

Nellis

m 9-13-96

File/Return

COPY

September 13, 1996

Mr. Maitland Sharpe
Assistant Director, Resource Assessment & Planning
1849 C. Street, NW
Room 5650 - MIB
Washington, DC 20240

TRANSMITTED BY TELEFAX: (202) 208-5242

Dear Mr. Sharpe:

The purpose of this letter is to express our concerns for the situation that currently exists relative to the wild horses on Nellis Air Force Base. We wish to express our concern and disbelief over the press release issued by BLM's Nevada State Office on September 10, 1996. Furthermore, this letter relays our frustration and disappointment of BLM's failure to address this emergency.

It is our understanding that the emergency review team was assembled in part for the purpose of addressing and eliminating suffering of wild horses on Nellis AFB. The team was informed of the severity of the Nellis situation during our meeting on August 20-22 in Reno, NV. At that time our three groups recommended immediate re-evaluation of the Nellis horses by an equine veterinarian to determine body condition and the possible need for humane destruction. Since that recommendation (over three weeks ago) no action has been taken to eliminate the suffering of these horses. The failure to act is irreprehensible.

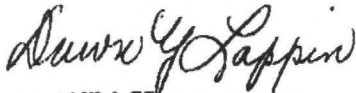
Furthermore, the team agreed that no press releases or other external announcements would be made until final recommendations were completed. Compounding our frustration is the fact that the National Program Office knowingly authorized issuance of a press release without team knowledge or endorsement. This further compromises legal issues attendant to the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

While our groups remain committed to the original intent of the team, we believe it is imperative to take immediate action to eliminate the suffering of these animals. Therefore, we respectfully request a commitment from the Director's Office to provide immediate access to accomplish evaluation and humane destruction of animals on Nellis AFB as necessary; to immediately provide food and water to the horses prior to gathering; and to conduct a regather within ten days and removals as necessary.

We thank you in advance for your action and stand available to assist should it be necessary.

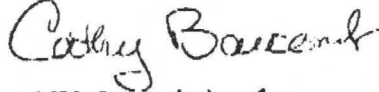
Sincerely yours,

Dawn Lappin
(702) 851-4817



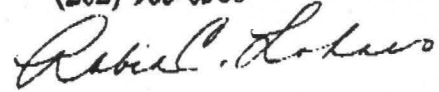
Wild Horse
Organized Assistance

Cathy Barcomb
(702) 688-2626



NV Commission for
Preservation of Wild Horses

Robin Lohnes
(202) 965-0500



American Horse
Protection Assn.

Nellis

10-15-96

IN REPLY REFER TO:



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

1120 (912)
WO(200)

October 15, 1996

Ms. Cathy Barcomb
Executive Director,
Nevada Commission for the
Presentation of Wild Horses
1109 Terminal Way
Reno, Nevada 89502

Dear Ms. Barcomb:

This letter is in response to your correspondence of September 13, 1996. Thank you for writing. I share your concern for the wild horses and the resources on the Nellis Air Force Base and elsewhere and want to do what we can to alleviate the conditions caused by the drought in southern Nevada. I have enjoyed working with you to address the needs of the horses during the drought, and I deeply regret that you were embarrassed by the inaccurate press release issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on September 10, 1996. On behalf of the BLM, I want to apologize for issuing that release.

The events that lead up to the release were as follows. After speaking with the Emergency Review Team on August 2, 1996, Tom Pogacnik, Chief of the National Wild Horse and Burro Program, arranged to revisit the Nevada Wild Horse Range on Nellis Air Force Base to evaluate the physical condition of the wild horses turned back earlier this summer. That visit took place on August 28, 1996, with Dawn Lappin, yourself, Dr. Kirk, and Mr. Pogacnik. As I understand it, the group agreed that action should be taken to alleviate the suffering of those animals in poor condition, and a meeting was held on September 5, 1996, with the Nellis Base Commander and his staff to gain agreement on the appropriate action. During this meeting the Commander said an action plan and a press release would be required before he would agree to humane destruction of so many horses on the base. The action plan was finalized on September 17, 1996. The press release was completed and issued on September 10, 1996.

The press release was issued through normal BLM and National Program Office (NPO) channels, but before checking with me or anyone on the review team. Unfortunately, the Nevada State Office and the NPO were unaware of the agreement that the Emergency Review Team would review all press releases pertaining to their actions prior to release.

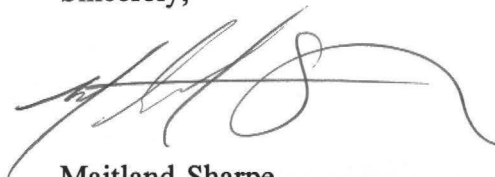
This press release erroneously stated that the BLM would euthanize old, sick and lame horses in extremely poor condition "with the concurrence of an emergency review team and wild horse advocates." I apologize to you for this assumption about concurrence and deeply regret the embarrassment this statement has caused you and your colleagues.

I appreciate the time and effort you have devoted to serving on the Emergency Review Team. We value your commitment both to the welfare of the wild horses and burros and to our partnership in meeting the goals of the Wild Horse and Burro Act. We do not want to do anything to erode that partnership or lessen our ability to work effectively together.

Meeting the needs of the animals on the Nevada Wild Horse Range is a continuing priority for the Bureau. On September 18, 1996, the BLM lead a team to evaluate wild horse conditions on the Range. While the team found the physical condition of the majority of wild horses to have improved, they did recommend humanely destroying one injured mare. A second visit involved working with the Air Force to secure additional waters for the wild horses and to measure the available forage remaining on the area. Based on the availability of forage and water, the BLM has determined that an additional wild horse gather will be needed on the Nevada Wild Horse Range in order to ensure the survival of the herd through the winter.

Again, we appreciate your interest and advice on the very complex issues of managing the wild horses and burros program. We want to do what is best for the wild horses and burros, in the short term and in the long term. I think we have made significant progress in this regard with your assistance, and with your continuing assistance we will make further progress in achieving "a thriving natural ecological balance on the public lands."

Sincerely,



Maitland Sharpe
Assistant Director,
Renewable Resources and
Planning

Same Ltr sent to: Dawn Lappin, Reno, NV; Robin Lohnes