



**Public Comments on Agenda Item 7, Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Meeting
Feb. 22, 2024**

My name is Suzanne Roy, Executive Director of the American Wild Horse Campaign. We are the nation's leading wild horse conservation organization and operate humane wild horse management and habitat conservation programs in Nevada.

These comments are submitted on Agenda Item 7 in opposition to the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council's endorsement of the Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands letter seeking federal taxpayer funds for the roundup and removal of 43,000 wild horses from Nevada public lands.

The Coalition - which is not a registered entity in the State of Nevada and does not publicly disclose its membership – is using deception to scapegoat wild horses for ecological damage caused by vastly more cattle and sheep grazing on a far larger swath of public lands in the state.

Case in point: the photograph contained in Dr. Sherman Swanson's presentation to this council - the same photo that is displayed on the Coalition's website and used in its promotional materials. Dr. Swanson asserts that it depicts a spring in the Virginia Range damaged by wild horses, but he leaves out pertinent facts:

- The spring head itself and the original sheep trough have long been enclosed in protective fencing that is not shown in the photo.
- The water shown in the picture is flowing via an underground pipe from the protected springhead.
- In 2018, the pipe became clogged, reducing the water flow to a trickle. The private property owner and the American Wild Horse Campaign immediately stepped in and worked together to improve this spring water source. Spring water now freely flows through the underground pipe to a trough where it collects, and when full, overflows and continues on its path as before.
- This spring sits within the only large cattle grazing lease on the Virginia Range. Cattle use this water source and have access to it year round, but Dr. Swanson deceptively blames wild horses for the so-called damage.

Exhibit 1 of these written comments includes Dr. Swanson's photo along with another photo depicting the actual situation in the area. Exhibit 2 includes photographs of a healthy spring in the Virginia Range utilized by both wild horses and deer, which Dr. Swanson and the Coalition neglect to show you. Exhibit 3 includes photographs of a damaged spring in a BLM wild horse Herd Management Area in Nevada that has been trampled by human activity, not by wild horses.

While there is much to consider about land health and the causes of degradation, Dr. Swanson's and the Coalition's reliance on deception leaves no room for productive discussion or development of collaborative solutions.

The truth is that rounding up and removing 43,000 wild horses will not improve the health of Nevada rangelands. Wild horses are present on just 14 of the 43 million acres of BLM land grazed by livestock, and 98% of forage on BLM grazing land is allocated to livestock. As long as we fail to address the root causes of land degradation, fiscally-sound, sustainable and socially acceptable solutions to improve public lands ecosystems will remain elusive.

Submitted by:

Suzanne Roy, Executive Director

Exhibit 1: Coalition/Dr. Swanson photo and photo depicting the actual situation:



Exhibit 2: A healthy spring on the Virginia Range grazed primarily by wild horses and deer.

This spring sits on a mountainside of mostly deconstructed granite (DG). Photos taken during winter, December 2023. In photo 1 the spring head is deep within the thick vegetation. Photo 2 shows the water as it flows out of that thick vegetation, which starts to thin. Photo 3 is where the water continues to flow down the DG hillside.





Exhibit 3: Spring within a BLM Herd Management Area that is not healthy due to human activity, not wild horse impacts.



