



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

Key Elements of a Sustainable Wild Horse and Burro Program

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Grand Junction, Colorado
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FY2017 Appropriations Act

- On May 5, 2017, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017
- Congressional Committee report requested:
 - “a plan to achieve long-term sustainable populations on the range in a humane manner.”
- BLM is developing a plan with a variety of approaches to reduce costs and achieve AML



Report to Congress

- Key Elements of Strategy:
 - Achieve AML
 - Maintain AML
 - Reduce Holding Costs
 - Placing Excess Animals into Private Care
 - Ensure Humane Treatment
 - Use Best Available Science
 - Provide Economic Development and Int'l Aid
 - Provide Public Information
 - Increase Partnerships



Element 1: Achieve AML

- 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act:
“Where the Secretary determines...that an overpopulation exists on a given area of public lands and that action is necessary to remove excess animals, **he shall immediately remove excess animals from the range so as to achieve appropriate management levels.**”



Element 1: Achieve AML



25,000

wild horses and burros
lived on public lands in
1971



27,000

wild horses and burros
can live in balance with
wildlife and livestock on
healthy public lands

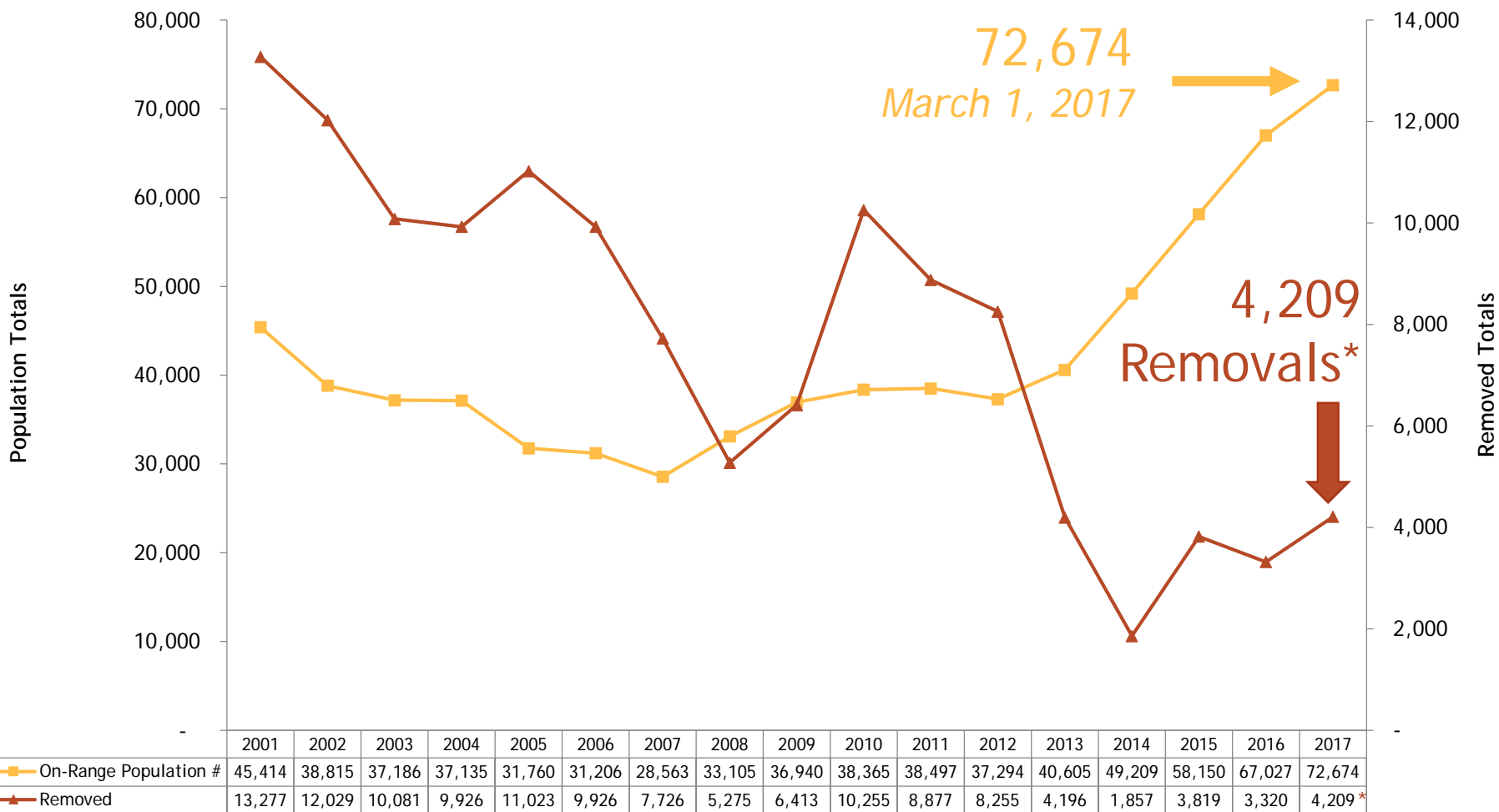


73,000

wild horses and
burros live on public
lands in 2017



Element 1: Achieve AML



* As of Oct. 5, 2017



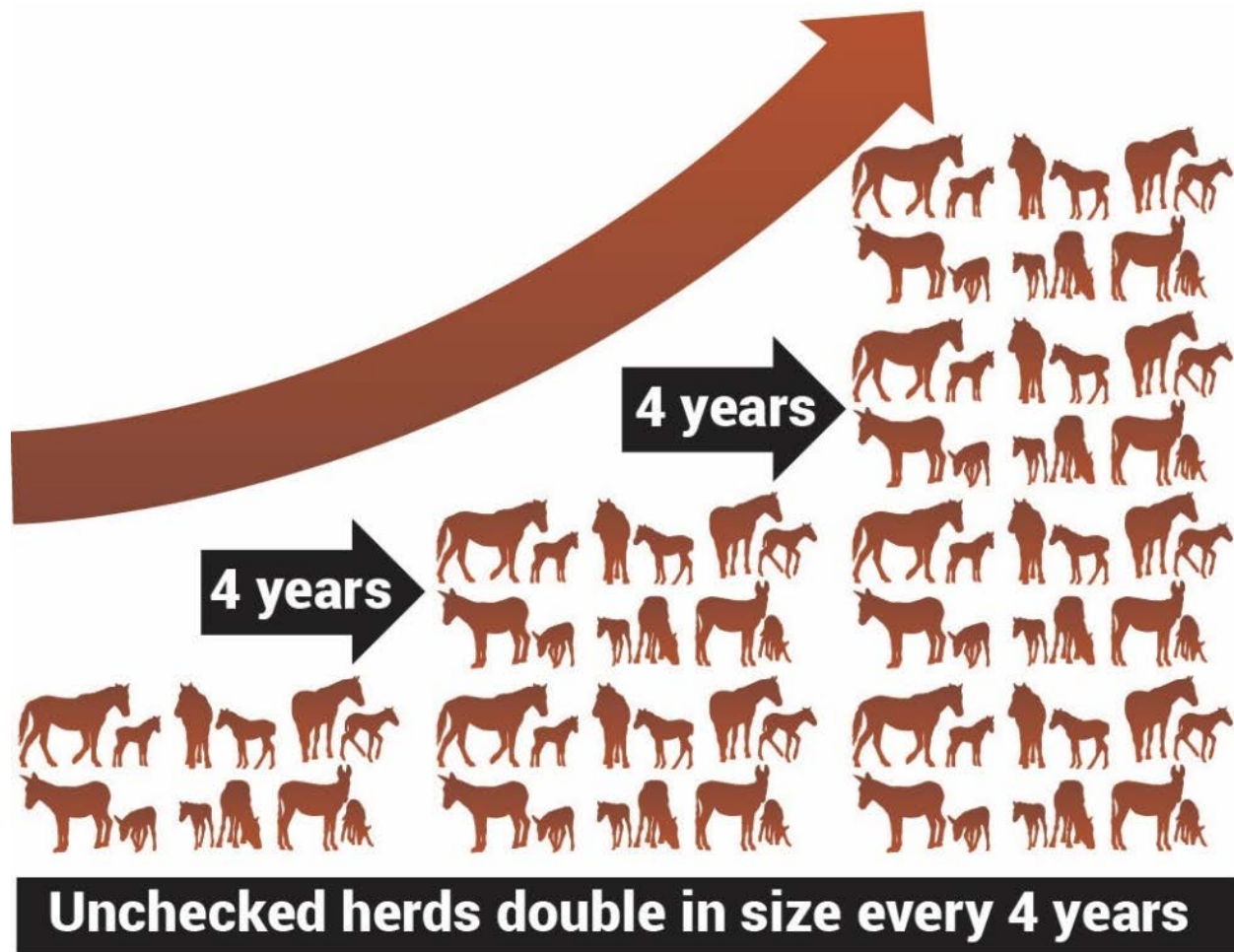
Element 1: Achieve AML

SUMMARY

- The BLM is mandated to maintain wild horses and burros at established AML.
- Estimated populations currently exceed AML by approximately 46,000.
- Existing fertility-control vaccines are ineffective at achieving AML in overpopulated HMAs.



Element 2: Maintain AML





Element 2: Maintain AML

- Gather, remove, adopt/sell
 - Annual adoptions/sales are insufficient to keep up with population growth
 - Growth in off-range care costs is unsustainable
- Fertility control
 - Vaccines only effective for ~1 yr
 - BLM must gather most horses to apply fertility control vaccine
 - Few herds are suitable for darting programs





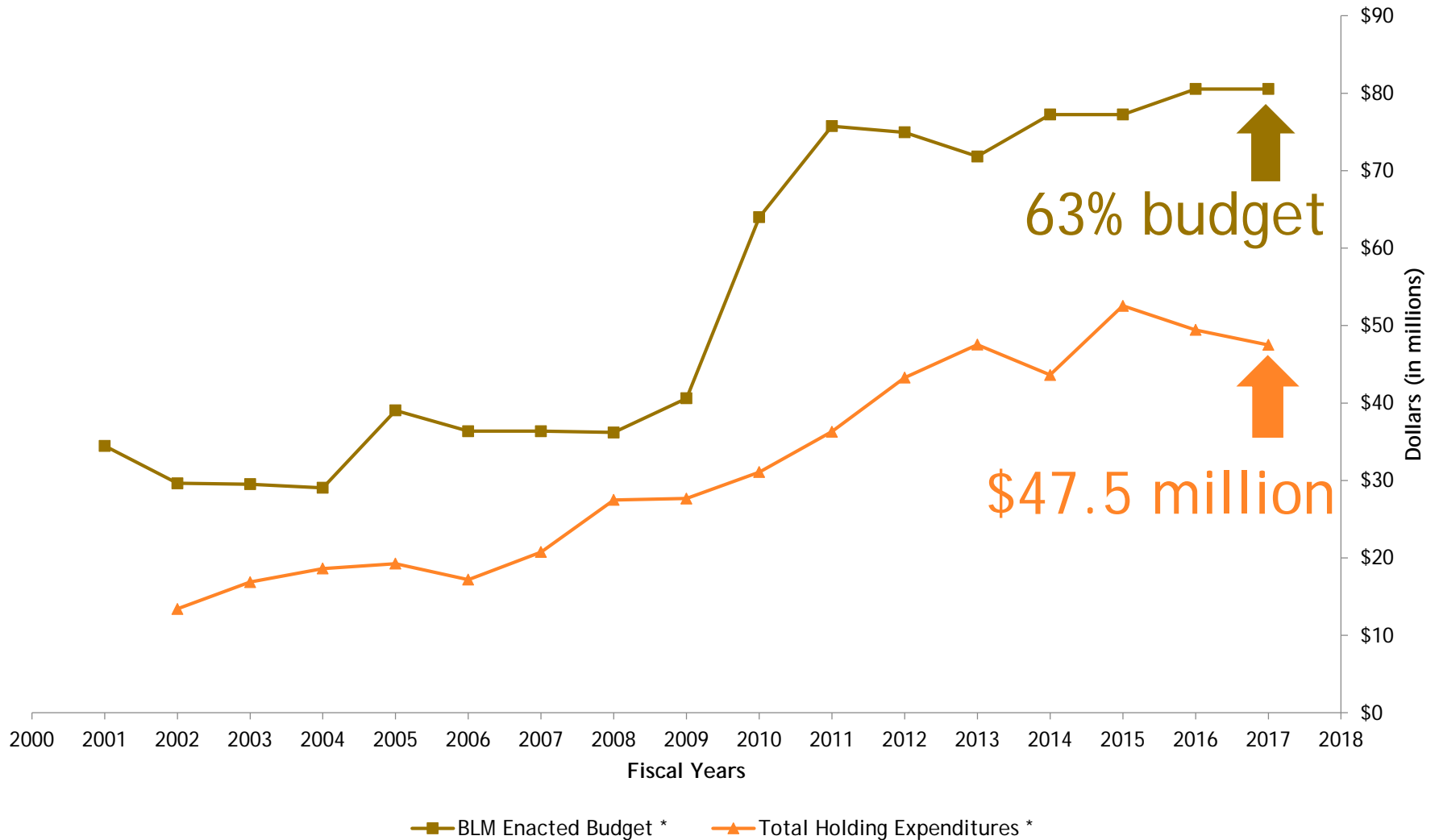
Element 2: Maintain AML

SUMMARY

- Wild horse populations increase 15-20% per year
- BLM must maintain populations within AML in 177 HMAs
- Existing fertility-control vaccines are effective for approx. 1 year
- Limited budget resources and BLM staff capacity for fertility-control operations and maintaining animals in off-range facilities



Element 3: Holding Costs





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Off-range pastures



Off-range corrals



\$1 Billion Lifetime Costs

For animals already in BLM's corrals and pastures



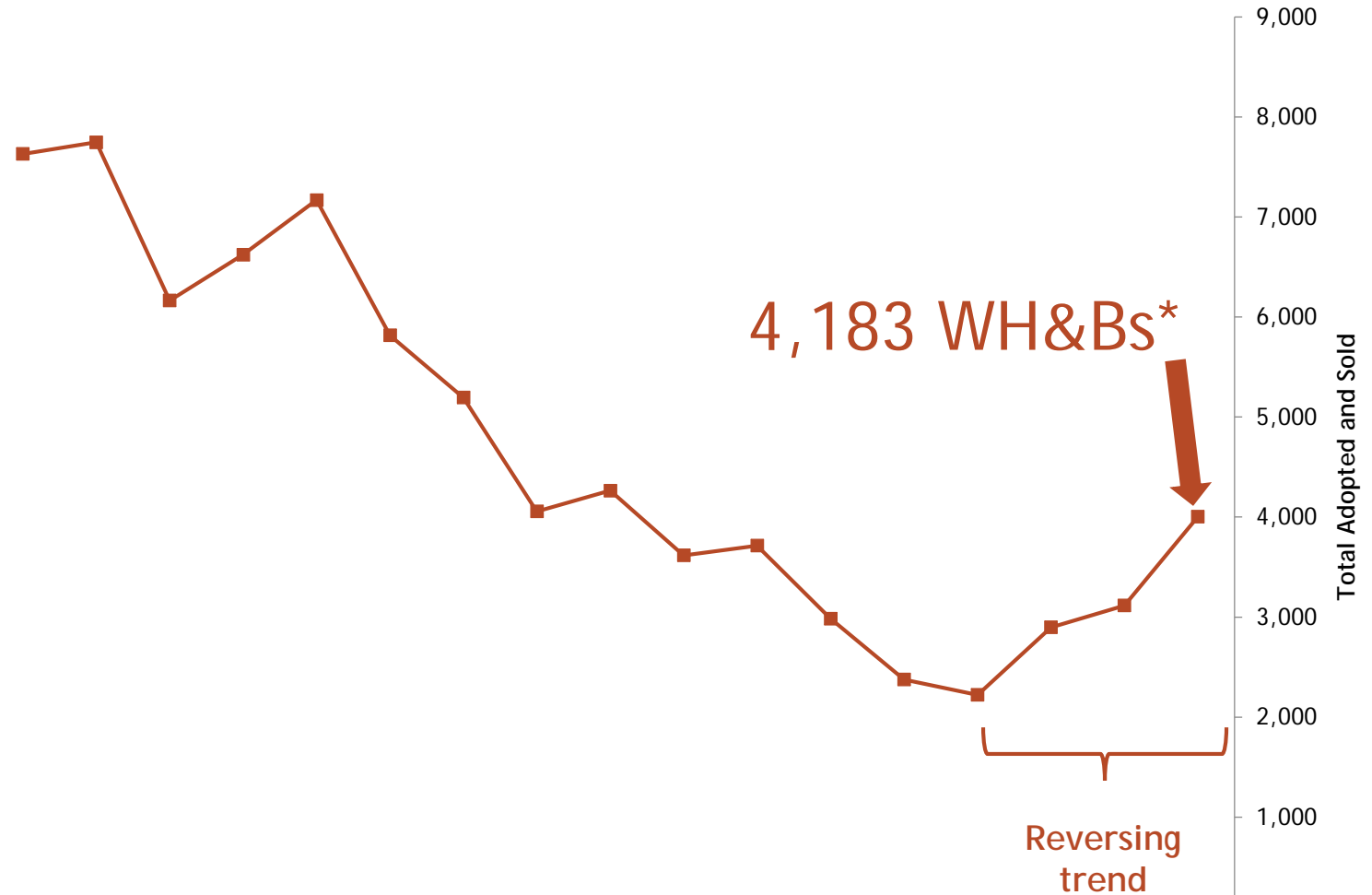
Element 3: Holding Costs

SUMMARY

- Holding cost for excess animals was \$50 million in FY2016, approximately two-thirds of program budget
- BLM must reduce current holding costs and not add to off-range population moving forward
- Expensive corrals necessary for program functions



Element 4: Private Care



	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Adoption + Sales	7,630	7,746	6,165	6,624	7,169	5,817	5,195	4,057	4,265	3,617	3,715	2,985	2,376	2,222	2,898	3,116	4,003

* Estimated for FY2017



Element 4: Private Care

SUMMARY

- Adoption and sale have restrictions on age, use and facility requirements put in place through law, regulation and policy
- BLM placed nearly 8,000 animals in 2002 vs. 3,100 in 2016
- BLM is on track to place more than 4,000 animals in FY2017, up from 2016 but still insufficient for program need



Element 5: Humane Treatment

SUMMARY

- Comprehensive animal welfare policy in place for gathers
- Policy for transportation, holding facilities and adoption events is in development.
- Veterinarians present at gather operations



Element 6: Best Science

- **\$13M for WH&B Research Projects**
- **12 USGS, NGO and University studies focused on spay/neuter treatments and longer-lasting contraceptive vaccines**
- **12 studies by USGS on other management techniques, such as better population models and survey techniques.**



Element 6: Best Science

SUMMARY

- In 2014, BLM implemented NAS-recommended population survey methods to increase accuracy of population estimates
- BLM launched wild horse and burro research initiative in 2015
- On-going research studies include 12 projects for improved contraceptives and spay/neuter techniques



Element 7: Economic Development and Int'l Aid

SUMMARY

- Opportunities could exist for cooperative partnerships with Tribes and foreign countries.



Element 8: Public Information

- WHB Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Twitter) provide adoption event information, gather viewing opportunities
- BLM State Offices provide additional social media platforms to promote WH&Bs
- Website provides more detailed information and statistics.
- Flyers and promotional items spread information to the public at events.



Element 8: Public Information

SUMMARY

- The BLM provides public information on the wild horse and burro program through its social media platforms, website and through the media.



Element 9: Partnerships

- Mustang Heritage Foundation - ~2,000 adoptions in FY17



- Local groups help with training, adoption and on-range management, such as PZP darting



Element 9: Partnerships

SUMMARY

- The BLM partners with local citizen groups as well as national organizations in the management of wild horses and burros.
- Partners, like the Mustang Heritage Foundation have helped place significant number of animals into private care.
- Other partners help with on-range management activities.



Discussion Questions

1. How can the BLM achieve AML within all HMAs in 5-10 years?
2. How can the BLM sustainably maintain AML within all HMAs?
3. How can the BLM reduce and control holding costs for excess animals?
4. How can the BLM significantly increase annual adoptions and sales of WH&Bs?
5. How can the BLM continue to ensure humane treatment of WH&Bs?
6. How can the BLM use best available science to improve management of WH&Bs?
7. What humanitarian assistance opportunities exist for wild horses and burros?
8. How can the BLM better provide information to the public?
9. How can the BLM increase public participation and financial support in the management of WH&Bs on and off the range?



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Thank You!

