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Comments: I would like to begin by saying, I find it disturbing that the USFS lacks enough common sense that they would chose to release an EA of such magnitude during a pandemic. People are struggling to survive on a daily basis and some one in this district thinks releasing this document with a 30 day timeline is appropriate.

Having read the EA, I am confused by the assumption that the original HMA plan was correct. Looking at a 45 year old plan based on guesses and non-scientific methods appears to be a very poor start.

Thinking about a timeline of 1975 and the establishment of an HMA based on the range the horses were using at the time. At this time the horses were only a couple years away from being captured and hauled for slaughter, of course they were in the least accessible areas by humans. areas.

I hunted the Ochocos from the late 1970's to 1990. We hunted primarily east and north of the Ochoco Ranger Station. We encountered wild horses on a regular basis. My hunting partners and I always enjoyed our encounters with the wild horses and believe cutting down the population to be a very poor choice.

I got involved with The Wild Horse Count around 2006. I found it odd when they said horses north of the road between The Ochoco Ranger Station and Walton Lake were outside the HMA, considering I had found horses there 25 years earlier.

Looking at the 3 alternatives is confusing. Alt #1 was said "To be no changes" yet it involved removing 75 horses.

Alt #2 was the USFS preferred choice also removing 75 or more horses and requiring the USFS to be involved in an active breeding program to improve the herd genetic viability. I question where funding exists for such a program.

Alt#3 calls for 150 or more horses to meet the accepted standard for herd genetic viability. This involved removing no horses and no USFS breeding program.

From where I stand Alt#3 looks like the "Make no Change" choice rather than Alt #1 considering we have a documented count of 135 horses.

Both Alt #1 and #2 call for a minimum 52% cut in total horse herd. This would be a devastating blow to the genetic viability and herd behavior of the Ochoco horses. In comparison, when this large of a cut in numbers occurs in Elk herds they loose the knowledge of the older animals and patterns for winter to summer migration. I believe this would be true of the horses also.

I support Alt #3 as the best choice offered.

Respectfully submitted,

George R. Johnson