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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hello,

I support the removal of these feral horses from the Forest Service Land. As an owner of property bordering the Apache-Sitgreaves Forest, we have experienced a substantial increase in the number of grass-fed animals, such as elk, deer, antelope, sheep, and feral horses on the forest which has caused excessive grazing pressure, as well as permanent damage to the forest.

In the 70's and early 80's we almost never encountered elk on our property. (I only saw 2 during that time frame.) However within 5 years, we began to encounter 50-100 elk grazing on our ranch nightly. And by the mid 90's, that nightly elk count had grown to 100+.

As of 2019, there are several hundred elk grazing on our ranch on a nightly basis.

Excessive elk populations are currently driving these competing animal populations to seek food on ranches, farms, and in more populated areas with homes, schools and business which can draw their dangerous predators, the wolf, into those same areas. (Plus, neither the Forest Service nor the AZ Game and Fish have provided reimbursement for the thousands of dollars of hay these elk consume from our property. Note: electric elk fences have been ineffective at keeping these large animals out)

Therefore, failure to control the horses' grazing pressure on other animals, which will further impact local farms and ranches such as ours and possibly spread disease among the horses and other animals.

I understand the general population think of horses as just being 'wild and pretty' but they need to understand that adding a foreign animal to the current wildlife ecosystem can negatively harm the health of the existing wildlife, as well as negatively impact private land owner expenses due to excessive grazing pressure.

Thank you.