



## NATIONAL HORSE & BURRO RANGELAND MANAGEMENT COALITION

*Advocating for commonsense, ecologically-sound approaches to managing horses and burros  
to promote healthy wildlife and rangelands for future generations*

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DATE: 13 July 2016

TO: The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker  
H-232, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Majority Leader  
H-107, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
H-204, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: **Oppose Amendment 112 to H.R.5538 (#130 on House Report 114-683)** –  
Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations  
Act, 2017 – Regarding Mare Sterilization Research by the Bureau of Land  
Management

FROM: National Horse & Burro Rangeland Management Coalition  
Keith Norris, Chair, [keith.norris@wildlife.org](mailto:keith.norris@wildlife.org), 301-897-9770 x309

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Pelosi:

The National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition encourages you to oppose Amendment 112 to H.R.5538. The Coalition strongly opposes this amendment because it will disrupt the Bureau of Land Management's efforts to comply with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, as amended, by preventing BLM's proposed Mare Sterilization Research study at the Wild Horse Corral Facility in Hines, Oregon and subsequent implementation of these potentially viable population growth control efforts on the range.

The population of wild horses and burros on federal lands has now exceeded 67,000 individuals; more than two and a half times greater than the BLM's maximum Appropriate Management Level of 26,715. These "excess animals" result in significant negative impacts to the long-term health of our rangeland ecosystems, thereby damaging the valuable biological and socio-economic processes our rangelands support. Under the 1971 Act, BLM must remove or destroy excess animals—or use other options such as sterilization—in order to "preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance" and multiple-use relationship in that area.

However, a variety of conflicting congressional appropriation riders and directives dating back to 1988 have severely limited BLM's ability to manage excess animals and therefore comply with the 1971 Act. As a result of these restrictions, BLM has relied heavily on the costly practice of removing excess horses from the range and housing them in long-term holding facilities, where

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American Farm Bureau Federation • American Sheep Industry Association • Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Masters of Foxhounds Association • Mule Deer Foundation • National Association of Conservation Districts  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association • National Rifle Association • National Wildlife Refuge Association  
Public Lands Council • Public Lands Foundation • Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation • Safari Club International  
Society for Range Management • The Wildlife Society • Wild Sheep Foundation



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over 45,000 animals now reside. If BLM's limited use of management options continues, on-range horse and burro populations will double in less than 5 years and off-range holding costs will continue to negatively impact the type of important on-range management efforts originally envisioned by the 1971 Act.

The Department of the Interior has identified the need for BLM to research and test horse and burro population-control methods, including surgical sterilization. The proposed sterilization study represents a collaborative effort to humanely and effectively address the challenging issue of horse and burro overpopulation on federal land. Rather than further limit BLM's management options, the House of Representatives should follow the House Appropriation Committee's recommendation and direct BLM to continue to study and test the feasibility of implementing a scientifically sound and humane sterilization program in partnership with universities and nonprofit organizations.

Similarly, the Coalition recognizes sterilization of free-roaming horses and burros as a potentially viable management activity authorized under the 1971 Act; but only if the safety and population-level effectiveness of sterilization can be demonstrated through adequate scientific evaluation, and if it is used in conjunction with direct and immediate removal of horses and burros from the range. Withholding funding from important collaborative sterilization research studies, like those at the Wild Horse Corral Facility, ignore the realities of the situation in that continuing our current management practices will have a devastating effect on the long-term health of our rangelands and the multiple-uses they support—which includes wild horse and burro well-being.

While sterilization may ultimately prove helpful to supporting rangeland health, native wildlife, and healthy horse populations as consistent with the Act, it is only a small component of the greater, all-inclusive, and pro-active management approach we need to address wild horse and burro overpopulation. As a result, we encourage **Congress to oppose Amendment 112** and allow for BLM to proceed with swift implementation and application of these studies, but also stress the dire need for Congress to provide BLM with the proper resources and authority to remove horses and burros from the range at a rate substantial enough to produce immediate and impactful results that protect our important natural resources and Western heritage.

Sincerely,

Keith Norris, AWB®  
Coalition Chair

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

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Masters of Foxhounds Association • Mule Deer Foundation • National Association of Conservation Districts  
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