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WHOA!

WILD HORSE ORGANIZED ASSISTANCE

INC.

A Foundation for the Welfare of
Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros

May 2, 1975

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The Honorable Curt Berklund, Director,
Bureau of Land Management,
Department of the Interior,
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Mr. Berklund:

Preparations for a gathering of wild horses deemed by ranchers and Bureau of Land Management to be in excess of the carrying capacity of the range in the area of Tonopah, Nevada, have been under way for some time. It is claimed there are 2,000 ~~freeroaming~~ horses there, an undetermined number of which could well be due to privately owned animals released in trespass for the specific purpose of producing offspring to provide a marketable commodity, horse flesh, that has cost an operator nothing to raise. An affidavit of a rancher claiming ownership of 800 in Stone Cabin Valley and Tonopah Bombing Range is in our files. The claimant has dropped his claim.

Field trips to the area involved indicate serious overgrazing, too much actually to have been caused by the horses only, and in the brief period of time since the Act of 1971 has been in effect. The major responsibility for forage depletion would appear to be consistent over-use by domestic livestock. We do not oppose a reduction of 400 horses if indeed there are 2,000 there, but we must insist that for the sake of the recovery of the public land resource there also be a substantial reduction in domestic livestock use, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE DOMESTIC LIVESTOCK WHICH HAS BEEN ON THE RANGE IN TRESPASS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS.

This organization has been kept fully informed by the Bureau of Land Management and we have made arrangements to have the entire operation filmed by a professional photographer to insure humane treatment and selective disposition. We have also screened and confirmed, thus far, 172 recipients for excess horses in the Stone Cabin Valley operation . . . people who are looking forward to providing a good home for one from the wild bunch.

Public Law 92-195 provides for a management and control program. It is the first time in history that an opportunity has been afforded for a humane and selective program involving these animals. Before enactment of that law, for decades, wild horses and burros were at the mercy of controls exercised by individuals . . . commercial mustangers whose lack of concern for humane treatment and selective removal is well documented in numerous bloody chapters that are a disgrace to our country; and by ranchers whose sole concern was to rid the ranges of these animals that might interfere with their monopolistic use for their own profit producing pursuits. Between these two control operations, wild horses



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faced annihilation. As recently as February, 1973, in Idaho a rancher-sponsored control of wild horses resulted in a brutal and horror-filled roundup and massacre beyond human comprehension that removed or killed every living horse in the entire area. The public is still reeling from the shock of it. And . . . as recently as March of this year, following the infamous decision in New Mexico when the three-judge federal panel declared Public Law 92-195 to be unconstitutional, when a cattle rancher, according to a signed affidavit, endeavored to hire gunmen to shoot eight hundred; and when another in Idaho shot two stallions . . . both incidents during the short interim period when Public Law 92-195 was not in effect.

While WHOA! does not give its blanket endorsement to reductions that could mushroom into a wholesale clearance program, it does not oppose well-planned, supervised, humane, selective reductions in areas where it is shown the public land resource is endangered, and where it is proved there is an excessive number of free-roaming horses, provided commensurate reductions are made in other uses, particularly the grazing of domestic livestock.

Very sincerely yours,

Velma B. Johnston (Mrs. Charles C.)
Chairman - Board of Trustees