

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources

Washington, DC 20515

December 10, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Senators Murkowski and Udall, and Representatives McCollum and Joyce:

We write to thank you for your leadership in calling attention to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Wild Horse and Burro program, and to ensure that the final conference agreement protects wild horses and burros in a manner consistent with Wild-Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act, a law unanimously enacted by Congress nearly a half century ago.

Both the House and Senate versions of the Interior-Environment appropriations bill for fiscal year (FY) 2020 include funding for an untested pilot project that calls for a dramatic increase in round-ups and removals. The House bill provides \$6 million in additional funding and the Senate bill includes \$35 million – with each including report language that calls for a total removal of 130,000 horses over 10 years. That plan has never been presented for consideration in the authorizing committees of jurisdiction, would triple the number of horses and burros in holding, and could cost taxpayers billions.

We are also concerned that the House and Senate report language opens the door to surgical sterilization procedures. The language attempts to limit population growth strategies to “proven, safe, and humane” methods; however, the BLM insists that the surgical sterilization procedure, which it plans to conduct on wild mares, meets that standard despite opposition to this procedure by many stakeholders, including veterinarians. Since neither bill includes provisions restricting the use of new money on this procedure, and since BLM has repeatedly shown its commitment to implementing it, nothing would prevent the agency from using funding to carry out this procedure on a mass scale.


These are just some of the problems and questions raised by the new plan which, if approved, could result in the most sweeping changes to the wild horse and burro program since its inception nearly 50 years ago. Fundamental changes to existing law should not be done in spending bills without hearings, testimony, evidence, and due consideration by the authorizing committees tasked with these responsibilities.

To ensure that no irreparable harm comes to wild horses, and that Congress has time to conduct a full inquiry into the consequences of the plan before fully funding it, we urge conferees to do the following:

- Limit new funding to the \$6 million contained in the House bill;
- Clarify report language so new funding can be used solely on implementing the Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) fertility control vaccine; and
- Clarify report language to ensure it prohibits use of any appropriated funds to conduct surgical sterilization procedures.

We share the Appropriations Committees' interest in finding genuine solutions to BLM's management of wild horses and burros and stand ready to work with you to explore and pursue all humane, scientific, and economic solutions that protect these animals and meet the expectations of the American public. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources



Debra Haaland
Chair
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests,
and Public Lands



David Schweikert
Member of Congress



Grace Napolitano
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko
Member of Congress



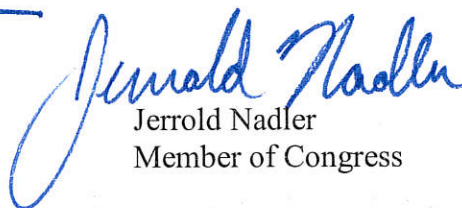
Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
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Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
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