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Collaborative Working Group

There are major problems that have been recognized with National Forest Collaboratives.Many of the problems in the article I cite below were the same problems with the Heber Wild Horse Territory Collaborative. The HWHT collaborative was heavily biased against protecting the Heber wild horse herd. Although on the surface the working group members appeared to have been chosen to represent all sides of this controversial issue, it became apparent that

there was a definite stacking of the deck against the Heber herd. People with a financial stake were selected. Naturally those people will make recommendations that will benefit themselves or their employers and not necessarily be in the best interest of the forest, the American citizens in general or the wild horses.

Representatives from other agencies were part of the collaboration. Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Arizona Department of Agriculture and the BLM served in various aspects on the collaboration board and working group. These people represented agencies that were not unbiased and open but have their their own conflicts of interest regarding wild horses. All three of those agencies have a history of people from them who have been vocal in their opinions against the horses. People who are quick to spread their misinformation against the horses in order to attempt to persuade people to believe the horses should be removed from the forest. These people have demonstrated their [ldquo]philosophical and indirect vested interest in continued resource exploitation[rdquo].

The Problem With National Forest Collaboratives[ndash]Why They Don[rsquo]t Serve The Public Interest.

by GEORGE WUERTHNER on AUGUST 13, 2014

http://www.thewildlifenews.com/2014/08/13/the-problem-with-collaboratives-why-they-dont-serve-the-public-interest/

Group Think

Forest Service collaboratives are know for their [ldquo]group think". That became apparent in the HWHT collaborative working group. Out of the three Heber herd [ldquo]advocates[rdquo] that were selected for the group, only one of them had any real knowledge of the Heber wild horse herd and the forest in which the horses live...and she, Mary Hauser, was fired for not [ldquo]working in the spirit of the Collaboration[rdquo]. Of the other two [ldquo]advocates[rdquo] one of them suggested euthanizing (which is a polite way of saying killing) healthy wild horses as a form of population control. No true advocate of the Heber wild horse herd would ever suggest killing healthy horses as a means of population control. The other so called [ldquo]advocate[rdquo] did not have any knowledge of the Heber herd and had not even been in the forest until after she was selected to be in the

working group. It is known that people with no expertise on a topic can be easily swayed. She did not speak out for the protection of the herd but was on board with a major cull that if implemented will lead to the extinction of the Heber wild horses.

Mary Hauser had been terminated from the working group by Michael Schoon, assistant professor ASU, via voice mail. He told her in his voice mail message that, [ldquo]you have not been working in the spirit of the collaboration and as such you are no longer a member of the working group[rdquo]. Just exactly what was the [ldquo]spirit of the collaboration[rdquo]? Because she didn[rsquo]t agree with the [ldquo]group think" that the Heber herd should be culled down to a genetically non viable population she wasn[rsquo]t in the spirit of the collaboration?

The fact that the only true advocate for the Heber herd was terminated near the end of the collaborative process demonstrates that the intent of the working group meetings was never to have diversity of thoughts, opinions and options. I believe the intent from the beginning was to produce a recommendation for the Forest Service with everybody basically on board with an agenda that had been preset before the working group participants had been selected.

The Collaborative working group meetings did not meet in public and would not allow members of the public to attend or to be in on phone meetings. There were no minutes or recordings taken during the meetings in spite of several requests for such by Mary Hauser. These are violations of open meetings laws that are required for working groups of this kind where projects are being planned with members in attendance.

Due to the reasons above, all recommendations from the Collaborative working group should be discarded.