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Organization:

Title:

Comments: My family has lived in this area since 1935. We have witnessed the damage to our forest, from these horses from the front line. The health of our forest is being impacted due to the manipulation of the law and the misinterpretation of the Wild Horse and Burro Act.

I have the original document that was sent to my Grandfather Irving Gibson in the early 70's. Of particular interest is this statement "Some have expressed concern that supplementation of existing herds, or creation of new herds could come about from domestic animals going wild for one reason or another. Note that the Regulation specifically excludes animals that appear on National Forest lands after the date of the Act because of accident, negligence, or deliberate disregard of ownership. These animals will be considered trespass and processed under our existing trespass regulations."

The document goes on with point number 5. Identity." Identity of animals and their location on the day of the Act is a problem but no need to let it be a bug-a-boo. We will just have to do the best we can." Thus we have the #BugABooHerd because this is exactly what happened.

Unfortunately this small detail is what has led to our current situation. The Forest Service, when faced with previous litigation filed by horse activists didn't prove to the court that the horses are not true "wild horses", even though every biologist and range manager know they are feral horses and now they are stuck trying to clean up the mess created by the misinterpretation of the law.

Navajo County can assist with this problem that isn't just a problem for the Forest Service but has an effect on all of the citizens and our law enforcement resources. They can help provide the documentation to enlighten the court about the facts and the results that we as citizens of this county are living with due to these horses and the horse activists.

Speaking of Navajo County, the horse activists are utilizing county resources with their incessant calls of suspicious activity in the forest. A recent incident comes to mind where the activists called every agency they could think to call including Navajo County Sheriff's Office, AZ Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service to report cattle being out of water in a dry tank. They missed one important detail, there was a second tank with plenty of water a short distance away. The animals were never without water but it made great propaganda for a few days on their facebook page.

I have received multiple reports of private citizens being harassed by the activists while they were out enjoying the forest. For example, an elderly couple out for a walk being questioned about what they were doing. The activists have accused a retired Police Officer of being the "horse killer." They constantly malign the Forest Service personnel and any attempt they make to address the issue is met with contempt.

They have amplified their attacks on our local ranchers, and I believe it is time that our county Supervisors become involved. Navajo County was involved in litigation regarding our forest in the past and as more incidents occur it reminds me of the county's involvement in the litigation following the Rodeo Chediski Fire.

The horses are causing a greater number of accidents on the highway and this trend will continue as herd sizes increase. Hunting will be impacted as herd sizes increase.

Dangerous interactions with humans are becoming more frequent as the herds move in closer to some of the neighborhoods. Who will be responsible the first time a young child or innocent bystander is injured by one of

these horses? It is the responsibility of the Forest Service to manage the horses and to do so in the most humane way possible. This doesn't mean to ignore the problem for another 15 or 20 years because of the lack of political will to do the right thing.

We have witnessed the destruction of our timber industry, forest and homes when activists sued and used propaganda to stop all forest management. We are again witnessing the devastating effects of activists using litigation and propaganda to demonize entire industries that have been a large part of our culture and our heritage in the west and specifically in Navajo County.