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Comments: This is in follow up to my previous comments to you during the scoping period.

Please let's not get hyped up by the false numbers and fictitious accusations being levied against the Montgomery Pass Wild Horses by cattle and mining industries who have only their own agendas in mind... If we critically examine the situation we will find that, really, the most important thing is to sort out what is real and what is not and take conservative action first to rectify things....

The public, myself included, has clearly offered a multitude of suggestions to mitigate the problems attributed to the Montgomery Wild Horses having migrated off their designated HMA. These are reasonable solutions that if implemented will reduce to almost zero, the complaints raised against the horses.

IF THE BLM AND FORESTRY SERVICE GOES IMMEDIATELY TO ROUND UP (prob by Helicopter because of the mountainous terrain), RATHER THAN FIRST ADOPTING THESE SIMPLE AND LESS EXPENSIVE SOLUTIONS, THEIR ACTIONS CAN ONLY BE INTERPRETED AS A VICIOUS AND UNNECESSARY ATTACK UPON THE NATURAL WORLD. THIS IS UNCONSCIONABLE. It goes against their assigned duties to PROTECT wildlife and manage it conscientiously...

The Wild Horses from Montgomery Pass HMA that you are planning to round up (because they are off their HMA) are actually BEING DRIVEN OFF THEIR LAND. They are driven off by the dirt bike conventions regularly held ON THEIR LAND, with 10 to 20 dirt bikes at a time being driven up and down River Springs Road only 30 feet from where the horses usually graze. On the days when there are dirt bikes, the horses stay plastered up against the mountains, afraid to enter the meadow to graze or drink water. I have witnessed this travesty go on for 2 days running.

There need to be signs stating that this is a Wild Horse Reserve and OFF ROAD VEHICLES ARE FORBIDDEN here. Until such signs exist, and are enforced, we ourselves are the ones responsible for forcing the Montgomery Pass Wild Horses to migrate off their HMA.

(How can we glibly decide to round up the horses that have migrated as if THEY are the trouble makers? Let's get them back onto their land and stop making it uninhabitable for them.)

Let's enforce a proper speed limit, 45mph max, for the two lane winding Highway 120. Let's put up flashing signs along there so that cars have warnings that horses may be crossing here. Instead of RUSHING to make the horses the culprits, let's save the lives of all who are at risk by properly informing and protecting them.

These wild horses also are being driven off their HMA by the fact that their natural spring water is being syphoned off. And I wonder where that water is going, and how much water is left for the wild horses?

It is cruel to round up horses that are only trying to survive.

The Mono Lake Committee has requested that the horses be rounded up because of the supposed devastation some of them are accused of causing to the nesting areas of birds along the shoreline of the lake. Also destruction of the Tufas. (BTW, the public is being led to believe there are over 500 Wild Horses still present at Mono Lake, who are wreaking havoc with the place. Whereas, in reality, there may be 10 or at most 20!!!).

As Background: In the Winter of 2022/23 it was estimated that there were 30 to 100 horses who migrated to

Mono Lake, because where they lived in the mountains got BELOW MINUS 20 DEGREES. They migrated to the lower altitude to save their lives. Still there were 10 dead horses found at Mono Lake once the snows thawed in the Spring of 2023. Their plight that Winter was a sorry one.

But again, currently there are at most 10 to 20 wild horses living there.

I brought Craig Downer, PhD, to Mono Lake two months ago in May 2024, to investigate the validity of the allegations levied against the "Mono Lake Horses". Dr. Downer is a Wildlife Ecologist, largely responsible for saving the Brumby Wild Horses in Australia and the Aldean Tapirs in Ecuador. He has lots of experience in reading the terrain in order to understand whether animals like the Wild Horses are having a positive or negative effect on the ecosystem. He can tell how many of them are likely present. It was his assessment after 2 days of exploring the area, that there are only 10 to 20 horses still present around the area of the lake, though far away on the surrounding hills during the days.

As mentioned in my previous comments to you, we took photos and GPS readings around Mono Lake and documented everything. The landscape and land itself was rich with plentiful grasses of many variety, largely because of the rich manure the horses were providing. The water was full of little fishes and the shoreline was pristine with all the delicate plants and small hiding places for animals preserved. We literally saw one very small tufa (less than 12 inches) which appeared toppled, but no other damage from horses.

We DID photograph a 200# man who, after climbing up a 12 foot Tufa, was photographed at the top by his wife who was standing below. It is more likely PEOPLE, (not horses), who climb around on the Tufas, that are doing damage. (Despite signs against this)

We have mentioned the importance of preserving the beauty of Mono Lake which could easily be done by erecting the Log and Pole fences that the Forestry Service is known for. They are lovely fences that look natural and melt into the landscape. They allow small animals through (coyote and squirrels and deer) while keeping larger horses and cows out. This is the perfect solution to maintaining the beauty of the Mono Lake area. The Log and Pole Fence could protect the more delicate areas of the lake yet remain open where the natural river feeds the lake so that any animals would learn to go to that area to drink from the fresh river water.

The other misinformation being told to the public, is that there are TOO MANY WILD HORSES occupying the Herd Management Area that has been allotted to them at Montgomery Pass.
NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH AND THE INYO FORESTRY SERVICE KNOWS THIS.

For 25 years these Montgomery Pass Wild Horses were studied by Turner, PhD, a Wildlife Endocrinologist who published his data in 2015. FOR TWENTY FIVE YEARS HE DOCUMENTED THAT THE HERD SIZE STAYED THE SAME.

This was because of their natural predators, the Mountain Lions, who also lived in the area.
Those Mountain Lions still live in the area.

BECAUSE OF THE MOUNTAIN LIONS, THE HERD SIZE IS STILL THE SAME!!! Despite the fictitious numbers that we are being given, the number of Wild Horses from the Montgomery Pass HMA are NOT TOO MANY for the thousands of acres present.

I myself met a Forest Ranger named "Phil", in Oct 2023. Phil told me he has been working for years for the Inyo Forestry Service. He is the Mountain Lion Expert. He was hired to dart the Lion(s) in the area, once they had killed their quota of Wild Horses, and transport them elsewhere. When I was there, Phil and his 15 scent hounds had found the remains of a wild horse on the Montgomery Pass HMA where I was photographing. He said, judging from the wear of the teeth, the deceased wild horse was only about 3 yrs old. (sad) Phil and the Vet

were getting ready to dart and transport the Mountain Lion to another place where it could be released and still find food.

IF THE INYO FORESTRY SERVICE WAS HAVING PHIL TRANSPORT THESE LIONS AWAY FROM THE MONTGOMERY PASS HMA, IT CAN ONLY BE ASSUMED THAT IN OCT 2023, THE INYO FORESTRY SERVICE STILL FELT THAT THERE WERE NOT TOO MANY WILD HORSES PRESENT THERE. That was less than a year ago, and despite there being new foals who I photographed this May, clearly the number of Wild Horses have not changed that much.

Again, rather than jumping to Helicopter Roundup which is expensive for us and devastating for the horses who get separated from their herds and family units and who often are injured and killed, let us implement some of the solutions that I and others have elucidated so that Mono Lake is protected, driving Highway 120 is safe, and the beautiful Wild Horses can remain wild.

These Wild Horses of the MPHMT are part of our National Heritage. They are a gift to those of use who live surrounded by sky scrapers and concrete. Those of us who live in congested cities with bumper to bumper traffic to and from work, yearn for summer and vacation weekends when we can go hiking and camping and explore the Natural World. The Natural World heals and restores our Spirits.

Every time I tell someone that I photograph Wild Horses, their eyes light up. They tell me how much they would love to go see them for themselves. They tell me they miss the horse they grew up with, or that they have heard how empathic horses are and how they are helping heal Veterans, or victims of PTSD or Autistic children.

Horses help people get back to themselves again. They help them get their feet back on the ground and begin to feel that all is well. Horses help us remember what is important in life.

Our Wild Horses are every day bringing exhilaration to people because they still run wild. They give us hope. They are gentle and straightforward with each other. They live by a certain code of ethics and it takes only an hour of observing them to see how ethical their behavior with each other really is. Horses crave peace. And their behavior is all about reestablishing that peace if it has been lost. They inherently want all of the herd to be safe and secure. The leaders and elders enforce that. Watching them as I have, for 4 hours at a time while photographing them, has made me aware of how noble they really are. So much more so than us sometimes.

Horses give us a wider perspective. They remind us how critical it is to live free.

Please preserve these beautiful animals for our hearts. And for the hearts of our children and our children's children.

Please.