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Organization:

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Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

Hello, I hope you're staying safe and healthy in these unsure times. I am writing to you because I understand that you are facing the difficult decision of how best to manage the wild herd of horses in the Ochoco Big Summit wild horse Territory. I know this is a complex, multifactorial issue but I hope you will consider the following, as these beautiful creatures are our responsibility and our legacy.

1. Helicopter use for rounding up wild horses can create a high level of stress in the horses and increase potential injuries when they enter the holding corral.

2. Permanent sterilization can change a wild horse herd's social behavior and lead to younger stallions superseding older breeding stallions, with breeding occurring anyway. Sterilization is thus contrary to supporting the wild character of the herds.

I've read the alternatives considered in the EA-- and I respectfully believe that there is an inadequate range of alternatives in that none of the alternatives strikes a balance between maintaining a genetically diverse, viable, and healthy wild horse population and significantly improving highly degraded riparian conditions within a reasonable amount of time.

I believe the best alternative would include:

1. Allowing the use of bait trapping for removal of wild horses beyond the upper limit of the AML and the use of temporary horse contraceptives, but no helicopter use and no permanent sterilization.

2. The introduction of wild mares from other wild horse populations to improve genetic variability of the Big Summit population; incorporation of active riparian restoration, including temporary exclusion fencing and native shrub planting in the most damaged riparian areas.

3. Prohibiting permitted sheep use of the winter range to reduce overall forage consumption; consideration of reducing sheep numbers permitted in the Big Summit Territory during the next allotment permit renewal process.

4. Monitoring of any decision to euthanize captured wild horses by an outside group supportive of wild horses, such as the Central Oregon Wild Horse Coalition, to ensure that only wild horses not likely to survive on their own and currently suffering are euthanized, and are not euthanized just on the basis of old age or behavior.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

Warmest Regards,

Erica Christensen