

15 April 2022

Ms. Stephanie Connolly  
Acting BLM Colorado Director  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
2850 Youngfield Street  
Lakewood, CO 80215  
[blm\\_co\\_statedirector@blm.gov](mailto:blm_co_statedirector@blm.gov)

**RE: THANK YOU AND SUPPORT FOR COLORADO WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS**

Dear Acting Director Connolly:

The undersigned group of conservation organizations supports the efforts of the BLM in Colorado to manage free-roaming horses to conserve wildlife habitat and improve ecosystem health. We recognize the importance of these actions, not only in Colorado, but across the West and the controversy associated with these science-based management actions<sup>1</sup>.

Free-roaming horses and burros are nonnative, feral species that significantly impact rangeland health, affecting native ecosystems and wildlife habitat. Currently, free-roaming horse populations exceed the BLM's Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs). This, coupled with the fact that wildlife habitat quality is in decline across many areas in the West due to a variety of other factors, has caused iconic western wildlife species, such as bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn, greater sage grouse, and others to be negatively impacted or imperiled.

The BLM is directed by Congress to manage "free-roaming horses and burros in a manner that is designed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on the public lands." Horse and burro populations exceeding AMLs are a distinct and serious threat to ecosystem health. Your efforts to achieve ecosystem health and conserve these critical rangeland habitats are greatly appreciated. In Colorado, four herd management areas totaling approximately 400 thousand acres<sup>2</sup> have a collective AML of 827 animals. The current population is nearly three times that, at an estimated 2,412 animals<sup>3</sup>.

Our public lands provide many purposes, supporting: wildlife, our outdoor lifestyle, rural economies, etc. Severe drought and other climate impacts are affecting the ecological values and range conditions across the West. Balancing the well documented negative ecological impacts of wild horses with the carrying capacity of the land will mitigate many of the existing concerns, and will aid in the protection and restoration of the habitat on which other wildlife species depend in the process.

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<sup>1</sup> In February, several members of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners sent a letter of support (attached) for the BLM's wild horse and burro management actions.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/herd-management/herd-management-areas/colorado>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/about-the-program/program-data>

As conservationists, hunters and anglers support the use of science as a basis for management decisions and appreciate the efforts of the BLM in Colorado to manage free-roaming horses to conserve wildlife habitat and improve ecosystem health across BLM lands.

Respectfully,

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Colorado Chapter

Colorado Bowhunters Association

Coloradans for Responsible Wildlife Management

Colorado Outfitters Association

Colorado Trappers and Predator Hunters Association

Congressional Sportsmen Foundation

Keep Routt Wild

Mule Deer Foundation

Muley Fanatic Foundation

National Wild Turkey Federation, Colorado State Chapter

National Wildlife Federation

Public Lands Foundation

Rocky Mountain Bighorn Society

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Safari Club International

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

White River & Douglas Creek Conservation Districts