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Horse and Burro Coalition Responds to BLM Horse and Burro Policy Changes

Washington, DC—Feb 4, 2013—The National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition commends the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the recent release of four instructional memoranda (IMs) announced February 1st to ensure the humane treatment of animals and greater transparency during horse gathers.

The need for horse and burro gathers on the western range is paramount to safeguarding healthy rangeland ecosystems—protecting native fish, wildlife, plants and a working lands way of life—and to achieving appropriate management levels (AMLs) for horses and burros. Ensuring the humane treatment of horses and burros, while using sound and effective scientific management tools to address overpopulation, is critical to the long-term health of the range and horses.

As BLM moves forward with IM implementation, the Coalition recommends additional research and emphasis on the environmental and rangeland impacts of the outlined practices. These include range and wildlife impacts, as well as water rights and water availability for native fish, wildlife, and plants. Furthermore, the ability for personnel to adhere to certain practices in remote gather locations—due to the constraints associated with remote work—may pose a concern, potentially warranting further examination and adaption of the IMs.

The Coalition supports BLM's IMs on increasing transparency during gathers. These actions will help to educate the public about the humane process of gathering horses and burros, as well as the negative impacts of overpopulation on rangeland health.

"We are pleased to see the BLM addressing the ongoing issue of horse and burro overpopulation," said National Association of Conservation Districts President Earl Garber. "These recommendations will ensure the humane treatment of animals and greater transparency during gathers that are necessary for the protection of rangeland health."

"It is encouraging to see the agency's attempt to address this ongoing issue," stated Society for Range Management President Wally Butler. "We urge the BLM and other agencies to take the next step in addressing the larger issue of management and the comprehensive ecosystem health as impacted by the nation's wild horse and burro population."

"Safari Club International knows the cooperative development of policies that benefit not only the sound management of wild horses and burros, but of all the wildlife inhabiting the western range, including game species," said Safari Club International President John Whipple. "We have defended the Bureau in numerous lawsuits challenging gathers, and we will do so going forward to ensure western wildlife habitats are appropriately managed for future generations."

The Coalition looks forward to working with the BLM on addressing additional concerns related to horses and burros, including fertility control, scientific management practices, and ensuring healthy rangelands.

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The **National Horse & Burro Rangeland Management Coalition** is a diverse partnership of 12 wildlife conservation and sportsmen organizations, industry partners, and professional natural-resource scientific societies working together to identify proactive and comprehensive solutions to increase effective management of horse and burro populations and mitigate the adverse impacts to healthy native fish, wildlife, and plants and the ecosystems on which they depend.

The organizations include American Farm Bureau Federation, Masters of Foxhound Association, 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, and The Wildlife Society. For additional information regarding the Coalition, please contact us at horseandrange@gmail.com.