

After Reading The F.R. on The wild
Horses by Federal Forest Service (File code 1950
date April 16 - 2020) In my opinion, These
colage educated people are not paying attention,

I was born in Burns Oregon in 1956, and at
7 years old my parents moved to Prairie City Oregon.
My father was a mechanic by trade and was
an avid archer & hunter. He taught me tracking
and habits of most animals at an early age.

By the time I was 12 I had lawn mowing business
and a paper route to make my spending money, at that
time in my life I met an old trapper named Roy
Kilbey, and in talking with him, got interested in
trapping. In the Fall of 1963 I bought 10 traps & 5 snares
from him. First he taught me how to de-cent & setup
these traps for mink-otter, muskrat, Rabbit, Squirrels, coyote
Bear & cougar. I never did attempt to trap bear or Cougar,
but at 16 and had a drivers licence and a car, I got a
job working nights at a lumber mill in John Day Oregon.
At that time I got interested in hunting with dogs
for Bears.

I bought two Registered Bluetick bear dogs and
with help from 3 avid Bearhounds developed a good
reputation for hunting dogs, and had added Black & tans,
which are Raccoon dogs.

I only Bred & sold pups once a year, and by
1971 I had both families of dogs going as far away as
Kentucky & and Arkansas.

In 1971 I realized I had cut a lot of what I had
going on because I was now driving log trucks, and
did not have time for all the things I had going on.

In 1971 I cut my trap line to 20 or less and sold my dogs.

In 1966 I had filed on a mining claim on Vinigar creek in Baker county with an old world war 2 veteran named Herald Edwards, and through him got interested in guiding disabled veterans on Elk hunts, which I did about 10 years until licensing and insurance got outrageous.

In 1972 I bought a log truck and began a trucking career that brought me to the Ochoco a lot logging for Hudsbeth, Crown, Ochoco Lumber Co, along with Edward Lines & Prairie Wood Product and Ellingsworth Lumber out of Unity and Baker Oregon, We hauled into and out of Northern California, western Idaho, central and southern Montana.

Going into long haul trucking gave me occasion to see game animals and predators in nearly every state, including Canada & Mexico.

My Point to get to the Reader of this letter is to point out my personal early association with the Ochoco Wild Horses, the rest of the wild life in this, and in many other areas of our state of Oregon.

I'm not going to try to put on that I'm an expert on the Wild Horses or for that matter on wild life in general, but to put a word in on what has happened in our state in the last 35 years, to all wild life in general.

Long before I moved to Prunville in 1983, Hunting of Bears & Cougar with dogs had been stopped by a vote from the west side by our knowing public who to this day refuse to believe what they created.

1 For instance in 1972, Oregon State game commission put out information on Cougars in Oregon. Fat count was estimated to be ~~5000~~ over 6000 cats

A private count that same year put the count at over 7450.

2 Oregon State Game Commission, 2018 in the game synopsis; Cougar count was over 6000.

Same year, 2 Private counts Based that count as closer to 7400 cats

At the time was a Bear count ever offered.

As it happened in the middle of the loss of all control of our ~~two~~ deadliest predators, then reintroduce ^{the} Wolf-

Now, F.F.S. and Game people deny that there are any in our area. Yet several have pictures on game cameras, have seen them personally, and are finding tracks in these areas.

About 5 or 6 years ago, after testing in the Giffy and the Ochoco units, my wife and I and 2 other couples filed a mining claim on Ochoco Creek.

That claim is 80 acres & also takes in part of Fisher Creek, and is called Bull Run #4.

One year later 3 more couples Filed on Bull Run #7 which is 120 acres

Over the course of the years of testing on Ochoco creek, Sisors and Judy creek, I got to see the wild horses, and deer & Elk a lot.

In the last three years, deer & Elk sightings has dropped to practically none. We still see the horses, but not in groups as big as 6 to 10 years ago.

Now we see smaller bunches of 15 to 20, and wander by, but are more Nervous acting than they used to be.

Three years ago in the spring while mucking where Fisher creek meets Ochoco creek, I had been there for about an hour when movement above me on the creek bank caught my attention. It turned out to be 2 mares & 2 colts and they just seemed to be watching me, but kept looking up the creek, then back at me. The two mares seemed spooked, but not of me, though I didn't know why.

After about 1/2 hour, I got curious as to why they stayed about 20 feet from me, so finally I picked up my sluice & Pan & shovel, and headed up stream to my pickup. The Horses paralleled me but stayed on the south side of the creek.

I put my equipment away, reached in and got my coffee cup, still watching the 4 horses.

Curiosity got to me, so I crossed the creek, and all 4 horses backed off to about 30 feet. As I headed up the hill, they followed me at about 20 to 25 feet.

I walked over to Fisher creek and traveling up the east side of it, I found where several Horses had crossed it and headed south, up the Ridge.

About 40 minutes later as I broke out of the draw into more open ground, I spotted several more Horses at about 50 yds from me. The Horses spotted me at the same time, and a horse I thought at the time was a stud and had been off to the left of the rest of the ~~rest of the~~ horses trotted quickly over, placing himself between me and his heard.

That all happened really quick, and at the same time I heard the horses behind me start to move. I started to turn around, but they shot by me at a fast trot and rejoined the heard, and with soft nicks they were welcomed and seemed to be being checked over to make sure they were OK. Meantime the stud had become more agitated, pacing back and forth, stomping, blowing & shaking his head.

I didn't want to disturb them any further, so I backed away and headed down the draw. Following the Horses tracks where they had crossed Fisher creek back to the west, about 50 yds in, I found where the 4 horses had spit away, and by crossing back and forth between the two sets of tracks, I found in a small patch of snow 3 or 4 fresh cougar tracks. Closer study told me the cat wasn't very big. I figured about 130 or 150 pounds and 2 or 3 years old,

At this point I was sure the cat had cut those 4 horses away in hopes of getting one of the colts. Whether they saw the cat, smelled it or it growled, I don't know, but whatever the cat did, it put enough fear in them make them leave the herd.

The two mares apparently knew that getting closer to me than was comfortable to them, and me, that the cat would not come closer.

I will cherish this memory for the rest of my life; and it explained instances in past years where deer, Elk and even rabbits have stayed close to people where normally they would have been instantly gone.

Anyway, to get back to my reason for this letter. If F.F.S. and others continue down the path they are taking, especially 12 to 58 wild horses, in my opinion, will spell an end totally for the wild horse herd, because NO ONE is factoring in the predators into the total equation.

I've watched for the last 40 years and seen our forest deteriorate, catastrophic wild fires, loss of roads which impedes fire fighting ability, stops access to our forests for a lot of people.

All of you with college degrees have lost the ability to use common sense, and to listen to "Use The People".

Final word is this. Tim McBooth should sit down & shut up ~~and~~ about the wild horses, wild life, mining and the committee has no actual experts on any of those.

Sorry this is long and Handwrote
over for a note
↓
Dan Hammond.

Foot Note

Over the fifty some years in trucking across the United States, I've gotten to see some wild horses in North + South Dakota, Wyoming Colorado and some other states too.

During these travels, I noticed a big difference between the Ochoco heard others including the Steens heard is They are wild eyed - flighty and if you happen to get too close, they act like they could get down right mean.

Not so with the Ochoco Horses. We have had them walk past us in camp at 25 to 30 ft they watch you & look and if no one moves toward them, they will get a drink, and feed on up the hill and out of sight. These horses have kind eyes I call them. I remind me of an everyday Ranch horse more than a wild horse.

Off

P.S. 3 years ago, Z21 News filmed 4 wolves and showed them on TV. I recognized the area, and the next morning one of my mining partners and I drove to the claim, parked and walked to the area the wolves had been filmed in.

We found the tracks in the snow and followed them for a bit. The tracks took us to where the wild horse had went up the ridge, and the wolves immediately started following them.

We reported this to F.F.S. and were totally ignored.

If this Heard is lost, I could not afford to have it to see the Steens heard or to the Dakota or anywhere else,

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