

Laura Bies, Ph.D.
Director of Government Affairs
The Wildlife Society

Dear Dr. Bies,

Thank you for sending the draft position statement and for asking for comment. However, I feel the information presented by the Wildlife Society on its "Draft Position Statement" on "feral horses" and what was published by Linklater et al. (2002)* in the "Commentary" section of Wildlife Society Bulletin was politically biased, unscientific, and illogical based on information extrapolated to the American continent from New Zealand with a flora that has no pre-European history of any land herbivores until a host of exotics were introduced for the first time. I am a wildlife biologist who has been practicing for more than 20 years and am a former member of the Wildlife Society participating in the 1st Annual Conference held in Albuquerque, NM in 1994.

Most of the problems with overgrazing is attributable to cattle (*Bos taurus*) which has solely a post-European settlement history. (I am not anti-cattle however, since I wrote a white paper for the New Mexico Livestock Board and Governor safeguarding cattle from Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy. I am however anti-overgrazing and have evidence to support that the horse has been used as a "whipping boy" for non-equine problems including cattle overgrazing and land development.) I have been working with the New Mexican Horse Project for 9 years and been tracking and studying wild horses descending from those from the Iberian Peninsula. I would like an opportunity to submit an article on the subject to provide a sound scientific position on the subject. This article will be based on the fields of paleontology, genetics, archaeology, archeogenetics, conservation biology, ecology, ethology, physiology, ethnozoology, and law. Since the evidence is voluminous and beyond the scope of a letter, I plan to address it in a point by point manner under a different format. With my scholarly colleagues, I will be drafting a paper for submission to your Wildlife Society Bulletin regarding the *actual* situation with wild horses in the American West. I hope that it will be evaluated on a scientific and not a political basis.

Sincerely,
Paul J. Polechla Jr., Ph.D.
Research Associate Professor
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

and

Project Biologist, Lead Tracker
New Mexican Horse Project