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STATE OF NEVADA

BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS

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KENNY C. GUINN
Governor

August 5, 2004

Kathleen Clarke
Director
Bureau of Land Management
United States Department of Interior
1849 C Street

Dear Director Clarke:

The Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners continues to be concerned over the ongoing struggle to attain management control of wild horse populations in Nevada. The Commission recognizes and concurs with the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) portrayal of much of the Great Basin being "on the brink of ecological collapse" (BLM, The Great Basin: Healing the Land, April 2000). Wildlife habitats are significantly degraded and threatened by severe drought and wildfire. The associated invasion of exotic weeds and cheatgrass has added to the stresses and competition for remaining habitats available to wildlife and is exacerbated by wild horse use and domination of important habitat components such as water and associated riparian areas.

While the State has supported planned management objectives and actions that would reduce the numbers of horses and burros on Nevada public lands to near Appropriate Management Levels (AML) by 2005, accomplishments to date and the outlook for future budget levels do not bode well for meeting these objectives. Although some progress has been made with the re-programming of BLM funds to the wild horse program, efforts have fallen short in Nevada on meeting minimum horse removals to meet planned objectives. Although AML is expected to be established for nearly all existing Herd Management Areas (HMA) by the end of next year, it is the continued overpopulation of horses within approximately 55% of the HMAs and the significant increases in funds and resources required to reduce and maintain horse numbers at a level consistent with achievement of a "thriving natural ecological balance" that continues to be of major concern.

The overpopulation of wild horses in Nevada has caused a decrease in the amount of habitat available for wildlife and domestic livestock. The continuing overpopulation of wild horses jeopardizes the long-term viability of wildlife populations and ranching in Nevada. The impacts transcend those associated with the maintenance of healthy ecological conditions and diverse and stable wildlife resources within the state and include impacts on many social and economic values in Nevada.

We appreciate the efforts of Bob Abbey and his staff and the regular updates he has provided on the Wild Horse and Burro program, however, a series of questions remain unanswered. The following are some of these questions:

EXHIBIT U2 - LANDS
Document consists of 2 pages.
Entire Exhibit Provided (O) 967
Meeting Date: 10-24-07

1. Why has Nevada BLM consistently over the years received only 15% of the Wild Horse and Burro program funds when Nevada has over 50% of the Nations wild horse population? How are these funding decisions developed? What has been the distribution of funding of this program and the rationale for this distribution?
2. Why has Nevada, with over 50% of the Nations wild horses, received only 19% of the \$7,650,000 funding approved by Congress for re-programming to the Wild Horse and Burro program? Where were the other funds distributed and what was the rationale?
3. What public land programs were affected by the re-programming of funds and what planned actions within these programs were not accomplished?
4. In light of less than desirable habitat conditions existing in much of Nevada and the limited resources available to BLM for management of horses, why do we continue to see Nevada BLM's Las Vegas Field Office developing land use plans that expand existing HMAs and attempt to establish AML for horses within the Mohave Desert ecosystem where forage conditions are classified by BLM as ephemeral? Site specific evaluations have also determined no available forage or natural waters are available to support a viable herd in this area. Proposed implementation of both these actions also include water hauling and development of underground water sources for expansion of horse use areas. With regard to the resources available for management of wild horses in a "thriving natural ecological balance" in Nevada and the habitat conditions, these actions seem unconscionable.
5. What is the plan and/or expectation for resources availability to remove nearly 7000 horses a year from Nevada over the next two years that would be required to attain planned objectives?
6. What is the program strategy for the future to manage the Wild Horse and Burro Program consistent with the mandate to protect the natural ecological balance of all wildlife species that inhabit Nevada?

It is with sincere intentions that the Commission invites you to attend a Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioner's meeting in the near future to discuss these concerns. The Commission has planned meetings scheduled in Ely, Nevada for September 10 and 11, 2004 and in Reno November 5 and 6, 2004 and would certainly accommodate your schedule on these dates.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you concerns and perceptions of this Commission. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Tommy Ford, Chairman
Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners

cc: Governor Kenny Guinn
Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners
Terry Crawforth, Director, Nevada Division of Wildlife
Robert V. Abbey, Nevada State Director, BLM