



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

NATIONAL WILD
HORSE & BURRO
PROGRAM

National
Motorized Vehicle
Hearing
Virtual Meeting

April 26, 2022

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

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Tuesday, April 26th, 2022, 3pm MT – Meeting Opens

Welcome & Introductions

Bryant Kuechle, Facilitator, The Langdon Group

Mr. Kuechle, serving as the meeting's facilitator, introduced himself and welcomed attendees. He confirmed that the meeting now in session is the public hearing on the use of motorized vehicles in the management of wild horses and burros for the Bureau of Land Management. Mr. Kuechle explained that the meeting was being live-streamed with public observation and closed captioning, that video and audio were disabled for members of the public, and that the meeting was being recorded. He noted that the opportunity to register to provide public comment was advertised in March, and all available slots have been filled. Anyone else wishing to provide comment must do so via email by 5 pm MT, April 26th. These comments should be addressed to the email provided in the chat box (BLM_HQ_MotorizedVehicleHearing@blm.gov). More details regarding the commenting process, would be provided following a brief presentation by the Bureau of Land Management. Mr. Kuechle introduced Mr. Scott Fluor, the Acting On-Range Branch Chief for the Bureau of Land Management's Wild Horse and Burro Program.

Overview

Scott Fluor, Acting On-Range Branch Chief, Wild Horse and Burro Program, Bureau of Land Management

As the authorized officer for the hearing, Mr. Fluor introduced himself. He acknowledged that 11 BLM state offices were being represented at the meeting by their associated Program Leads. Mr. Fluor invited each of the attending State Leads to turn on their camera and microphone to introduce themselves. State leads in attendance introduced themselves as follows:

- John Hall, Arizona
- Amy Dumas, California
- Ben Smith, Colorado
- Krystal Johnson, Eastern States
- Chris Robbins, Idaho
- Ryan Bradshaw, Montana
- Pat Williams, New Mexico
- Ruth Thompson, Nevada
- Emily Lent, Oregon and Washington
- Gus Warr, Utah
- June Wendlandt, Wyoming and Nebraska

Mr. Fluor called the meeting to order. He shared the following information about the responsibility of the Bureau of Land Management, and the purpose of the Wild Horse and Burro program and standards of treatment and welfare for animals:

MR. FLUER: BLM has the responsibility to manage and protect wild horses and burros on certain areas of public lands as stated in the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. In addition to managing wild populations on public lands, the BLM also manages wild horses and burros off the range,

in corrals and pastures and at other offsite events such as adoptions, as the BLM works to place animals into private care. As part of its administration of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, another law, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, authorized the BLM to use motorized vehicles. The same Act also requires a public hearing to be held on such use. That is the purpose of this hearing today. Slide 3, please.

MR. FLUER: Before I go into the different uses of motorized vehicles, I want to explain that the actions you are going to hear about are guided by BLM's commitment to humane treatment standards included in our Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program for wild horses and burros. The BLM developed the standards included in the Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program in collaboration with animal welfare experts from the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California, Davis and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Veterinary Services. These humane handling practices are in place for wild horse and burro gather operations, transportation, and care at public events and in all off-range corrals. Now I will give some context to BLM's use of motorized vehicles. Slide four, please.

MR. FLUER: The BLM uses motorized vehicles in a variety of ways to help manage wild horses and burros. Trucks with trailers are used to move animals from trap site to holding facilities, and from holding facilities to other facilities and offsite events for adoption and sale activities. Pickup trucks and utility vehicles may be used for monitoring or other activities associated with managing wild horses and burros, such as conducting fertility control operations, delivering supplies, and bringing hay and water to animals. Vehicles are also used to transport BLM and contractor personnel. Tractors, loaders or skid steers are used to move supplies like hay and water, or panels for pens. Slide 5, please.

MR. FLUER: The BLM may use helicopters or fixed-wing aircraft to conduct population surveys or to determine locations of wild horses and burros on public lands. As herds outgrow resources available to them on public lands, the BLM may use helicopters to help gather large numbers of animals across rugged terrain, normally as a guide to bring animals into established traps.

MR. FLUER: With that information, this hearing will now move to the public comment segment. I will turn it back over to Bryant to go over some guidelines. State leads you may now turn your cameras off.

Rules of the Room

Bryant Kuechle, Facilitator, The Langdon Group

Mr. Kuechle introduced himself as the meeting's neutral, third-party facilitator. He reviewed the procedural guidelines which would be observed throughout the meeting, noting that these same rules were published prior to the meeting:

“These Rules of the Zoom are established for the public comment period of the virtual public hearing regarding the use of motorized vehicles in the management of wild horses and burros on public lands.”

1. Those wishing to address the BLM must register in advance of the public comment period.
2. Speakers must address their comments via audio only.
3. To allow for the maximum number of individuals to express their viewpoints, speakers must finish their comments in the designated time: 2 MINUTES
4. All attendees must show mutual respect for each other and the BLM.
5. Speakers must not exhibit unprofessional conduct or use inappropriate language (profanity, cursing or swearing).
6. Please keep comments relevant to the topic of using motorized vehicles to manage wild horses and burros.

Verbal Public Comment

Bryant Kuechle, Facilitator, The Langdon Group

Mr. Kuechle explained that speakers would comment based on their order of registration. He explained that violation or disregard of the outlined Rules of the Zoom may result in being muted or removed from the meeting. Mr. Kuechle expressed that the Bureau of Land Management appreciated the public's cooperation with the outlined rules for the benefit of all involved. Mr. Kuechle stated that the Bureau of Land Management would not be commenting or responding to comments, and that it in no way reflected their agreement or disagreement with any comment.

Mr. Kuechle reminded attendees that the virtual meeting was being recorded, and that any person who did not wish to be recorded may submit written comment via the email address displayed on the meeting screen. He reviewed the process for public comment, explaining that each commentator would be announced in order, including the next speaker on deck. He stated that each person would be allowed two minutes to speak, indicated by a timer on the meeting screen, and that time could not be shared or transferred between people. He asked that commentators begin by stating their name, the organization or agency they represented if applicable, and their location. He reiterated that the mute function would be applied as warranted.

Verbal public comment was provided as follows:

LAURA LEIGH: My name is Laura Leigh representing Wild Horse Education. As stated these hearings were mandated when the use of motorized vehicles for the capture and transport of wild horses were reinstated by the Federal Land Policy Management Act. Issues with the use of motorized vehicles were anticipated. The controversy they represented and the abuse they caused had been clearly demonstrated prior to the passage of the 1971 Act. The brutal use of motorized vehicle capture methods was a driver behind the passage of that law. Simply checking a box that the law is being complied with is not sufficient. The public really expects a written and substantive response after the hearing, including any proposed policy changes. Checking a box appears to the public to be pervasive throughout the program from on range for the lack of oversight that lands some wild horses in the slaughter pipeline. We are aware that this hearing is not a programmatic hearing. This hearing is to address concerns using motorized vehicles only. If the agency can

embrace these hearings with the intention of the law concerns regarding abuses, often outrageous abuses, would have been addressed years ago. The need to litigate to get a policy created should never have been necessary. It should not be necessary today in order to gain compliance and improvement with those standards. These hearings are intended to allow testimony and create those needed changes. We will have additional speakers from our organization that will provide additional information during this hearing. A two-minute comment period is not really appropriate or adequate to provide testimony at any hearing or in any venue. So what we've done is we've split up the time. Our organization stands ready to provide functional testimony and assist the agency improving COP and compliance with COP. If that is the intention of the agency, we have the largest documentation of roundups over the last decade available, and we do keep statistical database, and could provide that to the COP team, and we urge you to reach out to us.

JOANNA GROSSMAN: Hi, my name is Dr. Joanna Grossman with the Animal Welfare Institute. Today's hearing is especially critical in view of what happened during the Pancake Complex round up. Countless individuals watched in horror as footage showed a young colt's leg snapping in half during a helicopter chase. AWI's position is that bait and water trappings methods are preferable when the BLM is determined to remove horses. That said, we strongly support reversible fertility control options so that horses can remain on the range. From a practical perspective, large scale roundups are at odds with the BLM's goal to manage populations effectively, given that removals for compensatory reproduction. Exorbitant cost associated with helicopter roundups also underline the need to pursue alternatives. For example, The Hill reported that a mere four contracts removed hundreds of horses totaled over 740,000. As agency officials acknowledged during a prior advisory board meeting, bait and water trapping does not cost more so expense would likely not be a relevant justification for choosing helicopter roundups. For future gathers though we request the cameras be installed on vehicles and that video be live streamed. Such technology would vastly improve the transparency of roundup operations and ensure that welfare violations can be addressed. At a minimum, we urge the BLM to institute common sense reforms to better protect animals subjected to helicopter roundups. The comprehensive animal welfare policy is silent for example on the distance that horses can be pursued by a helicopter. Similarly, the temperature standard should be narrowed as they currently range from 10 degrees to 105 degrees. Lastly, in planning documents the BLM consistently notes the stresses associated with helicopter roundups which can lead to injuries and deaths. Observers of recent roundups have documented many such instances, from horses suffering broken necks to goats dying from capture means, to a mare even dying from a ruptured uterus. The American public cherishes wild horses so we hope the BLM will take seriously its mandate to protect these living symbols from capture, harassment, and death. Instituting reforms to gather operations would offer an important first step to better fulfilling that mission. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment today.

COLLETTE KALUZA: Collette Kaluza for Wild Horse Education Minden, Nevada. BLM is often non-compliant with its own stated policies and COP standards on use of motorized vehicles. This has been documented by our current on-site observers. BLM is in charge and court is present, and often participate. Here are some commonly occurring inappropriate practices. Picture a 706 square mile HMA where horses were herded to one trap site for six days, and through a maze of barbed wire fences, which are being used as convenient barriers. Traps sites should be moved close to animals' locations whenever possible to minimize the distance animals need to travel and traps placed to

prioritize for safety. Foals, pregnant mares weak horses in conditions of mud, heat, cold, smoke are not taken into consideration in determining appropriate herding distance and rate of movement. This lack of care prompted Dina Titus to introduce bill HR 6635 to stop and find humane alternatives for management. Helicopters drive horses to exhaustion, come too close, repeatedly press any folk, erratic behavior causing injury. Helicopters are being used longer than they should without considering time needed for sorting, loading, transporting to temporary holding. This leads to these activities occurring in darkness without supplemental light. Gates used as a prime tool to drive and move horses onto trailers increase risk of leg injury. Overloaded trailers are causing facial and tail-head injuries. Rival band stallions are loaded in the same trailer compartment and fight, particularly when adjoining mares. ATVs are used to move and rope horses, this should never be done. We ask for a report and response to our comments and a meeting with those who will address or concerns and take steps to ensure BLM's compliance with its own stated policies and COP standards on use of motorized vehicles. Thank you.

MARIE MILLIMAN: Marie Milliman representing Wild Horse Education, San Diego, California. My question to the BLM is, how will you demonstrate compliance with cop reviews, with newly added contractors in an already accelerated and increased removal schedule, when your current track record documentation and reviews are currently inconsistent, faulty, and lack true transparency. The COP policy was introduced in the fall of 2015. Fast forward to 2021. BLM belatedly began a review of deficits and remains inconsistent in their review processes. It is important to note that those in charge of policing actions appear to believe that if COP classifies something as a minor infraction, they can negligently ignore it. We are independent observers and document COP compliance within our limited ability to observe, i.e. distance etc, or even denied observation. We have witnessed barbed wire draped with jute at the entrance of a trap, barbed wire used for a barrier to drive to the trap etc. when the national cop team was in attendance, with no mention of these violations and their reports. The cop review team was sporadically attended with a limited number of team members, 12 days within 89 days of five operations in the years 2021 to present. The team's report shows inconsistencies in scoring, report formatting, and includes contractor favoritism. Cop teams are to complete periodic internal assessments of cop compliance and should include stakeholders. Please publish the current national cop review team members including their contact information. The IC is also required to conduct after action reviews per BLM Incident Command System protocol, but rarely do them. BLM cop policy team shall create a board that includes wild horse education and maintains the largest library of round-up documentation and has legally proven the abuse. Wild Horse Education has the experience and documentation to participate in any cop review process and accomplish what we cannot elaborate on in this abbreviated hearing. Thanks for the opportunity to let it all out.

TAMMI ADAMS: Tammi Adams representing Wild Horse Education, Elk River, Minnesota. In April of 2021, Secretary Haaland promised in her secretarial order to improve agency transparency and public engagement in the decision making process, citing key deficiencies of this agency. Imposed BLM restrictions regarding observation and documentation of captures, short term holding and off limit holding facilities, are without reasonable justification. These restrictions are inconsistent, district to district, state to state, often ignoring first amendment rights, but are based on the whim of contractors' staff rather than terrain and number of observers. Beyond states, their

numbers do not lie that motorized vehicle roundups are safe professing a 1 to 2% mortality rate. However roundup related deaths and injuries are not reported after leaving temporary corrals. BLM does not compile and release spontaneous abortions statistics, a capture related death. Even BLM shipping and fatality cumulative counts do not equal capture counts. Where are these missing horses? BLM maintains a myth of low roundup-related deaths by clouding data and incapacitating the public to independently verified data. BLM now demands FOIA requests to obtain data that was previously available on BLM's website. From BLM obtained data, obtained months after waiting on FOIA requests, we calculated helicopter roundup related deaths as high as 15 to 18%, we documented and litigated horses hit by a helicopter skid. The Presiding Judge saw it, if the BLM employee stated it never happened under oath in a court of law, and other litigations full to run to exhaustion and horses through barbed wire. These inexcusable actions should have been addressed through these hearings years ago and should never require public litigation. BLM refuses to openly address public concerns yet BLM is legally obligated by law to do so. Even the National Academy of Sciences repeatedly identifies BLM lack of program transparency. BLM actions and policies are erratic and inconsistent and far from Secretary Haaland's promise. Will you please provide program transparency and meaningful public engagement at the national state and field levels?

RICHARD KARCICH: I'm Rick Kersey from Centennial, Colorado. For the record, I state the following. Without any scientific basis the BLM maintains there is an overpopulation of wild horses and burros in the American West. In efforts to control this supposed overpopulation, the BLM is directed to humanely capture wild free roaming horses and burros and put them up for adoption. BLM however uses helicopter companies to round up these animals, leading to brutally cruel, and sometimes deadly situations. At 500 dollars a head since 2011, BLM's top three helicopter contractors have raked in over \$37 million in taxpayer funding. Earlier this year, during a gather the pancake complex in central Nevada, a young colt was chased for miles by a helicopter, despite having a broken leg and had to be put down when captured. During the 2021 removal in the Antelope Complex, horses had been knocked down by helicopters, a foal trampled, and a horse chased into barbed wire. This is abuse and a violation of the BLM's own comprehensive animal welfare program. Over recent years examples of the abuse of wild horse and burros during helicopter gathers are legion, including a pregnant mare being actively chased by a helicopter while spontaneously aborting her foal. This is criminal abuse on its face. Taxpayer funded gathers of wild horses and burros on the basis of unscientific gaslighting by BLM are not only costly, ineffective, and cruel; they endangered the lives of these federally protected animals, particularly when helicopters are used. The elimination of helicopters from the BLM's gathers pending congressional hearings regarding wild horses and burro overpopulation. And, including GAO review of the BLM's contracts with helicopter companies, responsible for this abuse will provide significant savings to American taxpayers. Thank you.

JOYCE PURTZER: Good afternoon. I feel that the helicopters have in particular have caused many injuries and deaths. There have been pregnant horses that have been aborted due to this. The horses are being chased far far far too far. And I really feel the whole thing is very cruel and inhumane. Please look at some alternatives. Thank you so much.

REBECCA FALK: My name is Rebecca Falk, and I am from Kansas, and I'm pretty much just

talking for the wild horses. I have seen the San Mor (?) space for horses, I just went up there recently and I do see that they don't have much food, but the helicopter rounds I think is not the right way to go. They have brought in a lot of horses. Mares pregnant, losing their babies, horses have gotten trampled, foals are dying, they herd them in by barbed wire. Helicopter roundups are not the right way to go unfortunately. I don't think bait and trap is either. I think actually fertility control is one good way to go, versus anything else. I want to see the wild horses and burros stay out the land (?), I don't want to see them disappear. And as you keep capturing more horses, they are going to disappear. You're touching 22,000 horses this year. And even though you have fertility control, you're still not going to see that many horses out there anymore. So I think that alternatives need to be done and helicopter roundups, as I've said before, is not the right way to go. (yelling in background). I'm sorry about my son. I think that other alternatives need to be done. PCP, maybe gynecon. I'm not sure about that because it does leave abscesses. So I think that is something to look into. Maybe gelding there are a few actually gelded horses out in San Juan space and I wasn't sure how I felt about that. But talking to some people on San More space and on the warrior people, they said that the geldings do fine, so maybe that is something more to look into is actually gelding horses and putting them back out into the wild versus catching and keeping them in holding facilities. So that is my statement.

BRENNA WRIGHT: I'm Brenna Wright, I'm from the state of Vermont. I work with multiple horse rescues here and I'm also a humane officer. From what I've seen, the roundups with the... (inaudible. Arthur worked with her to get a better connection). I'm Brenda. A lot of my concern is that I don't see a lot of the laws that a normal private citizen would have to follow for horse care are being followed. Horses are crowded in trailers and driven for way too many miles in high heat. Trucks are driving at high speeds, the helicopters are flying way too close to these horses, and causing extra stress and driving them for miles and miles into small pens. I think that process itself just needs to be reevaluated. And also, there's a lot of talk of horses that are being euthanized for preexisting conditions, but no vet reports have ever proved that those horses are being euthanized for a preexisting condition, versus that might have been caused during a roundup, which I think that needs to be a little more clear to the folks that it was due to a health issue for these horses. I guess that's it and thank you for allowing me to speak.

TONI NAPOLITANO: My name is Toni and I'm from Colorado. And I'm, you know, making a public comment that I'm totally opposed to using helicopter roundups. Possibly you know maybe bait and trap methods could possibly be more humane. The bottom line is, I think we need to increase funding and hire BLM staff to do reversible fertility control measures such as darting of PCP. I think that is paramount that that's how we're going to deal with population management. You know after reviewing the comprehensive animal welfare program standards, I think, and I've been out to some of these roundups, helicopter roundups, particularly in Sand Wash basin, I think you guys are really violating your standards, you know, the pressure and release methods of herding the horses, you know, pretty inconsistent and erratic. You're pushing these horses to exhaustion. You're scaring these horses, we had a horse flip over, break its leg or hip, and then they ran it for about six miles and then it ultimately had to be euthanized. You're really evoking, from what I've watched with the roundups as well as on videos, you know a lot of erratic behavior on these horses that are causing injury and a lot of trauma and stress. I feel the helicopters are too close. Okay, I didn't see a helicopter hit a horse in Sand Wash Basin but I've seen videos of them hitting horses. They're just

too close, even when they're running them in the traps. The bottom line is cameras need to be in these helicopter cockpits to document that you guys are following the camp regulations, or that you're violating them. Okay and then there won't be questions from us on the ground. Again, you're running them long distances. The bottom line is, I think these roundups, are you know should be there should be a moratorium. Right now sadly in Wheatland in Wyoming - hi June, how are you? - and over in Canon cities with Steve Leonard, we have two major crisis. We got 2500 kids, horses, either having stranglers and we don't know what the disease that's killing horses in Canon City is. We need to change these formats for these holding facilities, and maybe they'll be smaller so when diseases do occur, we're not having you know 57 horses die in two days like we had in Canon city.

SAUNDRA HOLLOWAY: First of all, my name is Sandra Holloway. I live in eastern San Diego County, California and thank you for the opportunity to present my opposition to the use of motorized vehicles such as helicopters to round up wild horses and burros. I also agree with the previous comments made by Wild Horse Education. The Bureau of Land Management, BLM, is using outdated science for what little if any management planning they do. Climate change is real. The BLM's lack of proper management and updated plans for each range or herd management area, along with modern science and rewilding methods are a major contributor to climate change, and the destruction of our range. Our wild horses have been the scapegoat for the government's agenda. The BLM's radical assault on our iconic American wild horses and burros is one of the greatest injustices we've seen brought by the federal government in modern history. This country was built on their backs and they should be allowed to roam freely on public lands dedicated specifically for the wild horses and burros. It's an affront to see the agency continue to eradicate them simply for wealthy cattle ranchers to be subsidized with cheap grazing lands, all on the taxpayer's dime. This program remains unaccountable to the taxpayer and the public resource and clearly CAWPs are not being followed. The use of helicopters to chase pregnant mares and foals is outrageous and inexcusable. Many times the foals are run to death or as happened in Nevada recently, chased in such a manner as to break a leg. HR 6635 was recently introduced by Dana Titus to address the ongoing abuse, often causing unnecessary injury, and many times the death of wild horses and burros. It would also test the government accounting office to conduct an immediate review of capture methods to find the safest alternative. I support HR 6635, and I am strongly against using motorized vehicles such as helicopters, or ATVs to round up wild horses and burros on our public lands and forest lands. Thank you for taking my comment today.

ASHLEY AVIS: Hi everyone, thank you for giving me the time to make my statement. My name is Ashley Avis I'm the founder of the Wild Beauty Foundation, as well as the filmmaker behind Disney's Black Beauty and also a lifelong equestrian. For four years I've been traveling the vast American West filming wild horses and burros and nearly every state they exist. I've witnessed both the astounding beauty of their families, which every American has the right to enjoy, as well as the horror of helicopter roundups. From what I've documented in detail with my team over those years is that, without a doubt, these helicopter operations are not humane and I believe that the vast majority of Americans who saw what actually occurs to these federally protected wild horses and burros versus the narrative that the BLM is purporting, in my opinion, to placate the public, that they too would agree that there's nothing humane about this. Despite being denied our constitutional rights as journalists during numerous roundups over the years, where we were not allowed to see or film areas such as the trap site in Onakee (?) of 2021,

despite other groups given priority, we've witnessed and filmed the horror of the horses colliding with one another, stallions breaking their necks, and small newborn foals being run to death. So if that's occurring in just one of these roundups, how can you justify that these are humane? These are intelligent animals with family dynamics just like ours that's scientifically proven and the antiquated nature of these roundups is not only outdated, in my opinion, it's barbaric. And lastly, the fact that the BLM, a federal agency, still hires contractors that have broken laws, such as Couture Helicopter Roundups Inc, when Dave Couture pled guilty to and was convicted of a federal crime in the 90s for hunting wild horses with the intent to sell them to slaughter is not only in my opinion negligent, it's disturbing. So I encourage those at the BLM who are hearing the advocates today to undergo a thorough investigation within their own agency, and that helicopter roundups until more humane solutions are found, should be grounded. These icons represent the history of the United States of America, our children and future generations deserve to see them free on the range where they belong. And I look forward to showing the world what has actually happened, happening very soon, with our documentary.

DIANE SMITH: Okay, so I'm not going to repeat, a lot of the things that the people previously have mentioned because I am in total agreement with everything that they said. Wild Horse Education put it very eloquently and professionally than probably I can say. So I'm just going to read some of the stuff that I wanted to say so that I, you can see that I'm extremely against the helicopter aircraft trapping techniques. One of the reasons is it extremely inhumane. The aircraft puts wild horses and burros into extreme fear and flight mode trying to escape this powerful predator machine running for survival. This is not a natural predator. These animals kick into survive mode running for their lives, miles beyond the distance of a natural predator. These animals run beyond physical capability and exhaustion breaking legs, young and old trying to keep up. And again these animals are forced to run miles longer than any domesticated horse race, and on unpredictable terrain and obstacles. And the other thing I was going to mention in regards to the project inspector who considers the terrain, physical barriers, access limitation, weather, conditions of the animals, and urgency of the operation. My question is what scientific certifiable qualifications in equine animal welfare and conditioning, along with humane maximum capacity and ability for horse to be in full gallop, to run over obscure terrain, physical barriers for several miles, does this lead officer have to be able to evaluate humanely that helicopter dr trapping operations. Along with that, the contractors, what about their education? My other thing is that there are humane things out there, there is a wildlife protection management website where they can do the darting without hands on and that would be great in these places where there aren't a lot of advocates that could help out with the darting process.

MICHELE MALLORY: Okay, thank you so much. My name is Michelle Mallory I trust you can hear me. Excellent. Thank you, thank you for hosting this forum. I want to speak to the post heli use in these mustangs and burros that are then adopted. I have been on the board of a horse rescue for over 10 years and we have adopted numerous mustangs and burros, that have been rounded up. And we have discovered that with intensive training (of course these animals, I find them superior to our domestics just because their intelligence is so high, they're so creative they're so friendly, their constitution is amazing, especially relative to like I say here in the high country, our domestics and how they fare with our winters). Anyways all to say that no matter how much training, expert training, that we put into these rescued mustangs we discover that because of the predatory nature of these flights, the helicopters traumatize them. These Mustangs even though they make great leaps

forward with training, if you are riding them or attempting to ride, if there is anything from behind that, as the helicopters are an unmanageable and inescapable predator upon these flight animals when they're being rounded up. We are never able to get them fully sound and trusting, and so they become unrideable, which, if we want to get them adopted which is an excellent answer for at least some portion of them. People want to be able to ride their animals safely. And because of the trauma that comes from the helicopter being a predator from up above and they cannot escape, they cannot outrun. This permanently traumatizes them so they are not fully salvageable as riding animals.

JAKE TIBBITTS: Good afternoon, my name is Jake Tibbetts and I'm speaking on behalf of Eureka County, Nevada and the Eureka County Board of County Commissioners. The Eureka County Board of Commissioners also approved and submitted through some written comments via email for today's hearing. Eureka county asserts that helicopter and other motorized vehicle used for gathers of excess and other management of horses and burros is efficient, effective, safe and humane, especially over wide areas and rugged terrain. Eureka county recognizes some tragic losses of wild horses because of isolated accidents associated with gathering by helicopter. But these rare unfortunate circumstances must not be used as reasoning to cease or limit use of helicopters for gathers and management. We note the recent scientific journal article published in the Journal of Equine Veterinary Science by Doctor Scasta, which we cited in our written comments, which found significantly lower death rates for helicopter gathers of horses and burros than those found in roundups for other wild animal species, and reported a mortality rate of 1.7% for bait and trap gathers versus 1% for helicopter gathers with a majority of the deaths related to preexisting health conditions. This proves the safe and humane use of helicopters for gathering excess animals. Helicopter use must be retained and used to get to appropriate management levels as soon as possible. Lands and waters in the West, including Eureka County, continue to experience the adverse impacts of excess wild horses and burros that far exceed the resources that can sustain these animals for healthy animals and working range lands. We cannot continue on the path we are on. It's imperative that something be done now to conserve and restore the health of these range lands negatively affected by excess horses and burros. Helicopter use is crucial towards addressing this need. Thank you.

HEATHER HELLYER: My name is Heather Hellyer, and I am with Save Our Wild Horses, and I just wanted to call in and make it known that I do vehemently oppose the use of helicopters or any motorized vehicle in the use of roundups of our wild horses and burros. Case in point, the upcoming Black Mountain HMA in Arizona which I did have the privilege of visiting last year, the burros there. I'm also a longtime resident of Arizona, and the deserts there so I know how many gullies and so forth are out there. And for the helicopters to be chasing the burros in that particular area when they can easily be spooked and fall into a gully and break a leg there, I mean that's just a real concern of mine. So that's all I had to say today, I don't agree with the use of motorized vehicles during roundups. Thank you.

LINDA GRAVES: Hi this is Linda graves and I'm at the Save our Wild Horses conference in Washington DC and I'm calling about the use of helicopters and motorized vehicles in wild horse roundups. And I'm completely opposed to them. The fact that these horses are run beyond their capabilities. And while we see some catastrophic deaths at the roundups, they go on for weeks afterwards. Anybody that's ever done horse management of any kind, they know you don't put a horse away hot, the trauma and injuries continue to happen. Same thing with it being under extreme

terror for long periods of time also negatively impacts their health in multiple ways. And I agree with everything that wild horse education had to say earlier. So I just wanted to put my two cents in. And please, we need to stop this. And I am supporting the bill that would in helicopter roundups. Thank you.

GINGER FEDAK: I am a stakeholder because I have been out on the wild horse ranges and visited many herd management areas and I've also been present at different roundups at the designated observation spots. And I have personally seen inhumane practices and cop violations at the helicopter roundups, and it's, it is disturbing because the procedures and protocols are not being followed for cop. Transparency really must be addressed during these operations because currently meaningful observation is not made available at the vast majority of the roundups. With the roundups I have been to, we were put over a mile away and only saw 100 to 200 yards of the final run into the trap. We saw none of the preceding 30 to 60 minutes of the chase, where they have been chased into the traps, but we only saw the very last portion of it so there really needs to be cameras on the helicopters and transparency provided. Also the distance horses may be chased by a helicopter really needs to be limited to no more than five miles, and that is not when you count it from point A to point B in a straight line. These horses are run zigzagged up and down gullies and through areas with rocks and snow and through extreme heat and extreme cold and come in covered in sweat and any horse person knows that this is very dangerous so we really want to see helicopter roundups stopped completely and if gather is necessary, it should be a bait or water trap. Thank you very much.

[Stand By]

Mr. Kuechle noted that the time for public comment had come to an end. He thanked the public for their attendance and for providing comment and turned the session over to Mr. Fluer to conclude the meeting.

Closing Remarks

Scott Fluer, Acting On-Range Branch Chief, Wild Horse and Burro Program, Bureau of Land Management

Mr. Fluer thanked members of the public and the Bureau of Land Management State Leads for attending. He confirmed that all public comments were recorded and would be provided to BLM's decision makers for consideration. Mr. Fluer wished all a good evening and concluded the meeting.

5pm MT- Meeting Adjourns

The following 18 participants registered to provide public comment, but were not in attendance:

BARBARA SAMBRANO
SUSAN INGLE
CHERYL TURNER
HOLLIS PICKETT
JACK COLWELL
SHELLEY CRANLEY

CAROLE CSERNYIK
LINDA MCGUFFIN
MELISSA WARFIELD
STELLA KOCH
ANGELA DIXON
HILLTAXPAYER CHEL
SANDRA DYCUS
JULIE SERACUSE
GABRIELE MORITZ
THERESA BARBOUR
TERESA HALL
SUSAN GADDY