PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION STATEMENT TO THE

WILD HORSE AND BURRO ADVISORY BOARD

PHOENIX, ARIZONA DECEMBER 12 - 14, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement. The Public Lands Foundation membership collectively has thousands of years of experience professionally managing natural resources.  No one in the Foundation receives pay for Foundation work.

There is little you can do to solve the problem that is the excess of wild horses and burros on public lands.  When the Congress determined that there would be no sale of these animals without limitation, it assumed the responsibility for the problems that exist today.  You are familiar with the impacts those excess numbers have on wildlife, the animals themselves, water, and the destruction of land such that in many places it is beyond rehabilitation.

Until the Congress fully funds a multi-year program the only thing you can be certain of is that you or your successors will be here twenty years from now, as you were twenty years ago, ploughing the same ground.  Full funding requires a multi-year effort that provides for gathering excess numbers, applying fertility control drugs, and providing for the ever-increasing cost of warehousing unadopted animals.

We have two requests to make of you.

**Funding:**  One is that you ask the BLM to develop a redlined, not a new original, but a redlined updated version of its May 2020 Report to Congress.  That type of presentation will clearly demonstrate the cost of the failure to fully fund, over the long term, what it takes to manage horses and burros at AML.  Failure to fully fund the program results in a cycle that is absolutely predictable.  The cycle is simply described as horses and burros continuing to reproduce, BLM gathering some numbers every year in an impossible effort to comply with the law, applying a limited amount of fertility control, and sending excess numbers to be warehoused for the rest of their extended life.  No matter how the inadequate funding is allocated in this cycle, AML will never be achieved.  The impacts and the costs will forever escalate with warehousing animals having an absolute priority on the funding.

**Research:**  The second request is that you ask the BLM, as we are asking, that they reconsider research into sterilization of mares.  It is irresponsible, in the face of the horse and burro population control crisis, that sterilization is not in the tool bag to be carefully utilized along with other control methods.  Previous efforts to do research in this area failed when potential partnerships with two universities were terminated largely due to protests that the research was inhumane.  To the extent that ovariectomy by colpotomy was the principal basis for protest as being much too invasive, reconsider research into the other methods that were to be studied.  These were tubal ligation and laser ablation; both considered to be minimally invasive.  Certainly less invasive than castration as a previous Board member noted some years ago.

Thank you.