

**From:** [Kate Beardsley](#)  
**To:** [Peer, Beth -FS](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Comments regarding Big Summit Wild Horse Management - thank you  
**Date:** Thursday, May 21, 2020 11:17:20 AM

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Beth, here is a forwarded copy of my comments that I had sent to myself  
[REDACTED] as a safety. Glad I did!

Thank you for making sure my comments are submitted.

In appreciation,

Kate

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Kate Beardsley [REDACTED] >  
**Date:** Mon, May 18, 2020 at 11:55 PM  
**Subject:** Comments regarding Big Summit Wild Horse Management - thank you  
**To:** <[beth.peer@usda.gov](mailto:beth.peer@usda.gov)>, <[tory.kurtz@usda.gov](mailto:tory.kurtz@usda.gov)>

Slater,

The Preferred Alternative flies in the face of long standing science, creates unnecessary and extensive expense for the taxpayer, and shows utter disrespect for those community members who have helped our federal agency manage these horses for decades. This is beyond disappointing.

Whereas aiming for 12 to 57 AML is so far under genetic viability for any ungulate population, choosing Alternative 2 is by far the most expensive and most labor-intensive choice the USFS can make.

Alternative 2 will cause either extirpation of this genetically unique group of horses in a matter of a few years or cause a great hassle that can fairly be called Horse Farming by the federal government. With population numbers so low, the Ochoco National Forest will need to manage the horse population tighter than ever, requiring far more labor and resources than ever needed before.

Management needed to keep a population of 12 to 57 present will include shipping horses to and from other wild horse territories. This is an asinine move that cannot even be called a plan. This will destroy the local horses' ability to survive winters and other challenging situations as the wisdom of the herd will be lacking within just a couple years.

Choosing Alternative 2 shows a blatant disregard for the decades of input the central Oregon community has provided the Ochoco National Forest.

Choosing Alternative 2 proves that all the public meetings and all the series of meetings presented as 'sounding boards', 'partnerships', and 'public input' were merely a front; a decoy while the Ochoco National Forest continued on its determined path to destroy this group of horses.

The Ochoco National Forest has repeatedly failed to use offered local professional resources, preferring instead to attempt to handle issues themselves at great taxpayer expense and a near total lack of competence.

For more than 20 years, the Wild Horse Census has been performed by dozens of northwest volunteers and has made the Big Summit horses one of the most monitored herds in the United States. I helped run the census for 15 years and I can tell you that we took a lot of pride in presenting the very most accurate numbers possible. Yet it appears the Ochoco National Forest doesn't seem to believe the numbers presented.

Former District Rangers Art Currier and Bill McQueen stayed involved and responsive to the public when we had issues involving the wild horses. I personally have enjoyed many conversations with Art and Bill through the years. Recently, I have felt that the public is not being heard. For at least three

years, I've noticed a distinct unwillingness by the Big Summit Ranger District to be part of a collaborative effort. Having been involved since the mid 90s, I find this trend disheartening at the very least.

The census shows the Big Summit horses have reached homeostasis. They have reached a balance that needs very little influence from forest management. Yet the Ochoco National Forest claims the herd is growing. I remind you that the Coalition requested permission to search for and count horses north of Road 22 during the census for years. We were denied repeatedly with a simple statement "there are no horses north of the 22". In 2011 when we were finally allowed to look for horses north of the 22, we found four new horses in the first half hour. This scenario has repeated itself. The herd is not growing – we are searching more areas. I remind you also of the elderly horse found injured in a cattle guard north of Road 22 in 2011 or 2012. Turned out that horse was a branded Big Summit mustang, captured and gelded as a youngster, and lived for a quarter century undetected north of Road 22. The herd is not growing. At most, its individuals are moving around to avoid pressure throughout the forest. A homeostatic population is the easiest to manage. We should be studying this herd, not destroying it.

We have been told repeatedly that there are no horses east of Big Summit Prairie. Yet I've seen them. Multiple times. I began seeing them there shortly after moving here in the 90s. This is not new.

The Big Summit horses are barely clinging to the bottom of genetic viability already. Yet they continue to thrive without resource damage. Choosing Alternative 3 would be the least expensive, most effective choice. The horses already tend to limit themselves to around 130 horses. Should the population grow a little, gathering a few horses every few years will be significantly less expensive than the work it would take to manage them at 12 to 57 individuals with all the planning, trapping, treating, and transporting necessary to maintain the population at such low levels.

I need to be very clear for you here: Managing the horses near a population of 130 which the horses themselves have proven is sustainable is FAR CHEAPER than attempting to manage the same horses at a level below sustainability of 12 to 57. Imagine the amazing feeling you'll experience when you've accomplished this impressive balance - effective management at a low cost!

These horses are a tiny population whose excess can be easily absorbed by the community in small quantities over time. Large numbers removed all at once cannot be absorbed by the community. The goodwill generated in central Oregon by allowing the current number of horses to remain in the forest will be a legacy for generations. The extinction of what we now know as the Big Summit horse will be a mountain of shame insurmountable for decades.

I've noted that several within the Ochoco National Forest claim that the Big Summit horses are not attractive enough for adoption. Firstly, this is an opinion that should not hold any more weight than its opposite. Secondly, adoption value should not be a primary value when calculating how to manage animals remaining in a population. Thirdly, I personally have multiple Ochoco horses that have proven to the highest levels that Big Summit horses can perform. Three of those horses were used on contract with Ochoco National Forest last October packing fuel for a prescribed fire. I've included some photos of my Big Summit horses working to benefit our larger community.

I have offered to be helpful many many times. In the last few years, Ochoco National Forest has begun to refuse help in regards to the wild horses. It has been painful to watch the Big Summit Ranger District struggle to develop a skill set in house to manage the horses all while professional assistance remains available in the community.

**Alternative 2 is detrimental to the horses as valued in the 1971 Congressional Act, is vastly more expensive than other alternatives, and destroys any faith the central Oregon community has in the ability of Ochoco National Forest to manage our public land.**

**Alternative 3 is the most effective at following the intent of the 1971 Congressional Act, is the least expensive alternative, and will generate the most goodwill in our community.**

**I implore you to choose Alternative Three.**

I am, as always, still available should you desire to reach out.

Safe Trails,

Kate Beardsley

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Located in beautiful Central Oregon, **Mustangs To The Rescue** is a volunteer-based 501c3 non-profit. Our purpose is to have a positive impact on the community we serve by supporting horses, their owners, and potential horse owners, with assistance, resources and educational opportunities, thus improving the lives of horses and humans in our community.

Mailing Address and Contact Information

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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<http://MustangstoTheRescue.org>

EIN# 46-1948460

*Please Note: Mustangs To The Rescue is an all-volunteer organization. Many of our crew members have full-time jobs and families in addition to our work at the rescue, so do not be alarmed if you do not hear from us right away. Please contact our Board of Directors at [info@MustangsToTheRescue.org](mailto:info@MustangsToTheRescue.org) if you have any questions or to provide feedback on improving our service.*