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First name: Lane
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to express my feelings and knowledge concerning the ongoing controversy surrounding the horses that are presently found on the Black Mesa Ranger District of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest.

I came to the Heber-Overgaard area in the summer of 1970 and have been a resident for most of the time since then. I would often ride horseback in the Black Canyon area and often saw the small band of horses that would eventually become the designated herd of the Heber Wild Horse Territory.

In 1971 I married a local girl from the area. My wife's maternal grandfather Leslie Porter was the owner of one of the two allotments where the Heber Wild Horse territory was designated.

I would often help my wife's grand-father and family move their cattle from pasture to pasture on the allotment. During these times I was also able to encounter the small band of horses of the Black Canyon area. Never during these encounters with the horses did I ever see more that a hand full of horses and never any foals.

I believe that probably because of the deep snow(6'-7') of the winter of 1967 the horse herd number's were diminished to around 7 head. These remaining horses never had any off spring and never seemed to mingle with the reservation horses that sometime came on the Forest lands.

During the mid 1970's thru the mid 1990's I was employed by several cattle outfits that owned the other allotments that was part of the Horse Territory. These cattle ranchers were Gibson family, Doy Reidhead Cattle Co. And Steve Bragg Cattle.

From these years of being horse-back on this range I have a factual knowledge of what horses roamed the horse territory and far beyond its boundaries. I know that the Indian Reservation that adjoins our public National Forest is a sovereign nation and the Wild Horse and Burro Act has no power on the reservation or their horses. I know that the only horse herd that was protected under the Wild Horse and Burro Act have been dead and gone since about 1994.

Having been to at least two of the original horse meetings at the Black Mesa Ranger District office in the mid-2000's (after the Rodeo-Chediski fire) I came away from these meetings with the idea that the local forest officials knew that the original horse herd were dead and gone.

Yet because of the massive-public outcry not to remove these trespass horses and because of legal manipulation you as guardians of our National Forest have been stopped from carrying out the mandate from the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act. This act states that horses coming onto public lands after Dec. 15,1971 are to be treated as trespass animals and removed.

The horses that have been at the center of this controversy have for the most part come over from our neighbor the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation. They should have to take responsibility for seeing that they are removed from public lands. These excessive trespass horses are disrupting the natural ecological balance on our public lands.

We have had other large devastating fires in our state. Namely the 2011 Wallow Fire in eastern Arizona. I'm sure this fire has caused some reservation horses to encroach onto U.S. public lands. If those in charge of our public lands are not allowed to deal with these trespass animals in a timely and common-sense manner we may find

ourselves in a similar fiasco sometime down the road.

How this problem is handled may set a precedence that will cause future problems to drag on for years as this one has already done.

Thank you, Lane Parry