

Statement on @JoeBiden's Bureau of Land Management Postponing Onaqui Wild Horse Roundup & Court's Denial of Injunction

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, July 13, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- today, [Animal Wellness Action](#) (AWA) and the [Center for a Humane Economy](#) (CHE) issued the following statement from AWA executive director Marty Irby and CHE director of campaigns Scott Beckstead, in response to the federal Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) [postponement](#) of the scheduled roundup of the iconic Onaqui wild horses located on federal lands in Utah:



A billboard truck with short film about the Onaqui wild horses has circled the White House for days with a plea for Biden to cancel the roundup | Photo: Marty Irby

“While the postponement by the BLM gives the American people additional time to press for a permanent cancellation of this unwarranted roundup, we are mindful that the rejection by the D.C. District Court of the injunction sought by Friends of Animals clears the way for the agency to carry out its inhumane and wasteful plans to obliterate the herd. Likewise, we are aware that given the BLM's history of deception and lack of transparency, it could start chasing and harassing the Onaqui horses with little or no advance notice.

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We continue the call for President Biden to permanently cancel the Onaqui roundup.”

Marty Irby and Scott Beckstead

“It was 50 years ago that the Congress passed a federal law to protect wild horses and burros. It is time for the BLM to honor the mission and purpose of the law – to recognize

that wild horses and burros have a rightful place on our federal lands, and they are part of our American heritage. We continue the call for President Biden to permanently cancel the Onaqui roundup.”

Background:

Descended from horses used by pioneers and native tribes in the late 1800's, the Onaqui horses are known for their robust beauty and their ability to thrive in the harsh environment of the Great Basin Desert of western Utah. They are a favorite among wild horse photographers and enthusiasts and are believed to be the most popular and photographed wild herd in the country. Tourists from all over the country, and even the world, travel to Utah to view and photograph their favorite animals, including stallions with names like Charger, Goliath, Buck, Moondrinker, with glimpses of the herd's elder statesman, Gandalf (also known as "Old Man" by some), being the most coveted prize.

But the Onaqui horses are facing a grim future. The BLM is planning to use helicopters to chase, trap, and remove most of them from their home range on Utah's Great Basin Desert. Helicopter roundups of wild horses are notorious for their cruelty and the suffering they inflict on the animals. Horses will be chased for miles in the summer heat to the point of utter exhaustion, and some will sustain injuries or even be killed. There are new foals and elderly horses in the herd who will be in jeopardy of being left behind, wounded, or even killed during the terror, chaos, and confusion of the stampede into the traps. From there the horses will lose the two things that mean the most to them – their families and their freedom. They will be shipped by truck to BLM corrals where they will languish in barren feedlot conditions, awaiting an uncertain future. After being sorted and separated, the BLM will offer the animals for adoption, a process that poses a grave threat to their lives, as it has been recently reported that the BLM's wild horse and burro adoption program is sending horses to their deaths in foreign slaughter plants.



Left to right: Katherine Heigl, Marty Irby



Speakers at the event included (left to right): Jen Rogers, Red Birds Trust; Ashley Avis, director of Disney's Black Beauty film; Katherine Heigl, Scott Beckstead with the Center for a Humane Economy; Marty Irby with Animal Wellness Action; and Eric Molva

The BLM claims there is insufficient forage for the horses on their HMA, yet the agency has allocated wild horses only between 9 and 15 percent of the resources on public lands, while livestock are allocated between 85 and 91 percent. Livestock greatly outnumber the horses currently on the HMA, yet the agency has announced no plans to reduce or eliminate private grazing, and continues to follow the direction of a diabolical plan misleadingly deemed the “Path Forward,” that calls for the roundup and eradication of tens of thousands of wild horses and burros on federal lands at a cost of up to \$5 billion to the American tax-payer, according to the most recent Acting Director of the BLM.

The roundups are also planned for tens of thousands of wild horse and burro herds across the western United States, as the BLM heeds the wishes of the livestock industry and scrambles to remove as many wild equines as possible. Unless that is, they are stopped.

In April, a coalition of more than 70 groups sent a letter to Secretary Haaland calling for a freeze on grazing permits and an elimination of livestock grazing on all wild horse and burro Herd Management Areas. There has been no response from Haaland despite the media contacting the Secretary’s Office and the White House, who declined to comment.

The lack of response from the Biden Administration, combined with Haaland’s testimony before the House Appropriations Committee on April 20th that the Dept. of Interior is “in agreement with the plan of the previous Administration,” prompted a second letter in May directly to the President himself. Signed by more than 90 groups, rescues, and businesses, and more than 1,100 individuals, the letter called for Biden to immediately place a moratorium on the mass helicopter roundups. There has since been no response from the White House.



'Old Man,' the most famous Onaqui horse on the range



Katherine Heigl speaks before a crowd of more than 100 advocates calling on President Biden to stop the Onaqui wild horse roundups

AWA, CHE, the Cloud Foundation, Red Bird's Trust, Wild Horse Photo Safaris, philanthropist Erika Brunson, and the Jason Deibus Heigl Foundation joined actress Katherine Heigl in a rally with more than 100 people on the State Capitol steps in Salt Lake City on July 2nd pleading for the Biden Administration to stop the Onaqui roundup, and AWA followed up with a second rally on July 9th in front of the White House just days before the Bureau of Land Management's announcement. Actress Priscilla Presley also weighed in this week with the media and the White House also calling for Biden to cancel the roundup.

Visit the campaign website at www.SaveTheOnaqui.org for more details on the rally and coming events.

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies, and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Center for a Humane Economy ("the Center") is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both.

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