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Organization:

Title:

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

From the HWHT Management Plan:

Public Involvement;

The Forest Service entered into a Stipulation Agreement filed on March 2, 2007, agreeing to develop a wild horse management plan for the territory as required in the Act. Under the Stipulation Agreement, the Forest Service agreed to refrain from any gathering or removing of horses within the Heber Wild Horse Territory, as well as, on the Black Mesa and Lakeside Ranger Districts (which are considered the Sitgreaves National Forest) until the Forest Service completes, with public involvement, an analysis and appropriate environmental document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and develops a written Heber Wild Horse Territory Management Strategy" (land management plan, page 118).

In 2019, Arizona State University's School of Sustainability convened a collaborative effort consisting of wild horse advocates; ranchers; wildlife managers; and professionals in equine recreation and training, range science, and veterinary medicine to offer suggestions toward the development of the territory management plan. An integrated team of resource specialists from the Forest Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Arizona Department of Agriculture considered these comments in drafting the management plan.

From the EA:

Stakeholder, Tribal, and Public Involvement

In August 2017, Arizona State University's School of Sustainability convened an extended dialogue with a diverse group of stakeholder representatives about the future of the Heber Wild Horse Territory on the Sitgreaves National Forest. Members of this independent working group were selected by Arizona State University to represent interests related to management of the Heber Wild Horse Territory-wild horse advocates; ranchers; wildlife managers; and professionals in equine recreation and training, range science, and veterinary medicine. The overall goal of the formation of the working group was to convene a diverse group of citizens to exchange information and provide individualized advice from different perspectives related to wild horse management for consideration by the Forest Service as it makes decisions related to the Heber Wild Horse Territory Management Plan.

However, what the Management Plan and the EA failed to address in regards to the collaborative working group was that "different perspectives" were only wanted if they really were not different. The "exchange of information" and "individualized advice" was apparently limited depending on who was putting forth information or advice.

The only wild horse advocate in the working group with any depth of knowledge of the horses and their range, Mary Hauser, was fired in a voice mail message for not "working in the spirit of the Collaboration". It appears that they really only wanted public input if it supported their preset agenda.

The following is a transcript from the voice mail termination of Mary Hauser. The voice was that of Michael Schoon, Assistant Professor of Arizona State University on Sept. 17, 2018.

"We wanted to however, say that it is our opinion that you have not been working in the spirit of the Collaboration and as such effective immediately, uh, you are no longer a member of the working group. Um, all

communications from now on will be stopped from our end. We want to thank you for your time and all the effort you put in and we look forward to uh, meeting again in the future. Thanks very much. Bye."

The following is the public response of Mary Hauser that was posted on the Heber Wild Horses Freedom Preservation Alliance Facebook page on Sept. 18, 2018.

The Heber Wild Horse Territory Collaborative Working Group Terminated Me Via Voicemail.
My Public Response by Mary Hauser

The reason I am writing a public response following my termination by the Heber Wild Horse Territory Collaboration Working Group is not to defend myself in the public's eye. It is because I have seen the inside workings of this group and I am terrified as to what is being planned for the Heber Wild Horse Herd and I think the public has a right to know.

In Mike Schoon's voicemail he said, "In our opinion you have not been working in the spirit of the Collaboration." He never said what that "spirit" was, so I'm left to draw my own opinion. My opinion is because I would not conform to what I believe to have been their preset agenda for their ultimate management plan which will decimate the herd and send more than 3/4 of the Heber herd to a fate unknown.

As excited as I was to join the Collaborative Group and represent the Heber Wild Horses and their Territory, I am just as disappointed to see how it was orchestrated and carried out over the last twelve months. Arizona State University along with Southwest Decision Resources was contracted and paid to administrate the working group. The initial problem I had was for a meeting of this magnitude where in attendance we had the Forest Service, BLM, and Arizona Game and Fish officials as well as, cattle grazing permittees, and other interested parties involved and yet no official minutes were ever taken at any of these meetings.

I repeatedly asked for minutes to be taken during the first three meetings so that meetings could be reviewed. This would have been a nice paper trail for someone who would have wanted to know who made comments and who is in favor and who is not. There are very important decisions being made during these meetings and people should be held accountable for their decisions. I was told they were not taking minutes because they were not necessary. ASU answers...Someone would take Notes.

Originally I felt my contributions to the group would be to support and protect the herd with my long term observations and studies of the herd, individual workings of the bands, and my knowledge of the forest. However, I realized I was being forced out of my role as a contributor and into the role of a quiet observer of a well orchestrated screenplay of a management plan for the Heber Wild Horse Territory. I believe this was plan which appeared to have already been devised and laid out prior to the first meeting of the Collaborative Group. The reason this became so obvious is that members of the Collaborative Group openly admitted to me at the onset of these meetings that they did not have much, if any knowledge of the Sitgreaves National Forest. Many, including some of the Forest Service personnel, had never even been out into the forest until a field trip with this group.

The next startling obvious change occurred when people who had never owned a horse or had very limited to no experience with the Heber Wild Horses were suddenly full of knowledge. Those same people now were full of suggestions about the logistics of gathering, monitoring, tagging, placing tracking collars, and darting birth control. They also took active roles in decisions on how many horses would be left on the land without education or concern of genetics or viable herd numbers.

Their sudden knowledge gave me the impression that they had been hired as actors (without pay) and apparently given scripts to drive the direction of these meetings that were already planned out. The meetings moved swiftly to follow the path of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recommendations and the activities that BLM currently engages across our nation.

It also became obvious within the first three meetings that there was no education of the day to day life of the Heber wild horses. When I attempted to educate, defend or make a point in support of the Heber Wild Horses it was ignored. Sometimes I would receive a follow-up phone call from one of the ASU members, Michael Schoon, to 'correct' me and advise me on what I could, should or should not say during the meetings. Meanwhile it appeared others had freedom of speech.

Early on the BLM took the lead of this Collaborative Group even though these horses are not on BLM land. The

BLM agent controlled the direction of how things were going to be carried out. The Forest Service employees to this point made very few comments even though they are charged with the management of these horses. Per the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 the Forest Service has the responsibility to designate Wild Horse Territories and implement management plans for those Territories. Through the years the Forest Service had failed to devise a plan to manage the Heber Wild Horse Territory, so it's not surprising that they have passed their responsibility off to the BLM which has had years of experience stripping the American West of wild horses.

We have to make it clear that there is nobody left on the working group panel who is truly an advocate for the horses. We know it by their own words...one of the so called advocates suggested "euthanasia" as a way to cull the herd. We know it by their actions...the Forest Service illegally contracted with ranchers in the 1980s and 1990s to capture and remove free-roaming horses without ever having a management plan. Then again in 2005 they announced they were going to remove free-roaming horses until a court injunction prevented them from doing so. We know it by their inaction...a working group member turned her back on the wild horses for approximately three weeks in an area she was assigned by Forest Service to deliver water to during the drought. Over the course of the meetings their lack of professionalism was displayed as shown here in their final voicemail termination. This came as no surprise because they knew I would NEVER accept their plan to manage the Heber Wild Horse Herd into extinction.

To the Forest Service: This is notice to insure that my name is NOT to appear on any documentation connected with the Heber Wild Horse Territory Management Plan.