

11-14-03

Reference: Nov. 2003, Wild Horse Commission Meeting

Bob Abbey
1340 Financial Blvd.
Reno, NV 89502-7147

Mr. Abbey,

In regards to the fairly acrimonious meeting of November 14, 2003, Nevada Wild Horse Commission, there are a few points that remain to be cleared. As stated at the meeting, our focus is, as always, the horses. The concerns are that a special interest group, of which I am a former Board member and still a member, is dictating how a particular HMA is managed. Julie Gleason and I know well how much work NWHHA provides to the BLM, especially the Las Vegas Field Office. For over five years I have donated much of my time to the promotion and care of the wild horses in Southern Nevada as has Julie, from compliance inspections, putting on clinics, caring for injured and orphaned horses and burros, and public outreach. So, we resent being told that we have no business discussing the issue of the relationship between BLM and NWHHA. Our concern is firstly that holding these horses in these conditions is not in the best interests of the horses at this time. I stated in the meeting that as an NWHHA Board member I reluctantly agreed to holding these animals until spring. Spring came and went and there was still no forage available to these animals, so NWHHA pressured the Las Vegas Field Office and yourself to agree to holding these horses for a prolonged period. NWHHA was given a deadline of Oct. 1, 2003 in which the animals were to be released, placed in sanctuary, or adopted. When that time came around and your BLM field specialists said there was still not adequate forage, NWHHA once again pressured to keep these animals longer. The horses have not received the care dictated by the agreement between NWHHA and BLM, from medical care (i.e. the palomino mare), to hoof care (two trimmings in 15 months), fly control (none visible until Julie and I questioned it in August at which time several 'wild' horses were required to wear eye masks, provided by BLM, not NWHHA), to cleanliness of the pens (as of Oct. 6, the debris well over the first rung of the pens). This does not give confidence that conditions will improve now that the mares are in a separate facility. There are photos for all of the above cited examples. The point of bringing up the agreement between NWHHA and BLM was for someone to claim responsibility for these horses and for appropriate action to be taken, for the health of the horses and the Red Rock HMA.

In regards to documents that were presented at the meeting, an apparently unsent letter from Mark Morse to Billie Young and the FOIA request to WHOA. These documents were passed around at a recent NWHHA Board meeting by Billie Young herself and in turn passed on to us by a Board member. So, that would beg additional questions about the relationship of NWHHA and the Las Vegas Field Office and how an unsent letter is released to the public and a FOIA reaches the public before it reaches its intended recipient, in this case Dawn Lappen of WHOA?

Respectfully,

Christine Brehm
Commissioner
Nevada Wild Horse Commission
cc: John Jamrog
Linda Cardenas
Mark Morse
Susie Stokke
Dean Bolstad

12-1-03



United States Department of the Interior



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In Reply Refer To:
4720 (NV-930)

RED ROCK

Christine Brehm, Commissioner
Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
7089 Burcot #86
Las Vegas, Nevada 89156

DEC 01 2003

Dear Ms. Brehm:

Your recent letter (copy enclosed) reaffirms your abiding concern for the health and welfare of Nevada's wild horses and the rangelands on which they depend.

I also recognize and appreciate the deep concern that you and Commissioner Gleason have individually expressed so articulately on previous occasions about the wild horses held at Oliver Ranch since July 2002. Following our previous conversations, I directed the Las Vegas Field Office to address those issues requiring immediate resolution and shared that I would be making a decision regarding the disposition of the Oliver Ranch horses in the near future. At the Commission meeting, I again laid out the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) plans to make a decision on the disposition of the Oliver Ranch horses and the Red Rock Herd Management Area (HMA). Having done that, to belabor the point seems contrary to the Commission's goal of reducing the level of conflict and improving communication and cooperation. Regardless, I am pleased to have the opportunity to again clarify my approach and intentions regarding this matter.

As I shared at the Commission meeting on November 14, 2003, we had all hoped that on-the-ground conditions would improve to the extent that the animals could be returned to the Red Rock HMA long before now. Now, more than a year later, nature's grip on this harsh Mojave Desert environment appears to be frustrating those efforts.

From my perspective, it is a testimony to the National Wild Horse Association's (NWHHA) love for and commitment to these animals, that they have provided the hay, feeding, and care at little cost to BLM for much of this time. Throughout the entire time, NWHHA volunteers have been at Oliver Ranch day in and day out feeding the animals and assuring their care. Because Oliver Ranch is not designed for long-term holding, the facilities are not in place to allow for optimum sanitation and health care for these animals, particularly on a long-term basis. As a result, I recognize that some problems with sanitation, hoof trimming, and health care have occurred over the short-term. The NWHHA and BLM have already taken steps to correct these situations and I am fully confident that for the most part, the care the animals have received is a true testament to the American spirit of volunteerism. I feel strongly that NWHHA and the entire BLM Las Vegas staff are to be commended for the work they have done to date.

Largely due to recent rains, I have elected to reassess range conditions within the Red Rock HMA prior to making a final decision as to the disposition of these animals. The range reassessment is scheduled for the first week of December. The purpose of the assessment is to determine whether or not sufficient rain has fallen during September to the present to allow the return of at least some of the Oliver Ranch wild horses to the range. Based on the assessment's findings, I will then decide whether or not to continue holding at least some horses at Oliver Ranch, offer them for adoption through the Adopt-A-Horse Program, or place them in an approved long-term holding facility.

In reaching my final decision, I intend to fully weigh the input I have received from a variety of individuals and groups about this issue. I realize that there will likely be some who will agree with that decision and others who will disagree with the decision. Regrettably, there are times when BLM and others may differ about ways to reach mutual goals. I am confident, however, that an area of mutual agreement is the health of the animals (both on and off the range) and the health of the range.

BLM remains committed to continuing to work with all those interested in the management of Red Rock wild horses. One of BLM's key priorities for 2004 is to establish an appropriate management level (AML) of wild horses for the HMA and to implement the management actions necessary to ensure a thriving ecological balance of animals now and into the future. Because of the harsh desert environment, innovative measures may be necessary to manage these animals over the long-term. While BLM intended to accomplish this work in 2003, we elected to delay finalizing an AML for the Red Rock HMA in response to the preponderance of public input asking us to complete additional analysis of all the relevant data. I encourage you to get involved as BLM continues to work toward establishing the AML in 2004.

I hope the above information is helpful to you and serves to clarify my intent and position relative to the Oliver Ranch wild horses. I want to assure you that I have heard your concerns, and that I will weigh those carefully as I reach a final decision.

Sincerely,

ROBERT V. ABBEY

Robert V. Abbey
State Director, Nevada

1 Enclosure

1. Letter, rec'd 11/24/03 (1 p)

cc:

Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses ✓
Field Manager, Las Vegas

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RED ROCK HORSES ←



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