



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*

Major Policies Governing BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program

Policy	Date	Relevant Provisions
Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (Public Law 92–195)	Dec. 15, 1971	Declares that “wild free-roaming horses and burros are living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West.” Authorizes and directs the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture “to protect and manage wild horses and burros as components of the public lands ” that shall be managed in a “ manner that is designed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance. ” Authorizes the Secretaries, in areas found to be overpopulated, to order old, sick, or lame animals to be destroyed in the most humane manner possible and to capture or remove wild horses and burros for private maintenance under humane conditions and care. Limits range of wild horses and burros to areas of public lands where they existed in 1971.
Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94–579)	Oct. 21, 1976	Directs the Secretary of the Interior to manage BLM lands under principles of “ multiple use and sustained yield. ” Authorizes the Secretaries to contract for the use of helicopters and motor vehicles in administering the 1971 Act.
Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (Public Law 95–514)	Oct. 25, 1978	Directs the Secretaries to “maintain a current inventory of wild horses and burros on given areas of public lands [Herd Management Areas]” to determine “whether and where overpopulation exists.” Directs the Secretaries to “determine appropriate management levels [AML] ...and determine whether appropriate management levels should be achieved by <i>removal</i> or <i>destruction</i> of excess animals or through other options (such as <i>sterilization</i> or natural controls on population levels).” Directs the Secretaries to destroy “additional excess wild free-roaming horses and burros for which an adoption demand by qualified individuals does not exist...in the most humane and cost efficient manner possible.” Authorizes the Secretaries, to transfer title of adopted wild horses and burros to individuals that have provided humane conditions, treatment, and care for the animal for a period of one year.
BLM's Burford Policy	1982	BLM euthanizes 47 excess animals between 1981 & 1982. After a large public outcry, BLM Director Robert Burford places a ban on the destruction of healthy horses.
Congress Directs BLM to Triple Removals	Oct. 12, 1984	Congress triples wild horse and burro program funding (PL 98–473) and directs BLM to triple removals. BLM removes 18,959 horses in 1985 after removing 6,084 horses in 1984; on-range populations drop from 60,356 in Mar. 1984 to 44,763 by Mar. 1986.
Fee-waiver adoptions	1987–1988	BLM considers a policy change that would allow destruction of surplus wild horses and burros 90 days after they are put up for adoption, but ultimately decides to waive adoption fees for two years. The number of adoptions increases from 7,600 in 1986 to 12,776 in 1987 and 10,646 in 1988 before dropping back down to 5,220 in 1989.
Interior Appropriations Rider	1988–2004	Congress inserts an Interior Appropriations Rider stating that “appropriations herein made shall not be available for the destruction of healthy, unadopted, wild horses and burros in the care of the Bureau or its contractors.”
Animal Protection Institute of America (APIA) Appeals to IBLA (109 IBLA 112)	1989–1990	Several gathers are halted pending a legal challenge from APIA. The Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) concludes that under the 1971 Act, removals must be “properly predicated on a...determination that removal is necessary to...prevent a deterioration of the range.” IBLA then interprets AML as “synonymous with restoring the range to a thriving natural ecological balance.” Thus, the number of “excess” animals the Secretary is authorized to remove is that which prevents deterioration of the range— <i>taking into account multiple-use</i> —or that which exceeds a properly established AML.
California Desert Protection Act of 1994 (Public Law 103–433)	Oct. 31, 1994	Transfers approximately 3,500,000 acres of land formerly administered by BLM to the National Park Service (NPS), which is not governed by the 1971 Act. NPS views horses and burros as feral animals and therefore removes them from Mojave National Preserve and Death Valley National Park to preserve native desert species.

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 Association of Counties • National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
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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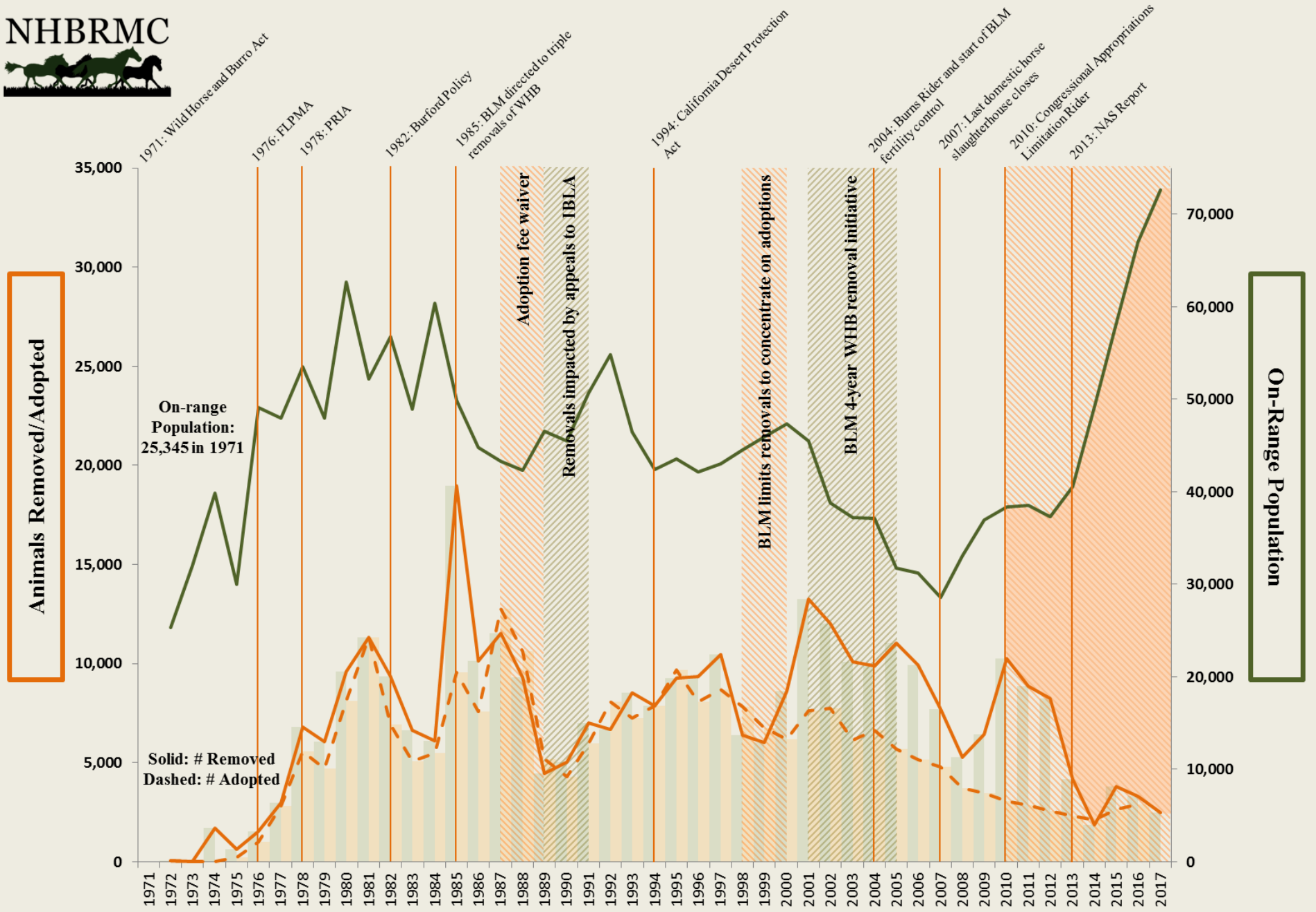
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BLM limits removals to concentrate on adoptions	1998–1999	BLM limits removals to concentrate on adoptions in an attempt to move some of the animals out of long-term holding. Adoptions, however, continue to decline while on-range populations increase.
4 Year Wild Horse and Burro Removal Initiative	2001–2004	BLM attempts to reduce expanding wild horse and burro populations that are posing serious environmental risks due to rangeland deterioration. Between 2001 and 2004, BLM removes over 45,000 wild horses and burros from public lands; the on-range population drops, but the off-range population swells to over 27,000 by 2006.
BLM begins Fertility Control Program	2004–Present	In collaboration with Humane Society of the United States, BLM continues to support the development and implementation of fertility control methods for wild horses. However, significant reductions in the rate of population increase have not yet been apparent and fertility control remains difficult to administer on a population level.
Fiscal Year 2005 Omnibus Appropriations Act (Public Law 108–447)	Dec. 8, 2004	Directs the sale, without limitation, of excess wild horses and burros, or their remains, if “the excess animal is more than 10 years of age; or the excess animal has been offered unsuccessfully for adoption at least 3 times.” Sale of excess animals shall continue until “all excess animals offered for sale are sold; or the appropriate management level...is attained.” Also provides that wild horses and burros, or their remains, once sold, are no longer wild horses and burros for purposes of the 1971 Act; thereby exempting animals sold under this provision from the general prohibition against processing their remains into commercial products.
BLM Establishes Limitations on Sale of Wild Horses and Burros	2005–Present	Despite their legal requirement to sell excess wild horses and burros without limitation, BLM implements internal controls intended to prevent slaughter of sold animals. As part of the sale of any wild horse or burro, buyers must agree not to knowingly sell or transfer ownership of the animals to persons or organizations that intend to resell, trade, or give away animals for processing into commercial products.
Last Domestic Horse Slaughterhouse Closes	Fall 2007	With this outlet removed, more domestic horses are shipped to Canada or Mexico for processing, abandoned, or made available to the public— causing direct competition with wild horse/burro adoptions and sales. The number of domestic horses killed in slaughterhouses from 2000 to 2006 ranged from about 40,000 to 100,000 annually.
Interior Appropriations Act Rider	2010–Present	Congress inserts language into the text of Interior Appropriations prohibiting “the destruction of healthy, unadopted, wild horses and burros in the care of the Bureau or its contractors or for the sale of wild horses and burros that results in their destruction for processing into commercial products”
The National Academy of Sciences’ Review of BLM Wild Horse and Burro Management Program	2013	Report finds that “continuation of ‘business as usual’ practices will be expensive and unproductive for BLM. Because compelling evidence exists that there are more horses on public rangelands than reported at the national level and that horse population growth rates are high, unmanaged populations would probably double in about 4 years. If populations were not actively managed for even a short time, the abundance of horses on public rangelands would increase until animals became food-limited. Food-limited horse populations would affect forage and water resources for all other animals on shared rangelands and potentially conflict with the multiple-use policy of public rangelands and the legislative mandate to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance.”
BLM Mare Sterilization Research	September 2016	BLM initiates efforts to comply with the 1971 Act by allowing for implementation of a proposed Mare Sterilization Research study. Research, however, is halted in the wake of extensive public opposition and three separate lawsuits.
National Wild Horse & Burro Advisory Board Recommendation	September 2016	“BLM should follow stipulations of the [1971 Act, as amended,] by offering all suitable animals in long and short term holding deemed unadoptable for sale without limitation or humane euthanasia. Those animals deemed unsuitable for sale should then be destroyed in the most humane manner possible.”

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Rapid population growth resulting from a saturated adoption market, low removal rates, and limited management options



DATA SOURCED FROM BLM