

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/21/2021 11:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: For the Administrative Record, I hereby submit this comment re the protection of our Heber Wild Horses.

Comment re Protecting the Heber Wild Horses

The 1971 Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act states that wild free-roaming horses shall be protected from capture, branding, harassment, or death. There are multiple references in the Act to the [ldquo]protection[rdquo] of wild horses. I have included just two of those references below.

Images of Act in Attachment [ndash] 1331: Congressional findings and declaration of policy and 1333 Powers and duties of Secretary

36 CFR states The Chief, Forest Service [ldquo]shall protect[rdquo] wild free-roaming horses.

Image of CFR text in Attachment [ndash] 222.60 Authority and definitions

Yet, there is only one reference in the Draft Plan to Protection of the Horses, and that just relates to documentation. There is nothing in the Plan anywhere about any actions the Forest Service will take to actually carry out their duty and obligation to protect these horses. And, frankly, carry out [ldquo]the law[rdquo]. In light of the barbaric killing sprees that have taken the lives of a large number of our horses in the past three plus years, the Forest Service should take the matter of the horses[rsquo] safety and protection very seriously:

Table in attachment: Management objective, monitoring objective, and potential management actions

A gaping hole in the Draft Plan and all associated documents is that there is nothing that provides for the protection of our wild free-roaming horses. At the very minimum there should be signage as to the protected status of these horses, as well as public education and awareness campaign and materials provided liberally by the Forest Service and AZ Game and Fish at every public touch point. Local residence (both permanent and summer residents), as well as people hunting, camping and otherwise recreating in the forest should be educated and made aware of the protected status of these horses. Until the Forest Service takes their role and responsibility for the protection of these horses seriously, the public and other agencies will not take the matter seriously. The Forest Service needs to take a clear, public stand [ldquo]in writing[rdquo] on the matter of protection of these horses.

If there can be signage on our public lands, notifying the public of domestic livestock, there can surely be signage regarding the protected status of our Heber Wild Horses, with instructions to the public not to feed them, to keep their distance from the horses, etc.

A metal cattle sign like this one has been erected on a metal pole on Forest Service Road 107, notifying the public of cattle in the area: (image in attachment)

In comparison, the only signage Forest Service has ever put up regarding the wild horses is this dinky paper Public Notice. To read it, a person would have to stop their vehicle on the cattle guard and get out of their vehicle and walk over to the paper to be able to read the small print. This type of signage is unreasonable and ineffective. It[rsquo]s nothing more than eye wash. This is unacceptable signage: (image of signate in attachment)

I wonder if this baby, brutally shot and crippled on January 7, 2021, felt [ldquo]protected[rdquo] by the Chief, Forest Service. This young foal laid there for several hours, from morning until early evening, before she was finally euthanized by the one and only person in the entire Black Mesa Ranger district authorized to euthanize her and put her out of her misery. That officer had the day off, so no one was available for several hours.

The two Forest Service personnel who were trampling all over the crime scene when two horse advocates showed up then left the crime scene and this suffering baby unsecured while they went to run errands. The band stallion (Midnight) and two mares were also killed in this evil shooting spree. One of the mares was well along in her pregnancy. I wonder if they felt protected by the Chief, Forest Service.

Image in Attachment: Photo

I wonder if these horses, brutally killed, felt protected by the Chief, Forest Service. For the Administrative Record, I hereby reserve the numerous other photos and videos I have of many other horses shot and killed between November 2018 and January 2021.

Image in Attachment: Raven and his bay mare, killed January 2019

Image in Attachment: Big Daddy and his mare killed January 2019

Since October 2018, these horses are known to have been killed. I wonder if any of these horses felt protected by the Chief, Forest Service. I have photos and videos of them all, which I reserve for the Administrative Record and for any future proceedings related to the Management Plan:

- * 2 bay stallions in mid-October 2018
- * [ldquo]Aztec[rsquo]s[rdquo] palomino mare and buckskin colt in November 2018
- * [ldquo]Aztec[rsquo]s[rdquo] black mare in January 2019 (pregnant)
- * Raven and his bay mare (pregnant) in January 2019
- * 4 killed on the 300 road in January 2019
- * [ldquo]Mixup[rdquo] and a young bay killed in January 2019 (bones were later found nearby of two additional horses; one was a foal)
- * [ldquo]Big Daddy[rdquo] and his bay mare shot and killed
- * [ldquo]Buck[rdquo] (iconic buckskin stallion) shot and killed in 2019
- * [ldquo]Choco[rsquo]s[rdquo] entire band shot and killed January 2020
- * [ldquo]Patch[rdquo] and [ldquo]Trigger[rsquo]s[rdquo] entire band shot and killed January 2020
- *
- [ldquo]Midnight[rdquo] and 3 others in his band shot and killed January 2021

One mare in Big Daddy[rsquo]s band, [ldquo]Angel[rdquo], was brutally shot and crippled. She suffered for days before being euthanized by two gunshots to her head. I wonder if she felt protected by the Chief, Forest Service.

Image in attachment: Angel, shot and crippled in January 2019; euthanized by gunshot on February 1, 2019

The Forest Service needs to take seriously their duty and obligation under the law and under federal regulation to protect these horses. The [ldquo]plan[rdquo] to protect these horses needs to be incorporated into the Management Plan. If the Forest Service thinks the killings will stop once the Plan has been implemented, that would mean they know the motive of the killer(s). If they know the motive of the killer(s), they know who the killer(s) is/are. If that is the case, then why has there been no arrest?

In closing, the Heber Wild Horse Management Plan needs to include the protection of the Heber Wild Horses. Otherwise, the Forest Service is derelict in their duty and obligation under the law.