

PAUL A. GOSAR, D.D.S.
FOURTH DISTRICT, ARIZONA

504 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-2315

122 N. CORTEZ STREET, SUITE #104
PRESCOTT, AZ 86301
(928) 445-1683

6499 SOUTH KINGS RANCH ROAD, SUITE 4
GOLD CANYON, AZ 85118
(480) 882-2697

220 N. 4TH STREET
KINGMAN, AZ 86401
(928) 445-1683

ONE CITY PLAZA, SUITE #161
YUMA, AZ 85364
(480) 882-2697

WWW.GOSAR.HOUSE.GOV



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0301

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March 22, 2016

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
B-308 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you begin work on the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, I ask that you include language that allows federal agencies to partner with states impacted by the overpopulation of wild burros to create a more effective management approach that allows for compliance with the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (Act).

On November 4, 2015, 20 bicameral members of Congress wrote to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Director Neil Kornze expressing significant concerns about management strategies for wild horse and burro populations. The letter pointed out that "almost half of the 100,000 horses under the purview of the BLM are located in holding facilities off the range, and adoptions have fallen almost 70 percent in the last ten years." The BLM estimates a lifetime cost of \$50,000 to taxpayers for each animal that is not adopted and remains in long-term holding. The BLM also estimates that wild horse and burro populations have grown by nearly 20 percent in the last year.

The November 2015 letter also specifically referenced burro populations in Arizona that have soared to more than nine times the appropriate management level (AML). Even more troubling, wild burros are creating significant threats to public safety. For example, in a three year period in Bullhead City, there have been 32 accidents involving burros and vehicles. In the Phoenix area during that same timeframe, there have been 121 burro incidents and the BLM documented 55 burros that were killed on roadways. Burros are also negatively impacting other wildlife and natural resources.

These concerns are not limited to these two cities though as I have also heard from constituents in Lake Havasu City, Yuma and Oatman about challenges combating invasive burro populations. States in the West are stepping up to the plate and asking to be allowed to pool state agency

resources to assist with combating these challenges. In Arizona, these agency stakeholders have joined together to form the Arizona Partnership and put forth a program proposal. Under this well thought-out plan, "The Arizona BLM office will be the lead agency, and will convene meetings with the partner agencies to assess and evaluate Arizona burro populations, prioritize areas of the state for burro gathers based on negative impacts to wildlife and habitats, and to address public safety concerns. Meetings with all partners will be conducted as necessary to accomplish the program, and additional logistical/planning meetings may occur with select partners to plan for specific projects." The proposal also allows for gathering, holding, marketing, adoptions and incremental approaches.

Given the track record and failure of the federal government to manage these populations, it is clear that states should be utilized as partners to assist with managing these invasive species. Accordingly, I ask that you include language that directs federal land management agencies to partner with states to actively manage wild burro populations.

I thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Gosar
Member of Congress