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ANIMAL PROTECTION INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

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August 1, 1988

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"Wild Horse Annie"

HARRY DEARINGER

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CLAUDE,
Countess of Kinnoull

Elizabeth Pelletier
Executive Director
Wild Horse Alliance
897 Third Street
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Dear Ms. Pelletier:

We're writing in response to your requesting our response to the comments and recommendations that you sent to the Senate and House Appropriations Committee as well as the GAO. While this is somewhat of an after the fact request, we are pleased to be to respond to the recommendations you listed.

- 1. REMOVAL OF HORSES FROM HERD MANAGEMENT AREAS.** We agree with your recommendation that removals be based on range data. This is currently BLM policy and is a major argument on which to oppose current removal plans that are not accompanied by a current environmental assessment. API consistently presses home the point that the Dahl v. Clark ruling of 1985 requires removals to be a remedial action. Your recommendation is in keeping with our stand.
- 2. POPULATION CONTROL.** We do not automatically support fertility control as an option for protecting, managing and controlling wild horses on the public lands. First, it is based on the presumption that excess horses exist which BLM has failed to show in all cases. Second, it is not within the constraints imposed by the statutory "least feasible management" conditions nor is it the most cost efficient management option. There may be isolated instances where it would be useful to resort to mechanical birth control, but we support selective removal when it is shown that there is an excess of horses in a given area. API has taken a fairly strong stance opposing the University of Minnesota studies on the basis of shoddy methodology and invalid statistics and we do raise the question of why these studies were pursued when in fact Dr. Turner had already developed successful implant methods. We do not support this recommendation.

3. **HORSE MANAGEMENT** We do not support this recommendation. While the selective removal we refer to above would be consistent to what you imply would solve certain inbreeding, we disagree with the implication that BLM wild horse specialists are ignorant of wild horse habitat needs, behaviors, grazing patterns, migration trails, band structure and social behaviors or that the BLM should be running a breeding program. API has been pushing for the formulation of Herd Management Area Plans in order to secure habitat requirements and band needs as management objectives. The Resource Management Plans in most areas require that these be formulated and they constitute part of the mandate of FLMPA in the land use planning process. Politics alone prevent them being written. Instead the pressure on BLM from livestock interests is to complete allotment plans and to move into grazing adjustments before wild horse proponents figure out what is going on.

4. **ADOPTION CRITERIA.** There is absolutely nothing to prevent knowledgeable folks from volunteering to help with the Adoption Program. We don't understand why this is a recommendation to Congress. On the other hand the need for funding a broader satellite program with publicity and public information is needed.

We do agree that there are adoptable horses labeled by BLM as unadoptable and that criteria should be developed within the adoption program that certifies different levels of usage. We believe the entire adoption program from the time horses leave the processing center until title passage is in need of an environmental impact statement.

5. **FEE WAIVER.** API agrees this program is in need of being stopped and testified to that effect before Congress. We are currently in search of the most effective avenue to pursue this end.

6. **PRISON PROGRAM.** Again, we do not understand why this is a recommendation to Congress. Nothing prevents concerned organizations or individuals from investigating current prison programs, from criticizing, from pursuing complaints through appropriate channels and demanding high standards of BLM. We believe humane standards and procedures are needed in this program and urge the knowledgeable and humane horse experts to get in touch with Washington BLM and demand regulations be written. API would support that action. We would lend support to a legal action if

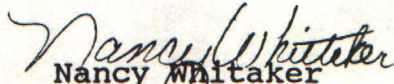
that were pursued. At this particular time we do not have adequate staff to monitor this program to develop a case against it. We encourage the Alliance to do so and would help where we can. Perhaps an area that you can pursue is to get an injunction on the basis of the fact that the program was not subjected to NEPA requirements and demand that the court order regulations.

7. **SANCTUARIES.** We disagree with the recommendation but agree with the supporting argument. We are opposed to the creation of a special board of "highly trained and knowledgeable" individuals. We fully support the broad public input process and continue to demand that it be applied in every instance by BLM. This is another case where NEPA requirements have been shoved aside and wild horse groups should evaluate the possibility of pursuing an injunction. API's recommendations to Congress were that an appropriation impose certain conditions and restrictions. We suggested they should be those already agreed to by several humane groups. Recommendations included 1) no title passage; 2) non reproductive horses only; 3) competitive bid contracting and 4) site specific Environmental Assessment at the "go/no-go" decision making stage. We've added "no zoo-like atmosphere" that would prohibit parking within several miles of water sources and no commercial enterprises on site.

8. **ADVISORY/REVIEW BOARD:** We are in disagreement with this recommendation and do not support it at all. We are in full support of the public participation process of FLMPA, NEPA, and the Administrative Procedures Act which do now guarantee our right of input and require that the agencies respond to it.

Because these recommendations refer often to the need for expertise within the wild horse program, API would suggest that those individuals and organizations with this expertise sponsor workshop and educational programs teaching and aiding other advocates and proponents to develop their knowledge of wild horses.

Sincerely,


Nancy Whitaker
Program Assistant

WILD HORSE ALLIANCE/ California State Horsemen's Association
897 Third Street Santa Rosa, California 95404 (707) 544-2250

Date: June 28, 1988

To: Honorable Senators and Congressmen

From: WILD HORSE ALLIANCE/ California State Horsemen's Association

Subject: **Wild Horse and Burro Management-Program Improvements**

The following comments and recommendations are based on the expertise of many knowledgeable and competent horse biologists, equine veterinarians, horse researchers, and other horse specialists. These comments are in response to our conversations with various Senators and Congressmen concerned with the humane and cost-effective management of our public wild horses and burros.

1. **Removal of Horses from Herd Management Areas:** Accurate herd numbers & distribution are not known on many of the Herd Management Areas and all studies to date show that horses have little or no effect on public rangelands, including the National Academy of Sciences' and the June, 1988 GAO Reports. We recommend that no horses be removed from an area unless data indicates that "real" damage is being caused to the ecological balance of the ecosystem by horses.

2. **Population Control:** The BLM claims that horses are reproducing at the rate of 16-22% annually. All scientific studies show that reproductive rates are 10% or less. However, successful, humane, and cost effective birth control practices have been developed by researchers Dr. J. Turner, Dr. J. Kirkpatrick, and Dr. I. Liu, as opposed to the inhumane and controversial research currently being conducted by the University of Minnesota. By selectively controlling herd reproduction, populations could be maintained and managed at desired levels. We recommend the above researchers' method for humane birth control be implemented.

3. **Horse Management:** Herds should be selectively managed to produce sound healthy horses. Many of the Herd Management Areas have too few horses to allow for a good genetic pool, thus reproductive "stress" has caused inbreeding. The Oregon Burns District BLM has successfully managed two very different herds, but the "curly" horses in Nevada have almost been eliminated because the BLM has been non-specific in their removal. We recommend that horse biologists or other equine specialists knowledgeable in horse reproduction and behavior assist and/or educate the BLM in horse management.

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4. Adoption Criteria: Most of the horses removed off of public lands are "adoptable" if handled properly by knowledgeable and kind horsemen. "Adoptability" of a horse should be determined by disposition and suitability of size, conformation and movement for a specific task. Some horses may be suitable for pleasure or trails, while other horses may be more suitable for jumping or endurance. Many adoptable horses have been slaughtered under the "fee-waiver" program and there are currently still horses left in "holding pens" that are adoptable. Marketing horses within the horse industry and educating new horse owners about horse behavior, care and training will greatly improve the success of wild horse and burro adoptions. We recommend that knowledgeable and humane horse specialists provide assistance to the BLM with the Adopt-A-Horse Program.

5. Fee-Waiver Horses: Horses are continuing to be slaughtered under the fee-waiver program. Even though the BLM has suspended fee-waiver adoptions, they intend to transfer title on 13,000-15,000 horses this year. Another 8200 fee-waiver adoptions have been approved and the BLM stated that they will continue to approve fee-waiver adopters on an individual basis. Most of these horses are sent to "livestock dealers" in South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Kansas who sell the horses to slaughter plants. We recommend that all fee-waiver adoptions be stopped. Only non-profit humane or horse organizations concerned about the horses' welfare should be allowed to adopt horses under the fee-waiver program subject to review by Congress. gwo

6. Prison Program: Sending horses to prisoners for training to make the horses more "adoptable" may be good therapy for the prisoners, but many incidents indicate that it is highly stressful for the horses. New Mexico has had numerous cases of abuse, while recently in California 16 mares aborted foals due to stress while being "broke". The success of any training program for horses is dependent on the quality & understanding of the individual educating the horse. Although training methods vary, all knowledgeable equine specialists agree that "gentling", not "breaking" horses is the most successful domestication method. Trainers such as Pat Parelli, Tom Dorrance, Ray Hunt, and John Lyons are nationally famous for their gentle and successful training methods with difficult, abused and wild horses. We recommend that knowledgeable and humane horse experts investigate each prison program to determine its success and supervise each program if it is to continue.

7. **Sanctuaries:** Many privately owned rangelands in the western states have been proposed by various people to provide "sanctuaries" for excess wild horses; i.e. D. Sysel, D. Wendt, L. Pedrett, D. Hyde, Carey Ranches, etc. However, the BLM has implemented agreements with D. Hyde for sanctuaries in South Dakota. Although we agree with the sanctuary concept to allow excess horses to live in a wild and free roaming manner, we do not support any sanctuary without public input as is the case with South Dakota. Sanctuaries should be located on suitable horse habitat providing both summer and winter ranges. We recommend that sanctuary criteria, selection and monitoring be governed by a knowledgeable civilian advisory/ review board as described in detail in recommendation # 8.

8. **Advisory /Review Board:** In 1986 the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board was established. Although the intent of the board was similar to what we are recommending, the actual board members were appointed by BLM. The bias selection of the Board members rendered that committee ineffective. It is critical that the currently proposed Advisory Board be free of BLM political influence. The main function of the Board should be to address the current BLM policies relating to management of wild horses and burros on a site-specific basis and assist with implementing solutions where problems exist. The Board should be appointed by Congress through nominations submitted by concerned horse and humane organizations. The Board should have no less than the following representation: 2 equine biologists/specialists experienced in wild or free roaming horse behavior, care and management, 1 burro specialist, 2 equine reproduction specialists experienced with wild or free roaming horses, 2 equine veterinarians experienced with wild or free roaming horses, 1 equine nutritionist experienced with wild or free roaming horses, 1 horse marketing specialist, 1 horse educator/communicator, 3 humane organizations' representatives, 1 range management specialist, 1 wildlife biologist, 1 ecologist, and 1 resource manager. BLM nominations should be limited to no more than 1/3 of the total number of Board members. This Board should remain active as long as the BLM is managing public wild horses and burros. We recommend that Congress appoint the above described Advisory Board to assist the BLM with the management of wild horses and burros. We are aware of the time commitment from Congress required to set up an appointed Board, however it is the only viable alternative aside from legislative change, to successfully insure the integrity of this Advisory Board. We currently have names of competent and honorable people to nominate for these positions.

WILD HORSE ALLIANCE
California State Horsemen's Association
897 Third St. Santa Rosa, CA. 95402 (707) 544-2250

July 18, 1988

Dear Fellow Colleagues:

The continued mismanagement and inhumane treatment of our wild horses and burros over the last 15 years has brought many people together in various efforts to help solve the problems. Although, victories have been won by different groups, the problems continue in almost every facet of the BLM's wild horse and burro program. The magnitude of the problems have grown to the point where no one group can accurately monitor all of the injustices bestowed on the remaining horses and burros.

In an effort to help coordinate the work that various concerned groups are doing, to involve the professional horsemen, and to bring together a united front to Congress, the Wild Horse Alliance was formed. The purpose of the Alliance is to educate Congress and other concerned groups and people about wild horse and burro management by bringing together experts in the field. The Alliance coordinators are experienced and knowledgeable wild horse specialists with professional expertise in wild horse and burro behavior, care & management, wildlife biology, range management, and wild horse sanctuary management with over 50 cumulative years of wild horse experience. We are volunteering our professional time as well as our own money to assist with this joint effort to help ensure the welfare of our last wild horses and burros.

Although, we feel that our wild horses and burros belong on public lands, they are disappearing at an alarming rate. Within many of the Herd Management Areas the numbers are unknown. Other Areas have too few horses to provide for a viable population. Thus, we feel that properly managed "sanctuaries" are one solution to ensuring the continuation of healthy wild horse and burro populations.

We have enclosed copies of the comments and recommendations we have sent to the Senate and House Appropriations Committees and to the Government Accounting Office (GAO). We have consulted many of the top horse biologists, veterinarians, equine researchers and animal welfare groups specializing in wild and free roaming horses and burros. We intend to offer support in the way of coordination of information to assist individual groups with their specific work and ask that you please indicate your support for our efforts in writing. We are convinced, that although groups may vary on their focus, we all share the combined concern and respect for the life of another species. We look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you.

Sincerely,

WILD HORSE ALLIANCE

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