

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/13/2020 1:17:46 AM

First name: Lori

Last name: Walker

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom it May Concern,

I have been observing and photographing the Salt River Horses since January of 2013. My recommendations would be to NOT remove any of the Salt River Horses in the Tonto National Forest and to expand their grazing area into the Desert Unit of the Sunflower Allotment by removing the fence at the Bush Highway tunnel. Install wells at the cost of the management group in the Bush tank and Hughs tank referred to as seep 1 and 2 by the srwhmg. This would lesson any strain on forage along the lower salt river. The fences along Butcher Jones Rd and Butcher Jones Beach could be easily repaired to detour the Salt River Horse herd from entering the area. I have photographed some of the Salt River Horses in that area since January 2013. We were told by a forest ranger that they have been in that area for 60 years.

I also recommend volunteers be allowed to spread native desert grass seeds with the overview of the Forest Service in areas where the horses reside.

Horseback riders have been coexisting peacefully with the Salt River Horse herd on every occasion except one that we have witnessed over the years. The horse back riders should be allowed to continue to be able to ride in the Salt River Horse herd area during any time and any season. Continue allowing the staging areas for riders.

If you do allow watering behind the SRWHMG property we would ask that you provide Tonto National Forest visitors a parking area along the Beeline and a self closing gate to allow the visitors access to that same area. This could be a pass required parking area. As it is now it is unfair to only let the management group have access to our Salt River Horses in that area. A good area in my opinion would be to have a water source, across from the rolls area that currently has a gate and parking right now.

If a Salt River Wild horse needs to be rescued then there should be more reputable rescues that are allowed to help provide care such as Wild Horse Rescue which was part of the Collaborative. There is no viewing of the rescues by the SRWHMG and they have stated only in the future if you donate to them will you be allowed to see the once public horses.

Being a previous member of the SRWHMG and part of the feed team I recommend emergency feeding only to the Salt River Horses. Over many years of observing and documenting this herd, our horses are more lean than most other wild horses. We travel every year with different wild horse herds in the western United States. To avoid as much human interaction during the feeding process, by the 3rd party contractor, I suggest feeding every other week as to not habituate the horses with the volunteers. Also to have 2 feed stations at each location and alternate them to give the horses back their wild foraging skills. Volunteers shall not be allowed to stay and photograph the horses in this area as we have witnessed many times. This has gone beyond just monitoring the herd. This will lesson the chance of horses equating photographers with food. Opening up the gate at the underpass on Bush Highway to the Desert Unit will lesson the need for supplemental feed and with the installation of wells will benefit not only the Salt River Horses but all other wildlife.

The 3rd party contractor(s) will not be allowed to harass the general public out viewing the Salt River Horses, educate yes, harass no as we have witnessed in the past.

I would recommend two groups be in charge of managing the Salt River Horses, SRWHMG and Arizona Wild Horse and Burro Collaborative as I feel it would insure the decisions being made would be in the best interest of the Salt River Horse herd. Also, a volunteer Salt River Horse herd board of directors made up of Salt River Horse

Herd advocates so the public can voice their concerns and get back to the proper agency.

I support proposal #2 which includes NO removals of our Salt River Horses. The numbers will be reduced through natural attrition and pzp. I'm in support of humane management.

Thank you for your consideration.