



Public Lands Foundation

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For America's Heritage

Public Lands Foundation Statement Before the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board, April 14, 2014

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to make a statement. The Public Lands Foundation members have thousands of years of collective experience managing natural resources. And, no one in the Foundation receives pay for Foundation work.

Our comments to the Board and to the BLM today will be limited to population growth suppression. We applaud the BLM for its March 2014 Request for Applications (RFA) to alert veterinarians, scientists, universities, pharmaceutical companies, and other researchers of the BLM's need to develop new, innovative techniques and protocols for implementing population growth-suppression methods. We are hopeful that this RFA will produce results designed to help control the overpopulation of wild horses and burros on federal public lands. However, we are concerned that any products of the RFA will likely take years, if not a decade, before they may have an impact on populations.

There does not appear to be any management activity that is dealing with the fact that horse and burro populations are continuing to grow in a largely unfettered manner. There is little room for debate that the impacts from increasing numbers of horses and burros grazing year around are adversely affecting rangeland conditions with a resultant negative impact on wildlife, soils, and water sources.

The Public Lands Foundation has, on numerous occasions, requested that the BLM convene a group of wild horse experienced veterinarians and other appropriate scientists knowledgeable about long-term fertility control drugs. And, that the group be charged with making recommendations for immediate large-scale use and field study of existing long-term fertility control drugs along with recommendations for monitoring populations and herd behavior. Concurrently, BLM should begin the process of securing permission from the EPA to use the drugs that would be field-tested. These long-term fertility control drugs should be field tested on a large-scale basis following protocols and monitoring regimens recommended by the experts. Large-scale tests can complement ongoing pen research.

We are now asking, why there is no apparent consideration given to this request; a request that holds the potential for limiting population growth until more effective population growth alternatives can be put in place? Funding for these large-scale long-term field tests could possibly come by redirecting funds from the adoption program where the average cost per adoption last year was \$3,857. Quite possibly, the use of some adoption funds for gathers and administration of long-term fertility control drugs could prove to be more effective in the long run.

We do appreciate the near impossible job that the BLM has been tasked with; especially given the constraints it is currently operating under.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.