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Comments: I write to implore the USFS to reconsider the proposed management plan for the Heber Wild Horses, as I believe the current plan places these beloved horses in great peril and jeopardizes their potential survival. These horses are one of the reasons I chose to purchase a home in Heber. For many people, the horses are part of what makes the area special, and they embody the spirit of the American West, and specifically, of Arizona and our National Forest land. I fully support controlling population growth via noninvasive birth control, and would gladly contribute to the effort via finances and volunteer hours. Noninvasive birth control is safer and more humane, as well as less costly, than invasive alternatives such as castration or ovariectomy (see recent letter to government signed by 56 congressmen/women aimed at stopping these inhumane procedures). Noninvasive birth control measures have proven effective, safer, and far less costly in other lands around the US which have implemented them. I absolutely do not support removal of these horses from the land, as it is inhumane for the animals, extremely costly to tax payers and the system, is an unsustainable temporary fix not a long term solution, detracts from the mystique and joy of the area for the many residents who adore them, and is unnecessary if birth control were employed. The Heber herd is unique from others around the USA as it faces an additional human threat, a monstrous human who hunts them annually in cruel and unusual fashion that leaves many of the herd dead, in a disgusting form of herd reduction. As this has happened only the past few years, and is unique to this area, it surely hasn't been accounted for in studies of other range lands/forests, and not included in the studies of this area which contain data from years ending prior to this unlawful slaughter beginning. Therefore the estimated annual population growth of this herd is inaccurate, as this person is yet to be apprehended. As such, any efforts to reduce the headcount of this herd, in the presence of a killer on the loose, could wipe out the herd completely given the unpredictable nature of this unlawful slaughter. The population limits called "Appropriate Management Levels" (AMLs) for each area where wild horses could be found on public land at that time, were never calculated to protect current wild horse and burro populations or to the land they lived on. Instead, the BLM established AML by the number of wild horses and burros that existed in 1971, when they were considered "fast disappearing", and do not reflect the natural and healthy growth of the herds. The current plan for our roughly 19,700 areas allows for 1 HORSE PER EVERY 394 ACRES! This is nonsensical, unscientific, and unjust. This will not allow for a healthy and genetically viable population, especially considering the additional extenuating circumstances of human threat in the area.
An important factor to account for, In 1971, Congress unanimously passed the "Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act," declaring these iconic animals to be "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West" that "enrich the lives of the American people" and are "an integral part of the natural system of the public lands." Protected, iconic, and "free roaming" animals should not be subject to brutality or removal from their home land to benefit for profit ranching. This 1971 congressional act states that wild horse habitat should be "devoted principally but not necessarily exclusively to wild horse welfare"...allowing ranching of commercial livestock but removing the wild horses, is not protecting their welfare. If Apache Sitgreaves and surrounding lands in a nd near the territory outlined are at risk or suffering, livestock should be managed or reduced prior to disturbing the protected wild horses! Bureau of Land Management regulations state the livestock can be temporarily or permanently removed from public lands "If necessary to provide habitat for wild horses or burros, to implement herd management actions, or to protect wild horses or burros". I support reduction or elimination of livestock grazing on and around these lands in order to maintain a habitat that is fruitful for the horses. Many Americans, and Arizonans, agree. nstead, the Forest Service should adjust livestock use in the Territory in order to give wild horses their fair share of resources on public lands designated as their habitat. This reallocation would allow for a larger, more sustainable wild horse population and save taxpayers millions in capture and storage costs for the horses the Forest Service intends to remove from the range. The National Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management do NOT work for livestock ranchers and are not tasked with protecting their holdings. Rather, they are tasked with safeguarding our nationally cherished animals and our national lands (as such, our horses have received level of distinction on par with the American Bald Eagle). As a local resident and taxpayer, I have a

stake in this issue, and I am clearly asking for these managing groups to protect, care for, and maintain the horses on this land, where I, my family, friends, and neighbors take great joy in their majestic presence. We are calling for an updated management approach that keeps the wild horses on the public land, provides them with a fair share of forage and water resources, and manages their numbers humanely with PZP fertility control, the immunocontraceptive vaccine utilized in both groups' successful fertility control programs. I hope my child grows up to witness wild horses roaming the Heber area, that fate lies in the hands of the USFS...what kind of world do we want our children to inherit? I for one, choose wild free roaming nature, over industry.