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Comments: Please see attached comment.

Heber Wild Horse Territory Comment

The USFS is required by the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"), 42 U.S.C. [sect][sect] 4321, et seq., to prepare Environmental Assessments or EAs or, if indicated, Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for any proposed changes to public lands that may have a significant environmental impact. The law directs the agency to identify environmental concerns, consider alternatives including no action at all and take a "hard look" at the issues and minimize significant environmental impact. A significant environmental impact includes actions that are likely to be highly controversial or have uncertain effects on the quality of our lives and that affect cultural and historical resources. 40 C.F.R. [sect]1508.27(b).

NEPA

At its most basic level, NEPA requires that the decision-makers, as well as the public, be fully informed, i.e. "that environmental information is available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and before action is taken." 40 C.F.R. [sect] 1500.l(b). NEPA ensures that the agency "will have available, and will carefully consider, detailed information concerning significant environmental impacts; it also guarantees that the relevant information will be made available to the larger [public] audience." *Robertson v. Methow Valley Citizens Council*. NEPA requires that all relative detailed environmental information will be available and carefully considered.

The USFS is currently in the process of developing a management plan for the Heber Wild Horse Territory and including the management of the Heber Wild Horse Herd. The scoping notice for the plan indicates that USFS intend to prepare an EA to address the impacts of the proposed plan and alternatives. I require that any NEPA analysis regarding this management plan must fully disclose all environmental impacts, and consider reasonable alternatives. Nature is the true manager for these wild lands, flora and fauna and nature is not static and this herd area has been under the control and effects of nature for thousands of years and therefore the HWHT Plan and the ultimate decisions must first take into serious consideration the natural environment that has evolved over the years.

NEPA requires that the USFS adequately evaluate all potential environmental impacts of proposed actions. To meet this obligation, the USFS must identify and disclose to the public all foreseeable impacts of the proposed action, including direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts.

I require that any NEPA analysis of this proposed action include but not be limited to a thorough consideration of the following significant impacts of this action:

- (1) impacts on the genetic viability of the Heber wild horse population,
- (2) the social, behavioral and physiological impacts of the stress of capture and captivity on wild horses,
- (3) the social, behavioral and physiological impacts of population growth control measures on wild horses,
- (4) the ecosystem impacts of removing wild horses from public grazing land, in comparison to the ecosystem impacts of allowing and removing and reducing grazing by cows and sheep,

(5) the impacts of helicopter drive trapping on the wild horses and Mexican Gray Wolves, and other wildlife;

(6) the impacts of water/feed trapping on the wild horses and other wildlife,

(7) the economic impacts of requiring taxpayers to absorb the astronomical cost of these captures and maintaining any additional wild horses at USFS or BLM holding facilities, and

(8) the ethical impacts of a wild horse management program that takes wild horses out of the forest and dooms them to a lifetime on USFS or BLM feedlots and/or being sold with no restrictions or oversight.

(9) the ethical impacts of the Forest Service Wild Horse [ldquo]Decision Matrix[rdquo] which is more like a flow chart to death in that horses considered excess can be deemed by somebody to be too old, sick, or lame and be [ldquo]euthanized". Who gets to make that judgment call? And that healthy horses over 10 years old will automatically be offered for sale without limitation which means kill buyers can purchase and truck them to Canada or Mexico for slaughter. The Forest Service will see to it that the horses not purchased will be killed. Healthy horses under 10 years of age will be offered for adoption and if not adopted after the third time or [ldquo]strike" they are offered they will be sold without limitation...again kill buyers may purchase. If not sold they will be destroyed. The Forest Service Wild Horse [ldquo]Decision Matrix[rdquo] is nothing more than a way to fast track the [ldquo]disposal[rdquo] of wild horses that NEVER should have been removed from the wild.

The USFS should be focused on protecting natural, free, wild horse populations on the range as the United States law requires and not rounding up wild horses and confining them on public or private feedlots, sending them to their deaths or outright killing them yourselves.