

## The Facts about the Bureau of Land Management's Wild Horse and Burro Program

### **The current BLM wild horse and burro (WHB) program is fiscally unsustainable.**

- October 2008 GAO Report found: "The number of animals removed from the range is far greater than the number adopted or sold, which has resulted in the need for increased short-term and long-term holding. . . . *If not controlled, off-the-range holding costs will continue to overwhelm the program.*"
- BLM now stockpiles more wild horses in holding facilities (36,000+) than are left on the Western range. The agency intends to remove nearly 12,000 wild horses and burros from the West in Fiscal Year 2010.
- BLM's wild horse policy consists of mass roundups, removals and the stockpiling of horses in holding facilities, costing taxpayers a minimum \$44 million annually. The cost keeps rising with agency plans to capture thousands more horses from the range.
- Secretary Salazar's plan to spend \$42.5 million to purchase *private* land in the East and Midwest to house horses taken from *public* lands in the West is bad fiscal policy and contrary to the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act.
- Safe and effective on-the-range management strategies could save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, yet BLM continues to resist change.

### **The BLM's program is devastating America's wild horses and burros, who are legally protected as an important part of our national heritage.**



- BLM helicopter roundups stampede horses over miles of often treacherous terrain, causing trauma, injury and death. At least 77 horses have died and dozens more were injured as a result of the recent, controversial Calico Mountains (NV) roundup. Over 40 heavily pregnant mares spontaneously aborted.
- The roundups destroy the natural social structure of wild herds; family bands are torn apart; stallions are separated from mares and foals are taken from their mothers.
- BLM has set arbitrarily low appropriate management levels (AMLs) for wild horses. The 2008 GAO report found that BLM lacked a uniform procedure for determining AMLs.
- Horses are left on the range in such small numbers that the genetic viability of many herds, including genetically and historically unique populations, are threatened.

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***American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign, [www.wildhorsepreservation.org](http://www.wildhorsepreservation.org)***  
*P.O. Box 926, Lompoc, CA 93438, 919-697-9389*

## **Wild horses do not receive their fair share of public lands designated as federally-protected habitat.**

- Livestock grazing is authorized on five times more acres of BLM-managed land than wild horses. (160 million acres for livestock vs. 26.6 million acres [shared with livestock] for horses and burros.)
- Livestock outnumber wild horses and burros on public land by *at least* 50 to 1.
- Livestock grazing on BLM land *increased* between 2006 and 2008, while the Appropriate Management Levels for wild horses *decreased* from 2005 to 2009.
- BLM has reduced designated wild horse habitat by 40 percent (over 20 million acres) since 1971, including a 2.4 million acre loss between 2005 and 2009 alone.
- Publicly-subsidized livestock grazing on public lands costs taxpayers in excess of \$122 million annually, yet cattle grazed on public lands provide just 3% of the nation's beef supply.
- BLM prevents ranchers who want to promote wild horse ecotourism from transferring livestock grazing allotments to wild horses.

## **Changes needed for BLM's wild horse and burro program.**

- Suspend all roundups (except those necessary for verifiable emergency situations) while the entire BLM wild horse program undergoes objective and scientific review. This review should include analysis of Appropriate Management Levels and Range Management Plans that do not give wild horses and burros their fair share of public lands.
- Shift resources away from costly and unsustainable mass roundup, removal and stockpiling policy to cost-effective and humane on-the-range management strategies.
- Increase wild horse and burro appropriate management levels by decreasing livestock grazing in herd management areas through voluntary buyouts and/or leasing of grazing allotments; tax incentives for retirement of grazing allotments.
- Manage reproduction through fertility control in genetically viable herds where necessary.
- Phase out long-term holding. Explore options for repatriating at least some of the horses currently in Midwestern holding pastures and short-term holding pens to Western public lands, in the climate to which horses have adapted and where they are part of the cultural history and natural landscape.

