

President Barack Obama , Vice President Joe Biden

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20500

comments: 202-456-1111 or 202-456-9000

switchboard: 202-456-1414; fax: 202-456-2461

contact forms: www.whitehouse.gov/contact/, www.whitehouse.gov/ContactUs/

Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington DC 20240

email: feedback@ios.doi.gov, Secretary_of_the_Interior@ios.doi.gov

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

1849 C Street NW, Rm. 5665

Washington DC 20240

ph: 202-208-3801; fax: 202-208-5242

Director Bob Abbey: Director@blm.gov, Robert_Abbey@blm.gov

ph: 202-208-3801, 866-468-7826; fax: 202-208-5242

Acting Deputy Director Mike Pool: Mike_Pool@blm.gov

Chief of Staff Janet Lin: janet_lin@blm.gov

House Committee on Natural Resources

1324 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

ph: 202-225-6065; fax: 202-225-1931

Nick J. Rahall, II, West Virginia, Chairman, contact form:

www.rahall.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=9§iontree=9

Doc Hastings, Washington, Ranking Republican Member contact form:

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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Senators

The U.S. Senate

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President Obama, Vice President Biden, Secretary Salazar, Bureau of Land Management, Members of Congress:

On 9/1/09, the Bureau of Land Management activated a roundup of Pryor Mountain Wild Horses. Helicopters corralled the famous horse Cloud (documented on PBS Nature series) and his band from their mountaintop home through desert foothills to holding pens.

I'm relieved BLM ended the operation after just six days, but it never should have occurred in the first place.

The raid on Cloud's Herd epitomizes years of mismanagement. To appease cattle ranchers and other private interests, BLM captures more animals than it can adopt out. With 33,000 horses already in federal compounds, surplus American horses commonly go from auction to kill floor.

A recent BLM press release claims to have freed "most of the 146 horses gathered," including Cloud and his herd. I respectfully demand freedom for Conquistador, Grumpy and other horses older than 10 — who are not adoptable. Let them live and die in their natural range.

I urge BLM to decrease horses slated for removal to just 20 adoptable horses from ages one to two. Ultimately, BLM should pursue non-invasive control methods — such as range expansion in conjunction with the National Park Service and intensified contraception programs. A cap on permits to hunt mountain lions would let natural predation curb mustang numbers. In addition, landowners who permit wild horses on their property ought to receive tax incentives.

I ask the President, Vice President and Congress to advocate reinstatement of these magnificent creatures on public rangelands. Your support of the Restoring Our American Mustangs (ROAM) bill S.B. 1579 can help renew protections Congress enacted in the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burro Act of 1971. ROAM's House version, H.R. 1018, has already passed. I hope the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee follows suit with swift approval of S.B. 1579.

Please return Cloud's entire herd to the wild, so that senior horses are not sold to kill-buyers. Slaughter is excruciating for these excitable animals. On Mexican kill floors, a "puntilla knife" is used to sever the spinal cord — merely paralyzing the horse as workers slit his throat. The captive bolt pistols used in Canada often don't work on such long-necked animals, and leave them thrashing in pain.

Please listen to public sentiment and let wild free-roaming horses and burros live as testament to the "pioneer spirit of the West."

Thank you,