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Comments: I am hereby submitting the following information for the administrative record:

Historical documents point to introduction of wild horses in Arizona's Apache Sitgreaves National Forests by Coronado Expedition as early as 1540
May 19, 2010

Compelling evidence discovered dating first introduction of Apache Sitgreaves wild horses to 1540 Coronado expedition

PHOENIX - Recent research by a Conquistador Program representative has led to the discovery of several books by authorities on the 1540 expedition of Francisco Vásquez de Coronado. This material presents compelling evidence that Coronado, in his expedition to the Cibolas in New Mexico, spent a considerable amount of time on the Mogollon Rim, traveling near what is now Pinetop, McNary, Vernon and St. Johns on his way to New Mexico in search of the Seven Cities of Gold. There also is considerable evidence from this material and muster logs of the 1540 Coronado expedition that the explorers had scores of Spanish horses as mounts and additional horses handled by servants as remounts much the same as Father Eusebio Kino who also brought horses to the area in the 17th century.

The muster records of the Coronado expedition provide numbers of horses per soldier. Logs of the conquistadors also show that the horses brought to Apache Sitgreaves and other areas of North America are the prototypical colors of the Barb and Andalusian used by Coronado and later by Eusebio Kino. These colors include chestnut, black, buckskin, gray and bay, the colors of many of the Apache Sitgreaves horses today.

The recently reviewed historical material also indicates that Coronado, like Father Eusebio Kino, let his horses roam free when he camped in places on the Mogollon Rim where there were meadows and forage. Some experts on indigenous species in North America date the horse in North America to prehistoric times. The ancestor of the horse then migrated to Eurasia where the wild horses there were domesticated and ultimately their ancestors ended up in Europe including Spain. Thus the Coronado Expedition is credited by some experts with re-introducing the horse in North America (not just introducing the horse) because the early ancestor of the horse was here thousands of years ago until the Eurasia migration. The evidence is compelling that the Apache Sitgreaves horses were re-established in the area in 1540 with the Coronado Expedition, then again with the Kino Expedition in the 17th century. Soldiers may have introduced more in the 1870s.

The horses of Apache Sitgreaves have a long history of military equitation in the region. In his extensive article on the Coronado expedition for Arizona Highways Magazine, Stuart Udall wrote on his discovery of a river location where the Coronado expedition crossed at one point in Eastern Arizona, "I am reminded of the extent to which, for many centuries, horses played a major role. This very forest has been the scene of a dramatic pageant of military horsemanship. If we had a time machine to go back, we would have watched young Spaniards in the summer of 1540 astride the first European horses ever to stomp the ground in what is now the American Southwest."

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