureau, the staff and the Forest Service and the volunteers that are involved in this, we sit here onboard and upper administration. We talk about the pros and cons of this idea and this idea and this content and that concept while these guys are out on the ground getting it done. They're bottle feeding, foals in the middle of the night, turning water on, on their days off. They're doing all kinds of things the BLM Forest Service staff and volunteers. So I want to commend everybody. It is not gone unnoticed. So thank you so much throughout the entire program for all the little things that you do that you would do when nobody's looking anyway. Thank you for those, all those things that you do. I've said my peace. Thank you.

Ms. Pearson: I'm going to tag onto that, too because we love success stories. We love people who are not only invested in their work but what the program is. I know for a fact in Utah it's the same thing. People that are in these program, employees that are doing the job, their whole family's invested in this. They're adopting animals and training them and offering them up for adoption. And their entire life is devoted to this. I have to say, I do the same thing. I've never adopted. I've restrained myself because I'm not home very often. I've had several conversations with my friend, Lisa but who is going to take care of them when I'm on the road. But I do my share. We're hauling water, we're hauling supplemental feed to feed the horses. I've got happy horses on my range, even though sometimes they're overpopulated. As a board member, as a cattle ranchers. I love wild, hoes. I don't think there's a person in this room that takes more picture of horses. I love seeing them healthy and in good range. And we do our part to be good stewards of the land in general. And so I just want to say, like Barry said, the same thing. Thanks to all the staff, Forest Service and BLM for what you do not only on our paid hours but your off hours. Thank you.

Ms. Carlisle: Thanks, everybody. Thank you, Forest Service, for a good presentation. Bryant? I think our next business is another presentation.

Ms. Waddell: Great. Thank you. While we wait, Dr. Perryman, I will tell you that my mother used to say that all the time. Whenever looking at something you're going to do think about being the person that is doing something when someone's looking that tells you the character of a person. I would agree in thanking Forest Service staff and BLM staff for all the work they do unnoticed. Much of it is-- I try to notice people all the time. My boss doesn't notice me very often. [Laughter]. But I think it's important to state and the volunteers and members of the public is of the public adopters and everyone associated here. And even though we may not agree the way wild horses and burros are managed, having that seat at the table is part of the conversation.

## **BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program Update**

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

Ms. Waddell: I will introduce myself. My name is Holle' Waddell and I am the division chief for the Wild Horse & Burro program. The Advisory Board members you guys volunteer your time and Celeste and Jim are tired of talking to me because I do like take their time. Giving them long updates. I know they're like, oh, my God. This is a long update. But keeping them updated is important for them to have information for their constituents. And I enjoy the board meetings because it gives us a chance to present information to the public that have a vested interest. And have been here for many years. We heard from a lady who said she had been dealing with wild horse and burro challenges, for half a century. Those of you who are new and this is your first board meeting or first introduction to the Wild Horse & Burro program, I thank you for being here in person and joining virtually. So, with that, I'm going to-- there's always a lot going on. No one talks about my hours. Anyway, next slide, Jordan. I used to have a clicker, but they stopped giving me one. The presentation, I want to remind you all about the legal authorities for what we do every day. The BLM is guided by a numerous laws that were passed by Congress. However, for purposes of today and this week we'll be talking about the two important pieces of legislation which were the wild free roaming horses and burros act 1971 and the federal land policy and management act. Both signed into law and provide BLM legal authority to manage wild horses and burros on public happened. As part of our multiple use mission as an agency. Legal authority, we at the BLM do have one main goal that guides all of our actions. And we want to manage healthy herds and wild horses and burros on healthy public happened. You heard Brian say that earlier in his remarks. That means that managing them is an integral part of that system required by law. Last year, BLM created a focus group. Those are our state Directors. And it was actually asked by the Deputy Director of Operations, Mike Nedd. The state offices and headquarters focus group was tasked with preparing a strategy and a plan about moving forward for placing the program on a sustainable track. The work of that focus group is still ongoing. We talked about what's that been looking like with the long-term goals of three and five and ten years. And then the cost associated to the program on how much it would take in order for us to achieve appropriate management level, not even as a program but even state by state. So, I'm hoping to provide an update on where we are in the coming months. Jim, I know you will share that information with the board. So, our most recent estimate shows that more than 82,000 wild horses and burros are roaming on public lands as of March 2023. That includes herd management areas and herd areas which we have been talking about our HAs. This means the population ticked up 500 animals compared to last year. We're still more than three times over that sustainable population level. That's what we call appropriate management level. So, this year, that nearly stag nature growth can follow two years of population decline that we had seen for several years from our peak of more than 95,000 animals in 2020. It's important to note that our population estimates do not lineup perfectly with the fiscal year but how we track the removal numbers. Even though we removed more than 20,000 animals in 2022 only 11,400 of those removals came March 2022. That's the date we calculate the annual population estimate. Raft year's estimates are in line with biological expectations, and they show that removals combined with fertility control play an important role in the responsibility management of wild horses and burros. So, with a larger population comes more foals that are born each year which means more animals must be removed or treated to slow population growth which is our recurring challenge. So for example, our population 100,000 animals would produce approximately 20,000 foals in one year. And the BLM's removal capacity is around 20,000 animals per year with our current resources. That mean we would not be able to affect the population size after that population threshold has passed. That's an important feature because when we're talking about budgets and talking about ways to manage our populations, if we were to reach 100,000 population, we would only be able to remove the foal crop for that year. What does that mean? We wouldn't be addressing overpopulation in any significant way. Following a record year for removals and treatments we scaled back our goals this year as we contend with a growing number of animals in our off range corrals and pastures and impacted by the timing of an approved budget from Congress which obviously is beyond our control. And slowed some of our actions. As of June, we've gathered a little more than 700 animals, removed about 500 of them and treated and released a handful. The busiest time of gather is yet to begin. Our goal this year is about 5,600 removals withholding 1500 spaces for emergencies. 1500 fertility control treatments. We plan to complete surveys in about a third of our HMAs which you heard Garrett mention earlier, and that's about 60 surveys. The long-term branch has been busy as both branches are. Other initiatives I want to highlight, for example, we finally have in place a new contract that is dedicated completely to gathering, treating, holding and releasing animals back to the range. I mentioned that, we've been calling that the CTR. You can add the "H" in there if you wanted to. It is CTR. This is an exciting achievement, something in the works for a couple of years. I can't wait to see how the contract is used to increase our fertility control numbers. The first CTR gather is July of 2023. And I'm searing it into Scott's soul. July 1. So, the On-Range branch continues holding virtual public meetings on the use of motorized vehicles. Look forward to having you next year. And that purpose is to manage horses and burros in the use of those motorized vehicles. So, in the past, each

state would hold those meetings in person but with the virtual option it does allow more people to be involved and engaged and participating. They can participate by giving public comments. And that way more voices can be heard on the matter. So finally, you'll hear about the research and community grant efforts and the coming slides that we have. So, our research efforts continue to move forward as well. And we talked about that. You heard some of them from Garrett. The BLM did issue a 2021 strategic research plan that we discussed in October and identified humane long lasting, more mare fertility control methods as the highest priority for funding followed by research into the relationship between wild horses and burros. Received as-- and their environment including as it relates to climate change. We solicited and the project proposals received were-- we've chosen to pursue two projects to develop better fertility controls. And these would be single dose and you heard about those from Garrett this morning. Cornell University college and the Northwest Wildlife Conservation Research will lead one passage that will test the effectiveness of delivering PZP vaccine in the neck or muscles. The second project will be led by the USDA Animal Plant Health and Inspection Service. Their national wildlife research center will continue their research efforts into developing various formulations of the vaccine. So, I'm pleased to present to you all major accomplishments. And I'll note that this photo was taken by our Off-Range branch chief Paul McGuire. It's necessary to say so. Thank you, Paul. It's very beautiful. These are preliminary figures that are expected to increase as we collect all of our records and finalize the data for this fiscal year. And that obviously happens about September 30 and be posting the final numbers and made public. As early as June we placed 5,289 bureaus through adoption sale or transfer which continues the three-year streak of placing more than 5,000 animals into private care. That's huge. We can accomplish this placement without the support of our partners like the Mustang heritage foundation, programs like the adoption center program as well. And as you can see a large percentage of adoptions took place through the adoption incentive program. And we're pleased with that success. You've leader variations and continued conversation regarding considerations of improving that program. And so we will update you on. And of course, we continue to provide lifetime care for unadopted and unsold animals. As you can see on the slide the vast majority of animals in our holding system are on pastures which is a more cost effective, again more cost-effective way of caring for the animals and they provide a better quality of life long-term care for those animals. They are in a free roaming environment. And in the past we have hosted pasture tours. Someone from the board asked me about that. We do not have a scheduled tour right now. I would encourage you, anyone to think about, we have public off range pastures. Those are open all the time. And we have four of them. And we can go into more detail about those public offering pastures. So we continue to be amazed with our successful corral is at placing animals into private care. Over a thousand found homes through the online corral system which offers animals for adoption on the internet via bid. The Amazon of wild horse adoption and sales. The Mustang heritage foundation partnered on the last slide. They're responsible for nearly 40% of animals placed in private care. That is an outstanding accomplishment. We are looking to continue our partnership which you heard the representative from the Mustang champions and assisting us in placing animals in rife care. Off range pasture proposals are being evaluated from the solicitation released in 2021. And this has been a while. And it's not for lack of trying. This should be revealing for everyone how much time and effort goes to evaluating pastures to ensure that they meet our requirements of providing a good home for our wild horses and burros. Sometimes it could take up to two years from the solicitation when it opens and closes to the actual time the animals start arriving. We need to plan ahead and increase the capacity. Then finally as most of you are aware, we undertook an evaluation of the adoption incentive program last year. We looked at many ways that we can secure the health and safety of adopted animals. Agency recognizes that all areas of the Wild Horse and Burro program which include the adoption and incentive program are subject to continual improvement. And we constantly reassess and reevaluate. And it's for this reason that the program continues to seek input from the public through forums like this that are sanctioned by the Advisory Board and that we look at agency leadership because they are attentive to this issue and to the input that's received from the public and are committed to the improvements to advance the agency's mission of effectively managing wild horses and burros and stewarding public funds. The Wild Horse and Burro program issued policies or instructional memoranda which we talked about today. Since the board met in October, the policies strengthen and affirm BLM's commitment for high quality care for wild horses and burros. The first is an update to our previously existing animal health vaccination gelding and micro chipping. But it was a great effort that was placed into several of the state leads and other specialists in the program contributing along with both of the deputies that were engaged with our APHIS, veterinarian consultation. As you know the policy requires every wild Carr calendar. The second IM accomplishes the humane treatment, handling and care of wild horses and burros in off range pastures and public off range pastures. This continues building the comprehensive welfare program, and I am proud these are now published and timely accomplished as policy. Kudos to you Jerrie for that effort. So, speaking of CAWP this provides an update of what we accomplished in 2023. Jerrie and her team worked tirelessly. They worked to bring in more specialist. It's not the same people on the team all the time. They work together to conduct assessments, look at the standards, host workshops and continuous conversations within not only the agency

but also the program itself. Last October you all received an in-depth briefing from Jerrie and how it's structured. So hopefully none of this is new information. I know Dr. Lenz has been involved in it so I thank you for those efforts. As you can see we completed eight CAWP assessment in 2023, private corrals and three adoption events. We also accomplished some major tasks, one of which we talked about. The standards of off range pastures and public pastures. Holding a training session for our assessment team this year. We're working on the contracting of the CAWP handbook. It's a big undertaking. So, this slide gets us into budget. Talk about how BLM has spent the budget allocated to date in the Wild Horse and Burro program so far this year. We'll pause and let you look at it. This slide is simple to look at. You can look at the different pieces of the pie. We associate it with the operations within the program. As you can see, the vast majority of our expenditure continue to be for unadopted and unsold animal and holding facilities that's both corrals and pastures. Expenditures in this category will continue to remain high in the coming years as we provide lifetime care. What we have been focused on for several years is moving more animals from higher Costco ales to lower cost pastures. And when it comes, when it's been determined that they don't have a adoption demand or cell demand that's where they would move to from a corral to a pasture. This keeps the holding cost low and provides better outcomes for the animals as well. As mentioned earlier, those offering pastures are free roaming environments. So, I do want to take a quick mention about the population growth suppression cost because it seems like a small piece of the pie. Though it may be small on the graph, I want to make sure you are aware that many of our fertility costs are associated with gather operations. Projection for example, gathered past years both removal and fertility control components. Most costs associated with capturing the animals for treatment would be categorized under the JJ slice. Now it's really far away for me. So, I can help guide you there-- if need to. And I don't know why this monitor is only pointing to that side of the table. Scott, will you point out JJ piece of the slide if you can come on down. Pier neck. Okay. It is the orange. And the JJ is the orange. And then the population growth suppression is the little blue thin slice. So, I won't, without going into too much detail, because we haven't done a budget update for, I don't think for this part of the board. But we do track expenditures within the government or within BLM under program elements. Those are the letters that you see in parenthesis. So, JJ is described as our gather and removal program element. And it is where we capture the associated cost related to gathers and removals.

And there are several different program elements that are associated there. I'm happy to walk you all through those later. This is how we track the associated cost and performance; accomplishments are captures under those program elements. So, with that, while it may seem we only spend 1% of our budget on population growth. The true percentage is higher when you factor the other costs. So, we expect fertility control cost to increase as we utilize the new catch and treat release contract, the CTR on the update. As you are aware, management and protection of wild horses and burros is a big job. And we couldn't do any of this alone. Always grateful to have great partners. And other volunteers that help at any time day-to-day and year to year. Many that do not receive funding. Last year we launched a notice of funding opportunity to project proposals from current and additional partners to help us continue to make progress in our mission. And I've talked a lot about this funding opportunity over the last two days. We received many more proposals and able to split those between the off-range projects and off range projects. Solicitation was structured just that way that those offering projects, I believe they closed on October 3 # and off range closed on January 31. It was a rolling deadline. Last March we announced two awards. One was for the Mustang heritage own indication who has been a highly successful and effective partner to us for many years as well as a new partner which I mentioned called Mustang champions who will be focused on education and placement of animals into private care. We're happy to be working with these two organizations. We anticipate making additional award announcements to support our on-range efforts. Keep an eye out for that press release and that information. So many of you are aware they were working on updates to the federal regulations governing the Wild Horse & Burro program which haven't been updated since 1986. And that's right, I was ten years old the last time the regulations were updated. Fifth grade. The rule-making process can be complicated. I want to provide you with the breakdown of the process. I am no regulatory affair specialist. I will try to answer questions as best as I can. As you can see there are several steps including a public comment process. So where are we right now? We're still on step one. I guarantee you, we are still on step one. We are able to-- we have been able to bring on another retired BLM'er to assist us which you might remember Bruce. He was the acting division chief for the Wild Horse & Burro program. And came back to assist us and owning-- revising regulations for the Wild Horse & Burro wild program. It is to develop the proposed rule and NEPA document. What does that mean? That means the draft, the language for those particular revised regulations. So, once we have a good draft and believe me that's a lot harder than it sounds, you think all the things that you've thought about write it down. It's not simple. We have solicitors at the table and go through internal review process before the White House. The Office of Management and Budget and that office is in regulatory

affairs. There are several steps. After that language is done, the proposed rule will be published for public. Members of the public can find information and thoughts about it and have to respond to those comments before another round of internal and White House review will take place. Most recently, you obvious little have heard about the public lands rule. Agency is working on several rule-making efforts at one time. And so I am being patient is one of those things my grandmother told me was a virtue. Okay and finely, I want to end on the president's budget proposal. This budget request will continue to support emergency on range operations and limited planned removals with a major focus on fertility control for herds that are at or they are AML. Scott is hard at work to develop a schedule because we would like to move forward with continuing the fall, winter schedule. So, we have that develop and are hoping we will have support funding, funding support in order to move forward with the gathers. It will also continue to allow us this budget to care for the animals in holding and that will be off range corrals and pastures and work on increasing the private care placement of the animals in the corrals or adoption and sales programs. Now animals that are in the corrals are available for transfer which are you eastbound are the transfer authority is provided through the appropriations. So, this includes maintaining the support for the adoption center program as well. So, on that note, I hope I didn't bore you. But I want to thank the board for your attention to this presentation and the staff for the support in putting together the presentation. I appreciate it. I'm happy to take questions you may have at this time.

Mr. St Geroge: If I can go quickly right before your question, Holle'. I think that was exceptional as an update. And you know, I'm going back to and struck by Celeste's challenge that we can and should do hard things. And I hope everybody sees in your update here that we are doing hard things on a daily basis in this program. If you think about the program administration as a dashboard, every time you turn up a dial, a lever moves down, a light goes green, and a warning buzzer sounds. And if you turn that dial down, the lever goes up, the light turns red and the warning buzzer changes pitch. So silver bullet solutions or simple value propositions are outmatched by the complexity of the program. But I think a value proposition that we hold to Holle' mentioned the idea of healthy herds on healthy lands is a guiding proposition for us. And as Holle' mentioned and as I tried to highlight. We are at this critical turning point for the program. In just two to three years, if we don't have the resources, we need to administer the complex program Holle' just laid out, we could be at the turning point threshold of 100,000 animals on the range, at which point, we cannot keep up with the recruitment the rate, the full crop annually. That is a critical issue for our capacity to administer the program. Because a simple solution of do more of this and less than that simply won't meet that challenge to turn the dial and change the light and accommodate the warning buzzer. Right? So, we're very focused on the complexity of the program and how each and every proposed solution affects other aspects of the program. I think Holle' laid it out well. Sorry to take your time, Tammy.

Ms. Pearson: And go to the bar graph that showed the population growth. Exponential growth. I want to say, and I really have to-- I'm not telling anybody--You did that very well. I appreciate that. I don't speak well. But you look at the bar graph right there, this is the population that's been terrifying me for the last so, 15 years because we could see it coming. And I think I said yesterday that you know, the first people were worried about this were the people that were on the ground. The local people. They can see this exponential growth. And the damage, the daily damage that was happening and the potential damage of ecological disaster. I mean, I can't put it any plainer than that. So, it has never been a horse versus a cow thing. It was just one species with that kind of a growth potential was terrifying. And the impact that's going to have for all species on the ground. And so, I do have to say, I didn't think we were ever going to see a downturn on population. Honestly, that's why we've all been working-- I'd rather see that than me on the screen. Anyway, but that's been the reason why I think it's a total, you know, there are so many people advocating for that. And we appreciate that we hit the peak and we're coming down and that we're addressing everything as a whole. It's not just one thing that's doing this. It's the whole picture and the whole program that you've got. So, kudos to you guys. Keep up the good work. We have to just keep pushing in that same management and get things down so we can avoid that disaster on the ground.

Ms. Waddell: Yeah, thank you, Tammy. You know, one thing that was-- I mentioned the focus group earlier. One of the conversations that we have at the forum and looking at this graph stops at 2023. We were able to, with the assistance of Scott and Robin, Watson who is our resource advisor and manages budget and strategic projections and Dr. Paul Griffin who is great, our research specialist. Between all of those people and Paul McGuire and Jason we worked to pull together many documents and variations and estimates about what this may look like if we move forward with significant removals and out-years and if we don't. And if we aggressively do fertility control and if we don't. And no new tools are found or

if there are, so there are all these projections, all these Disneyland type Wild Horse and Burro projections presented. They started going cross I'd at some point. I can't look at another graph. This is the best way to display the position. If they had to look at the background that he will develop the graph, that was worse. Even utilized Pop Equus model. It looks at something different. It wouldn't allow these projections the way we needed to, to look at them. So even with those, those projections, they show populations that could decline if there are resources available. And that there's a whole list of assumptions that go along with that. Do we have a committed budget every year? We have acquisition of enough space in corrals and pastures? Are we placing animals into private care continuously at maximum numbers every year? There are several components as Brian mentioned that have to go together in order for us to be successful.

Dr. Lenz: So, I mean, it's obvious. But the cost is off range pastures and corral. Have there been any advocacy groups or private organizations that have stepped up and said, we'd be happy to take a thousand or 5,000 horses off your hands and put in private pastures? Anything like that come up or been discussed?

Ms. Waddell: I'm leaning in, No

Dr. Lenz: Because I hear a lot of discussion around the horse industry that there are groups that have interest in that. That would be helpful, wouldn't it?

Ms. Waddell: It would be. We had organizations in the past ask questions and gain information. But then they, I believe begin to look at some of the costs associated with it. And we have even offered to transport the animals. We'll deliver them to you. And we have an adoption, adoptions or sales. And we've also even had conversations in the past about, well, is there a way that we can maximize the use of the transfer authority? Right now we're not allowed through the appropriations. But we have not had an organization step up and say, we'll take a thousand.

Mr. St George: I will add where we have had conversations about appropriation interest, some of those interested parties have bucked at the comprehensive requirements for care, period.

Dr. Perryman: There's always, maybe not always, but quite often there's opportunities for budget augmentations that may come down-- may become available. And I don't know maybe the new foundation could play a role in this. Somebody might say, here's \$20 million, pick your number if you're wishing. Do you have, I'm assuming you had some kind of contingency plan that is in some format, some stage of development or if some budget augmentations came down, that you could jump to it quickly and move along? I'm assuming that those plans are in place anyway or in development.

Mr. St George: Yes, so the short answer is yes. In any effort we make to work with appropriators on Capitol Hill we are thinking about it. The last thing we want is a bucket of money that we could not deliver on that investment and commitment. That's a bad luck. So we are thinking about what the opportunities might be for the BLM foundation. The foundation is keenly interested in this program. And the foundation and the BLM are keenly interested to figure out the program executing on our multiple use and guild mission. It's premature to really talk about where the nexus will be. Indeed, why we want to continue to have discussion and facilitate discussion between the board and foundation. Additionally, we have I think some new thinking happening within BLM and our budget shop to explore more options with appropriators and Congress for how to fund sustainably fund the program. And as you say we are talking internally, Holle and I and Scott and Paul and the entire team about how we ensure we have the capacity to stand up on deliver if the dollars come to us.

Dr. Perryman: Right. Now that there's been confirmation there are other groups out there that they had the confidence that they'd be willing to go back and ask for some kind of augmentations. And as far as the foundation goes, I'm happy that you're here. There are some ideas that have been floating around for a few years that we probably need to talk about in terms of tax credits and tax certificates and things like that, that are really kind of creative that sort of withered because nobody was there to shepherd those ideas. It's probably we should have a conversation about. I appreciate your answer. And some of the other groups outside that have been working on this can now move forward with confidence knowing that there is something in place that can be funded if they do the heavy lifting on-- if they can do that you can't do.



Mr. St George: If I may, let me express gratitude for that. Many of you here represent constituents and partner groups advocating for BLM's behalf with Congress and committees. We're grateful for that. The communication and dialogue is open. We are happy to respond to questions and information needed to help facilitate that conversation with Congress.

Dr. Perryman: And the Forest Service, too. The Forest Service are the bureaus of this Wild Horse and Burro program here. We don't want to forget them.

Ms. Pearson: Let me just ask one quick follow-up. The other part of my original question was the budget was \$154.8 million. Is that an increase? Have you been increasingly asking for more annually?

Mr. St George: Yes, we have. It is essentially a flat budget. There is some flexibility in there to continue and advance aspects of the program. Holle' highlighted the opportunities but they are limited. Now, I have to be honest that the budget formulation process is complicated. And it involves many, many different authorities. Holle' and I indeed the BLM Director, we don't have uniform discretion to simply request more. It is the President's budget. It is not BLM's Wild Horse and Burro program budget. So, there's a lot to work through. And I think we all know what we try to fund in the Federal agency with limited dollars. So, it represents in our mind essentially a flat budget with discretion to respond to emergencies, to respond to key opportunities that will advance the program in limited ways.

Ms. Waddell: No, I think you nailed it. So yes. It is a flat budget. However, we do have a budget officer that is creative and looking in other ways to maximize opportunities. And we look forward to that.

Ms. Carlisle: I'm going to jump in. I don't know if timing is going to be right on-- we've been thinking about it, recommendation that might assist with what are perceived obstacles and what a real obstacles and observations that are interested in-- pasture like, natural holding like situations. And I think that there are some groups who have been trying and they get caught up in the process because the process is cumbersome. And so, at some point though, I think right now there's a workload issue frankly. And this might not be the right time. We'll discuss that when we work on recommendations tomorrow. But I think it's a good time to start thinking about down the line, an outside auditor is not the right word because it sounds scary and punitive. Some sort of neutral organization that can help to collect the data that BLM needs to make tweaks to that contracting process and is to make available to people that are interested those organizations that help with that process that are outside of the BLM and can the Forest Service. They're called Ptax, Procurement something, something, that helps with people in nonprofits that are interested in becoming involved in government contracting starting from zero. So, I think there's opportunity here to help facilitate those organizations that are interested, really don't know where to start but keep the Federal agencies protected from that idea of potentially showing favoritism to one group over another which you all cannot do. But timing might not right. But I think this is really good for collecting the information that the board needs to be able to offer recommendations that would assist with that process.

Ms. Waddell: Hey, Celeste, I would offer a couple of thoughts because in the past, and I'll talk about off range pastures and corrals when we have initiated a solicitation. We had in the past a small business workshop, I think that's what it's called, an opportunity where the contracting officer would host a conversation with people. And this is before the virtual life. So, it was in person. And it was in conjunction with I believe SBA, with the Small Business Administration, the contracting officer would put out here is when the workshop would happen for that purpose. You're right, contracting, within the government can be complicated. It can be a long process. Developing a proposal for evaluation, you want to read all of the fine print and then what's behind it. There's-- Sam's registration and lots of different steps that I know our contracting staff is more than willing to walk people through and have when we've had solicitations that are open. And there's always a point of contact for people to call even in our notice of funding opportunity or assistance agreement. They're called grants management officers and she made herself available night and day, all day, all night to people through that process. And she had several organizations that it was their very first time doing it on their own. And she was there to help them through the process. You're right. There are organizations that host those and even people who charge attorneys or other people who will charge to assist you or create a proposal on your behalf. Obviously, we don't, I don't know who those people are. But as far as when there is a solicitation whether it's for a notice of funding opportunity or contract, the contracting officer and the grants management officer are available to answer any of those questions. Not to mention they're like, ask questions and instructions and step-by-step. I know-- if I was in the public and didn't work for

the government, I probably wouldn't get a contract because it's a lot of work. But there are organizations that have gone through the process, several of them. And I think once you get through the process, pull the proposal together, the contracting officer and grants management, they are great to work with. They are busy people. So, the fact that they take the time to talk with anyone who is interested during that process is really commendable. And I appreciate all the work that they do.

Dr. Perryman: Yes, thanks, Madam Chair and Holle. I want to segue briefly to another subject. And there was a lot of-- a number of concerns expressed yesterday in the public comment period over some of the mechanisms and logistics on the ground when gathers occur. And that's always been a concern of the board as well. We are concerned about that. And so, I noticed in our packet there's a brief statement on animal care and safety remaining a top priority. 99.76 injury free gather rate for lack of a better term. And I'm going to put commissioner-- on the spot here. The last peer review, this is for the board's education. The last peer review step I've seen-- correct me if I'm wrong, mule deer captures in the wild-- there's inherent risk when you're capturing wild animals. But mule deer as I recall, about the same number percentages, it's less than a half of a percent of mortality. And I think big horn sheep, maybe higher. Maybe 2%, some it where in that range. But that puts us right in line with other wild animal captures and holding. Am I still on the right track with that? I don't know when the last time I saw peer review.

Mr. French: You're right, spot on. And big horn's higher than that. But it's primarily, I guess you have to look at the technique for the capture. You know, big horn is generally a-- net gun from a helicopter and hazardous to both parties. At any rate-- if that, shooting a net gun at a running animal and then jumping out of a helicopter and pinning them to the ground, even with that, we're seeing a very low incident of injury.

Dr. Perryman: The point is, we're in line with other methods and other species with regard to care and concern and quality assurance, quality control. So, I commend you for that. And you know, keep going. We can't stop at this point. Vigilance is required. We can't just sort of sit on our own Laurels, so to speak. So, I just kind of wanted to bring that to the attention of the board. I yield back.

Ms. Carlisle: And is Ms. Bertola still in the room? In terms of that, where you are going through the internal auditing process you're going through, you have audited some of the gathers if I'm remembering correctly.

Ms. Bertola: We've completed 11 gather assessments so far.

Ms. Carlisle: So, I think that is ongoing, that's exactly what you're saying, you don't stop at that even though you're along the lines were what's considered appropriate sort of industry standard for lack of a better term. Doesn't always translate to like, hey, great. But that idea of refinement and continuing to dot those Is and cross the Ts. It's good to hear. We've had discussions just sort of on our personal levels of how to capture the public's interest in gathers and in being able to go to a place where they can communicate any frustrations that they're seeing with the gathers. And I mean beyond the social media postings that occur which you can't grab onto and do anything with. They spin everywhere. You can't tell where the original report is coming from. And that's difficult for the agencies to respond to. And so, when perceived or real violations of that comprehensive animal welfare protocol occurred during a gather, I think the public feels like they have no voice in reporting that out or getting information back about whatever their concern had been. Either we looked into it and checked this box or didn't and you're right and we're refining that and you're right and there's a consequence. So, I don't know if anyone has-- anyone from BLM in particular or Forest Service are there mechanisms for the public to engage in that in a manner that can be collected and identified and is-- the agency acting upon it?

Mr. St George: Could you reframe the question.

Ms. Carlisle: Yeah. Well, I'm re-thinking my answer. I was hearing you differently. Thank you for that.

Mr. St George: Then what? There are liaisons on the ground at each of those gathers. And we would encourage the members of the public to express their concern to those liaisons and we expect BLM to respond in coordination with its contractor. Yesterday in subcommittee we talked about several parallels to the way BLM administers its fire program. Wildfire program. And I kind of wish I had the props at this moment. But in BLM's fire program, there is something called the Red book. And it's about two and a half, three inches thick. And that guides the administration of every

incident. We have something very similar in the Wild Horse and Burro program. It might not be two and a half, three inches thick, it might be two inches thick. It guides the operations on the ground. And we expect both BLM and contractors to comply with those guidelines. And that we would take action where we have failed to comply. Again, similar to the fire program, there is a strong culture within the fire program of preseason preparedness reviews. An independent team from BLM goes in and reviews another organization's preparedness for that season. Do after action reviews and audits. And the culture accepts that review not as something punitive but as something with a growth mindset that we are going to do better to continue to ensure we are providing for firefighter safety and public safety. And then respond to the incident appropriately. We are working and Jerrie is in the lead of instituting the same sort of culture within the Wild Horse and Burro program of a growth mind set of understanding that these audits are for the betterment of the program. And we have mechanisms to receive that public comment and criticism and critique where we can go wrong. Holle' shared with me because we can go wrong. Humans are involved here, and we can make errors and make mistakes. Holle' shared with me an article from the journal of Equine Science that found that BLM Wild Horse and Burro gathers are considered as safe or safer than similar gather operations for elk, deer and caribou to the point you were discussing. Commissioner French.

Mr. French: If I could, just a follow-up question. I'm wondering is it SOP for the bureau to conduct a debriefing following each of these operations? Because I would think that would be the opportunity especially following it, similar to what the fire program does. There's a debriefing following the activities on the fire program to see where did we mess up and how did we perform in that. Because there is such a limited of number of contractors on the ground, I think they would welcome the debriefing evaluation audit very soon, following that. I'm wondering is that an SOP?

Mr. St George: We're going to pitch back to Scott and Jerrie. Did you hear the question?

Ms. Waddell: Before the lead in, I think Jerrie or Scott, whichever one-- there is a self-assessment tool. Therefore, several components to CAWP and Jerrie is moving in had phase 1 moving to phase 2. There is a self-assessment tool. There's also the tool where her team is assessing operations. And eventually we will move to this external assessment tool where members of the public would be able to participate in different ways. Does that mean that anyone that's on the ground can throw up their hand and say, I don't like that this is happening? They can say it, right? Freedom of speech. It doesn't mean that that's part of assessing the actual operation. I think that's part of what's challenging about this. The public feels very empowered to often weigh in on operations without maybe knowing all of the SOPs, knowing the instruction memorandums, the standards associated, the requirements, what's identified in the contract itself. So, there's a lot of opinion about the work being done instead of questions being asked. Go ahead, Jerrie.

Mr. Fluer: I want to add to Brian's comment how it relates to fire and incident management plan. In gathers we have an incident management manager for the overall operation tied to an incident manager's gather plan. So, there's an overall gather plan for the entire operation. And then of course we have what we call a contract officer representative on the gather that is basically in charge of the gather and working with the incident commander. Those operations are followed through a laid-out process. And I'll turn it over to Jerrie to talk about how CAWP is feathered into that. But we have a very structured approach. And as far as after a gather, we have gather reviews and debriefings and you know, to review after action.

Ms. Bertola: So just a couple of points I was going to make is that Ms. Carlisle was asking about the temperature. On the gathers that I've been to, doing the internal assessments, most times there's somebody at the trap, somebody at the public viewing and also at holding that's checking those temperatures. And there's constant communication behind the scenes on those to see if we are achieving that. We carry our own, double check, triple check to make sure that those things are happening. There's been times where, I've seen we're stopping for the day because of whatever issue has come up. I feel like, our specialists, this is all becoming second nature to them. It's been a learning process. It's going to continue to be a learning process. And that is how our CAWP is designed for all that feedback to keep coming in. How can we improve and make it better? How can we better explain ourselves internally and externally on what we're doing? It's been a learning process and we're working through that. So, the self-assessment like Holle' mentioned, Nevada has been excellent in setting something up. And it's simply going through and looking at our standards, how are we doing? And that's something that they can do, you know, on a weekly basis or at the end of a gather, depending on the size. We're encouraging that for our other activities as well. Because it's a good spot check, oh, I didn't-- that standard reads different

than I thought it read. It's a way for us to double check ourselves. Those are the ways we use the CAWP to help send our message out there. We are doing this and our people really care. So, I don't know if I answered your question fully or not. Those are the comments I'd like to add.

Ms. Carlisle: Yeah. Thank you. Appreciate that. I didn't mean to intimate that that is happening. It was the quickest, simplest example I could come up with. I know the board has been sort of poking away at exactly what you're talking about which is the fire model for something that is-- it's big in the public's mind. I know it's big in the agency's mind and the board's mind. This is a place where there's, you know, it's like going on a field trip. Highest risk portion of that field trip is your drive to wherever you're going. That same thing is happening in the program with the gathers. There's a lot that can go wrong and go wrong spectacularly. So, I'm pleased that you all are ticking off that long list of things to do to just continually refine that program. Anybody else?

Mr. Kuechle: Okay. Well, that puts us ahead of schedule. We have time. We come back from our lunch break at 1:30. We're looking at, you know, almost two hours. So, we can take an extended lunch break. When we return, it's our public comment period time. Again, just a reminder, we'll do virtual first then in person. If you would like to provide in-person public comment, please register in the back. You can all provide public comment one time over the course of these days and meetings to ensure everybody has the opportunity. And we will begin promptly at 1:30 with public comment. Thank you.

### **[Break for Lunch]**

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

Mr. Kuechle welcomed the Board and members of the public back to the meeting. He then went over the rules for public comment, either virtually or in person.

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

#### **Shari Frederick**

My name is Shari Frederick, and I would like to thank the members of the board for letting me comment today. You play a very important role, cause your role is to safeguard and be the fiduciary responsible for the horses and burros that are on public lands. I am also a fiduciary for public funds, I'm a treasurer for a government agency and I understand the responsibilities that you have today, and I appreciate your taking the time to listen to us. I have several points I would like to touch on. First is the overall treatment of wild horses and burros there are several areas where, the treatment seems to be, very damaging to them. And I know your responsibility is to maintain their safety at all times. This starts with the roundups. Some of them are traps, some of them are helicopter roundups. We have had documented and seen lots of damage to the horses and really no action taken on those. And if it was, you know, um, another horse, you have animal abuse, you have areas that you can do so certainly they are, um, you know, it's very just horrific to see the Foles being roped and, and broken legs out there when they're running at break neck speeds. So, very important to look at the treatment. Um, they move from the roundup. They're, they're split from their families. Horses are family oriented. The stallions are put together. The mares are sometimes separated from their young foals because roundups are done during foaling season, which depending on the weather may be all during the year. Again, another form of really animal abuse. Um, and then they're put into these warehousing lots, which really are more meant for cattle. Um, they're disoriented. They start having mental issues. Obviously, they may be then warehoused or get ready for adoption and just like a, a person, they are probably not in the right state. It's harder for them to, um, to be able to take time after going through this trauma, uh, to be adopted and to become a regular working horse because they've gone through this. So, again, I think the treatment of horses, the fiduciary responsibility really needs to be reviewed closely because the things I've looked at certainly do not show that, and it really shows animal abuse. Secondly, uh, you have requirements to review the, the herd management areas. They have, from what I can see, they have not been done timely at all. In fact, they're very delinquent important. You can't be making decisions based on old data. You've had a lot of roundups, I mean, thousands of horses are being warehoused and roundup. So, you really need to update these. Um, the incentive program that you, um, certainly the BLM has needs to be reviewed. I see daily horses and kill pens that are unhandled, they were just titled in the last day or month or week. How can they be unhandled and they're getting the thousand dollars incentive. Where is the due diligence? We need controls that are,

**Connie Ahrend**

Hello, my name is Connie Ahrend and I'm the vice president of a Wild horse sanctuary in the southern USA, thank you for the opportunity to provide my public comment. I would like to start with a quote from Henry Kissinger. Learn the facts, not just the slogans. So here's a question for the board. With the drought of the last years, and especially in 2022, does BLM have valid numbers on how much water is used for the cattle and sheep grazing on public lands? And then BLM administers 155 million acres of lease grazing allotments on public lands in 13 Western states? About 54 million acres of assessed acres fail land health standards. And your own data determines that livestock grazing is a significant factor. So why does BLM not apply? Paragraph 47, 10 0.5 of the code of federal regulations closure to livestock grazing until land health improves, remove the cattle before the wild horses, the removal of livestock will protect the land and the wildlife. And in reference to the AIP I would like to state even untitled horses are ending up in kill pens. I bought a wild horse mare from a kill pen in 2019, of course, as so often without a title accompanying the horse. Just because I requested a letter of confirmation from BLM in 2023, it came to daylight. The horse never had been titled and was dumped at an auction by the adopter before the one year waiting period was over. So how come BLM does not follow through and wonder why an adopter does not apply for titling? BLM is responsible for these horses and should stay responsible even after titling. To Mr. Perryman. This board demands respectful behavior. So why do you speak disrespectful about the wild horses? You called the wild horses' critters yesterday?

Mr. Kuechle: Ma'am, we ask that you respect the Board members and respect them with no attack. Mary, when you are ready.

**Mary Koncel**

Hello. Thank you for this time. My name is Mary Consul. I'm a program specialist with the American Wild Horse campaign and the proud adopter of a BLM mare and two burros. My comments today are focused on the Forest Service. They include both concerns and hopes for the future. First, we strongly encourage the Forest Service to increase its use of PZP fertility control, which is highly effective. Since 2018, almost 2,500 wild horses have been removed from Devil's Garden on the Modoc National Forest in California, largely by helicopter roundups in order to reach an AML of just over 200 horses. Additionally, the Apache sit Grieves National Forest in Arizona is currently conducting a significant bait trap operation of Alpine Wild horses without public notice. And during foaling season, the Forest Service has yet to implement PZP fertility control in these herds, meaning roundups are destined to repeat. But in Apache sit grief, a local nonprofit has offered to implement a fertility control program. We ask the Forest Service to accept this offer to better and more humanely manage the alpine horses. Second, we encourage the Forest Service to reevaluate AMLs to ensure the health of the herds under its care and the O'Chico National Forest. In Oregon, a new management plan calls for the reduction of the big Summit Wild horse herd from about 150 horses to between 47 and 57 horses. Besides endangering genetic diversity and vigor, such a low AML can result in the herd being decimated during a single harsh winter. Moving forward, AWHC asked the advisory board to support the following recommendations that prioritize humane and cost effective management of the wild horses and are advantage advantageous to multiple stakeholders, including the Forest Service, first, implement comprehensive PZP fertility control programs that could result in the end of removals. Such programs can be accomplished by taking up offers of assistance from NGOs. Second, reassess AMLs to support and increase healthy Wild Horse in burlled populations on the rage. Third, relocate captured wild horses in burros from active territories to inactive territories that have been reevaluated and determined to, once again, excuse me, provide suitable habitat. Thank you once again.

**Linda Kemp**

Hello, my name is Linda Kemp. I am a master watershed steward and serve as volunteer for Save Our Wild Horses. Thank you for listening to my comments. The 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act has designated wild horses and burros to receive first place in consideration on their designated lands. The board must recommend actions that do not advise breaking this law. The BLM by law must write herd management plans for each HMAs and include wild horses and burros on rule changing that pertain to their lands. It is very deceiving how AML numbers are used to accent overpopulation. They are over 50 years old and never scientifically arrived as published by the National Academy of Science. The last RM plan from Idaho shows a low allocation of 135,116 AUMs for livestock, but only 2,304 AUMs for wild horses. But surprisingly, 2,673 AUMs for wildlife like pronghorn, mule deer and upland bird species. This is BMLs Thriving Natural Ecological Balance. This causes a decline of wildlife population, especially the killing of wildlife. For cow to pasture on our lands, wild horses occupy less than 10% of our public lands, yet all our public lands and wildlife are in steep decline directly due to livestock grazing. The BLM has the authority to remove livestock at any

time from wild horse designated lands, 56 million acres were designated for wild horses and less than half is now managed for them. The land is now being used for other purposes. Release the wild horse in holding back to the lands, restore the genetic diversity of wild horses to prevent birth defects and extinction. Eric Marlborough, director of Western Watershed Project has established the minimum viable population sizes of 278 animals for small herds and 370 for larger herds. While the rest of the world is using wild horses assembly wilding to restore the land, here they are being falsely accused. It's extremely beautiful the way our wild horses are being rounded up and handled. The willingness for BLM to revise and review the CAWP is so needed.

### **Lorna Torrey Palermo**

Hi, I am Lorna, and I very much appreciate this opportunity to talk to you. I would like to speak to several key concepts and they are, solution focused strategies, collaboration, humane management, rewilding, and respect for ecosystem priorities. Humane management as defined by Jim Benson includes five things. Communications, relationships, respect, flow, and continuous improvement. If we strive for those things, I think we can make a difference. Wildfires, floods, wildly fluctuating temperature patterns and drought has let us know that change is with us and if we do not deal with it, it will deal with us. The Center for Biological Diversity estimates, estimates that approximately 30,000 species per year or three species per hour become extinct. This die off is being driven by humans. Extinction is irreversible. The BLM with 245.7 million acres and the Forest Service with 192.9 million acres are tasked with protecting America's public lands. Public lands and management can make or break the future wellbeing of this continent, if not the world. It's a huge responsibility, one that must be shared to be achieved. We have a crisis looming. We all need to work together to protect the planet. Um, I'm going skip everything I was going say and go down to, um, where are we need for change. Okay. So I think that many times we keep doing the same thing over and over because it's the way we've always done it and we don't keep a clear perspective on how things actually do need to change to meet the changing environment. Um, one of the things we really need to look at is public lands ranching. The other thing, of course, is the inhumane management of our wild horses and burros. We can live without public lands, public lands ranching. We can't live without the land. I will be sending you a written statement, I apologize, I didn't really get to any of my specific data. Roundups are lethal methods, though is incarceration and sterilization. We need to look at humane non-lethal methods of managing wild equines. Thank you.

### **Sheila Sterling**

Okay. Good afternoon. My name is Sheila Sterling, and, I ask that you please actually listen and take to heart with the people have to say, today, what is happening to the wild horses and burros is full on genocide of a majestic intelligent animals, horses, and burros who are very family oriented. They've lived for a thousand years keeping the balance of the ecosystem. Yes, I said that they actually create and keep the ecosystem healthy. You see, horses and burros do not and cannot digest seeds. So, as they travel and they eat and they defecate, they defecate out the seeds. They're planting the next generation for the food and shelter of the entire range. As this, as the rains come, plants grow, it is said that they have to be removed because to protect other animals, and this is just not true. The horses enhance and protect the environment. They're not starving either. I've heard that said, if they were, there wouldn't be thousands and thousands of sheep and cows being sent to graze on the very same land. Now those animals do destroy the land and they destroy the ecosystem because they do digest seeds and they pull up plants from the roots, which will not grow again. And we will be left with huge dust bowls of unusable land. And this hurts all of us. So, you know, the horses have always been a symbol of our freedom and our heritage. I also am totally against PZP because it poisons the horses, and it is a quiet genocide. 10% of the land, of the vast amounts of land that the BLM has is not a lot. It's not a lot at all. These horses are, are treated horribly. They're run down with helicopters, many young ones killed and removed from their families. They're stuck in pens and they're; they're left out in the baking sun with no shelter. They're poisoned, and then they're sent to slaughter using our taxpayer funds to misuse and decimate. Uh, and a species really must stop. You know, it's a sin against all of us and all that is good and right in the world. This must stop. We must start to honor our heritage. This is our heritage and our history. I think it's time we start to honor them and allow these horses and burros to run free. You know, they can coexist right along with the cattle and the sheep. And we need to stop allowing people to block the use of the water from the horses that should be made illegal right now. This is public land and it was put there to protect the environment. Thank you.

### **Stephanie Carnfield**

Stephanie Canfield, thank you for this opportunity to speak on the behalf of wild horses and birds, woman speaking on behalf of what, what is a native reintroduced species. And I hope that the um, board will acknowledge that there's research to back that up. I would like you to uphold your responsibility to the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burrow Act, to

acknowledge horses as an, as an important part in the ecosystem and, and acknowledge and utilize their contributions to the ecosystem. I also do not support the use of PZP for some of the reasons that we're already, um, spoken about. I would like the board to consider as hard as it is the importance of predators in the balance of the ecosystem. We can look to the wolves in Yellowstone, reintroduction of the wolves in Yellowstone as a, as a really good lesson and reminder of how without those predators, um, the other species don't thrive either. And I'm not talking about livestock care, I'm talking about native species. Um, the predators, uh, for wild horses are cougars, mountain lions, as we call 'em. Um, I also urge the boards to consider the psychosocial needs of horses. Um, that is an important part. I'm a licensed clinical social worker. They're sentient beings and they deserve our care, not just for their physical care, but their psychosocial needs. They're, they're herd animals. They, they make families like everybody's talked about. And anyone who's spent time with wild horses from afar where they don't know you're there so that you can just observe, you'll see that it's super important. Um, and it honestly makes me really sad that we, we have the arrogance to, to just brush that aside. That is really all I have to say. Muro, thank you again. Please take care of these horses. It's important to those of us who are, who are here speaking on their behalf. And it's important to people who, um, don't have this opportunity to speak up. Thank you.

### **Charlotte Roe**

Good afternoon. I am speaking from Berthoud Ohio, Berthoud Colorado, alongside our adopted wild horses and burros Um, and I'll focus on burros today. Uh, as with the wild horses, the BLM's mandate is to manage them as self sustaining protected species. That's not what we're seeing today. The BLM is actually managing them for extreme populations suppression and, and unprecedented removal from their legally designated habitat. As though we are listening to a broken record, we're told that burros are overpopulating because their numbers exceed appropriate management level AML, and that this harms the thriving natural ecological balance to NEB, AMLs have no scientific basis. We see that they are politically derived and frozen to keep giving preferential treatment to taxpayer subsidized livestock grazing. The National Academy of Sciences found that these population quotas were artificial and rigid and warned that removing burros permanently from the land could jeopardize the genetic health of the whole population. TNEB is an important concept of BLM. Cite it like holy writ, but is not once analyzed. TNEB with respect to any herd management area from which wild horses or burros are being evicted. Burros are not the problem for the failed land health standards of path of BLM's assessed rangeland. They're at one with a naturally functioning range ecology. They eat through office forage, they dig waterholes, they open trails for other wildlife and they help fertilize the ground. Their presence is dwarfed by millions of collect of commercial cattle and sheep, which do run down the land together with extractive industries. You can't claim overpopulation with puffed up numbers, but that's what's happening. The BLM keeps shrinking wild burro populations, uh, to unsustainable levels, but, uh, actually tends to double count the burros because of their coloration. Um, on successive days to compensate for spotty aerial surveys, BLM adjusts the final count by 25% to add to those, uh, present but not seen. Then speculative population modeling, which has nothing to do with burros multiplies the previous year's estimate by a typical expected growth of 20 to 25%. Again, nothing to do with burros. Why does this matter? It matters because in the case of the Black Mountain range, I'm ending my time, but I did deliver written comments. Thank you for your time.

### **Emily Raap**

Hi, my name is Emily Wrap. I'm a campaign manager at Nonprofit Animal Protection Group, lady Free Thinker. Thank you for the opportunity today to provide this public comment. This summer and fall, the BLM plans to remove at least 6,000 wild horses from their wild homes by cruel helicopter roundups, which have caused horses to suffer immensely and indeed die in the past, including from broken bones, snapped necks, lacerations, and heart failure. In fact, a lady free thinker analysis found that at least 245 wild horses died as a result of the 2020 helicopter, uh, as a result of the helicopter roundups between 2021 and 2022. This death toll doesn't even take into account the hundreds of horses who died from disease like equine flu after being captured and packed into holding facilities or the horses who were slaughtered after being adopted out through the Adoption Incentive Program and sold at livestock auctions. But not only are these roundups cruel, they're also costly and ineffective. According to federal records, since fiscal year 2017, the BLM has spent more than \$25 million in taxpayer money for the cruel helicopter roundups, and stated that the costs to round up a horse from the range and house the wild animal for life is up to \$50,000. Inhumane helicopter roundups have also proven ineffective at stabilizing horse populations as they cause wild horses to grow at a high to grow at higher than normal rates due to a biological phenomenon called compensatory reproduction. The BLM also claims that the roundups are to protect the land from destruction from the horses, but still allows 1.5 million cows to graze on federal land, which devastates our planet. Out of the 245 million acres of land, the BLM manages 155 acres are for livestock in just 26.9 are for wild horses and burros. By continuing this practice, the BLM is showing its not interested in protecting public rangelands or the welfare of

animals. I urge the BLM to do the right thing and stop the cruel. We Wild Horse helicopter roundups immediately. Thank you.

### **Dre Arman**

Thank you. Hello everyone. My name is Dre Armand and I'm the Idaho-Nevada Chapter Coordinator for Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, a membership based nonprofit organization consisting of over 10,000 members who seek to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting through education and work on behalf of our wild public lands, waters, and wildlife. The great state of Nevada holds the most public land in the lower 48 with more than 85% of the state belonging to the public. The BLM manages 63% of Nevada lands, the vast majority of public lands within the state. Many times interagency collaboration can hinder progress in land management, but that is not the case for the horse and burro issue in Nevada. This is a matter of providing the right resources and funding to BLM offices across Nevada to appropriately manage horse and burrough overpopulation. Nevada is a stunningly beautiful state full of unique landscapes that are rapidly losing their biodiversity. Due to horse overpopulations, many Nevadans rely on these public lands as a food source in addition to recreation, mule deer, bighorn sheep, the Lahontan cutthroat trout, sage grouse and more are losing their habitat at a rapid pace. As these under acknowledged symbols of the American West are losing their habitat, we are losing our natural food systems just as quickly. Proper management is needed for the sake of the horses themselves too. Uh, there are endless stories across the state of hikers coming across as starving or severely injured horse and feeling deep remorse for the horse. With a population of wild horses in Nevada doubling every four years, horse populations will continue to suffer due to their own overpopulation exceeding resources on the landscape. In Nevada, we are already removing cattle from the landscape in many areas, and horses continue to decimate landscapes that have not been grazed in years. Public perception and opposition to science-based management practices is one of the greatest hindrances to restoring Nevada's biodiversity and reaching AMLs within horse populations. If we don't tackle this issue at ground zero, we cannot expect to implement effective solutions across the Western US with more wild horses in the state of Nevada than all other states combined. We ask the advisory board to recommend that Nevada be prioritized within this ongoing conversation and within the budget for horse and burrough management. Again, the BLM manages 63% of the land in Nevada. This organization can work towards a healthy Nevada landscape and appropriate management levels as defined by the wild and free roaming horses and Burroughs Act. We just need to give them the proper resource resources to get the job done. Thank you so much for the time today.

Bryant Kuechle: Thank you, and before we turn to our next speaker, we have Clint Frady who was registered on the Zoom and dropped off. So Clint you if you would like it rejoin before we close the virtual session, and we sent a link to your e-mail.

### **Joyce Purtzer**

Good afternoon. My name is Joyce Purtzer and I thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm very concerned about the way the wild horses are being treated, that horses are losing their freedom and they're losing their family. And the claims of over overpopulation and scarcity of resources are simply not true. In 1971, there were 53 million acres that the horses were able to live on. Today there are 31 million. At every roundup, horses are injured and killed. They're then taken to corrals and crowded. Very often they suffer from disease. The majority of the horses remain here. Perhaps a few end up in pastures. But the ones I have seen are basically in, in, uh, horse, in, in corrals. The adoption procedure, which is really their only way out, only provides for a limited amount of horses to be placed again. And very, very often, many of these horses end up in slaughter. Uh, as far as the, um, forest Service goes claiming that they're, that they have no budget, somehow they managed to come up with over half a million dollars to take the horses out of the forest where they were living and put them into an auction which was unregulated. Many of them arrived in very, very poor condition. There has to be a better way that this can be handled as far as fertility control to me, in the most part, it really is not needed. The, the figure of 20% increase every year, I think is exaggerated. The AMLs, which are said are very arbitrary and GonaCon is a permanent sterilization. This is not anything that could be, that be, that could be used. I would like to complement the state of Colorado who's gone into partnership and is attempting to assume some responsibility for the horses here. I would like to see this done in other places. I thank you again for the time and for the amount of money that's been spent. I feel like the horses should be allowed to at least be re relocated to different lands and not left to languish in corrals. Thank you very much.

### **Mike Jenkins**



It's a privilege to be allowed to deliver a public comment. I'm a multiple adopter of wild horses. I have two and they're quite different from my domestic horses. I'm enjoying a two-year-old and a recently received yearling. My experience with the Adoption Incentive Program led me to an in-depth investigation of where these horses go after consignment to the adopter. I'm a Kansas resident. I live 80 miles from a large BLM off range holding facility. I live 65 miles from a federal corrections facility with a wild Mustang program. I live 50 miles from a notorious livestock sales barn known as a kill pen for equines. I live 40 miles from a family who adopted 12 BLM wild horses and disposed of them at that kill pen. I can say this with absolute certainty because I obtained, obtained through Freedom of Information Act request copies of the paperwork which consigned these animals to the adopter. I have photographs and records taken at the Livestock Sales Establishment, which confirms the date of their transfer as one year past the initial BLM consignment. The evidence I have gathered on Henry and Chandra Stackman in this matter is incontrovertible. It confirms from which source the family obtained, the animals that they received incentive payments, and that they dumped the animals into the slaughter pipeline shortly after being made liquid by the BLM. These are the facts in the matter, and they are not in dispute. The Adoption Incentive Program as implemented facilitates a nationwide cottage industry whereby adoption of wild horses is executed not to provide them with good homes, but solely to deliver them to slaughter. Multiple sites around the country facilitate the unlawful transfer of these animals. You have heard from previous speakers that this is a repeating saga of abuse. My work as a volunteer with Equine Rescue has made it clear that the operators of the slaughter pipeline use emotional blackmail and coercion to fraudulently obtain blood money from the well-meaning individuals and groups. This scheme is conducted using social media to execute a well-established cycle involving horses and burros as they exit the Adoption Incentive Program. The BLM, this advisory board and members of Congress are well aware of this problem. The 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act did not specify how long the horses must be managed by the BLM. The BLM has adopted internal rules and procedures, which curtail protections, which are supposed to be afforded America's wild horses and burros. These are the facts in the matter, and they are not in dispute. I thank you very much for allowing me to make a public comment on this day. June 29th, 2023 for the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board's Public second public comment session.

Bryant Kuechle: That concludes the virtual public comments session, and we have four in-person. If you are in-person and still wish to provide public comment. We'll have time in the session tomorrow.

### **Nicole Hayes**

Hello. Thank you guys for your time today and allowing me to speak. My name is Nicole Hayes and I am a conservation biologist with the American Wild Horse Campaign. I'm here today, today to talk about livestock, drought and resource allocation. As most of you in the room know, this past winter has been record breaking for the American West in Nevada alone. January to May has been the 13th wettest on record the Carson River Basin in Eastern California. And Western Nevada has had more than three times its median snow level. And the Southern Nevada Spring Mountains have more than 500% of their median snowpack. As of May, 2023, only 5% of the contiguous United States was under severe drought, none of which is located in the American West. So my question to the advisory board is how are these current conditions being taken into account By law? Removal of excess animals may only occur upon examination of current information. This brings me to livestock and resource allocation. According to the public employees for environmental responsibility or peer quote, livestock grazing mostly by cattle is the single largest use of publicly owned lands in the west. The BLM issues, 18,000 grazing permits covering 21,000 allotments across 155 million acres in 13 states. Though the department does not release a head count, it has been estimated that those permits represent about a million and a half, 1.5 million heads of cattle. According to the National Cattlemen's Beef Association in 2021, there were 93.6 million cattle in calves in the us. If we take the rough estimate of 1.5 million cattle on public lands, that equals less than 2% of cattle in the United States. I want to ask why so much emphasis and so many resources are allocated to a program with so little impact on the American cattle production, that is also the single largest reason for degraded range health. The BLM site's lay livestock grazing as by far the most significant cause of failure of an allotment to meet, uh, rangeland health standards. According to BLM field staff, 39 million acres site livestock as the sole cause of land health failure. When you look within the HMA more than half the allotments that fail standards for Rangeland Health, the agency has identified livestock as the significant cause of failure. If we take Nevada as an example, there are wonderful 48 million acres of public land within the state. Livestock grazing occurs on 43 million acres, while wild horses exist on only 14 million acres, which they also share with livestock. We've heard many people comment that in Nevada horses are the biggest cause of range degradation, but they exist on only 29% of this public land while livestock grazing occurs on 90% of it. In fact, in the past 50 years since the act was passed, more than 41% of public lands designated for wild horses in burros have been eliminated, while private livestock is still authorized to utilize these areas. Thank you for your time.

### **Tracy Wilson**

My name is Tracy Wilson and I am the Nevada State Director for the American Wild Horse campaign. The BLM is stated, it needs to reduce Wild Horse populations to AML before fertility control will work. But the reality is getting to AML and holding it is an unattainable goal. With the agency's current plans continuing to round up horses en masse while waiting to get to AML is not only proven to be counterproductive to the B'S goals, but it's costing taxpayers millions. It's been 10 years since the National Academy of Sciences recommended robust fertility control as a strong management tool. The BLM needs to use scientifically proven fertility control in a meaningful way. Used when over AML every birth prevented with fertility control is one less horse removed, one less horse, uh, at risk of entering the slaughter pipeline, or one less horse requiring funding to be held in long-term holding for its lifetime. We've already seen that fertility control works on a larger scale in the world's largest Wild Horse fertility control program here outside of Reno. In the first three and a half years of our program, we reduce the foaling rate by 60% with no roundups and population continues to decline. While some may say a program like this can only be implemented in a herd that is acclimated to humans, many of the VR horses live high on the range where they're far more afraid of people. And yet our team continues to trek into those wild areas to treat mares if they can do it. Imagine what could be done on a larger scale with more resources. Our program successes are being presented at one of the world's most prestigious, prestigious equine reproduction symposiums in Brazil next month. And a scientific peer reviewed publication is slated for later in the year. The summer roundup season is supposed to start in the coming days with 7,000 wild horses and burros targeted for removal. And yet the BLM plans to treat just 1600 with fertility control. We heard today the plan to treat just 390 mares within the roundup schedule in Nevada this year. If we accept for argument's sake that the nation's herd is at 80,000 wild horses and Burroughs, of which approximately 40% or th 32,000 are reproductive mares, a nationwide fertility control program should be targeting 22 to 25,000 mares or 15 times the current plan. We can't flip a switch to fertility control overnight, but BLM can take measured steps to recount reallocate resources and scale it up. We cannot spit at a fire and expect it to go out. If we are to finally have a truly humane, sustainable, tax efficient, and supported program, there has to be a significant change in priority towards on range management. One answer does not fit all but answers can be found in many areas. There are untapped resources outside of the status quo from hunters to veterans to partnerships with livestock permittees and more. There are opportunities to be explored with the common goal of maintaining healthy herds in healthy numbers. And we at American Wild Horse Campaign continue to stand ready and willing to assist and advise. In conclusion, I ask the board to recommend that the BLM take concrete steps to reform its current management program by scaling up humane fertility control programs even while an area is above AML. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

### **Tammy Adams**

Good day. Thank you all for giving me time today. My name is Tammy Adams. I'm a representative for Wild Horse education. I'm an environmental engineer and as a consulting engineer, I have completed and managed multiple environmental assessments, restoration and reclamation across the west as a scientist and engineer. Methods and data collection we're clearly defined and demanded on our federal state laws and agency policies. BLM has these same clearly defined rules under law for methods, data collection and reporting. Yet only once in the last three years have I encountered a gather ea, which provided Rangeland Health summary data as a supplemental piece of information. And that was Utah BLM Secretary Halland promised in her secretarial order to improve agency transparency and public engagement in the decision making process on blm.gov, it states their mission on decision making as science is foundational to transparency and trust. A statement made yesterday insinuated a plethora of misinformation on the Wild Horse and burro newsfeed from advocates every week. Videos, photographs and FOIA data are not misinformation. What I find concerning is in my research and multiple appeals is the lack of required data provided by BLM. There is no rangeland data for both livestock and wild horses and burros. There's no rangeland data from past removals demonstrating return to TNEV, no rangeland data over multiple years to establish a transparent and legitimate AML anecdotal information and withholding methods and data creates public distrust. It's also a slide form of deception. For example, the New Mexico Bordeaux, HMA has a hundred percent of AUMs allocated for livestock, zero AUMs for wild to horses at all on the entire HMA yet. Bordeaux wild horses have an AML based on zero AUMs and no range land data. The tour map from Tuesday had no key. When you say all tools, does that mean slaughter's back on the table? Science and data are fun, are foundational underneath a for law and policymaking and management planning. How can any management plan or decision about issues take place without transparency, science and data as its foundation? I suggest the board recommend that BLM transparently provide all existing methods and data for public review on the website. I'm going to just leave you with this little food for thought. Wild horses are a public resource permitted discrepancy from profit driven use that is allowed on a public resource only when the resource can produce a sustainable yield. I greatly appreciate your time and it's an honor to be able to comment. Thank you.

**Mark Boshell**

My name's Mark Boshell. I am the Deputy director of the, division of Public Lands in Utah. I first and foremost, I want to thank you for your time. I know many of you are here in your personal capacities, uh, donating your time and I appreciate that. I think we all do. Um, uh, I'm not going to say anything that the board hasn't heard and, uh, and that the board doesn't understand, but I think it bears repeating. Um, this issue carries serious and long-term implications for Utah and the West. Um, when the United States Congress passed the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, it declared these animals to be living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West. Congress then mandated the horses and burros be managed as an integral part of the natural system of public lands. Although this declaration of policy is clear, the specifics as to how to preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance is more complicated. Reasonable mines can disagree on how to achieve thriving range lands in concert with other uses of public lands, such as livestock grazing, when what seems to be indisputable is the basic and fundamental need for active sustained. And sometimes creative management helicopter gathers are critical to the BLM success of managing healthy herds on healthy range lands. Without the use of helicopters assisting in gathering horses and burros, the cost of wild horse and burro program would skyrocket while the effectiveness of removals would plummet. Helicopter gathers are the only effective way to gather horses in the remote and inaccessible HMAs throughout the west. If we care about the whole range and not just our famous accessible HMAs, often located near population centers, we must continue the use of helicopter gathers. Um, we've heard a lot about fertility control today and yesterday. Um, fertility control needs to go hand in hand with, with our gathers to make our, to make better use of our, of our dollars. I really appreciate, um, this opportunity. I think we've heard today from a lot of people that are passionate about this issue. There's no doubt about that. Um, but there's, there's no doubt that horses out on our western landscapes need to be managed for the benefit of wildlife and the benefit of other sensitive, wildlife. Appreciate your time. Thank you.

Mr. Kuechle: Okay. Thank you very much. That concludes our public comment session for today. Again, we have a third and final public comment session scheduled for tomorrow morning, and the virtual slots for that are full, however, we have the opportunity for in-person comment. So, if you arrive tomorrow at public comment, you can sign up as you enter with that public comment section. With that, we have about an 18-minute break and we want to begin at 2:45 for our panel discussion, so please, return promptly at 2:45. Thank you.

[Break]

**Panel Discussion: Drought, Wild Horses and Burros Presentations**

Mr. Kuechle continued the meeting by introducing Dr. Paul Griffin.

**Dr. Paul Griffin, BLM**

First, I would like to thank you – this is an organized panel to discuss the relationship between drought and climate change and wild horses and burros. There's no new normal in sight, the pace is fast and accelerating and everyone can expect this is going to be for years to come, and we'll keep moving forward in the interests of discussion. The panelists gain knowledge, and each gained through science, managerial experience and traditional understandings. They have long careers and their views are their own and should not be determined as policy positions for agencies they work for. We made it clear to panelists, this afternoon is an open-ended forum for board and panelists and the agency has no control over the content and views expressed. I intend to step back and hand it over to the chair and we can mainly learn a lot from the panelists. Let me introduce them. Each panelist will make opening remarks in the order shown on the screen. Matt Reeves with the U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station displays traditional modeling tools. And Tamzen Stringham, University of Nevada and many aspects including plants, soils, hydrology and safe deforestation. And Eric Thacker is with the Utah State University office, and experience with including -- John Wauconda, among other roles, the ranger department coordinator and now with The Nature Conservancy agency as Indigenous Partnerships Program Director. And his family roots have been aired long before domestic horses brought to the continent. And Dr. Reeves, if you are ready.

**Dr. Matt Reeves, US Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station**

Ready. Excellent. Well, thank you, everyone, for allowing me to speak to you today about data considerations from managing wild horses and burros in an uncertain future. As mentioned, I do work at the Rocky Mountain Research Station in Miss HOLA for range station issues. And we're going to talk about key resilience factors looking at approaches

the Forest Service is using in collaboration between the U.S. Forest Service system and I take a peek at climate change. One of the main points, I am hoping we can use consistent approaches using past trends and future trends about what with you know about wild horse and burro management. Pop quiz for everybody, if we look at these two sites, we ask which site will be more resilient to drought. Is it A or B? I am going to say it is B because I want it to be that way. A is cheap grass and we don't like that too well. There's a mixture of life forms there, and critically, we see perennials here and not here. That's the key. And it is because improvement and carbon we get from the perennial about you bulbaceous species, on the Y is the soil depth and green dots are the perennial grasses and it's almost always beating the peach color, the under grass soil, and especially deep in the soil because the roots go down. And that's what brings things together. And soil resistant to drought because of moisture retention. I talked about data consistency and mentioned in the comment period about the lack of data, and I think we're beginning to be at a stage where satellite and we have the ability to say something. This is a year in Utah, and what we see is the trend of perennials forks and grasses, the stuff with the yellow in the blue circle. That's whether the perennials have decreased since 1986. We don't want to see this, and critically, the last two years, and that would be 2021 and 2020 were the lowest on record. And this is a bad thing and don't want to see this when talking about the future. So, the reason it is so important to keep those perennials, remember, the soil and carbon component. There are other factors, of course, why we want to maintain perennials, but that's a biggy. Switching to the viewpoint of climate change. We have on the top here, what's called the RCP 4.5, and on the bottom RCP 8.5, don't worry about what this means, but recognize that this map, in the future, tells us that we're going to be losing annual production in the warm tones. And the cool tones, more likely gaining production. And production is not equal. We know it is divided amongst scrubs, trees, grasses and we don't want it to be only piece of the pie because of losses to the present day. This is of course over a long time period. How does this relate to wild horse wild horse and burros we use this as a determine nation, modeling approach if you will. We used this now 7 times in different years, recently on the Montgomery pass herd management area there, and we use it also in some NEPA cases and if we want to look at "What if" questions. Instantly you can apply these. And we start with the annual productivity and this is the mountain pass here, and we have average, below average and above average annual production, from 1984 to 1992. This is numbers per acre, you can't see them. Lower productions is the cool tones and warm higher productivity. You have the annual production, but not the entire story. That's what this landscape is here. The distance to water, scrubs, diet, those things. And in this case, the cool tones tell us the higher propelling of that forage is used or useful, and the warm tone is original out of reach, out of water or country is too steep or something else. We take all of these into consideration of the model. I would propose that the consistent modeling approach would go a long ways to debating everybody on the same page. Closing thoughts, looking at the impacts of forage for things like drought and light form changes as we move from annuals to perennials shrubs and understanding what that means for wild horse and burros would be critical going forward. Not just the quantity of forage, but also the quality, talking about pretty own here promote even. When it rains it will be droughty, and... This mindful approach, putting all of the data we have into a common modeling program, it gets us to what we can agree on, creating dialogue and improves decision-making over all. With that, I will yield the time to the rest of the others, thank you.

**Dr. Tamzen Stringham, University of Nevada Reno**

Good afternoon. So, as I was sitting here listening to public comment and my esteemed colleague sitting next to me. I thought about the research project I am currently involved in with Eric Thacker sitting to my left. I do want to talk about this, but I also want to make the comments -- I will start with the comments not on the slides and then go through the slides. I am a range management ecologist, commonly called a rock kicker because I spend my life living in the dirt, out on rangelands. I just got home from about a four-week stint. I see horses, but that's not why I am out there. They are beautiful and I like to look at them. I am not there to quantify the condition of rangelands through a modeling process. And I have done that now for -- 400,000 acres in Nevada. If you want to do a deep dive in data on plant communities, conditions they are in. We see the impacts of drought and also of wet years like this year. It is really important talking about rangeland health and rangeland functionality, that not every piece of land is the same practice when I am up in northern Nevada up to Elk Grove, those areas are much more resilient than Tonopah and I looked at the conditions from Galena, Nevada near Area 51, and over to Tonopah to the California border. I can tell you what is happening and I will not provide data today, but I have it if you want it. Mass scale off of a small shrub in that part of the world and drought-related. There are other shrubs suffering and the horses that live there are primarily eating shrubs. There's no shrubs in that understory. And there's a higher elevation, where the grass is essentially comment opponent. But most of that should desert. Has HMAs on it livestock eat grazing it. And overuse. Cattle will be removed and that happens in Nevada with EAs, but can't be done with horses and we need to have a management plan moving forward looking at the individual HMAs and climate change and they are going to vary and make decisions based on that model about what the caring

capacity will be, and it cannot be based on annual production, but a long term understanding how production is declining with climate change. Past that and getting involve with the body scoring methodology. I have to confirm we would see significant changes in body score across HMAs based on elevation and location of the HMAs. Unfortunately, we don't know that occurs in the larger portions. I don't have data from below Hauffy; a little bit from Cal thicken. And data camera, where they have been set up cameras and horses trigger its camera and camera takings the picture. We utilize learning from these datasets and the machine learning tells us whether a horse, cow or deer is present, what's tripping the camera. We can sort of the horse photos out and it with human ID sample brought out from the modeling context. Then we use random data sets within specified seasons, so spring, summer and fall to lose body condition score. Utah State works with us and trains people on how to do body condition scores and then score a subset from the students and then apply an individual factor for each of the body division scores. It is quite a process but used pretty well. We use those for the body condition score within trapped locations overall and the covariate influencing it. Is it elevation, growing season length, a number of different covariate we look at. I will show you a map of where our data exists. This is current data and each with an HMA we have camera traps on. And unfortunately, I forgot my glasses and can't read this. There should be body condition scores, but I can't see it. I can see the colors. Each of those has a body condition score on it with red being -- read it. 4.3 to 4.5 and then 5. Okay. The red one is the lower one and blue the higher one. We want horses to be at least above a 4. Pretty thin, actually. You notice we pick up red ones that's hotter and dryer on this map and picking up blue ones where it is cooler in weather. The next layer I wanted to bring up is, this is a spring layer, known water sources that USGS produced for our part of the world and we can overlay the spring layer giving us an understanding how far horses have to travel for water, similar to what you are try doing. Notice as we move south, the amount lowers substantially. And when we get into drought situations, it is not whether it is for HMA, but if there's a water source. A combination of forage and water, and as horses are standing or living near a water source because they have to have water, the areas around that water source, you can get concentric circles of degradation and water because they can't travel far enough and get to forage. To give you an understanding how drought impacts horses water sources and would be good for HMA goes forward and also help you understand that when we say there's a lack of forage in HMA, it is a lack of fromage that a horse can get to that's found by water. That's where I am going it leave it. I have a really pretty picture. There they are.

#### **Dr. Eric Thacker, Utah State University**

Well, it is nice to get to clean up behind two great scientists. And this presentation will look really good, I hope. I decided to focus on the grazing aspect. I have worked in range and worked on everything from resting to grazing and even wildlife damage and endangered species. Horses I have been working on for about ten years. There's something unique about the Great Basin and most of our horses occur in the Great Basin. I want you to pay attention to the green line. This is the phenology, and this is the growth curve over time in a particular year, and if you watch the graph moving from screen to screen, bouncing up year to year, it means the higher the peak goes, forage and the how long you have vegetation on the landscape. What gets overlooked the question, how long do you get to produce most of the forage for the animals, what's the timeframe? Three? It is actually closer to 60 days, depending on elevation and maybe narrower from 35 to 40 days, and you might have the accumulation of that, and what that means the consequence? The Great Basin all is produced in a relatively short window. Let reason I bring it up is because I think it is important to keep in mind, April and May, generally whether this happens in most of the Great Basin, a great time for the plants, and also mules and horses, mules drop their fawns early May. And sage grass, what do you know? Early May. The reason is they time their birth with the green up and take advantage of the nutrient-rich forage and grasses. Specifically talking about species that overlap and don't overlap. Mule deer, deer horn, browsers and prong horned in Utah eat 60 to 70% of shrubs, guess what? In April and May, how much of their diet is shrub? None. They primarily focus on foraging and grass because in the last months of pregnancy they all need to lactate. These will make sense when I am done. We only think about drought in a single year. It happens, snows a bunch, rains a bunch ever we move on. The reality is, and not a lot of good data when you lay grazing over the top of the drought. If the research suggests if single year, you still have a one-to-two-year lag in production, so just because we're no longer in a drought according to the weather services it is still trying to recover from the drought. Arizona and Montana, we can draw conclusions, they are the same. And if you have drought further, and the length to recover, if you have a 3-year drought you are talking 4 to 5 years of recovery. I have spent a reasonable amount of time to understand grazing practices, my focus is not so much what we're doing the drought, but what in fact we're doing after the drought brought, we often think about we need to take care of the drought and plants have well adapted to handle the droughts and they go dormant, their way of protecting themselves from the drought. Put a pin in that. We want to be sure we're giving plants a chance on the back grazing, I am talking about elk, horses, cattle, sheep, and we as humans have managed grazing. We determine the type of animals, number of animals, the length of time grazing in a

particular area. The timing and sensory, how much of that foraging is taken every year? With livestock, these are the principles we abide by on grazing across the landscape. Dr. Reeves gave you a really good clue how it should look. Our stocking rates should not be dying age, based upon conditions. And a lot of livestock predesires going on with 30% fewer animals in order to plan and adjust for that. However, when moving to wildlife and horses, how many of those principles do we manage? We have one. This is just reality. We have one. There are some things we can do with hunting pressure and I am sure wildlife biologist in the room talking about ways to manage the landscape. The way we control that is by the number of manuals, even livestock are looked at primarily by what's on the landscape. The reason it is important. Sorry. Here is forage production on the Onaqui, and I picked it because most in the room know what I am talking about. In time, what is the most notable thing about production. The only constant it is constantly changing and there's no constant I put a Lynn there to make you feel better, that's actual production. Especially in the Great Basin we see large swings in production. Go back to the grazing condition, how do we manage grazing in a highly manageable system. Controlling numbers in a given year. In bad years you take animals off and in good year, add them on. And I would like to know well before the grazing season starts, how many animals are on landscape, currently not available. Historically, we started in the 50s a conservative stocking range, and reducing the number of years we have too many animals on the landscape with our grazing animals. Thinking about our wildlife and horses specifically, and important to remove animals in a timely manner, and pointing out that's a difficult task. And means as the numbers increase, you will be grazing too many animals in half the years is what it amounts to. This is a cautionary tale, and two points. This is a project that Dr. Reeves is part of. The graph on the left is precipitation, which is bouncing all over the palace. If the land is healthy, we expect it manage the precipitation. Good and bad years, but stable over time. On the right, that's the forage year. And lost about 10 percent-ish of forage production since late '80s, early '90s, does that concern anybody? It should. 10% is more than you think. The concern is if you keep the same number of animals on the landscape during that time, you are compounding that effect, meaning literally driving it into the debt. A cautionary tale. If we don't manage appropriately, I am talking about all animals, not just horses specifically, the outcome of this is real. In fact, in this year bison, horses, stress tests cattle and it is messy. The last point I want to make is back to the wildlife thing. I am playing a little bit off the body condition score, studies that Tim mentioned. Take everything with a grain of salt, with you we have not had a lot of change in range condition. That's alarming. And a lot of animals on the landscape show variation in landscape. And even talking about managing horses and setting aside horses and just talking about wildlife. Going back to the window, forages and grasses, you'll horn and wrong horn are heavily relying on the 60 days and no, their diets don't overlap horses entirely, but in the 60% window, one hundred percent overlap. If you have too many animals taking the grass and are compete clock for the same forage, it can have pretty dramatic long-term outcomes for the population as well. And also recognizing as the doctor pointed out, we're losing precipitation and don't get as much as we are used to and some of the problems can be exasperated bait for the future. And with that, I will leave you with a nice picture. Thank you.

### **John Waconda**

Thank you. First, let me say thank you for the invitation to join your group. And I appreciate and certainly understand the challenges, roles and responsibility all of you have, as public land managers, and these who are responsible for addressing a large challenge, and in Reno, where there are many social public attitudes, concerns, values, that come to play in additions that surround managing wild horses and burros on Federal lands. And I appreciate and am somewhat can relate to that. I retired from Federal service, had 32 years of Federal land acknowledgment experience, first with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and then the U.S. Forest Service. I do have somewhat of an understanding of the complexity in areas that are being discussed and appreciate the role in the participatory environment that has evolved in making and helping make these decisions about how to deal with wild horses and burros. As Paul mentioned I work with The Nature Conservancy now, and I do have other experience that I think lends itself well to your conversation and meeting today. I am a livestock producer, and very fortunate to carry on this tradition that has been handed down in my family for multiple generations. We have grazed land on Tribal trust land, but also it is addressed and participated in grazing on deeded land as well. Which myself and my family have been responsible for carrying. And know the challenges in regards to multiple uses of land and the complexity with multiple species. And I can appreciate and relate to some degree the challenges that we all address as managers and myself, a producer, and also a farmer as well, too. And I have plenty to keep me busy and thinking, which is what I do late at night or early in the morning and using a tractor and a hoars. And what our responsibilities are for taking care of the land and taking that seriously. My perspective here, I hope to offer from a little bit of perspective of an indigenous person who has experienced land acknowledgment in various ways, and tribal trust land and keeping with my neighbors and relatives who are also producers who live on Indian reservations and also dealing with Federal horses and livestock conflicts. So, I hope that a little bit about what I say today is taken with that, in that

context. I do also want to say my perspective here today reflects myself and my experience from my Tribal knowledge and experience, which is one of only 567 tribes across the country, and many diverse people, and traditions, and culture, and I am here in New Mexico, which I am situated along the beautiful mule grand valley, and fortunately was blessed this year with large runoff and irrigation water, but also quite familiar with years in which there are water shortages and larger conflicts between wildlife and livestock and horses, when it comes to water, and so I do say that my experience here is within that context of that race and of that people. Our Pueblo people here in Mexico were introduced to horses as part of a time in our history that was not very good. It was a conquest by Spanish coming from Mexico, who introduced horses to our people, and it did not come in a partnership nor a friendly relationship. It might have started that way, but it essential was a conquest, and the introduction of horses to my people also introduced other parts of our colonial domination that we're not very well and not very well taken because of slavery, fortitude when working for survival of another people, who were intruding upon our traditional and ancestral lands, however, they brought the horse and it did change our culture and tradition in many different ways. We did use horses to allow us to travel and transportation over larger distances, but horses were also used in a utilitarian way, and our people competing for survival during very harsh times and depending on our food source, and that's not something known or understood in our culture. We rely on our environment and our systems, our natural systems both plants and animals for survival. And throughout Centuries of trying times, we had depended upon many types of animals. Animals that normal society would not think edible, or even fathomable to use as a feed source. Horses, burros, were one, and our culture and tradition basically is living within nature and what we are blessed with surrounding us as a people and our environment to be able to live together, to be able to survive, to be able to be endure conditions that are not always favorable and relying on many food sources and in relation to our existence. So, with that in mind, we do have historical cultural positions revolving around this. And rather ranging and livestock production is a part of life given to us because of our placement on lands, Indian reservations that restricted our travel, restricted our mobility tore able to travel and utilize different landscapes, for survival, and many of our tribes were located on less desirable lands and the only suitable life was agriculture and livestock production, and doing what was given to us, and one of them was the horse. We used it in ways which it supported our lives, and it was a subsistence as well, too. Being able to rely on tools such as the horse to be able to make our lives easier and being able to utilize what we could and continue our survival and subsistence off the land. I do also know there are many challenges that the livestock, wildlife and horses that utilize the same forage and water, and it is quite apparent right now, today, many of our Tribal reservations have conflicts, and those species that are dominating are curtailing livestock reduction and degrading grasslands and dominating our water systems, near the desert environments, water is very controlled and very well evidence that horses, feral horses are controlling and restricting some of our traditional and cultural ways that have never been -- at the end of the day in light of drought and situations and not being able to aggressively manage our horse populations. I do want to say, there are tribes I am aware of and others you also might be aware of using Tribal sovereignty, and being able to take more aggressive action in managing horse populations and that certainly is a situation and action that is thoroughly within the scope of Tribal sovereignty, and as Federal land managers, being able to work in partnership with tribes is certainly not only mandated by governmental administration and administration requirements and rules and regulations and consulting tribes, and I hope addressing our horse and bureau challenges certainly not excluded from Tribal participatory decision-making processes. That much of our public land today was once ancestral lands of American Indians, Native Americans and indigenous people. So, I would expect that these decisions are on the advisory group here, and decisions that are shared and inclusive of Native American tribes, Tribal governments, represents, and the values and input that is collected from that participation is going to vary place by place. Social, cultural tradition, and respect with the tribes in many places and is not consistent and taken as universal just as my thoughts and perspective today are not reflective of other tribes and values of other tribes throughout the country, it varies. However, I would strongly advocate, the decision-making, wherever it takes place or how it gets done, that it includes our Native American communities and community leaders who often have a large contribution to share with us. And I have worked with various tribes here in the southwest, and many of these experiences and have directly addresses Federal horses on specific type of reservations and animal control ordinances were developed to aggressively manage horse populations. And as a Federal BIS line officer upholding Tribal and governmental authority, have no ability to pass decisions or regulations that were made, even though they go against my personal particular values, I have to uphold Tribal sovereignty and that's for them to manage horse populations or wildlife populations, just as they have done to address the basic species in our watershed environments. Plants and animals, and I think that ability allows us to live in a better relationship and not being particularly favorable of one type of species or another, which there are certain conflicts that create imbalances in our natural environments. So, let me just say, I have been working and have had experience with tribes, where aggressive management actions have been taken. For the -- burro and horse population and certainly that decision should be upheld, and certainly the advisory group are familiar with that and can gain more information how that

relates, and essentially their desire. I am essentially aware of the degraded conditions that originate from these conflicts, excluding livestock production, excluding wildlife and it has happened on some Indian reservations here in New Mexico. I should have taken a picture, a couple of days ago, along the interstate, and honor that reservation, where sand dunes are now present and horses are barrel hanging on themselves after they included livestock, the pueblo, excluded livestock and graded conditions, and dominate all water sources that are nearby, and have excluded wildlife populations where they were present before. The other impact was the lack of forage, and for wildlife or livestock, is the lack of grasses that certainly impact being pollinated and being able to essentially pollinate plants and species that are necessary for healthy ecosystems, certainly we're at that stage. And we have many decisions to make, and I hope that there are solutions that can be made so we can -- if possible, support to aggressively manage when these conditions warranty and actually take place. I am very familiar with the U. such forest policy and very aware of challenges ahead for the U such forest population and the public has misunderstood about the presence of feral horses on public lands, and have taken a very strong opposition to management actions, yet, I think are essential necessary to avoid degradations to our environments that are irreparable, or very costly to be able to restore degraded ecosystems and I am sure many of you have examples where that has taken place, and being able to restore those are quite the challenge and requires such large investments of public funds to restore it. There has to be a stronger way to address opposition to manage and opposition or misunderstood or ill-informed public about the conflicts that do exist. And myself, as a Tribal member, certainly, quite concerned about our policies within our Tribal community about taking more aggressive action when necessary and certain conditions. And I appreciate that opportunity to speak with you, and I am sorry, I don't have slides or pictures of the scenario I have described to you. There are many and I have been to many places on Tribal lands where the challenges that you are facing on public lands are occurring as well, too. I just hope there are some meaningful actions we'll all take, and taking on this water responsibility, rather than ignoring it or thinking that [Indiscernible] one exists. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. Thank you very much.

### **Panelist Discussion**

Ms. Carlisle: Now we have time for the board to engage with any of the panelists, and I just want us to sort of watch time. I will watch time and give you all a heads up. But we'll also have one more presentation about the population modeling and we can gauge discussion about that, and we want to keep track of that. I will keep track of time and we'll start with Dr. Lenz.

Dr. Lenz: I understand from your comments the studies shows horses maintain their body weight when other species loosen there's. My memory is not so great, but 25 or 30 years ago papers were published and comparing horses to cattle and maybe sheep as well. When you have the forage, the horses did begin fine and I think the cattle lost weight and didn't go we will. And theory was horses are high fermenters and the cecum behind the small intestine, as posed to the rumen, in front the of the small intestine and maybe why they did so well. And often they have upper and lower incisors, whereas the originals don't. Have you read any articles?

Dr. Thacker: I am not a physiologist, but I have enough experience with horse and cattle. Specifically, if you look at the rate of passage, horses have a much faster weight of passage. Current theory, if they are not fluctuated like the others, they are better adapted to consuming forage. The concern that I have, if they are not fluctuating in terms of other animals and condition, then waiting for poor health of horses before we take action and might likely lose -- we should take to the range first and it will take care of the animals.

Dr. Lenz: I think they graze 16 to 20 hours a day, and although they don't have a gall bladder there built to constantly.

Dr. Thacker: When looking at stocking rights, horses have grazing and higher rates of passage and well validated they consume more feet per body weight more than anything on the earth.

Dr. Stringham: We were thinking hypothesis was a tool to determine when to remove horses from range, and we have come to the conclusion that it is not the tool. That horses, one because they are behind up perimeters can forage and poor quality as well. But they can also range U further than other animals from water. When we see really thin horses, we're already at a range where they are really degraded and that's when we see skinny horses and at that point in time, we may be at a threshold for recovery of the range itself. Those are the things to consider. What we look at on a cow, determining when to bring her home and feed her hey is very different than a horse.



Dr. Lenz I think that a full body condition score is not necessarily a bad thing. When I look at horses, I think that you ought to see maybe a slight image of the last rib and certainly able to run your fingers down the side and feel the ribs. That would be ideal and society as we move from not using our horses every day, and society moved in horses 5 + to 6, whereas 4, 4 1/2 is fine.

Dr. Thacker: The other thing I will add in conscious of time and it is important. Horses are also able to handle landscapes that are already been degraded. For example, if you take a sagebrush ecosystem and grasses and almost unuse and to cows and things low on the list, and r- but horses can do really well on that. The greater landscapes, the other species are lost to begin and the horse is still able to contend with that, and in fact, a lot of horses are already living in that scenario.

Dr. Perryman: Yeah, to -- could you guys expand on this concept? I think it would be good for the board, and for those watching as well in Internet land and in the audience. Expand a little bit on the idea of ecological potential. And if you get a sequence of drought years from your grasses you added up earlier, you get a sequence of drought and the production is below average line, and yet, the number of grazing animals are still well above that line, so to speak. There are thresholds that can be crossed that you may never recover information and those are the things that we're concerned about talking about degradation, can you expand on that a little bit. I know all of you three are qualified, but whoever would like it --

Dr. Stringham: I will take a stab at it. That's been my life for the last 15 years, modeling the edge logical range conditions in the West. The concept of pre-settlement condition, which has been used in range science for years as the standard for determining whether or not a range land is degraded. I would say the range science protection is moving away from that. That one, the plants that developed back into the 1800s, the plant communities, or developing under a different climate than we have today and coming out of a little Ice Age and a lot more grass at that point in time than today, and we have a significant legacy grazing effect occur with settlements across the west, and there are many places in the range lands in the Western United States that have not recovered from the grazing impact and never recovered. And the plant communities that adjusted to the heavy use whether set off and was occurring is less palatable today than they were at the time of settlement. And the number of APMA's livestock has been reduced and MLA and -- yet, we don't see improvement with millions of days of many range and that's a threshold event. If we're going to compare lands to the 1850, that's not fair. And I know the range land is moving away from that and assessing health-based off of disturbance ecology and state and transition models that the scientist community is developing today. If you are in a shrub-dominated system and the reference condition would be fifty percent grass and fifty percent shrub and now you have a 90% shrub, removing animals from that will not bring the grasses back. That's just a fact. And what we need to say, the land experienced a lazy grazing event and this is not a current management issue, but a historical un with. If we talk about setting the number of horses out there, and we need to also be considering to what they have done to the HMAs they are grazing in and if the MMAs experience their grazing and the number reduces just for the sake of the animal, and maybe the grazing will not recover, but the other animals and the horse, we need to consider what they are living in. Things are changing, science is advancing.

Dr. Reeves: I wanted to bring it back home to the modeling idea. In the modeling approach I sort of talked about, you notice the trend in the perennials I talked about and that doesn't occur everywhere, effect, but leveraging on what Jansen said, you take the trends at all of the different locations and do the things when they pop out at us looking at the nation, increasing the abundance of invasive animals, but also increase in the wooded species, throughout. One of the things when we use our model a little bit out in the future, we is project the things we see, opinion you can readdress functions of what they mean because of these trends, maybe they are going up, down, sideways, but you can leverage those trends to help you make better decisions.

Dr. Perryman: Based on a current ecological possibly, rather than some perceived ecological potential than it was in 1850 or 1804.

Dr. Reeves: You will remember which is more resilient pop quiz, which everyone failed except for me. The one on the left the annual grazing situation, that's not coming back without real help.

Dr. Perryman: Without additional inputs it won't return to anything like it was ten years before that. And something from the little Ice Age climate period. Yeah, so. Eric?

Dr. Thacker: The only thing I will add to that is a project we just finished up. The most alarming thing that came up, looking at most sites burned, mostly 80% were sagebrush or juniper, so classic vegetation, and the condition prior to burn played a huge role in setting your expectations for recovery, and meaning if it is messed up and cross the threshold, no amount of hope is going to help. And with that, doctor, adjust our expectations and what Matt is telling us, you need to look at what things are trending to and do it based upon that arrearage than desired conditions, referenced conditions.

Dr. Perryman: Or if we pull all of the animals off, it will become something it used to be. Something like that. And it is important. And you guys talked around it but not specific you can do it, and many of these habitats around the watering holes we're talking about are seasonally -- important is not a strong enough word, but seasonally critical habitats for all kinds of animals that are out there. From squeaky dogs to birds, to domestic animals to horses to big game. Jim and I have had these conversations time and time again. These are critical habitats, and whether these animals show up for the time of the year, they need to have those habitats there in some form so they can use them, and they get there and they are because they have been degraded and they have to go some other place. And anything you have animals move ago cross the land, all kinds of bad things can happen. Are you more exposed to predation, and water, hunger stress, and just stress, and that is important over time, and that can play into next year's recruitment. And some of these populations in decline, at least regionally declines, so this is big stuff we have to be cognizant of, talking about the seasonal habitats and trying to maintain their functionality and ecological potential, so the other animals out there on the landscape will have them when they need them as well. Thank you.

Mr. French: I think this is a great saying way into a comment that I had early this morning, talking about AML and AUM. And all of those numbers we utilize historically, and it comes back something Eric said to me at lunchtime, there's a huge difference between recovery and restoration, and we talk about restoring habitats after a fire or lazy and grazing event, and we're finding out now, that's not possible. Recovery is something to stabilize what you have left. I think, you know, if you go back to the comments that I made earlier this morning, I think that makes the argument that I think we should really take to heart, as it applies to establishing the grazing and/or utilization standards for the piece of ground, whether it be for cows, big game species, or horses, many of these habitats that we establish these boundaries on, whether they call them big game units, HMAs or grazing allotments, we established a caring capacity and vegetative community that existed at the time when we put the numbers, assigned those numbers, whether AUMs or AML. And I think a lot of us would be been in the field or a lot of years observe this, be we're not seeing a proportional return back to that pre-legacy event. It seems to be leveling off and as Doctor Perryman was talking about thresholds, once you achieve it, even with the drought cycle and preset versus productivity. It didn't come back. The production didn't come back preponderance of the evidently when the water, the preset came back, and that's your threshold you are talking about. I guess what I am saying, it is a complicated concept, but it is something that I don't think we really considered, when building those management protocols around those numbers, and I think it is something that we're going to be talking about in a lot more detail down the road because if we're going to be successful with regard to healthy landscapes, we're going to have to recognize that production and in that production potential looks like.

Dr. Stringham: Let me make a few more just generalizations here. In the great basin, this concept, I like the concept of maintaining what we have, versus trying to restore something, and the data shows that if you are in the five data pre-inch zone, trying to get any data back to the way is used to be, and we're not there, and maybe science will come up with a golden bullet, but we don't have it now. And the largest biome in Nevada, we fail miserably, and unsuccessful. Being able to reinvests in the community. And up to 12, we get about thirty percent and when we get above 12-percent we decent need to do a lot to restore those systems and we need this think about how approach the management. What's the quality of allotment, the HML from a plant mapping, and soil compliment mapping perspective, and lay over the top of that, the extreme woodies coming in. We knee in the Western United States, we have more than 18 and 19 pictures that didn't exist in 1950. And what does that do not data? Research and the tree, the size of the tree, they are drinking 8 gallons a day. We're creating hydro logic drought by not helping the wood lands and helping them to expand. And if there's 12 20 per acre drinking 8 gallons a day. The meadows are drying out and critical habitats of meadows and water are declining as we watch trees march across the landscape, and when they burn and no understory and crown fields, we get tea grass and we're cooked. That's something to think about as an approach to landscape. It is a really big puzzle with very few solutions right now. So --

Ms. Carlisle: I think we're all feeling kind of bummed out right now. [Laughing]. It is a hard place to sit in the advocacy chair and think -- I mean, quite frankly, I don't want to be on the board right now because it is a no-win situation, trying to think about how do we advocate for these horses and important for American people to remain on these landscapes in multiple use and regardless of you want it to be. And the blame game between who's doing more or less is moot at this point, and it doesn't matter. That said, it is very difficult to try and figure out how to, I don't know if how to explain is the right term. How to wrap our heads around the idea that, you know, I mean, it is true, the numbers look like there's favoritism for some uses over others, and of course, the management is different. In terms of cattle, you may not be grazing them the number allocated, and there's actual use and allocated use, but we can't see the information. It is happening in a field office to field option basis and it looks bad, we're removing animals saying habitat doesn't support them and putting out more of a different type of animal, but you all have not relying on that, and you are annualizing the system to support that process, so how do you speak to that idea there's an inherent unfairness between the user groups. I see it as a stopping point for forward progressing, and we have been there forever.

Dr. Thacker: Wow. Um, I have thought about this some. That's a pretty difficult question. I think there's something I learned when I took a population biology chance helped me think more clearly about these systems, especially when you start talking about animals and populations and you can't think of them as individuals. The result is to maintain the population over a landscape over time. So, the question is, what do we need to do to keep horses and mules there on the landscape, and important not to think about the individual because the population is here to stay. Changing our thinking a little bit and thinking long term about populations and not necessarily individuals, and that's one thing that would help frame it differently for a lot of us. Secondly, the range community has been preaching this for a long time. It has to start with the base resource and the base resource is the land. Science doesn't make decisions, so I can't give you that answer, Celeste. I often tell my BLM partners, I have the easy job. Tell them what the science says they have to figure out what to do with that. First off, we have to think about the resource, which is land, being realistic about what it can do and not do. Second, I tell my students all of the time, horses, cattle, sheep, deer, they are not magic. All range management is, managing plant and animal physiology together. That's it. It is that simple. Not that it is easy, but it is that simple. There are two questions to approach this of the perceived imbalance, um, I don't know if I have a good answer for that. I can sit down and go through numbers and I calculated ALMs mule there and horn and elk, and the horses are winning that game by a large margin. I don't know so fair is the right way to approach this. That's all I got.

Mr. French: To be honest with you, I think it is a fair discussion for us to be having right now because perception is reality, and I think -- I was just thinking we're on the same wavelength, and thinking about the standpoint of the physiology and the horse having the ability to thrive and sustain itself, in marginal conditions, gives it that ecological or at least a genetic advantage over some of the species trying to compete for the same resources at the same time. So, the AUMs we're discussing are that the horses are doing better across the board, and predictable. And one of the things we're finding with this, with the events occurring right now, we're seeing annual grass and weeds, noxious weeds coming in and replacing almost in Monotypic stands across the great basin right now. The bad news today, the expectation for that to return, even with intensive management is probably not going to happen in our lifetime. It suggests knowing the physiology of horses and the susceptibility of a certain species versus another. And that's where the biology is and manage specific to risk. I think about, we're watching significant shifts. I heard today and yesterday about the reductions in horse numbers across the west, and I even heard the word "Extinction" several times. And I would suggest that days of 25 to 30,000 mule deer in Nevada are over. We reached that threshold a long time ago and we're not going to sympathy return, and we let already see the potential for real numbers already. And I reported yesterday, having to do with the needed recruitment in Nevada and this year, it is being record that upwards of 40% on the upper end of reduction and in recruitment on mule deer, and a high of 72 percent in Elko County, loss of mule deer recruitment, and that's an indicator, another number, which is an indicator of the resilience of mule deer given drop siblings. The sad part is, and what we have seen in my lifetime in Nevada is I don't think we'll see the numbers rebound back to what we saw in 1988 for instance. Back in the 1990s, I think the populations will go right along with the threshold with the habitat they are living on. It is reasonable for all of us to expect that those population numbers are going on with the thresholds rights along the habitats, and the idea we'll see more mule deer, more horses are on more AUMs and they are susceptible to loss and habitat and forage production, we're probably not going to see the restoration happen and we'll see some sort of return to that level, but the baseline activity will be adjusted downward. And I don't know how long it lasts and probably in our lifetime. I have been in this business for almost 50-years and I have been watching this happen and didn't know what I was seeing, but I have been watching for that 50 years and it is definitely real.

Dr. Perryman: Well, you are bringing me down. I am pretty optimistic, just a couple of things and will do this and finish up with a comment on what the ranger said. Keep in mind, in most of these areas we're talking about and we have seen some degradation occurring, by statute, I guess. Maybe that's not the appropriate word, domestic livestock are not allowed to go into areas that have nothing to eat on them. The bureau and Forest Service will not allow for that it happen. I know where degradation is occurring and haven't had a domestic annual for more than 30 and sometimes for voluntary use. Animals are not being turned out to the areas where we have an extremely high degraded sort of situations going on. There would be an exception to that, but in general, there's no point for a producer from a common-sense standpoint. You can't turn animals out if there's nothing to eat. It is not a viable, economic model; right?

So, I don't make the pizzas, I just deliver them. And with respect to this idea of ecological potential, and probably having a lower our expectations over the next few decades. I have seen in my career and these guys can probably say the same thing and doesn't want to put words into their mouth, but in the same profession I am in.

I have seen times I thoughts it was Nuked. I mean, just absolutely Nuked. And five, six, seven, ten years later, it just surprised the heck out of me. So, these systems are much more resilient than we think they are sometimes. Sometimes, yes, we know there's a threshold and something has been crossed and it is really, really bad, but from an optimistic standpoint, these systems can be really resilient if we manage them appropriately, and that's what we're talking about here, appropriate management and trying to get to the bottom of what that is, what possibilities will, and we can have healthy horses and wildlife, and healthy economic system for producer out there and can pay taxes and economy and on and on. And I am pretty optimistic, and I think we can do it and do a good job at it, and I think this board is quite capable of shepherding that along the pathways. There, I said it.

Dr. Thacker: I want to -- not necessarily correct, but something I want to emphasize. Something in my presentation as well. We can't look to a certain species to solve the 'problem. For example, we can look to all of the horses across the United States and the trend is not fixing and constantly remove all of the livestock and this problem doesn't fix. Everything has to adjust to the reality of the situation we're in. So to your question, specifically, we can't point fingers at just one group of species and assume by removing them without adjusting everything else, everything will fix itself. For example, dumb the numbers and I have students do this in class. If you pick an HMA and leave the horses to do their thing, most of the time after ten years, they will surpass the cattle in on the allotment, assuming you are taking cattle off. And my point is not managing cattle the same problem. The point is, everybody has to file a little bit of the bite, for the future and we all have to set up the table and it has to be done more -- uh, with more of a consensus among groups of the reality of what's happening. I'm done.

Dr. Perryman: I go back to a statement a number of years ago. If you have this box and it has this function in it. You take it out and all you have is dysfunction in a bigger box and that's where we have been having these issues.

Dr. Stringham: One more statement. Don't forget water. And as the climate is more and dry, and water is what dictates however we can move, regardless of what animal we're talking about. And radiation coming out and less water sources will degrade quickly then will you get into trouble with whatever is out there, horse, cattle, deer, and think about water and how we're going to manage that going forge. I told you march water trees drink. And BLM removed 18 miles of meadow and we have monitoring in. Within one year of drought, the meadow after removal of trees gained fifty -- went from 800 pounds per acre to 4000 pounds per acre. And as an altogether agency, what are the water sources and what are the emblems above it, can we improve it?

Dr. Bechert: I would like to thank the panel for all of the information you shared. I learned a lot. And I like how you broke it down, too. And I am thinking of one of Eric's slides, how do you manage livestock and wildlife and compare that to horses and identifying how our hands are tied in certain ways, and based on what you both just said, too, it looks if we focus on different species, what we're going to pick up, it's a little too late and we're a little behind the game, and the focus and determining AML and status and more focused and the range land itself and the water. And to me, you know, then our job as a board is how does is that happen? And I think there's a lot of consensus about working locally. Because locally, that's where people are the resources to gather these kinds of data, but also, the wherewithal to do something about it. And so collaboration is really key. That's what I gleaned from this, and maybe then there's some hope. [Laughing].

Ms. Carlise: We're going to do Mr. French and then Brian and we have one more presentation, so I think we might have to cut ourselves a little bit short here.

Mr. French: Quickly, I wanted to address the issue about water that Tamzen talked about, and you guys remember, we want through a period of time from a resource management perspective looking at librarian health, habitats and meadow complexes regarding damage control actually from improper livestock grazing and hedge cuts lowering water tables and I remember we spent hundreds of days at the underground coming up with solutions and mitigating those problems that were created by livestock, improper livestock use and in their defense, most folks didn't realize what we were doing at the time. There was a lot of armoring and head cut stabilization projects to include meadows. One of the things we found on those areas we didn't touch, that ground water went deeper into the ground with a head cut on the streams, initially, and dried the entire piece up, and meadows dried up and completely didn't know they were meadows and most of us we see places and wonder what happened to them. I only bring that up, I am seeing similarities right now. The difference between AUMs and AML, whether there's a problem with livestock interaction, meadows or aquatic habitats and aquarian habitats and the livestock needs are not met and they move out of that spot and stay in that spot many, many cases and that was a painful thing to enforce, and a lot of people were really hurt in the process trying to stabilize those habitats. Right now, I can think of three allotments for AUMs in northern -- Humboldt county I am think being right knew, and recent significant changes to the livestock and timing and the location the cows can be at the time of the year and protect the streams and walk away from the horse population there. And in my cases the horses stay right on the Riparian tone, and that's why they stay and where the water is and wind blows and stay there all of the time. In many cases the aquatic dry up in that area as a result of not managing the horses and it want the horses fault, and talking about HML, and in the context. HMA and not just forage potential but talking about pieces of habitat out there that we need to protect under that type of management, regardless of where it is AUMs or AML. And I would go back to something Dr. Perryman said a minute ago. There are several HMAs I can think of in the northern part of the county and haven't had 'cows on them for many years plus, and the kilowattic territory, has been submission into horse years and it doesn't take a lot of damage to these zones, and I want to compare if it is something we need to put in the frontal lobe when talking about the management protocol.

Mr. St George: Well, thanks. I think this has been astoundingly useful discussion and thank you to all of you on the panel. Celeste, I am still struck doing hard things and I want to reflect on what Federal policy and altogether -- land acknowledgments says, and the challenge, the false dichotomy, and pitting one against the other and only if we can create one use and create solutions and space for north use. I heard an certification during a point in time today and public meeting, that public land livestock grazing is the single grazing use, and perhaps Forest Service may agree with me and the number of accounting and the use confounding both organization it is recreation and we're managing with a fraction of the budget that public land grazing or wild horse and burros get, and that's a massive challenge to try and deliver for the public. Let me take a second and remind all of us that Federal land acknowledgment and ultimate defining of multiple use definition. It means the management of public lands and their various resource values, so they are utilized in a combination to best meet the present and future needs of the American People. Making the most judicious use effort land for some or all of the resources or relate services -- paraphrasing now, and to make adjustments in those uses to conform to changing needs and conditions. Multiple use is the use of some lands for less than all of those resources. And a combination of balances and diverse resource using that take into account long terms for future generations. And Dr. Perryman goes on to identify what these uses are, include by not limited to recreation, range, timber, water shortage, water, fish shall scientific and historic values and harmonious and management of those using it and the sustained field and productivity. That intent is very elegant in my mind. I don't know if we give Congress enough credit sometimes when we do it, and that's a really elegant definition and incredibly consistent with the Wild Horses and Burros Act. And I want to draw us back to that. That's what we're trying to do, and while it seems focused on wild horses and burros and it is actually focused on that mission. Thank you.

Ms. Carlisle: I would like to thank the panelists as well. You made all of our stomachs hurt, but it is very necessary, and I appreciate your knowledge, too. And Bryant, I think we have one more presentation and some follow-up discussion on it and we'll adjourn for the day.

Mr. Kuechle: Yes, we'll get the presentation pulled up, Dr. Paul Griffin as a presentation just momentarily. We'll get his slides going. This is the population modeling presentation.

**Discussion: BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program Population Modeling Program Presentation**  
*Dr. Paul Griffin, Wild Horse and Burro Research Coordinator, BLM*

Thank you very much. Before we get into that, I also want to echo the panel members who walked into this with no structure and have filled it and so instructive for us and a lot of us will be listening back on what was said here and glean more for future directions, so thank you so much for all of you. And for this portion of the meeting, we interpreted the board's request for this discussion to mean, talk about how the program uses population models. In this presentation, and of course, interrupt me anytime and we can have discussion, and first clock I hope to show a couple of generally conceived population models and two of them follow in the general category of estimation models and projection models and they both play a role in determining most likely population sizes for the HMA first reporting. And I will talk about population aerial service and potential tools used to do the surveys. And second, talking about more simple and complex projection models drawing on demographic rates, survival following rates and general advocacy. Those get into growth rates and intended management and achieve and maintain heard an AML. Based on yesterday afternoon's subcommittee. To me, it sounded like a higher level of interest in demographic modeling. If you are interested, we can talk about modeling genetic diversity and that's something we talked about during its Phoenix meeting last year. So, a couple of concepts of modeling. Biological systems are very complex and not humanly possible for all of the impacts to our horse and burro population and. Any model will be strongly influenced by what's called model structure, the mathematical set of relationships that leads to estimates and projections and model structure can be very influenced by which variables are included in the model or not included. And independent variables, you can think about making predictions about dependent variables and some people might call them outputs. Second model accuracy, how the -- values. And one example in our case, comparing model predictions for known values, and that's validation, and different people have their own understanding, but personally, I separate estimated value and expected values and I think of estimation values, a quantity fiction of something that already exists in the quantity fiction in recent days or in the past, annual growth rates, competency and expectations in contrast, or projected value from conditions that may come in the future. Another measure of how modeling provides measures of precision, like something like a consent or Founding Fathers intervals and how you understand the narrow and wideness and range of the value beside the point estimate, the most likely single value. Next slide, please, talking a little bit about aerial surveys, and for population management no most of our areas. USGS worked closely with -- 2013, the national academy of sciences pushed BLM to conditions and accurate herd size, including things not seen by visual observer. And to provide measurable unisn't, precision among those estimates, before 20 13, most of those surveys or raw accounts, and the national science therefore said were gross underestimates. And this kind of modeling falls within estimation models. You have heard a little bit about it yesterday and today, simultaneous double observer survey models and the forestry service I think for non-produced animal within a service area even though they weren't seen. The data recording for analysis as far as data in double observer serve surveys evaluated and reviewed and data published in 2020 for these surveys. And estimated sciences for the number of herds lined up in areas of wild horses in areas of known population size USGS used to help BLM in those analyses, but since 2021, and Michelle, many services from planning and data collection and analysis and interpretation. So, in this method, observers reported detection patterns of groups available or burros, and seeing covariate like group size or distance from a helicopter and record that in a way that allows for statistical analysis. Not only the SOPs are publicly avail clock, the analytical script for the public in NR are, and based on our recapture theory, and protection for one observer or another, Gus to a mark or reciting. The detection could be detection probability from each group and even gets a corrective factor and over all the total population estimate comes from all of the animals seen on the such a detected by its observer, plus the unseen represented based on that correction factor. Next slide, please. So, here's an example of estimates from a double observer aerial survey for sand wash basin herd management area, the HMA in the further estimate south in Colorado and surveyed at the same time as HMA in Wyoming and helped with the population size and fitting. And the number of foals in adults shown hear in the purple box and the number of foals and adults seen, and 393 total animals, and the model also estimates what percent were print and not seen by observers and shown in the orange box. Which in this case, the HMA was 10.9 percent. And 10.9 animals present were not seen by anybody. That's the estimate. And based on the model, we end one the estimated number of horses in the area at the type of the survey, and that's in the blue box. 441 total horses and 433 were adults. And now, I want to point out these estimates have measures of precision in several ways. The 90% confidence levels are shown and most straightforward we use, and the lower confidence limit is the NCL and use is for the 90 percent confidence levels you think if the survey was repeated wuss of the times and you can expect 90% of the estimated value for population size within that range. And also, we have the standard are and coefficient of the variation and two ways to portray variance and that can be used later if someone wants to too a time series analysis and do different points populations in time, and in other words, more precise estimates would get more wave. Next slide, please. This is all leading to estimations of population size: I am not seeing it, if you can advance to the next slide, please. Thanks. Hmm, other direction. I think it would be slide six. Yes. Thank you. So how do we -- every March 1st we publish estimated herd size, how do we get those? The short answer is based on the most recent survey and we apply

growth rate estimate. This is a form of population modeling, population projection law. Usually, there's some time lag between the aerial surveys and March first and BLM needs to use some type of projection laws been March 1st. And publicly available methods and 2020 standard operating procedures we generally use as guidance. As of March 1st, all of the animals on the range are considered to be adults and for this purpose, yearlings get bunched in with all of the adults and the herd population as the chief estimated today, a little bit out of sink in terms of removal numbers. I will simply the SOP here, and basically the projections account for projected growth and herd size, depending on the low inspected population growth rate and also when the most recent aerial took place. And from the time of the survey, whether or not to apply a growth rate depends on the time of the such. For example, if November of 2022, would typically use that herd size land acknowledgment at the March 1st herd size. If it happened in early 2020, say early April, and the office would apply the annual growth rate from service of adults. And that would account for the net expected change from one year to the next, the addition of losses due to foaling and losses due to mortality. And this talks about how to cost annual growth rates from a time series of survey results and you will see it. This is a discussion about population models, and I have to point out at least one brief letter, and often refer today as Lambda fun fact. In the absence and sites for annual specific growth rate, most sites expect about 50% for horses and 15% or less for burros and for the marginal growth rates. The SOP, these methods for projecting population size, it involves simplifying assumptions, but it turns out empirical measurements based compare comparisons and populations' sizes do DEN tend owe line up pretty well. And one reason it is so robust, and annual rates from horses and adult foal for horses is pretty low in most herds compared to other manuals in North America. I am kind of gloss over here. Projections also have to account whether there's a Garth and removal and whether it happens to following period and whether the annual growth rate applies or not. And the matters expected to be in following every year because of fertility treatments. Local offices make the call of what the expected herd sizes are by March 1st based on their own experience and knowledge. For example, if there was some evidence of high over winter mortality, like Theresa alluded to for morrow lake, it may be use the curve side estimate. And anecdotally, I have into the heard of that activity, on BLM managed herds. Go to the next slide unless you have any questions. We can make some generalizations about what herd dynamics, based owe and peer reviewed and foal rates and adults and full survival. Here, the values on this slide are generalizations and consistent with analysis of demographic rates published in 2016, and of course, local rates will vary. And in general, like I said, the annual curving growth rates for horses generally tend to be between 15 and 25% and consistent with time observed and also with demographic rates, like in most herds, sixty percent are supposed to foal every year and most are herds eighty percent and mayor over 90% per year, and putting those together, they are consistent with annual growth rate of 20%. Plan I what I find a have I simple way thinking about how much fertility control needs to be applied due to growth rates by a certain amount. At the basic level, if you produce the potential for fertility by fertility because of survival rates you would expect to have fifty percent less growth rate per year. If you wanted to have no or no low growth 5% per year, following rates would have to be about 1%, and considering background about sixty percent and that means third quarter of mayors have to get to that per year, and if we have about 15% feeling and given background mortality rates, that herd will grow very well of the it wouldn't decline, typically, but won't grow much. That's a simple demographic rule I think about, stable population sides, 75% of the mayors treated, infertile in every given year. The percent of actual mayors infertile depends on how many have been treated recently with whatever fertility control method like vaccines and the duration of that effect. And right with a way, you can see this is why for a very long time, the BLM has been emphasizing development, testing search for humane, safe, longer lasting fertility methods some of the reasons Holle' was supporting is conducive to that. So that was kind of a simple set of demographic modeling, and more advanced one that we'll get getting to is using the recently publicized Pop Equus. USGS published it after working several years with BLM to support it. And much more detailed demographic projection model in the Kuwait goer of population matrix models, meaning that every year population size, the number of horses it is tracked by age, sex and fertility control recent history. This structure allows Pop Equus track and apply longer effects say a booster shot after a PZP 22 vaccine or Corona vaccine and key points there with the history, and a much more complex set of bookkeeping. And because this model is structured around horse demography, and whether feral horses, Tribal horses and state lands, it is publicly available and this tool is available to any interested person listed here, or anybody. It is on the Web, and there's the URL. And this model is really useful for projecting and preparing cost projections outside alternatives. And users have a wide range of alternatives and can change a lot of model independents like growth rate, population size, gathering treatment schedules for each alternative, and gather costs, cost per treatment, percent of animals gathered, so there's a lot of details and you can apply. And the nice thing about this model it records all of the assumptions and give awe a summary. And just like fully result, should not be taken laterally. There are a lot of real-world factors that cause to all numbers and not causing projections and the under demographic records are based on what has been peer reviewed and available and also the effects of contraceptives. Policy wise, conducting Anaqua's policies and it is pretty robust, not user friendly and does not include some of the fertility choices look pop eek can yours, and

wuss, and other models. Guidelines were written at a time where there's some uncertainty whether applying for fertility programs and caused them to crash and go to zero over time. And toad we're way moor centered and many we have a better understanding of fertility-controlled methods that are available. I do need to point out, Pop Equus program overrule horse and burro program cost, and that's because Pop Equus and really gauze of gather and called for one area and complex. And a lot of costs not included. Most importantly the cost of animals already in range holding and also cost and monitoring cost and surveys. And another importance on how Pop Equus was programmed. To me, it is not ideal for modeling an entire population, and we can get into that if interested. Can I go to the next slide, please? So, this is kind of a hypothetical example of four alternatives shown in Pop Equus, and removals only, black line, and removals and GonaCon, and darting, and Zona Stat. Other the application periods, the GonaCon, in this population starting with 60 animals with close to 3,000 treatments. It does stabilize the population, but more like 800 an pals, so if you are already two times AML, a fertility controlled method is not going to get you down to AML in the near future. Those are things anyone can use Pop Equus to determine, and I encourage that. Rehab here are some methods for the use of Pop Equus I want to share. The longer lasting fertility control methods require fewer handling oceans and fewer treatment of mares to lead to the same and lead to reduced growth rates, and like I said, that's why BLM has been interested in developing longer lasting method. And Dr. Perryman, what is the ratio of fertility-controlled treatments or actually removals of fertility controlled treatment that's can lead to population management? And you can use Pop Equus to game that out. On this slide in the graph, what I am portraying is, just from one controlled management. For a herd ta starts as a percent of AML, from 100 of AML up it 4 times AML, four types of population size and using herd removal strategy to bring down AML over a five-year period, what would be the relative effort of the number of animals removed versus the number of animals versus fertility control and the answer, depends on where you are. Compared it AML at the start. If it looks like you are at AML from the start, up to this model, can you get away to a one-to-one ratio. I think it would be great and a lot of people can get behind that. If you have a 230 0 AML, two times for the fertility treatments necessary for the AML. And we just heard in the panel discussion how really important it is to protect natural resources and for longer periods of time over AML and over longer time periods can be detrimental. And as John said, the source of how it all indicates a limited budget involves tradeoffs. Just to frame this more broadly, currently, we're sitting the 60 thousand wild horses on the range versus AML or BLM horses, that's about 200 to 90% horses AML and what you would expect and consistent that we would need to remove more animals than it treats, if the population stabilization size. I think I have run pretty long here and will stop there, and I hope there is time for questions and people are still awake.

Ms. Carlisle: Hi, Paul, this is Celeste, and we have six minutes and have to be right on the button today and we have to cut off at 5, our original meeting time. And be brief.

Ms. Carlisle: I have a quick question. Paul, when field managers are making decisions about gather, removal and numbers of treatments, how are they, right now, today determining how many animals they are going to treat and why and are they corresponding with you and making that decision and helping to look at the modeling data with that? Or at this point we're just going to apply what we can.

Dr. Griffin: That's a good question for Scott Fluer but the potential values and projected values and different for removals and Scott, since he's the branch deputy division chief and in touch with what available budgets are nationally of the really local offices really don't have the latitude to look at a single isolation, and the program overall is connected. In general, essential, local offices look at the effects of fertility control and removals and over time, monitor the results in population size that come down the road.

Mr. Fluer: So Celeste, you are asking how do they determine what level of treatments to do? And that's an office by office treatment obviously. And Paul said, tied to budget and their analysis and environmental assessment, managing lower, mid AML or higher AML. Also, what type of efficacy to come back and rerate those animals. It varies office by office and a lot of times staff community and sometimes the number of animals to treat.

Ms. Carlisle: Thank you, that's very helpful.

Mr. St George: I know I need to be super quick. We talked about that with Gary earlier and talked about this issue repeatedly through the board meeting. I think what Scott and Paul are both reflecting is as simply as I can put it. The paradigm in the bureau is to think about to drive a herd area as close to AML so we can maximize the efficacy for fertility treatments and if the board is recommending BLM to rethink that paradigm, let's talk about that. That's great.



Dr. Griffin: Yeah. I want it dovetail with what Brian just said, and if the necessary -- well, necessary is not a great word, but if the ratio of removals and fertility control actions over time is not appropriate from where your starting point is, then are you inevitably, and it requires a huge number of fertility control treatments and as I showed in the results and you inevitably increase the overall population over time, and over one hundred thousand will be extremely hard for us to catch up for exponential growth or operation.

Ms. Carlisle: Thank you, Paul, I think this board is tired. But we appreciate that a lot. And thanks for your time and thanks for calling in from the home base. Bryant, over to you.

Mr. Kuechle: Thank you, that concludes today's meeting and we have a final meeting tomorrow, 8 to 12, the focus on the board meeting is draft recommendations and final recommendations BLM. And there's a public comment at 9:30 if you are interested in public comment, the virtual is likely full, however, can you sign up in person when you arrive tomorrow. As Celeste mentioned, there's an event next door. That event starts at 6 and the hotel told us try not to linger and thank you very much. We'll see you tomorrow.

**[Adjourn]**

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

***\*From June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023***

*\*This comment period occurred on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at the conclusion of the advisory board subcommittee meeting. The transcript is included here.*

Mr. Kuechle: Okay, we're going to go ahead and get started with the public comment time. Appreciate if everybody can grab their seats. We have a lot of commenters and a short window to receive them. Reminder if you signed up for in-person public comment, it will be helpful if you sat in one of these first two rows over here by the side of the front row. Okay, welcome back, everybody. We're going to go ahead and get started. I want to provide announcement prior to the beginning of the public comment session. Okay, so really quickly I want to go over some of the rules of public comment for everybody's benefit here that's going to be providing comment today and potentially in future dates. To ensure smooth meeting for all engaged, the following rules have been accomplished for the comment periods In-person and virtual commenters must register in advance at [BLM.gov/WHB/Advisory Board](https://blm.gov/WHB/AdvisoryBoard). As mentioned prior all virtual comment slots have been filled. However, we do have opportunity for in-person comment to sign up for tomorrow and the following day. Virtual commenters must address the comment to the board via audio only. Do not watch on [BLM.gov/live](https://blm.gov/live) while speaking on Zoom. That will create a feedback loop. We want to avoid that. Commenters will have-- they may not reassign their slot to another speaker. Commenters will have three minutes each and finish in designated time to allow the maximum number of individuals to express their viewpoints. Commenters must show mutual respect for everyone participating. Do not use unprofessional conduct, yelling, profanity, et cetera, including personal attacks to member of the board, BLM service or anyone for that matter. That's immediately mute and move onto the next speaker. Again anyone disrupting the meeting may be muted or asked to leave. Written comments to the board must be sent up at least three days in advance of the meeting via email. For any comments you'd like the board to see prior to this agenda item. If you have comments you can submit those to the record at the conclusion of Friday's meeting at noon. Disregarding the rules may result with being muted or removed. We appreciate you following the rules. BLM or the Forest Service will not responsibility to comments. They should not interpret that they agree or disagree with anything said and the Chair serves the right to comment for factual and accuracies. We're going to begin with the virtual session and when that concludes we will move onto the in-person session. What we will do is go through the list of folks that registered and begin with the person that registered first and move down the list to recent registration. I'll announce who's speaking and who is on deck. Meaning that person is going to go the first person I announce. As I mention those names, if you can raise your hand virtually on the Zoom, that will move you to the top of my list and make it easier to find you. So, we'll go ahead and get started. This is audio only, no video. So, the first person we have on our list is Rick Karcich and Laura Leigh is on deck. Rick, I see you there. We're going to allow you to speak. Okay. Go right ahead. The comment will start-- the timer will start when you begin speaking.

**Rick Karcich**

I'm Rick, for the record I state the following. Politically speaking on its face, expanding use of land held status for BLM managed lands not just used for grazing sounds promising. Without a massive influx of funds how can BLM expand the use of land health standards when it's doing a poor job on current land health program? BLM displays a shocking failure to manage public lands. BLM data shows that 50% of the lands assessed or 54 million acres do not meet standards and 41 billion acres of-- have not even been assessed. BLM lacks the staff and resources to manage our public lands. BLM lacks the political will to take actions that address land health failures on land it manages. The management model for Wild Horse & Burro on Wild Horse & Burro act 1971 is outdated paradigm that emphasizes establishing steady state management for single resources. The goal set by the Wild Horse & Burro act is Wild Horse & Burro be sustained at a constant AML. It's recognized as pathological. When it comes to forestry, grazing and management, natural systems do not support particular resource over time. Management efforts isolate and stabilize certain species conflict with the randomly fluctuating practices-- ecosystem. And that model has not been validated. At the heart of this matter lies a simple, longstanding conflict. The humane treatment of Wild Horse & Burros for profit. First principles are that we humans are-- protecting is not a luxury. Over-population problem especially in Colorado. There are stills of hundreds and thousands of cows and sheep. And public lands can only support only 800 wild horses. BLM Colorado-- follows herd management areas on approximately 400,000 acres. There is no current census on wild horses or livestock. Trespass on public lands is rampant. There are hundreds and thousands of cows grazing and yet BLM contends our public lands can only support 800 wild horses. Clean water, clean air, are connected with healthy range lands and priceless. It is these attributes that create-- over the proving degradation caused by wild stock grazing. It shouldn't be the profit motive to determine what's cruel, kind, environmentally destructive and what counts as justification.

### **Laura Leigh**

My name is Laura Leigh and I represent Wild Horse education. Although I was able to attend the field trip due to (inaudible) lines today, I could not attend the meeting to give comments in person. I continue to hear the board and BLM complaining about difficulties in planning budgets and actions. Yet I continue to hear the emission of anyone talking about the lack of herd management planning process, and how that lack has directly contributed to exactly what I hear everybody complain about year after year. It's almost like mentioning the name Voldemort in a Harry Potter novel. Nobody wants to mention herd management planning. Removal plans are not management plans. Even BLM's handbook distinguishes. It's the only document specifically mentioned in the code of federal regulations. Removal, fertility control plans are not management planning. Finding a unifying factor to continue to avoid addressing things like genetically and adequate AMLs, critical habitat preservation for wild horses and burros, et cetera, is not managing. It's green watching. To allow industrial encroachment into halls to continue. And BLM's report to Congress. HMAs they distinguish then removal plans and management plans. I'm going to read the BLM's report to Congress a little bit here. Herd management summarize the management goals for HMA and anticipated actions to achieve the goals. BLM goes onto talk the HMAP development is a key component in decision-making for BLM's Wild Horse & Burro management on the ground. Yet BLM has avoided doing the management plans in the vast majority of our herds since the very first plans in the 1980s, is you know, outline the fact that there was not enough data to create these management plans. The 2020 plan from BLM even creates budget, line items for herd management area planning. Yet we never, ever see the scoping process begin for these plans. And instead we have gather plans that claim to be working towards achieving management goals and objectives that have been defined in herd management area plans. This is the step one in a process where I constantly hear everybody talking about the problems that occur when we avoid step one. If we're going to fix this program, we have to begin at the beginning. That's herd management area planning. I can go on and on but I see my time is running out. So I thank you all for the ability to comment. And I will be submitting more extensive comments. Thank you.

### **Andrea Lonseth**

I'm Andrea. Thank you for having me. Dr. Shapiro in the University of California Santa Cruz-- fossil research, the sale DNA in the wild horses of the America wild horses, 700,000 years ago said the Professors new finding are sure to fuel the ongoing controversy over the management of wild horses. There is a need to update ourselves. There's a powerful falsehood that the wild horses came with the Spanish. Dr. Shapiro in green state present day wild horses experienced regional population loss in the United States. The revolutionary-- was in the United States 700,000-- exclusively that cradle was in North America. DNA the Professor studied, anywhere else other than the United States was younger than the DNA in the United States from Colorado bones, Texas and Nevada bones. The Professor stated the horses traveled up through Canada. They stayed in conditions in North America didn't support the horses in the Ice Age. They stayed in Eurasia and brought back by the conquistadors in the 1500. Said, if the wild horses hadn't crossed we would have lost them globally. The folks with conquistadors,-- the misinformation is passed onto the media who is passing it onto the

public. UCSC doctorates were looking for the oldest fossil bones in existence. They came with the horse bones, oldest of all bones on the planet. The horse fossils in every continent are younger than in the United States. What of should been the pride of the United States is these wild horses, legislatives in Colorado legitimized-- they substituted natural-- artificially manipulating future genetics that we ended, far predated the animal which is the human species. Human fossils are younger than horses fossils. Best wild horses brought to-- by the arrogant human species, Nevada legislators even want to shoot them as game for hunters. 80% of the public wants to know wild horse slaughter, it's the will of the people.

### **Debra Clemente**

I'm Debra and I live in New Jersey I was probably one of those children that advocated for the wild horses back in 1971 with Richard Nixon writing letters and advocating. So, I actually have been around advocating for a long time. You brought up very good points today about your perceptions and our perceptions and the public, we do feel that you mismanaged the herds. That there are issues. There's not transparency. You hiring publicists doesn't make it transparent. I think the people would rather be more hands on, maybe you can get some cameras or maybe you would allow us to view the trap sites better when the photographers are out there. There's lots of ways that we do see things now between lives and YouTube and the people that are out there recording. So, we do see where this stuff happens and the issues come in. And I do think that we need to collaborate and think outside the box. COVID showed us you can rapidly change laws. It needs what it needs to be done better. And also, the wild horses really are needed to that land. They're integrated into the land. They're very important. They do protect against the fires. There's very many advantages to them being on the range. And the BLM does not ever bring up the fact about the cows and the sheep that are out there on the lands. And I think that it's like 30 to 1 or something like that in that area. And also, I think that the incentive program is a problem. I think that maybe a recommendation of changing it from the six months to 12 months review might stop a lot of those horses ending up in the slaughter pipelines in very poor condition. Six months they can have their hooves really grow long. They could not be shed. There's there are issues with that. I am happy today that you did say that you would like to work on some is of these issues and you're open to a lot of this. That's what needs to happen. We need to move forward because you cannot move all the horses in holding. And that's no way you can keep up with that pace. Thank you very much.

### **Stacey Lumley**

Thank you very much. I want to start off by saying that I am Stacey Lumley. I'm from New York. I am a United States citizen. And I feel that the wild horse free roaming, the whiled free roaming horses and bureau act that was established in 1971 to protect wild horses and bureaus on federal land is antiquated and needs to be changed. The act does not work any longer. It is decimating our wild horse populations. Unfortunately, this act allows wild free roaming horses and burros that are deemed to exceed their territorial limits even when their numbers are extremely low to be rounded up as a means in keeping with the multiuse BLM management concept of my public lands. These animals are deemed excess to preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and a multiuse relationship with ranchers, allowing four wheelers and bikes through these areas is not keeping a thriving, natural ecological balance that the BLM is trying to propose. I will say it again. This is not a thriving ecological balance. This devastates the ecological balance. This is not what I want from my public lands. The adoption program is a complete failure. Many of these wild horses are not trainable. Nor should they be. Many are mistreated because they cannot be trained. They wind up in horrendous conditions because they cannot be trained. Many wind up in auctions. They are-- purchased by kill buyers, kill pens and then sent for slaughter. Also, the BLM currently has more than BLM horses stockpiled. Many of the long-term facilities have no shelter from the elements. The horses are stockpiled into pens. This is not a life for once free and wild animals that had family groups broken a art from horrendous round ups that were extremely traumatic. This is not what I want for my public lands. I want to see my wild Mustangs live their lives in a way that is free. We must find another way to manage the numbers. I do not want my lands given over to ranchers for their gains. I do not want to see cows and sheep on my public lands. This is not maintaining a thriving ecological balance nor providing a multiple use. This is not land management.

### **Dawn Johnson**

I had surgery and forget about this so I'm not prepared as I normally am. I am going to submit written comments as well. But the few things that I would like to point out which many of the people have is that the amount of land that has been taken away from the original wild horse and burro plan has been millions of acres. And it has been replaced as most of us know with the livestock industry. And I have a background in the livestock industry. I have parents and great

grandparents that did all of this. Cattle men, different ranching and things they did. So, I understand the balance that we have to have with some of the stuff. But the amount that is taken away from it the horses in relation to what most of these ranchers that are quite wealthy and quite large and the subsidies they get and is the fact that they get to get land for pennies on the dollar oppose to some farmers and ranchers that don't get the opportunity like that is something that needs to be looked at. We remove the wild horses off land. And Colorado is a great example. There are documentations of pictures and videos that was done and grazed with sheep everywhere. And it is a-- it's a shame that the information is not being given with full transparency as to what is going on in a lot of the lands in the horse' lands, wild horses' lands. And you add onto it the kill pen issue and I have firsthand knowledge. I have from Kansas. Kansas Peabody pen is one of the largest in the country. I've been a part of that, working with that lot for probably eight to ten years now. I had a conversation after the conference which I was a part of. And the amount that's going into the kill pens because of the incentive program which is an extremely broken problem. And I've had this conversation with the people in the BLM two or three times. I sent documentation. That has got to change. The BLM, I know got a lot of hats. But that is the one thing that they are supposed to be doing is safeguarding their livelihood and the safety of those wild horses. And they pretty much just wiped their hands clean. Just because they don't have a title anymore is not an excuse. It needs to be changed and looked at. And I'll send more comments.

### **Deborah Legg**

Hello. Yeah, my name is Deborah Legg from Virginia. And I'd like to share a story of something that happened to me in May of this year in an area where wild horses live. And so, I'm going to read my story like a little script. And here we go. The river ran through under cold ice shelves clinging in time in this western landscape. I, too, was guarding my time in this linear space while walking along the river's edge. The music playing through my noise canceling headphones couldn't over-fake a new fact I learned. In 1858, approximately a thousand horses belonging to the American Indians were ordered to be slaughtered by EO settlement colonel George Wright. The intent was to break the spirit of this first nation's people. The plight of the buffalo pushed away. They too were slaughter by the millions further crumbling Native American's way of life. My noise canceling headphones weren't able to block the buffalo and the soul of the beaten tribes of the American Indian. I found myself in between, something in me shifted as I moved through the woods. My heart settled into a deliberate beat and my muscles worked in painless synchronicity. My breath was measured-- I was returning to a state of wildness. Sunlight illuminated the spot under a tall pine. I sat in a thick pile of moss and leaned back against the tree. The prayer-- closed my eyes, this prayer comforted the mournful cry. I was deaf and blind in the wilderness. And this is true. Bear, fear, and then I realized it was early May and the bears were coming out of hibernation. Then suddenly just as quickly as it came on, the fear transformed into the fear of fiercely protected and calmness came over. I a few feet from me stood a wild horse, a lone stallion stood over me. I was protected and returned to the wild. Under his welcome protection, I meditated moving into the in between, I appreciated I was whole. Any division in me was united going forward my work would be founded in benevolence.

### **Holly Gann Bice**

Hello and thank you for the chance to speak today. My name is Holly. I'm in Washington D.C. and I'm the Director of government relations for the American Wild Horse Campaign. Today I'd like to focus my comments on the importance of collaboration to create progress on the wild horse management issue. There are undoubtedly numerous aspects of the wild horse issue that are areas of disagreement. There are also areas of common ground where we can and should collaborate. And one area is implementation of fertility control. To that point we are glad to see that BLM started a grant program to work with NGOs. It's a step in the right direction, but we urge the BLM to fully embrace the partnerships in a larger number of herds. Collaboration is certainly not always easy, but it is necessary in order to move forward to implement real solutions to stabilize wild horse populations in a humane science based physically responsible manner without collaboration on fertility control this issue will remain in crisis and continue on. Collaboration comes to the benefit of all stakeholders, livestock permittees, environment lifts, wild horse advocates and taxpayers. And it benefits the BLM and the Forest Service by providing necessary manpower and ultimately resulting in better public sentiment toward the agencies. Collaboration would also help the agency fulfill the directives for Congress and work with NGOs and military veterans. We have seen the benefits of collaboration including bringing together diverse interest such as groups that normally don't agree on much of anything. Colorado is a great example where agriculture, environmental and wild horse interests came together ultimately resulting in passage of state legislation to provide funding to supplement BLM's per filth control efforts in Colorado. The American Wild Horse Campaign has stepped up and submitted offers to help BLM and Forest Service to-- we continue to stand ready to assist and collaborate with the agencies on this issue. It's our hope that today's

discussion shows the importance of collaboration for the benefit of all who share an interest in this issue. Thank you so much.

### **Rebecca Falk**

First of all, I want to talk about the cash incentive program. Give the vet initiative instead to protect wild horses and burros. If they have a vet initiative that would help—help get their feet done and get shots, et cetera. It's a great idea to do the cash incentive but the horses and burros are going to slaughter. I also want to talk about the round ups which needs to go away. I've done comments on the helicopters. They're cruel and unjust. There are horses and burros that get killed. There's got to be a bait trap or fertility should be focused more and keep the wild horses and burros out there. Helicopters are going to happen in a couple of days. Maybe it had to be done. Now it's becoming primitive. Colorado is an example. Last year a lot of the horses got injured. They were done in hot temperatures and that just needs to be stopped. I also want to talk about the HMAs for the wild, hoes. That needs to be focused just for the wild horses and burros and get livestock off there. You can get the livestock people maybe get them to retire their grazing allotments through compensation or other means, have the HMAs-- wild horses as I suggested. So also I want too talk about future round ups in the wild horses. There has been a round up that they're talking about in augment I did a comment and other people did. And this round up needs to be stopped. A lot of the horses are older and there's a fertility control going onto these wild horses, the ones close to Cody Wyoming. They need to be looked at and round up, needs to be sought unfortunately. It might not be, but I'd like to see that one done also. HMAs in some other areas need to be focused on in Idaho. There's only four HMAs and 640 horses only. HMAs in Idaho need to be improved and more HMAs need to be focused on so the HMAs in Idaho, there are only a few wild horses. So, I think that they need to add the wild horses in Idaho as well. So, Thank you. That's it.

### **Cody Schroeder**

My name is Cody Schroeder. I'm speaking on behalf of the Nevada chapter of the wildlife society. The Nevada chapter and affiliate society is an organization of wildlife biologist with the goal of sustaining wildlife populations and habitat through science based management and conservation actions. Nevada is the driest state in the nation and the overpopulation of wild horses and burros in the state has impacted many of Nevada's many native wildlife population. The current population managed by BLM in Nevada is approximately 50,000. High appropriate management levels for horses and burros in Nevada is 12,800. Horse and burro populations in Nevada are four time high. We node an additional 1500 horses occur in BLM land in Nevada managed by the California state BLM office and another 10,000 horses occur on other federal lands and tribal and state lands The current situation in Nevada is in violation of the wild and free roaming-- called to be consistent with the thriving ecological balance. Biomass of horses is now three times in Nevada, and Nevada-- have declined 30% over the last decade. Several severe habitat degradation is documented and clearly negatively influencing-- the negative impacts of overabundant horses is almost certainly impacted nongame species. Recent study published by stoner and others in 2021 in the journal of wildlife management found that Nevada has the highest overlap with free roaming horses in the entire western United States.-- sheep habitat-- over 35% of mule habitat in the state being occupied by horses and burros. Another recent study in 2021 demonstrated annual decline? Sage-- of 2.6% for every 50% increase in wild horse abundance over AML max levels. We strongly support BLM receiving funding to bring HMAs and AML, six-year timeframe. Simultaneously we support funds to achieve this goal. We also support research for fertility control. It will reduce future need for gathers. That said for reasons described above we strongly urge strategy that achieves AML rapidly as possible followed by fertility control which will substantially reduce the need for gathers and eliminate the need for long-term holding.

### **Danielle Matthews**

My name is Danielle Matthews, I'm the Torrance California representative for the preservation of wildland. I ride my horses in competitions. My love forever horses is should go I'm passionate about. The BLM states that they gather and remove wild horses and burros from public lands to protect the animals. That is far from the truth. In fact, round ups are often done in secrecy with excessive police present to keep the public at bay. For every wild horse removed, a cow takes its place. Don't be fooled, round ups are not to protect the wild horses and burros nor nation's public land. It's all about the money. Simply put, round ups are animal abuse and the BLM turns a blind eye. They rip the wild horses away from native homes, resulting in thousands of wild horses and burros losing their freedom and lives. Horses are sensitive animals. They feel, communicate, love, and they have families and feed off of energy and emotion. They're traumatized and death is a common result. Separated from the families. Stallions often injure themselves reuniting with families. As a

mother, I would do anything to protect my child even if it means losing my own life. That's what wild horses do it as well. They get paid per organization dead or alive. At the holding sites for the horses that did make it that far, the BLM euthanizes horses with physical defects though they have managed to survive in years in the wild. There are more wild horses in government possession than in the wild. They regulate their population levels. As more wild horses are captured the pressure to sell them, the rise of our nation's innocent and wild horses and burros are at risk. If you have an ounce of empathy, we ask you stand with us and stand for our beautiful wildlife. Thank you for your time today.

Mr. Kuechle: Thank you. That concludes our virtual comment time. We will move on to in-person. Those providing in-person comments, the same rules apply. We have a timer that will begin. When you begin speaking, you'll see the timer. We ask that you conclude the comment by the end of that three minutes. Please show mutual respect for everyone participating. Don't use unprofessional language or conduct such as yelling, profanity and personal attacks of any kind. The board, BLM or Forest Service will not respond to comments. So, what I'll do is similar to the virtual process, I'll say who is up first, and who's on deck. Person up first can join me right here. We'll unmute the microphone and begin speaking when you're ready. Riley is up first, Devin green will be on deck.

### **Riley Peck**

Yeah, thank you. Grateful to be here. My name is Riley Peck. I work for the Utah division of wildlife resources and represent them in the state of Utah. I am a legislative liaison. Our public policy analyst. And I got my start working for the division of wildlife as a biologist and doing wildlife research. Pretty passionate about that. I continue that passion, as I teach at the local university, wildlife and biology. Something near and dear to my heart. We talked today and there's a lot of passion within the wild horses. I love them. I have three of them. Adopted them, use them. My daughter races on them. We ride them all over the place. Wild horses and wildlife are like these giant pendulums. We talked today that there was data that showed the impacts to wildlife and wild horses. And it does exist. It's not just for mule deer we have data within the state of Utah that shows 13 different animals have negative impact because of the wild horse. We have 40 plus birds impacted because of that. So, it is with that perspective that I would want to echo the voice and say, we encourage BLM and everybody possible to use every tool we have in the tool box to bring horses to the appropriate AML. Like I said, it is that pendulum. I'm passionate about horses. We ride them regularly. My daughter practices on them daily. They are part of the family and they are a place. With arguing that horses have a negative impact on wildlife, somebody inevitably asks me what about the cattle or the livestock component to that? We need to remember that it's not just what mouth is on the landscape but how they occupy the landscape. It is not simply saying we have enough food out there to increase the horses so they should be all right. Often times we are water limited. We have different components that make that a negative impact. So, as we are balancing that pendulum, going left to right, we need to consider everything. Wildlife certainly is being negatively impacted because of the amount of horses that we have on the landscape. I am passionate about the horse. I hope that you can see that. I encourage anybody that has the capability to adopt one to do so. They are magnificent animal. At the same time I'll echo from the division of wildlife that we must do whatever we can and try to bring that down to AML including any and all options we have on the table. Thank you so much.

### **Devon Green**

So, Devin Green here. I'm making a film. My background is in philosophy, comedy, going on adventures, asking questions. So, I've had the opportunity to go into this with an open mind. Certainly not partisan. Generally interested in truth and old school idea of journalism, investigative journalism. That was my dad's career. Now I continue with video. I say that to say, let me give you, I walked into the room here's my impression. And my feeling about the animals, when I look at the numbers and when I look at-- David who spent their lives making documentaries about wildlife, pointing to the fact in the last few decades, 30% of the livable land is gone. 60% of populations have decreased in the last 50 years. There were at one time 25 million horses in this country. Now it's more like 7. We have a bear on our flag in California. I've never seen a bear. I feel the love everyone has for these animals and the talking points and there's merit to everything. I'm nodding my head. But I want to encourage us to think bigger. At a time we had 60 million buffalo roaming wild, we had birds and grass to feed them. I can't say I can snap my finger and solve the problem. I'm saying we have less wildlife than we ever had. There's no Jurassic Park yet. We create these animals. Even if you have a billion dollars you want to get a lake house in Tahoe. You want to see animals and be to pristine nature. For a lot of people that's the closest thing they have to spiritual connection. It was with me when I started watching documentaries about nature. So just being able-- the wild horses are not starving. I don't mean to dismiss the ideas of overpopulation here. But it was beautiful. It's

beautiful to be around them. I swear to God, I can't talk to anybody from Reno without mentioning the wild horses. It's a big part why people live and come here. There are spots where you can see them. I'm from the eastern shore. I relate to all of you. I just want us-- I want to hear with the same passion of that no nonsense we have to get it down to 12,000. Get these species working together, we have to bring in America back to the fruitful hand. Let's-- I encourage you all to think big. Thank you.

### **Jim DeChambeau**

Thank you. It was mentioned about funding opportunities which is a great idea. I'm aware of a nonprofit that is respected and has positive history would like to get with the BLM to agree on more partnership agreement and would utilize and raise funds to finish projects that BLM stated. And hasn't finished in rehab projects the lands. I ask BLM board to recommend the process for the BLM to do this. And as far as treating older mares with you should treat the younger mares first and not older mares. And the biggest thing is removing horses from long-term holding. So, you can get the 45,000 other extra horses out in Nevada's range. Nevada's a state being the most decimated by these horses. And the-- has come up with the public lands policy with conversation leases and restoration projects and restoring degraded land while we all know that 90% of the degraded land in Nevada is from wild horses. I come from a line of horse lovers. I'm 68 years old. The first horse I ever rode was a Mustang, roped in the-- my dad rode Mustangs from the 20s to 60s. She was a Mustang for all of his adult life. I love wild horses. I love to see them in appropriate numbers. And I love to see the land of Nevada restored to a healthy habitat. Thank you.

### **Brianna Merrill**

Please excuse my wiggly one here. I am representing the Pyramid tribe and while our opinion is officially neutral, I would like to stress that the preservation of our lands is key to us obviously. And we'd like to ask that tribes be considered for opinion involvement, every tribe and all its people are different opinions. And I guess I feel you all have done a great job with remembering to keep tribes in mind today. Then I would also like to put forth perhaps not to all but the public to stop tokenizing Native American to support your opinion. Your opinion should be your own and these are not native animals. They have ancestors. But we would like to make sure that we have landscapes here that can support all wildlife in the future. And we have been here to see the actual decline of our native ungulate. And would like to do anything possible to encourage HR success and longevity and includes managing the wild horse and burro population. I feel that instead of catering to public opinion at this time that we're approaching a very dire situation with climate change, drought, wildfire, where we need to make the tough decisions and move more swiftly before it, we don't have much left to work with here. So that is my prepared statement. Thank you all for your time and your work. And I wish you all the best of luck.

### **Randal Massaro**

Good afternoon. I would like to say special thanks to Brian St. George and Jason for his time. My name is Randall, I'm an actor in Hollywood, retired state police and retired federal law enforcement. And an animal rights activist for the preservation of wildlife. I've been involved with Nevada politicians before over the nurse Nevada bear hunt. I also went out to-- colony, sat in boards, they came in and joined us-- So I'm very involved across the nation and in Canada with Native American. I speak for them because a lot of times state natures aren't given the time to speak and not given that respect. Ladies and gentlemen, I dealt with BLM for many years. I used to be a green peace representative of about. Union members for the preservation of wildlife. What I would like to say is this, doing radio shows and TV many actors are taking stand ups-- I assign people and train people to go out to the range, get undercover footage. We have stockpiles of it. Your own 20-time investigative reporter George did a documentary called stampede to oblivion. George gauge covered the dance sisters on American land -- I associate with all these people. So, keep in mind, I'm not here to criticize you. I'm here to extend the olive branch. We're talking to three federal judges about going to Congress to show-- I was in Utah on the herd round up of the horses, rounded them up said there wasn't enough food and water. They start dying, the sick ones replaced with the healthy ones. This is what happens all the time. \$70,000 a calendar helicopter, taxpayer dollars taken from Federal agents, firefighters, to subsidized the shortfall. I want to catch more drug bangers and drug cartels? They teach us the art of sabotage, the art of chaos. And you did with PZP-- you have Native American taking sides. So, I would like to say, I'm out there. My fielders are out there. We reach out to people. Thank you, I gave you my card. Work with us, please. Thank you.

### **Joanna Grossman**

Hi, everyone. My name is Dr. Joanna Grossman. As one of the nation's oldest animal protection group-- we appreciate the BLM's recent efforts to increase the administration of proven and safety fertility methods. The close collaboration with stakeholders will play an important role in improving the management of wild horse and burros. Take a proactive approach when it comes to fertility control. With a budget for the program in FY'24. We are pleased to see Congress include language on the FY'23 omnibus to set aside budget for use of immuno contraceptive vaccines and the agency treats it as a floor. We encourage the agency to conduct outreach to community groups to identify opportunities for collaboration. As colleagues and horse coalitions, a network of five hundred rescues and sanctuaries in the United States, we welcome the BLM to speak to our staff where they could assist. From our perspective and as the National Academy of Sciences has noted, mass removals lead to animal difficult to stabilize populations on the range. Removal of 20,000 in FY'22 is unsustainable. Financial considerations aside, they introduced in Congress prohibiting helicopter round up-- during the Wyman checkerboard round up of 3500 horses, horses died. We are greatly disappointed to see that BLM finalize its plan to move forward. 70,000 Americans signed a petition opposing the sweeping removal of wild horses in the cowboy state. The BLM management plan is troubling in view of the tenth circuit-- the removing horses from the checkerboard. From broader perspective extreme plans do not offer a viable path under the law. Proactive approach is key to keeping horses on the range and minimize exorbitant costs.

### **Matt Manroe**

I have the pleasure of being executive Director of a nonprofit called Mustang Champions. We have received a grant to produce two new programs in partnership with the BLM Wild Horse and Burro program. The first program is two new Mustang championship competitions all English and all western competitions. We are looking at the Kentucky horse park, Lexington, Kentucky for our English competition, September 2024. Our western competition we're calling Mustang challenge. We're looking at Las Vegas, South Point arena and that competition for July 2024. We are working with an Advisory Board to help us develop these competitions and we're going to do a few things differently. We want an exhibitor to have as much time as possible to work with and train their horse. Adoptions and purchases can begin October 1 for our competitions in July and August. That's new and different. We want to promote better training techniques. We are going to be gathering training resources and developing a curriculum that must be completed by each exhibitor before they qualify for our competition. We want our exhibitors to go out and show their horses to get them better prepared. Attend a local or national event to qualify. These are things we are doing to showcase the Mustang and its abilities, the best that they can possibly be for our competitions. We're excited about that program. The second program is an education program. We will be creating trade show kiosk that we can be shipped to events across the country. We will support them in that effort. But we want to educate the American public and get them to better understand the condition of the range, what's going on with the Mustangs and burros and have face-to-face contact with the Wild Horse and Burro program staff. So, we are very excited about what we have been granted the opportunity to do. And I just wanted to make you aware that that is happening. And we will launch in July. Be watching over our two competitions and our education program. Thank you.

### **Karen Boeger**

I am a retired school-teacher but lifetime conservationist, activism for half a century still belong to three different conservation boards. And also help to found this little Coalition for Healthy Nevada's Lands, wildlife and free roaming horses and burros. We came together to do just that, to alert people to the crisis on our public lands. And they need to conserve, protect and restore the health of our lands so that we also, in doing so restore health to our wildlife and those horses and burros in addition. I want to acknowledge that. I know I'm preaching to the choir. Many of you have been at this for many years. And I want to say from the outset in case I run out of time that I really appreciate your public service, your days, your time, your months and years of contributing your passion and your expertise to try to solve this persistent problem. One thing that I noted in reading over the agenda is that there is no place where our department of wildlife or even western-wide wildlife departments give an update to you on their situation because this situation with the horses and burros gravely as you heard affects our wildlife. In Nevada as you heard from Cody Schroeder, we have threatened nature species clearly at risk and decline as it shows-- [LIST OF NAMES]. Trout among other species. And wild horse and burros are among-- oh, dear. Okay. I'm going to flip back to the fact that I want to come to implore you that Nevada is ground zero for this issue. The accelerating crisis on our Nevada public lands is, must be prioritized and for management nationally. Nevada, our public lands health crisis is far larger than any other state. We have the most public land acres than the lower 48. And the state of highest percentage of public land acres. Our public lands belong to each and every



one of us. Congress needs to be aware of the key importance of our Nevada public lands health. Nevada is the driest state in the nation, over 50% of the horses and burros, 300% over population and 60% of the excess horses and burros. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. You should get my longer official letter sometime before you leave, I hope.

### **Tina Nappe**

My name is Tina Nappe I'm a lifelong resident of Nevada long time member of several conservation organizations and have been primarily involved with wildlife habitat preservation, particularly water for wildlife. I want to express my appreciation for the tour yesterday which demonstrates the expansive Nevada Great Basin Desert, landscape and shortage of water essential to horses and cows and to wildlife. The rancher who provides the water source to distribute cows and horses on otherwise dry range demonstrates the impact that a lot of grazing can have around a water source. I will one of a small group of Nevada conservationists along with Karen who recognized that we conservationists recognize free roaming horses in Nevada were becoming numerous impacted wildlife resources and neither conservation organizations nor natural resource agencies were addressing it. Our group recognizes that over the years wild horses and burros grew. And the negative impact facing the future of virtually unlimited expansion of horses and burros were ranchers and livestock. Our long silence as conservationist fed into that presumption. In reality, as horse and burro populations expanded, it is wildlife, native plants and dependent pollinators who became the victims of excess horses just as they are of cattle, mining and renewable energy. In short, unmanaged wild horse and burros can be an extract at this resource user rather than maintaining a renewable one. That is over-phrasing by horses or cattle can spell the permanent doom of our native plants and subsequently our wildlife. We are requesting that Nevada receive its fair share of funding to remove excess horses. We recognize there are some who propose abandoning Nevada because the numbers of BLM horses and burros now exceeding 50,000 in the territory they occupy over 50 million acres seem beyond almost capacity to address. I am here today to let you know that Nevada's wildlife-- like Indian rice grass, water sources and areas are as important to the long-term future of our wildlife as they are in any other state. We look forward to your supporting and hearing our request to receive our fair share of funding, even though wild horse and burros are wonderful they have become a negative impact on our wildlife in Nevada. Thank you.

### **Colette Kaluza**

Good afternoon. I volunteer for Wild Horse Education. BLM is continuing without addressing violations. Last year I was able to capture video showing a helicopter chasing a foal. BLM clearly violated humane policy. They directed the helicopter to chase the foals for far too long in bad conditions required documentation on method of euthanasia was ignored. BLM assessed the incident and determined, quote, all required protocols of the comprehensive welfare animal policy were followed unquote. BLM's abusive conduct has been repeated repeatedly resulting in the creation of cop. They put together a team to evaluate compliance. One round up incident was at Triple B yet they gave no consequences. I also attended and noted the many additional violations. BLM has not responded today to my report. What the camera cannot catch, we obtain through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) which accomplishes a discrepancy between the number of horses transported and number arriving at holding facilities. The majority arrived in Indian Lakes road, a private closed facility. From the time the horses arrived until the public was allowed to see them over three months later, 67 horses were dead. Broken Arrow had not facilitated a single adoption the 50 plus pan take horses the public were following, only three were ever found. Broken Arrow must-- anemia testing within 30 days of arrival. But only 4% of the horses were in compliance and 37% for more than 60 days overdue. It must adhere to BLM vaccination policy-- to identify injuries and needs, provide veterinarian care, request documentation, and discuss horse deaths with vet but no data was provided to show compliance. Scanned data for BLM's team cited violations yet no consequences. BLM should be creating management area plans as required to preserve wild horse habitat and to be humane. Protects act to ground helicopters was inspired by and can referred to the code-- there is no shade at Broken Arrow or wind break for horses, pens should be provided to segregate unhealthy horses. Ground horses.