



# *W*ild Horse and Burro Program



*"The 90's:  
A New  
Beginning"*

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# *The 90's: "A New Beginning"*



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## *Wild Horse and Burro Program*

The Bureau's Wild Horse and Burro Program has experienced an obscure and "chuck" ridden path since the 1971 charter. During the past 19 years, since the passage of the original act, numerous interpretations and solutions have been offered and implemented including some substantive changes in the basic law.

To briefly recap the program's history, we began with the original act of 1971 which gave the Secretary of the Interior broad authority to protect wild and free roaming horses and burros on public lands. The act, however, hamstrung the Bureau of Land Management, the agency ultimately responsible for management, with some very restrictive provisions.

The act was modified in 1976 to lift the restrictions on the use of motorized vehicles associated with management requirements. Aircraft and ground vehicles were then employed effectively in the BLM's management practices.

It was not until 1978 that the act was again modified to allow passage of title of up to four horses per year from federal ownership to the private sector. Up until that time all adopted horses and burros, and in some circles their subsequent progeny, were considered federal property.

Interpretations and guidelines continued to evolve over the next decade to further clarify and refine the program. However, it was not until late 80's that herd management activities, employed to maintain the integrity of specific herd attributes were recognized as legitimate and acceptable practices. Such efforts on the part of the BLM are receiving support and recognition by several organizations and institutions interested in perpetuating the well being of the American Mustang. These initiatives are designed to protect and enhance the historical, scientific, cultural, and educational values of the American Mustang through specific herd management programs. Such practices are not without criticism, however, for some interests believe that free roaming horses should be left to the influences of nature.

Oregon pioneered herd enhancement techniques beginning in the mid-1970's and has continued to refine their management efforts ever since. Other states including California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and now Utah are initiating more aggressive approaches to herd enhancement. The remaining states are also proceeding at various energy levels.

Numerous controversies arose over the program and have persisted at a high pitch since the passage of the original legislation. Law suits, anti-BLM campaigns and general distrust of the bureau and its motives prevailed for nearly two decades and still plagues the Bureau in several circles. However, over time a relationship of trust and sharing has developed between horse and burro protection organizations and the Oregon/Washington and California BLM. Recently this support has been expanded to include a growing foundation of key equine industry people.

This support has been the result of extensive and intensive investment on the part of a few dedicated and positive BLM employees who believe in the Wild Horse and Burro Program. They were, and are still willing to invest that extra effort to turn the program from a millstone to one of the most positive public outreach programs in the history of the bureau. These most valuable human resources should not be ignored nor diffused, but should be directed and released to pursue the resolutions of the most significant public land issues confronting us today. The answers are available and the solutions are more than reasonable.

As previously mentioned, Oregon has succeeded in not only gaining the attention of horse protection groups but the leadership of the equine industry as well. A listing of some of the more active and influential organizations supporting Oregon's "Better Idea" includes the following:

- ✧ International Society for the Protection of Mustang and Burro      ISPMB
- ✧ American Mustang and Burro Association      AMBA



- ◆ Wild Horse Organized Assistance
- ◆ Whole Horse Institute
- ◆ Spanish Mustang Registry
- ◆ Kiger Mustang Association
- ◆ Minor Breeds Conservancy
- ◆ Horse Digest
- ◆ Equine Heritage Foundation; Northwinds Museum, New York
- ◆ California Dressage Society

WHOA  
WHI  
SMR  
KMA  
MBC  
HD  
EHF  
CDS

This support has been gained through openness and honesty, dedication, and investment (both personal and monetary), into the enhancement of Oregon's Wild Horse and Burro Management Program. In 1983 the Burns District Manager requested from the State Director of Oregon the delegations to not only operate the field programs but to serve as oversight and external liaison for the State Director. This authority was granted and an exemplary management program evolved to the point that the District received a Secretarial Citation in 1989 which recognized Oregon's operation as number one.

There has always been a positive commitment by wild horse personnel in the Burns District, however the interest and enthusiasm over the program during the last ten years has escalated, and Oregon has succeeded in moving from a small and inadequate holding and processing facility in the Burns District to not only the best horse facility in the bureau, but one of the major public outreach facilities in Oregon. Literally hundreds of people of all ages and walks of life flock to Oregon's facility for a heightened recreation and educational experience. BLM staff members have been on the road sharing Oregon's Wild Horse Management story with students of all ages, horse groups, civic and conservation organizations, and youth groups. These positive outreach initiatives have resulted in an increasing awareness by our publics of not only the achievements of the program but the obligations and hurdles that must be met to make the program a success. Our accomplish-

ments have not only transcended state boundaries but have captured the eyes of international interests as well.

Never has the climate and public sentiment been so ready for a major outreach effort on behalf of the Bureau's Wild Horse and Burro Management Program. It is time for the bureau to capture the moment. Clear direction to the field to move towards enhancing the resource and integrating this highly visible biological component into a more holistic approach to the management of our public rangeland ecosystems is essential. This will establish and reinforce positive public opinion towards our capabilities as trusted and effective stewards of the land. Our publics are starving for answers and enlightenments on the many mysteries of our environment, and what more appropriate an approach for the bureau to take to heighten their awareness but through the horse and burro as our vehicles.

The answers to establishing an acceptable and supported Wild Horse and Burro Management Program are relatively straight forward. However, they will require investment, commitment and patience to achieve our goals. The major areas which need to be addressed are:

- ◆ Program Direction and Continuity
- ◆ Field Commitment
- ◆ Public Outreach
- ◆ Management Practices
- ◆ Follow Through

These major program areas are currently inadequate in the eyes of not just organized interest groups but in the minds of many of our own people as well. Solidifying the program and establishing public support can be achieved without a major increase in program investment, but a change in the way we are doing business is in order. Each Area of major concern, which needs added attention from internal and external knowledgeable and experienced advocates, will be addresses.

# Program Direction and Continuity



The Kiger Mustang Dedication: "A Commitment"

*Continuous sharing of the goals and objectives with the publics provides the reinforcement needed to assure continuity.*

*Visible leadership and strong direction are essential to gaining trust of the publics.*



A Burns Horse Corral Event: "The Lottery"



During the past two decades the emphasis on the program has been directed towards controlling numbers of animals on the public lands, with little concern over the quality or special attributes of the resource itself. This narrow emphasis has created several issues and problems. To begin, focusing in on mere numbers gathered off the range to achieve designated management levels, has resulted in literally thousands of horses in captivity with no place to go. The adoption or placement program has initiated over time several approaches for placement of excess horses and burros with varying degrees of success.

Unfortunately, public sentiment towards adoptability of animals became very restrictive, and for several years only young and attractive animals were desired, leaving the majority of gathered horses unadoptable. As a result holding facilities were established, legislation for sale authority was proposed, and now sanctuaries have been established for the unwanted. In the meantime, we continue to gather more unadoptable horses with no clear direction provided for the program as a whole. It is time we assess where we want to be with the program and how we want to get there. A few critical tasks which need to be accomplished immediately and which will set the framework for a holistic and positive program are:

- ◇ Establish short term program goals which should focus on establishing a clear sense of direction and a reinforced commitment to a positive program.
- ◇ Establish long term program goals and objectives which need to be mutually formulated by the administration and interested publics.
- ◇ Clearly articulate subsequent goals and objectives so that all employees as well as the publics have a clear understanding of

our course of action. Our own employees and the younger segments of the public should be prime recipients of our messages.

- ◇ Perpetuate goals and objectives which are in full support of a mission to enhance the wild horse and burro as a public resource; to maintain the honor of their place in our heritage; and to integrate their role as a major component of our ecological systems in the western biospheres.
- ◇ Establish a continued commitment from the Administration, reinforced by Congress, to the bureau's efforts of achieving their articulated goals and objectives.

These tasks require little more than the formulation of our philosophies and expectations towards one of our outstanding public land resources. The required monetary investment should be minimal.

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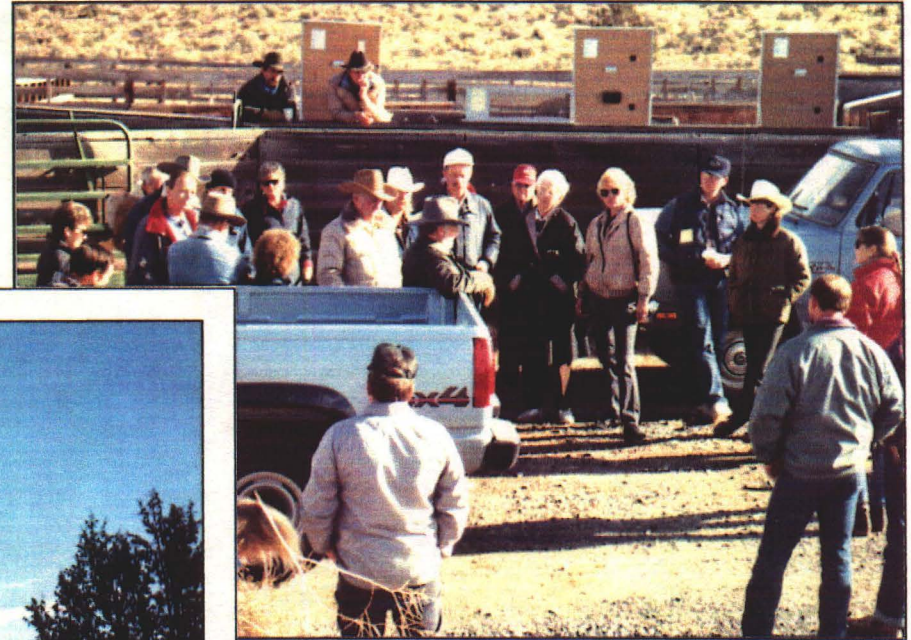
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## Field Commitment

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*Knowledgeable and experienced field personnel adds credibility and dedication to implementation of a successful program.*



**Horse Lottery and Program Seminar,  
Burns Corrals**

*A well defined mission instills a commitment for excellence by field personnel.*

**Loading of Horses; destination Burns Corrals**

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Unfortunately the Wild Horse and Burro Program has not always been received as a major public outreach and positive image opportunity at the field level. With some notable exceptions many of the field personnel which have been assigned responsibility for field guidance and operational tasks have had virtually no experience and/or knowledge of equines or of the biology of large ungulates in the wild. In addition, many of these employees were influenced by superiors who had a lack of interest and even a personal bias against the program. Many of these individuals, with no fault of their own, had or have no particular background in the principles of rangeland ecology. Such deficiencies stifle a positive and progressive program initiative, regardless of which program. This has resulted in frustration, lack of aggressiveness and in general a lack of support by field organizations. This is the most easily rectified deficiency as it stands today.

The responsibility for enhancing the field's commitment to establish and perpetuate a positive program lies with management. Simply stated, the selection and placement of experienced, knowledgeable, aggressive and positive individuals in order to ensure that the Bureau's mission and goals are pursued, will bring new life to the program and gain the trust from external interests required for the program to be successful. Strong and enlightened people, coupled with a clear sense of direction, will provide major advancement of the program. This is also a low monetary investment initiative.

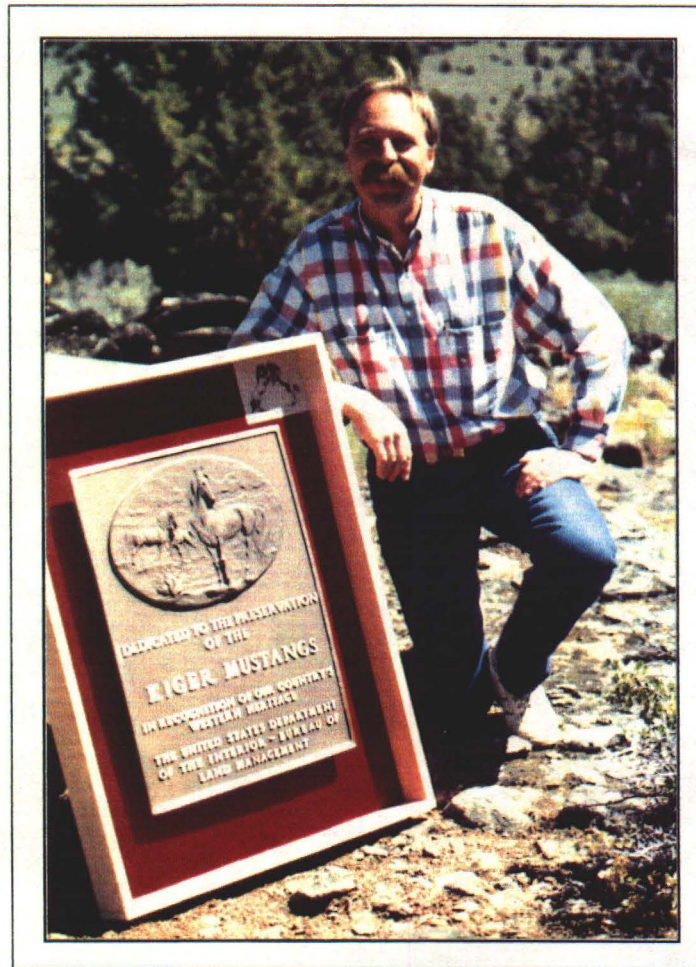


## Public Outreach



Education Center: Oregon State Fair

*A knowledgeable public can serve as our greatest allies.  
We must carry the messages to them.*



Kiger Mustang Overlook Dedication  
Artist Rowland Cheney, Volunteer

*Providing special events, facilities and recognition can heighten the enlightenment opportunities for our recreating publics.*



Providing our varied publics the opportunities to learn of and experience our roles as stewards of the public land trust is critical for the sustained effectiveness of the Bureau. Public outreach is currently a major initiative of the Administration and a fair amount of energy is being expended in regards to the Wild Horse and Burro Program. The current outreach activities associated with the program are however somewhat sporadic and without a clear sense of direction. Much of our efforts are in response to external requests such as tours, lectures, speaking engagements and walk-ins. This facet of an outreach initiative is essential in gaining the trust and respect from our publics, but is only a small portion of the requirements for a fully effective initiative.

A viable and effective public outreach program should be visionary, well thought out, structured or planned, and targeted for all ages and cultural persuasions. It should have the element of consistency; however, flexible enough to be tailored to local and regional needs, resources and opportunities. It should be designed to enhance not only the educational and enlightening experiences but should also take full advantage of the recreational opportunities offered over a wide variety of public lands. Wild horses and burros provide an excellent attraction to public lands from which our overall diverse and integrated management mission can be conveyed. Two specific areas of enhanced outreach responsibilities opportunities include:

*Enlightenment through Education:* Many traditional techniques are available. Media, video, lectures or speaking engagements, outdoor field classrooms, field labs and involvement with and by organized interests are but a few which we have proven effective. These initiative should be structured or focussed on the very young up through educators and law makers, and should be tailored accordingly. A viable and effective awareness program will require the infusion of knowledgeable, creative, and talented professionals at all levels of the organiza-

tion, and a noticeable increase in our budgetary investment over that which is currently directed. Such investments could include expanding the functions of existing BLM equine facilities to include demonstrations, information dispersement, events, observation facilities and hands-on experiences. Volunteerism, ong staff training, cooperative agreements, and part time employment are specific areas which could be expanded to augment this initiative.

*Enlightenment through Recreation:* The bureau is moving into a new era of public lands stewardship. During the first fifty years of our existence the administration of public lands required attention to but a few interests or users of the public resources. During that era the issues were clear and were primarily consumptive, and goals and objectives were more focussed and easily discernable.

During the past 10 to 15 years, essentially since the enactment of Federal Land Policy and Management Act, (FLPMA) our clientele and public expectations and demands have greatly expanded. Through this growing awareness of our public land resources and a genuine concern for the environment, greater emphasis has been placed upon the nong consumptive uses and the intrinsic values of the public lands' environments. This evolved in a relatively short period of time which found many bureaucrats in the natural resources business unable to forecast or plan for the future needs and wants of the diverse and expanding publics.

Today, keeping up with the demands of our user publics is often an overwhelming task, which provides for little time and energy to be directed towards providing the "public lands story" to the public. We do know, however, that an aware and enlightened

# Public Outreach

public can best be fostered through hands-on experiences. The most available and amenable publics to a heightened awareness are the recreationists. Although the tourists of America come from a wide variety of cultures, backgrounds and means, there is a common expectation of all, that is enjoyment and experience.

Nearly all public land recreation experiences are enhanced through the encounter of animal life in a free roaming state. BLM offers unique opportunities for heightened experiences to its visitors by the presence of wild horses and burros roaming free within the public lands' environment. There are 195 Herd Management Areas in 10 states, covering 33.4 million acres of public lands under the stewardship of BLM in the west. These areas transverse nearly all the diverse ecosystems offered on public lands in the contiguous 11 western states. There are no other wild animals on public lands that are as readily observable, or could be made available to the publics than horses and burros.

Free-roaming horses and burros are not the only program opportunities that offer significant recreation and enlightenment experiences. BLM administers a number of major corral complexes in the western U.S., contracts three adoption centers primarily in the Eastern states plus two sanctuaries. These facilities receive thousands of visitors of all persuasions every year, and could accommodate many times the current usage. The opportunities are endless for us with these facilities to convey our public lands' messages. A few specific initiatives which could be expanded to provide opportunities include:

- ◇ Public Lands Initiatives:
  - ◇ Expansion of viewing and interpretive facilities
  - ◇ Recreation maps depicting encounter opportunities
  - ◇ Brochures and videos
  - ◇ Tour participation and sponsorship

- ◇ Corral and Facility Initiatives: Providing enlightenment on:
  - ◇ Receiving and processing
  - ◇ Veterinary care
  - ◇ Nutrition
  - ◇ Behavior
  - ◇ Animal characteristics and attributes
  - ◇ Tack
  - ◇ Training demonstrations and seminars

In addition to on-sight initiatives the bureau has the opportunity to take our message to the people. Fair functions and major civic and recreational events are prime opportunities for BLM to go on the road and take a horse or burro to lead our way. Mascots can do wonders in gaining the attention of many of our publics and particularly youthful Americans. A small investment of our time in gaining the trust of an animal can pay major dividends when shared with our publics through personal encounters.

An effective public outreach and personal encounters program does not come without investments. Printed materials, visual media, interpretive facilities and personal attention initiatives all require time and money on the part of the administration. However, if designed and implemented properly, less attention should be required in reacting to complaints, controversies, perceptions and litigation. Investments in establishing partnerships and friends are much more effective and pleasant than those required for conflicts and confrontations and in the long haul will become cost effective.

The effectiveness of completing a task is dependent upon the quality of tools utilized.



### *Management*

*Selective returning of quality animals provides for herd integrity and public appeal.*

**South Steens Mountain Herd: Painted Horses**

*Perpetuating special status or historically significant herds offer exceptional opportunities to demonstrate management integrity and commitment.*



**Kiger Mustang Herd: Line Back, Dunn Factor Horses of Spanish decent.**

# Management



Warm Springs Herd:  
"Dollars" Dominate Stud

*Returning Superior Studs to the range provides for rapid improvement of herd quality and high public interest.*



*Selective herd management creates and ensures high demand for excess horses removed from the range. The rewards are many.*

Dollars' Progeny, "Four Bits" and Mom



The bureau has been assigned an extremely critical and sensitive mission via the Wild Horse and Burro Program. The responsibilities do not rest with the perpetuation and protection of the animals in the free-roaming state and the well being of animals in captivity. We also have been charged with providing husbandry and maintaining the biological and genetic integrity of these wild equines. Over the past several years the latter responsibilities have received little attention beyond limited research efforts associated with biology and control. As previously mentioned, few individuals charged with equine management responsibilities knew anything of husbandry, behavior and biological requirements of the animals, consequently little attention was given to these needs. When our publics know more of the resource than we as the caretakers, it is time to change.

The majority of wild equine organizations and several industry and ranching interests are becoming more involved and supportive of efforts to produce and maintain a better quality of animal and preserve those special features of individual populations offering historical and cultural values. Advancing our efforts in these areas will not only maintain the integrity of the resource for generations to come, but signal the world that we take our responsibilities seriously.

The ultimate results of improved animal quality are: greater acceptance by the publics; increased efficiencies of the program; and a sense of professional and organizational pride for a "job well done". Such an organizational achievement can bear positive influences on other program initiatives as well.

Management practices which have proven successful in some states include the following:

- ❖ enlightening the public through openness and honesty
- ❖ returning of animals for improved quality
- ❖ establishing population characteristics and controls to affect production and age distribution

- ❖ design and locate rangeland improvements to accommodate wild equines and other wild animals
- ❖ determine historical and cultural backgrounds of populations and establish goals to maintain special attributes
- ❖ modify rangeland facilities which are inhibiting the bureau from meeting integrated management objectives or adversely impacting critical biological functions.

Herd improvement techniques which provide desired results are relatively simple and straight forward and avoid intensive involvement or interference with the wild and free roaming nature of animal populations. The returning of quality animals to the wild will produce a more eye appealing useable animal as well as help maintain genetic viability. Mixing or sharing of genetic stock even across state jurisdictional boundaries is also desirable. Selective birth control, employing the most current technologies, would also enhance herd improvement with minimum disruption to biological and social functions of the animals. However, any herd improvement practices need to be thought out with the animals' social needs and behavioral attributes in mind.

The refinement of these practices have at times evolved through trial and error and should not be employed loosely or secretively. Being upfront and open to external input ensures a successful initiative. The results are a higher demand for the animals, less time in a holding pattern, a more satisfied and supporting clientele and a general feeling of satisfaction by our organization of a "job well done".

Although there is an investment upfront to improve animal quality, the end result will more than offset the investment. As an example, excess animals from a herd under a quality improvement program were all adopted the same day they were made available. Most herds, not under a quality improvement program, result in less than half of the animals being readily adoptable and require several expensive months before placement. The remaining animals are merely stockpiled.

## Follow Through

There has been essentially three concerns expressed over the years in regards to these practices. The first was the perceived contradiction with the Act that management practices are not natural. With few exceptions, human intervention to provide for the long term benefit of wild horses and burros and to maintain a viable program is receiving broad and vocal support.

The second area of concern pertains to the added cost of herd improvement practices. Actual experiences over the years from those operations making use of such practices clearly demonstrate that major efficiencies and cost savings were achieved over time. There is no question that the initial investment pays off with high dividends.

The third issue focuses in on the possible competition the government is creating with the horse industry. Industry leaders are responding to the contrary, stating that animals, particularly horses, entering the private sector through BLM's adoption program are obviously a "grade" animal or minor breed and are providing a feeder source of new horse enthusiast versus competition to breeders. Many wild horse adopters eventually progress to one of the major breeds. Backyard breeders are not industry competitors.

These recognized and acceptable practices are currently being employed with demonstrated success and substantial support from external interests. Realizing that modifying some biological populations of less than desirable animals to those of quality will take time to achieve and a commitment to maintain, however, you'll never get there until you start. A trip of a thousand miles begins with the first step. The time to make a difference is *now!*

The final area required for a successful holistic program is follow through, an essential ingredient that is too often overlooked. In order to determine how successful our efforts are we must check in. We know that our overall management mission is dynamic and requires periodic maintenance and sometimes modifications. In order to know what is required and when to make adjustments, we must live with the process.

Monitoring, evaluations, show me's and survey's are common approaches for check ins, but the ultimate test is how the program is perceived by the publics and what is their confidence level in the bureau in fulfilling its mission.

An effective follow through initiative will require the support and partnership of both our internal and external publics. The desire is there and the climate is right to initiate positive changes. Not only will the program become more efficient and the tasks more rewarding, but the public as well as the "wild ones" will be better served. It is time we provide the honor and recognition so deserving of those animals which led us successfully through a major era of our evolution. We are now the caretakers, so it is our turn to lead the way. *The answers are available and the time is right!*



*The success of any mission is  
measured by the attainment of the  
goal.*



**On the Range: "Dollars" and his pocket full of change**



*With the adequate investment, commitment  
and follow through, a bright and productive  
future can be assured.*

**There is no end, just "New Beginnings"**