

Healthy Nevada Lands



**Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands,
Wildlife and Free-Roaming Horses**

DBA: Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/healthynevadalands/posts/>

Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands, Wildlife & Free- Roaming Horses

Mission:

Ensure that Nevada's lands are managed to conserve preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship in habitats for horses, burros and wildlife. Achieve a thriving ecological balance that will result in productive and sustainable habitat for over 700 species of wildlife, free-roaming horses and burros and livestock, which depend on these lands.

COALITION FOR



HEALTHY
Nevada
LANDS

Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands, Wildlife & Free- Roaming Horses

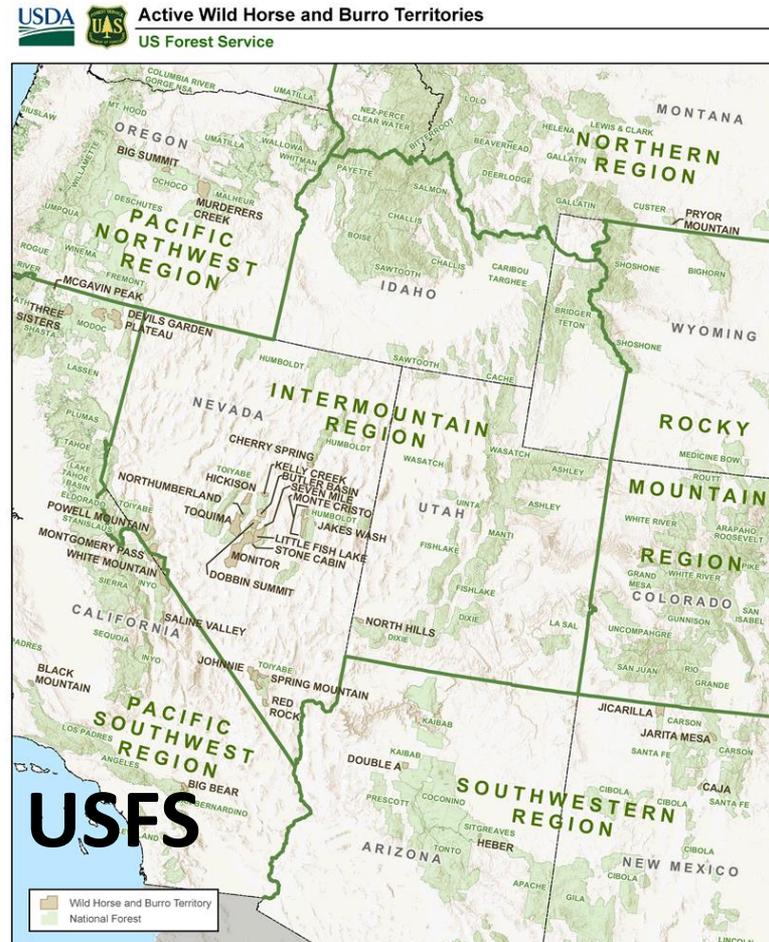
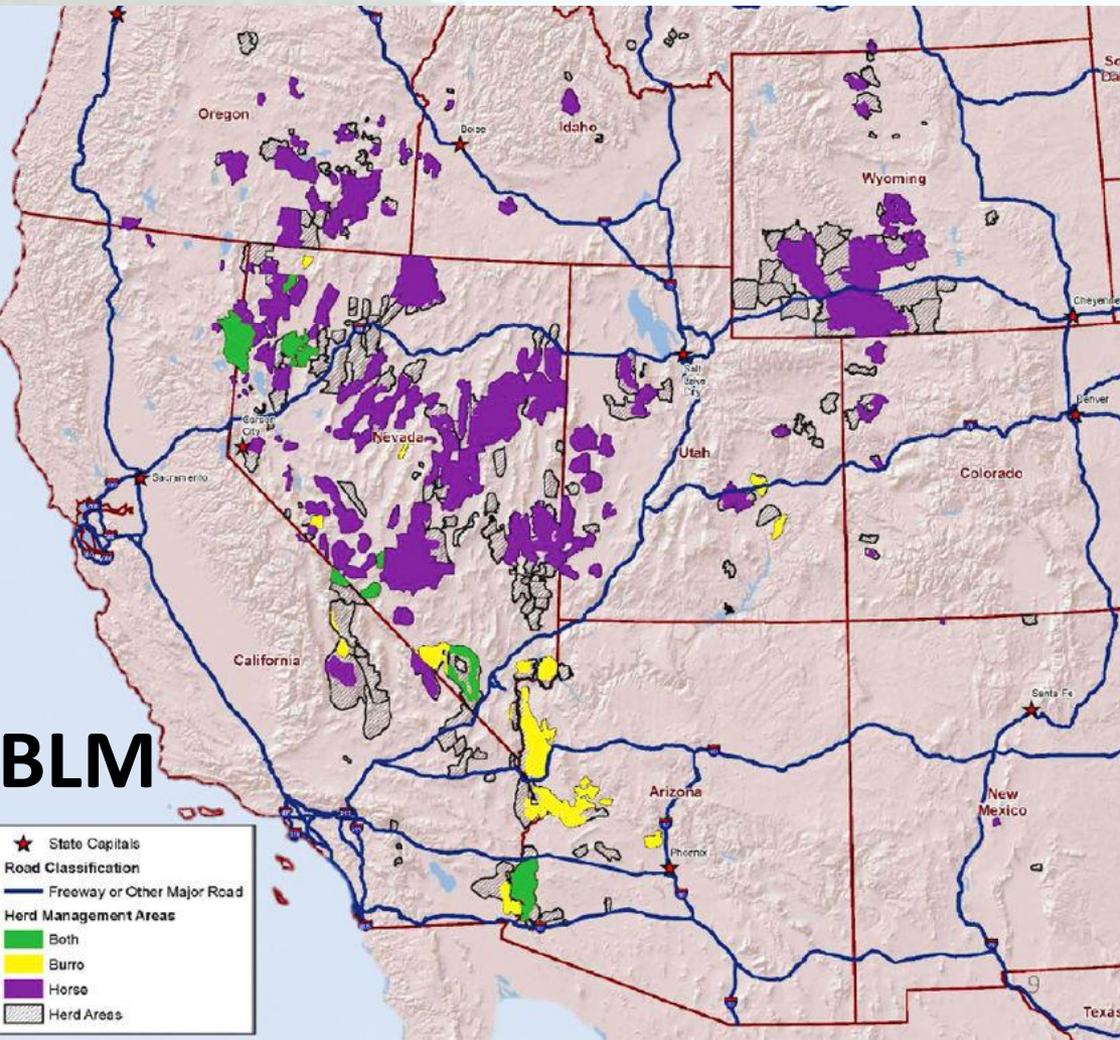


Goal: Work through the political process to enable change in wild horse management to achieve the thriving ecological balance called for in The Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971.

Objectives include: Educate the public about how the current management situation inhibits mission attainment. The habitat impacts of FRHB's are unsustainable with continued exponential population growth.

Fact or Fiction?

Nevada is the largest “landlord” of Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros, more than 50%



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Vision 1971 Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act

They are an **integral part of the natural system of the public lands**

The Secretary shall manage wild free-roaming horses and burros to achieve and maintain a **thriving natural ecological balance**

“Excess animals” must be removed from an area to preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship

All management activities shall be at the minimal feasible level and shall be carried out **in consultation with the wildlife agency of the State**

To protect the natural ecological balance of all wildlife species, particularly endangered wildlife species

Protect the range from the deterioration associated with overpopulation

Appropriate management levels (AML)

Sustained ecosystems and habitats for wild and free-roaming horses and burros, wildlife, and multiple land users

Thriving horses, burros, wildlife, livestock, and habitats

Reality 1971 Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act

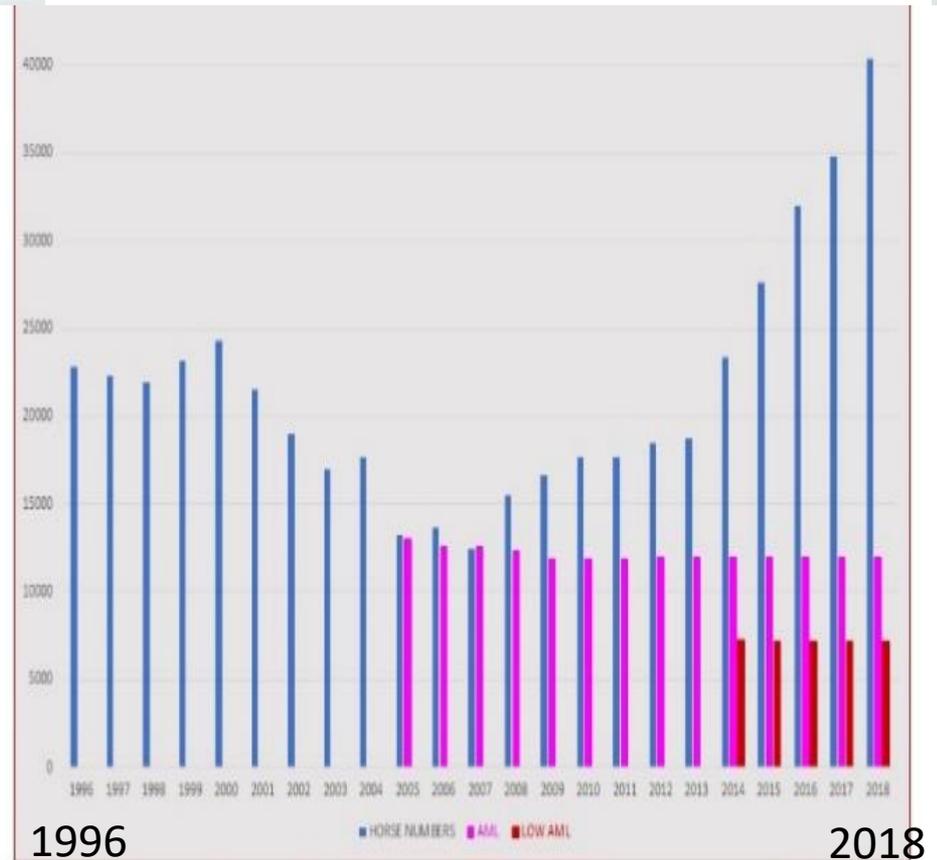
AML should be a range from low to high to avoid annual gathers

We almost achieved AML in 2007, but failed to maintain AML

Nevada BLM Horse population size (blue) compared to high (pink) and low (red) AML

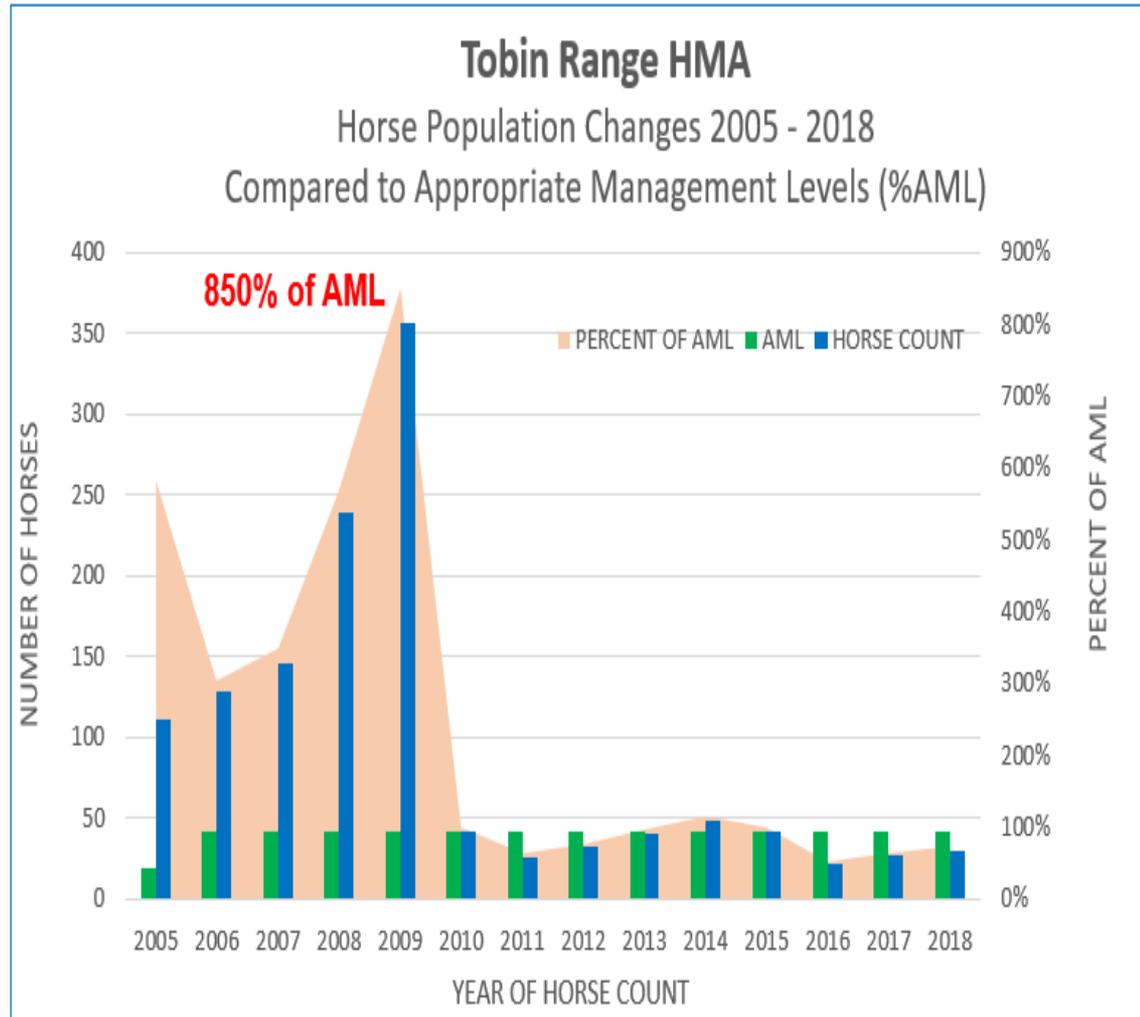
40,000

10,000



Management is about Maintaining FRHB within their Carrying Capacity, AML

Gathers maintain herd numbers
Calling gathers reductions misleads people



In Nevada & Nationally, Current numbers are Record High and Unsustainable

Without gathers,
populations grow
exponentially
(they double in
3-6 years)

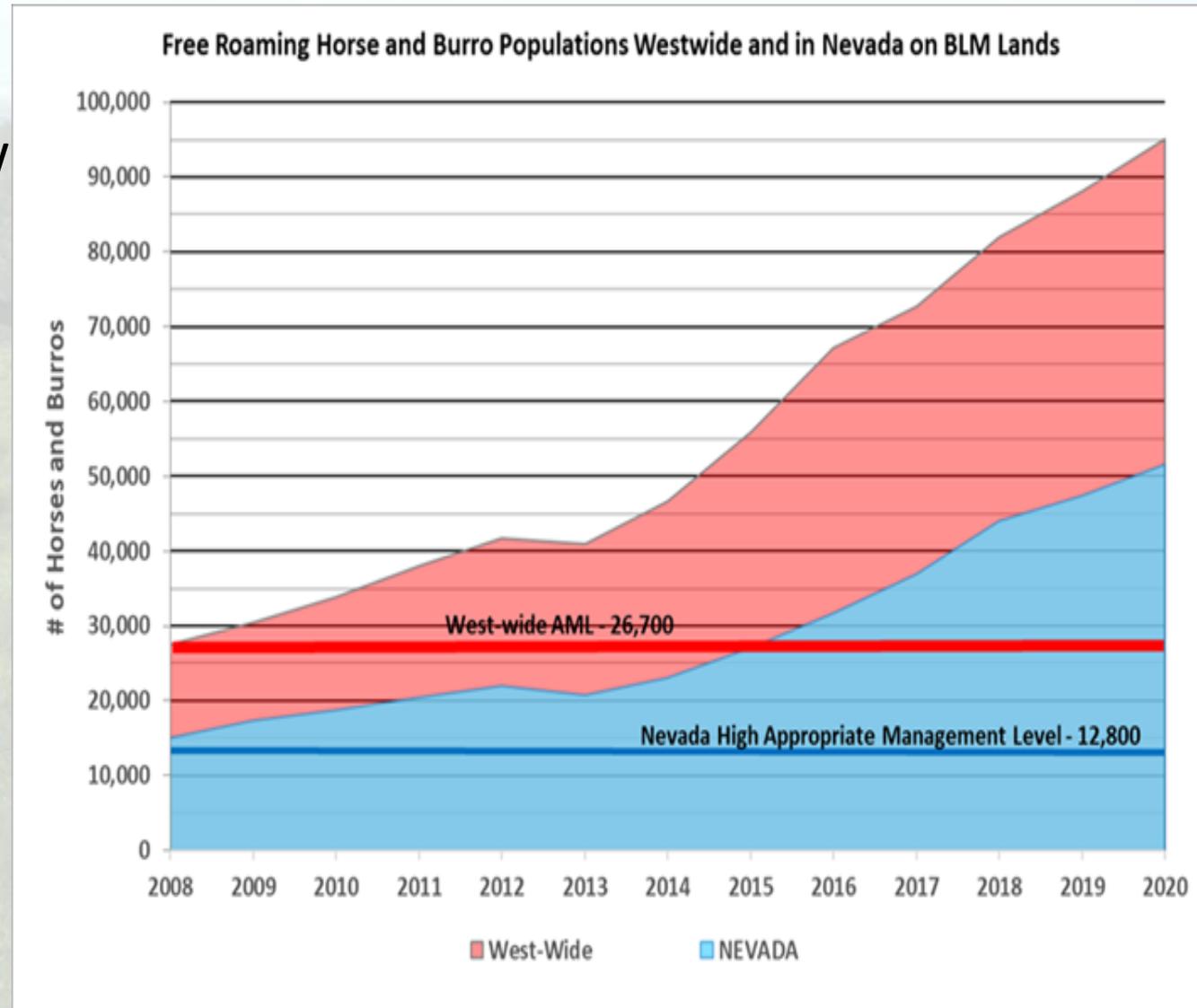
1 x AML

2 x AML

4 x AML

8 x AML

16 x AML



In Nevada & Nationally, Current numbers are Record High and Unsustainable

Without gathers,
populations grow
exponentially (they
double in 3-6 years)

At AML growth rate is 25%
(3 years to double)

Above AML the rate = 18%
(4 years to double)

When starving, = 12-15%
(5-6 years to double)

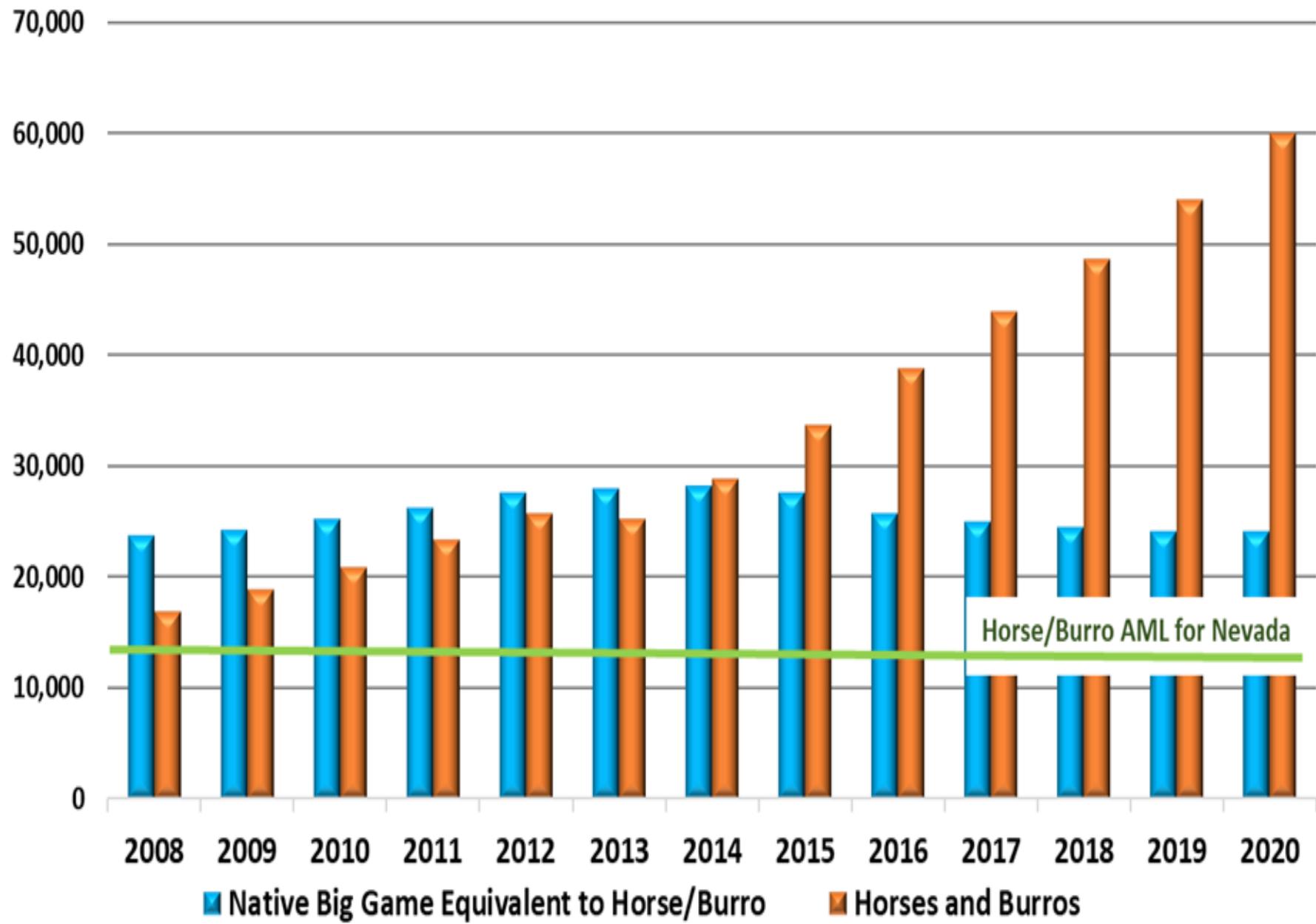
Growth rates provided by Alan Shepherd, former NV
BLM FRHB S Program lead



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of Comparable Native Big Game Equivalents and Horses/Burros in Nevada

Statewide #s of Big Game and Horse/Burro Equivalents



Horses and Sage-Grouse



Sage-grouse population decline is directly correlated with % over AML of horse populations:

Direct avoidance on leks

Diminished forage and cover

Loss of resilience →

cheatgrass/fire

shrinking riparian habitat

Animals, horses and wildlife,

healthiest at AML

happiest at AML

Multiple Riparian Resource Values

Values include:

Water/Habitat for FRHB, Fish/Wildlife and Livestock

Endangered Species or species of concern,

Recreation and Beauty

Sensitive plants,

Water quality,

Pollinators,

Forage



Horses use spring-fed meadows 50 times more than surrounding rangelands (cattle 30 times more)

Many Riparian Areas Grazed by FRHB are Shrinking & Drying

- Inadequate stabilizing riparian vegetation allows trampled soil to erode
- Altered flow patterns concentrate water flow for drainage and erosion



Horses, Burros, and Cattle Concentrate in Riparian Areas

Attributes of horses and burros that **MITIGATE** rangeland & riparian impacts

Horses often travel farther from water to forage than cattle

Some herds or bands migrate, so some riparian areas are not used year long

Attributes of horses and burros that **MAGNIFY** rangeland & riparian impacts

Horses selectively graze spring meadows even more than cattle

Even migrating herds use summer range throughout the growing season

Horses and burros, with one stomach, eat 15-20% more forage for their size

Horses and burros with top and bottom incisor teeth can bite off root crowns of perennial plants

FRHB dominate riparian area use where present with big game year round

Horses, Burros, and Cattle Concentrate in Riparian Areas

That need more recovery than damage to function

Strategies for managing **cattle**
grazing of riparian areas

Short grazing period

Long recovery period

Occasional growing season rest

Riparian pasture

Moderate to light intensity

Cool season use only

Graze early in season

Even use and two years rest

Off-stream water access

Regrowth before winter

Vary season from year to year

Riding, herding, & stockmanship

Cleaned pastures

Salt/supplement scattered

Strategies for managing **horse and burro** grazing of riparian areas

Manage populations for AML

Off-stream water access

Coalitions Support AML

National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition

<http://www.wildhorserange.org/>

NATIONAL HORSE & BURRO RANGELAND MANAGEMENT
COALITION

*Advocating for commonsense ecologically-sound approaches to managing horses and burros
to promote healthy wildlife and rangelands for future generations*

Free Roaming Equids and Ecosystems Sustainability Network

<https://extension.usu.edu/freesnetwork/resources>



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The Path Forward

Conduct targeted **gathers and removals** at densely populated Herd Management Areas (HMAs) to reduce herd size and make progress towards **AML**

Treat gathered horses and burros with **population growth suppression tools** prior to being returned to the range

Relocate horses and burros to large cost-effective, humane pasture facilities funded through public-private partnerships

Promote adoptions in order to help reduce captive populations and costs

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

American Farm Bureau Federation

Society for Range Management

Humane Society Legislative Fund

Public Lands Council

Return to Freedom Wild Horse Conservation

National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition

Eureka County, NV County Commission Office

Humane Society of the United States

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Beaver County, UT County Commission Office

American Mustang Foundation

Utah Governor Office

Humane Treatment of FRHB

Inhumane Treatment

Careless endangerment at or after gathering (rare)

Starvation or Dying of thirst by horses in populations over AML (too common)

Humane Treatment

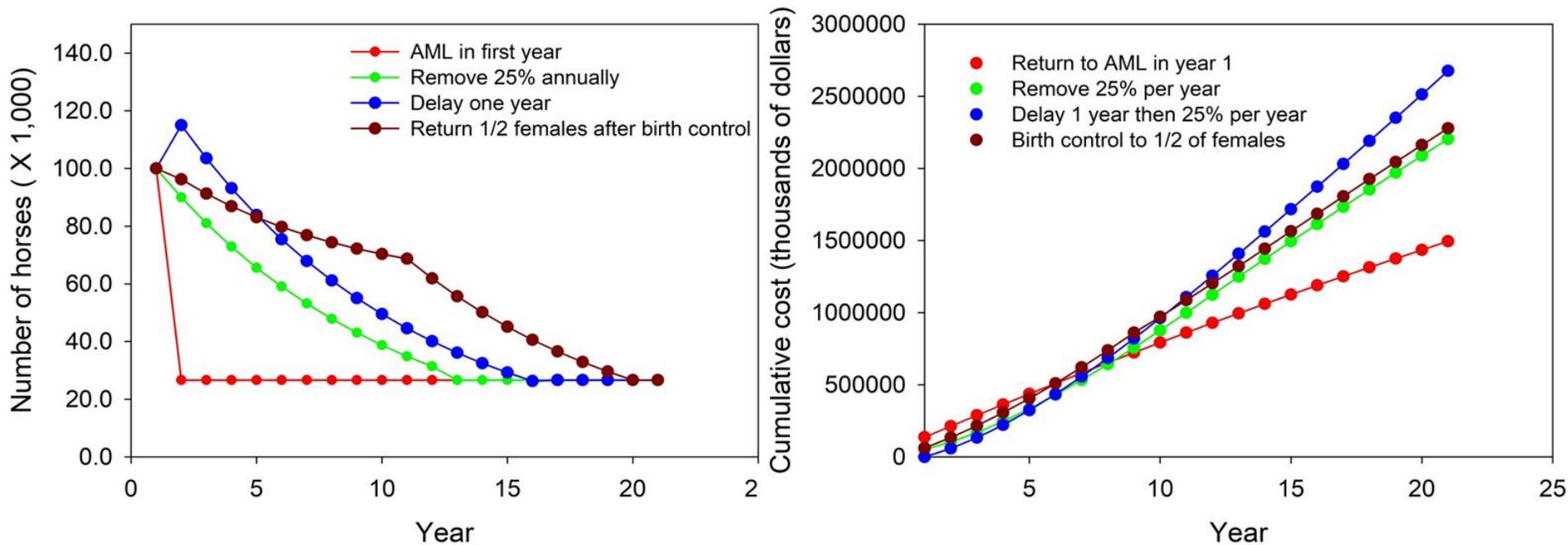
Healthy horses on healthy rangelands (our goal)

Off-range horses on pastures with forage water and care (the best path forward)

The Best Path Forward

The amount and lasting impact of damage to wildlife and habitats are governed by excess population size and time needed to achieve AML. Without long-term fertility control, the cost each year of gathering for short-term fertility control is similar to off-range holding and excess animals continue to impact habitats.

The lowest cost (BEST) option is gathering to AML as soon as possible



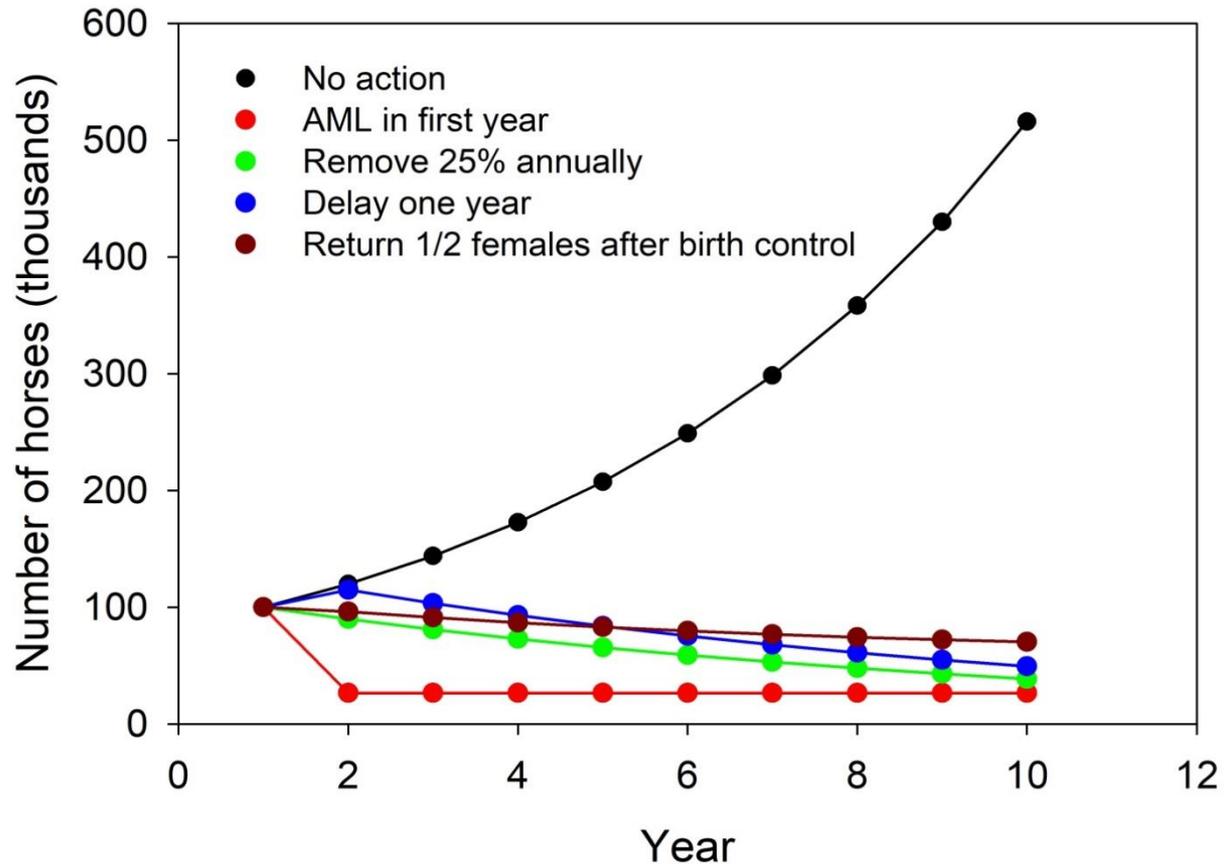
The Best Path Forward

The amount and lasting impact of damage to wildlife and habitats are governed by excess population size and time needed to achieve AML. Without long-term fertility control, the cost each year of gathering for

short-term fertility control, animals continue to increase.

The lowest cost option is

Failure to address this moment is OMINOUS



The Best Path Forward

The amount and lasting impact of damage to wildlife and habitats are governed by excess population size and time needed to achieve AML. Without long-term fertility control, the cost each year of gathering for short-term fertility control is similar to off-range holding and excess animals continue to impact habitats.

The lowest cost option is gathering to AML ASAP. Failure to address this moment is ominous.

Adoptability of horses is largely governed by their age and numbers. At AML, 5,413 excess animals per year is less than demand and this number could be entirely young animals (younger than 5 years)

Financial incentives to adopt horses reduces long-term government costs. Longer term growth suppression fertility treatments can reduce the frequency of gathers and the numbers of FRHB available for adoption.



Grazing Over Long Periods Selects the Best and Fertilizes the Rest

The grazed plant that regrew
is the best

When the perennials wear out
the annuals invade faster,
thrive and then fuel
frequent big fires



Nevada Symbols **Impacted** by Ecological Damage from Excess FRHB

State Flower – Sagebrush

Depends on the

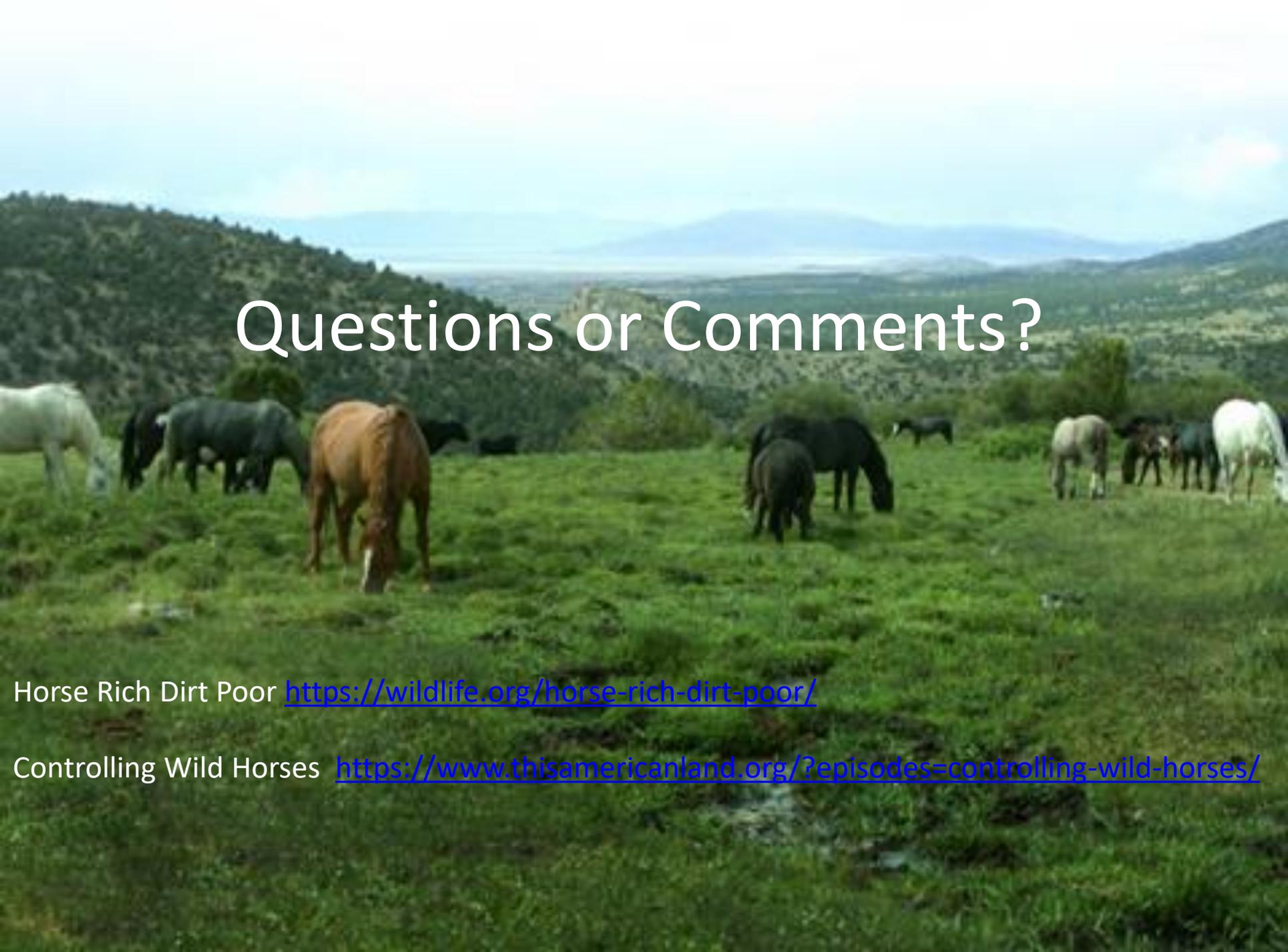
State Grass – Indian Ricegrass --
and other deep-rooter
perennials needed for
resilience after fire



State Animal - Desert Bighorn
Sheep and the

State Fish – Lahontan Cutthroat
Trout often depend on well
vegetated riparian areas where
soil protected from erosion
stores water for dry seasons.



A herd of wild horses of various colors (white, grey, brown, black) is grazing in a lush green field. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a cloudy sky.

Questions or Comments?

Horse Rich Dirt Poor <https://wildlife.org/horse-rich-dirt-poor/>

Controlling Wild Horses <https://www.thisamericanland.org/?episodes=controlling-wild-horses/>