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Gentlemen,

Our local news reported an update on the wild horse situation the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. Frankly, I could not believe what I was hearing in the report. According to the media, a decision has been made that the herd of wild horses is too large and will be reduced to a number around 100. My wife and I lived in Overgaard for many years and unfortunately had to move to the Phoenix area for health reasons, however, we still own property in Overgaard. Also, I volunteered with the Chamber of Commerce and was an officer for years.

You should know that one of the reasons we moved to the area was because we enjoyed regularly visiting the forest to enjoy viewing the lives and times of the wild horses. To this day, our children and grandchildren often visit the area to again always visit the wild horses. You should also know that while volunteering at the Heber-Overgaard Chamber of Commerce for years, many visitors would come in just to ask how to search the forest roads to find and view the wild horses. Not only do National Forests exist for the public enjoyment like these horses but the local economy of Heber-Overgaard greatly benefits as these people visit the area to see the horses. Given these facts, I believe it is the job of the Forest Service to protect and nurture the wild horses for the benefit of not only the horses but the public and community as well.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest consists of 2.7 Million acres. You want to only allocate 21 to the wild horses. That is ridiculous. Wild horses are wild and should be allowed to travel within the forest as they please. They should not be allocated such a small area or manually reduced in size by the law. Cattle should NEVER be allowed to graze on public land that taxpayers support. This only benefits the greedy cattle ranchers that make money at the expense of the horses, the public and the community. Our tax dollars are not meant to support cattle ranchers.

Should the horses overgraze the 2.7 MILLION acres, they will naturally die off and reduce their numbers. That is the way of nature. Man should never interfere with how nature cares for its wildlife. The Forest Service should also not allocate ANY grazing land to cattle to make the cattle ranchers more profitable. That is not how are taxes should be used. Again, any ranchers thinning the herd by murdering wild horses should be severely punished not rewarded at the expense of the horses, public enjoyment or the community. The public wants to see horses not cattle in the forest.

I sincerely hope the someone uses their common sense to realize that your current proposal is a very serious mistake for many reasons. Your job is to serve the public and wildlife. Wild horses are wildlife. Protect them, don't destroy them.