



RESOLUTION 2023-03-07

FEDERAL MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT OF WILD HORSE AND BURRO POPULATIONS

WHEREAS, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) represents the states, provinces, and territories of the United States and Canada, which are inhabited by over 4,500 wildlife species; and

WHEREAS, a mission of the Association is to advance collaborative, proactive, science-based fish and wildlife conservation and management across North America; and

WHEREAS, the conservation of wildlife resources is entrusted primarily to the state, provincial, and territorial fish and wildlife agencies, and the Association; and

WHEREAS, the States share management authority for species of wildlife listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and

WHEREAS, the Association's state membership encompasses the entirety of the nation's range for wild horses and burros, including Herd Management Areas (HMAs) that are spread across 32.6 million acres of 10 Western States; and

WHEREAS, the Directors of said agencies recognize the impacts that overpopulation of free-ranging wild horses and burros have on wildlife and habitats across the States; and

WHEREAS, wild horses and burros are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) under the Wild and Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (Act), as amended; and

WHEREAS, the Act requires that the BLM and USFS establish HMAs with appropriate management levels (AMLs), implement effective monitoring protocols that ensure a thriving ecological balance, remove wild horses and burros to maintain this balance, and, upon request, to remove wild horses and burros that stray onto private lands; and

WHEREAS, State fish and wildlife agencies continue to be extremely concerned about excess horses and burros within established herd areas and HMAs, as well as expansion outside of these areas, as populations exceed AMLs across the West and continue to expand at levels unsustainable for maintaining a thriving ecological balance, devastating vital fish and wildlife habitats and, in many cases, undermining states' ESA-related conservation efforts; and

WHEREAS, Federal agencies have increasingly been unable, under existing appropriations and current management practices, to adequately address wild horse and burro populations that exceed AMLs, or to effectively remove unauthorized, unbranded and unclaimed free roaming horses and burros, exacerbating the impacts to wildlife and habitats;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies requests that the responsible committees of Congress appropriate full and consistent funding levels for wild horse and burro management

programs at the appropriate ratio, to enable the BLM and USFS to effectively manage wild horses and burros as intended by the Act, without diversion of funds for management of fish and wildlife resources; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association requests that the BLM and USFS utilize all measures available within their authorities to identify clear thresholds for action, and establish clearly-defined monitoring and response protocols to maintain wild horse and burro populations at or below established AMLs; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that across the United States, the Association requests that the BLM and USFS utilize all measures as authorized by the Act to remove wild horses and burros that exceed established AMLs, and remove animals that exist outside of HMAs, as soon as practicable; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in light of the devastating impacts of wild horse and burro populations and the ongoing drought in the West, the Association requests that BLM and USFS reevaluate established AMLs and reduce AMLs across the West; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association urges that BLM and USFS specifically utilize all measures available within rule or regulation to remove unauthorized, unbranded, and unclaimed free-roaming horses and burros from the landscape.

Resolution submitted by the Federal Public Lands Committee.

Adopted by the Association on September 27, 2023 in Calgary, Alberta.