

Dear Ms. Steele,

I am writing to you as a concerned citizen, deeply troubled by efforts to escalate the roundup of Nevada's wild horses and burros. These actions, particularly those advocated by the Coalition For Healthy Nevada Lands, Wildlife, and Free-Roaming Horses, rest on misleading claims and ignore the underlying issues plaguing our state's ecosystems. I urge the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council to reconsider their stance and policies in light of the comprehensive evidence provided by the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER).

PEER's analysis of BLM rangeland health data, released in November 2022, paints a stark picture of the ecological degradation afflicting our public lands, overwhelmingly due to livestock overgrazing. With assessments on more than 50% of livestock allotments highlighting significant livestock impacts as a major cause of land health standards failure, it is clear that the scapegoating of wild horses and burros is not only unfounded but also diverts attention from the true culprits.

Nevada, being predominantly managed by BLM and characterized by its arid climate, is at a crucial juncture. With global warming intensifying, the insistence on outdated, livestock-centric land management practices is both reckless and short-sighted. It is essential that we pivot towards more sustainable, ecologically sound practices, such as those observed by indigenous communities, including the moderate harvest of Pinyon Pine nuts and Juniper berries. The destruction of Pinyon and Juniper forests, vital habitats for numerous species, in favor of livestock grazing, is a misstep that we cannot afford to continue.

Moreover, the BLM's record roundups of wild horses and burros, as noted in fiscal year 2022, with 20,851 individuals removed, starkly contrasts with the lack of action towards implementing a mandatory "drought call" for livestock. This imbalance in policy enforcement not only exacerbates the strain on our ecosystems but also undermines the legal protections afforded to these wild equids under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.

The evidence is undeniable: livestock grazing is the predominant cause of rangeland health failure. Yet, the BLM's current policy disproportionately targets wild horses and burros for removal, ignoring their ecological benefits and the negligible impact they have in comparison to the millions of cattle and sheep grazing on these lands. This policy not only jeopardizes the genetic viability of these iconic species but also overlooks their role in ecosystem health, including soil building, seed dispersal, and wildfire prevention.

I implore the BLM and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council to realign their management priorities based on factual evidence and ecological science. This includes reducing livestock numbers or adjusting their grazing seasons, restricting harmful activities such as OHV use, and acknowledging the positive contributions of wild horses and burros to our ecosystem. It is time for a management strategy that respects the intrinsic value of all species, promotes ecological balance, and recognizes the critical challenges posed by climate change.

I look forward to your response and am hopeful for a shift towards more equitable and environmentally responsible policies.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Borkowski

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