

Wild Horse Fire Brigade Lawsuit Halts Bureau of Land Management ('BLM') Wild Horse Roundup in Oregon

BLM's wild horse roundup around Oregon's Pokegama Herd Management Area was officially halted in response to lawsuit and condemnation of the death of a wild mare

YREKA , CA, US, January 1, 2023
/EINPresswire.com/ -- On Wednesday, October 5th 2022, Vermont Law and Graduate School's Environmental Advocacy Clinic filed a lawsuit in the Federal Court in Washington D.C (Case 1:22-cv-03006) against the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, on behalf of its client Wild Horse Fire Brigade (WHFB), a California-based all-volunteer 501-c-3 nonprofit organization.

[That lawsuit](#) brought a temporary halt to the roundup of wild horses from private property within and adjacent to the Pokegama Herd Management Area in southern Oregon while the Department of Justice evaluated the lawsuit, which alleged that The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) failed to follow the law and its own guidance before initiating the roundup.

The intention of the lawsuit was also to prevent the loss of wild horses and to compel BLM to conduct legally required studies regarding the horses.

"The BLM has a history of cutting corners and ignoring their legal obligations in a rush to get rid of wild horses in the west," Professor Michael Harris, director of the Environmental Advocacy Clinic at Vermont Law and Graduate School said. "Horses are native to the west and are an important aspect of the ecosystem. We need to work to increase their numbers to ensure healthy, stable herds."



A herd of wild horses seen in an alpine riparian area of a wilderness area. Documented evidence proves wild horses have been using this riparian area and spring for centuries without any ill effects. Photo: William E. Simpson II

The recent doctoral dissertation by Yvette 'Running Horse' Collin provides evidence that strongly suggests wild horses have been living in the region of Southwestern Oregon since at least the year 1580, when Sir Francis Drake documented observations of wild horses living among the local indigenous peoples of Southwestern Oregon during his voyage and exploration of the west coast of America in 1580.

This is an extracted quote from the dissertation by Dr. Yvette Running Horse Collin, titled; 'The relationship between the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the horse: deconstructing a Eurocentric myth'. That dissertation can be read in its entirety at the following URL:

<https://scholarworks.alaska.edu/handle/11122/7592>

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"The Spanish conquistadors were not the only European explorers to have noticed and recorded early sightings of horses in the Americas. In 1579, the Queen of England sent Sir Francis Drake to "The New World." Drake also recorded having seen herds of horses in the Americas during his voyage off the coasts of what are now known as California and Oregon. An account given of Drake's landing in the geographic areas now known as Northern California and Southern Oregon includes the English explorer's description of the homes of the Native Peoples, as well as the animals that he encountered. "It related his wonder at seeing so many wild horses, because he had heard that the Spaniards had found no native horses in America, save those of the Arab breed which they

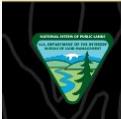
had introduced." 116In addition to accounts from explorers appointed by European kings and queens, there are accounts of native horses in South America in the area now known as Argentina. One such account even includes an explanation as to why the Spanish may have been motivated to hide the fact that the Indigenous horse of the Americas existed and had a relationship with Native Peoples. According to an article entitled Antiguedad del Caballo En El

2020/2021/2022 Pokegama Wild Horse Gather | Bureau of Land Management

Animals shipped: 0
Total Deaths Today: 0
November 18, 2022
Animals gathered: No horses gathered
Animals shipped: 0
Total Deaths Today: 0
November 19, 2022
Animals gathered: No horses gathered
Animals shipped: 0
Total Deaths Today: 0
November 20, 2022
Animals gathered: No horses gathered
Animals shipped: 0
Total Deaths Today: 0
November 21, 2022
Animals gathered: 4 (2 stallion, 1 mare, 1 foal)
Animals shipped: 0
Total Deaths Today: 0
November 22, 2022
Animals gathered: No horses gathered
Animals shipped: 0
Total Deaths Today: 1 (Acute Injury)

2021 WEEKLY GATHER REPORTS +

2020 WEEKLY GATHER REPORTS +



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BLM Bureau Office in Klamath Falls Oregon reports killing a wild horse

“

That wild mare died tragically and needlessly as a result of an illegal and ill-conceived roundup authorized by Mr. Todd Forbes at the BLM's Lakeview Oregon office”

*Deb Ferns, MBA, President,
Wild Horse Fire Brigade*

Plata (The Antiquity of the Horse in the River Plate) by Anibal Cardoso as cited by Austin Whittall on his blog site article

115 Ibid., 53.

116 Henry S. Burrage, Original Narratives of Early American History. Early English and French Voyages (New York: Unknown Binding, 1906), 23.-"

In early December, Wild Horse Fire Brigade and its legal team at Vermont Law learned that a wild mare was 'acutely injured' during a renewed roundup activity by the BLM during the time the DOJ agreed to halt the roundup while considering the legal action by Vermont Law. Tragically and needlessly, that wild mare died.

On December 7th 2022, Wild Horse Fire Brigade issued a Press Release condemning the BLM's actions and the death of a protected American wild horse, as a result of the continuation of the alleged illegal roundup.



BLM photo shows burned forest and downed fences in Pokegama HMA in Oregon



A mighty wild mountain stallion greets naturalist and horse expert William E. Simpson II. Photo: Carla Bowers

"That wild mare died tragically and needlessly as a result of an illegal and ill-conceived roundup authorized by Mr. Todd Forbes at the BLM's Lakeview Oregon office" ~ said Deb Ferns, President, Wild Horse Fire Brigade, who went on to say that; "wild horse advocates should contact Mr. Forbes directly and offer their own concerns as well".

(Todd Forbes - Oregon BLM Lakeview District Manager; Ph. 541-947-6100 / email; tforbes@blm.gov)


The removal of wild horses from the area around Pokegama is reckless and disregards the health, safety and welfare of people living in the region given the excessive grass and brush wildfire fuels that were formerly managed by hundreds of wild horses that have lived in this area on the Oregon-California border for the past 440-years.

Now it seems that the BLM was desperate to somehow defend and explain the questionable and needless death of the wild mare to the Federal Court in Washington D.C. that is handling the pending lawsuit.

On December 20, 2022, the BLM filed a Declaration in the Washington D.C. Federal Court (Case No. 1 :22-cv-3006) by the BLM agent involved in the death of the wild mare, a Mr. Blair J. Street, who claims the title of 'District Wild Horse and Burro Specialist for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lakeview District in southcentral Oregon.


Among the statements made in the Declaration by Mr. Blair J. Street, he also stated the following:

"We spent hours attempting to load the remaining mare and stud into the truck. Eventually, I unhooked the horse trailer from my truck, and we left the horses overnight to see if they would go into the trailer themselves. I have used this tactic on other gathers to coax the horses into the trailer with a small bucket of water.




Wild Horses Need Your Help. Take Action.

PROBLEM:
Wild Horses are aggressively rounded up by the Bureau of Land Management and some are taken to slaughterhouses.



SOLUTION:
Take the Wild Horses to Critical Wilderness areas where both the horses and the environment will thrive, and will not disrupt public land or industry.



WHY:
No living creature should be treated this way. There is a way we can all coexist, nature, people, and industry.

The 'Natural Wildfire Abatement and Forest Protection Plan', commonly called 'Wild Horse Fire Brigade' helps mitigate wildfire by restoring native wild horses as keystone herbivores into designated wilderness areas rich with forage and water where they benefit flora and fauna as they reduce and maintain grass and brush wildfire fuels, beyond conflicts with livestock and other public land uses.

Wild Horse Fire Brigade helps save native species American wild horses by rewilding them from government holding facilities, and/or relocating them away from areas of contention with livestock production, and humanely placing them as family units into carefully selected designated wilderness areas that are economically and ecologically appropriate.

There is approximately 110-million acres of designated wilderness area in America, primarily in the western United States. These designated wilderness areas have abundant forage and water resources but are manifestly unsuited for livestock grazing due to existing law, existing populations of apex predators and excessive logistics and transport costs due to the difficult terrain and remoteness of such locations.

In such wilderness areas, wild horses that are restored back into their evolutionary roles as keystone herbivores naturally protect forests, wildlife, watersheds and wilderness ecosystems, which benefit through symbiotic grazing by wild horses that naturally maintain wildfire fuels (grass and brush) to nominal levels, thereby reducing the both the frequency and intensity of wildfire.

The goal of Wild Horse Fire Brigade is to naturally and sustainably save America's remaining native species wild horses by establishing several wilderness wildfire-grazing pilot programs using wild horses that are sourced from government agencies using existing law (Humane Transfer of Excess Animals).

Another goal is to also support the amendment of Section 1339 of the 1971 Free-Roaming Wild Burro and Horse Protection Act, to allow federal managers to also directly rewild horses into designated wilderness areas outside existing herd areas.

Make a difference today.

Visit WildHorseFireBrigade.org to learn more or contact us at Contact@WildHorseFireBrigade.org | 858.212.5762

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It is not uncommon for studs and mares to be mixed together while trying to load horses from the trap to the holding facility.

We headed back out to the trap the following morning, on November 22, 2022. When we arrived, the mare was lying down and the stud was kicking at her. She could not stand.

At that point, I released the stud.

When the mare tried to stand, she was very uneasy and stumbled a lot to try to keep her balance. Her head was tilted to the side, she could not straighten her neck, and her eyes were very wide open. When I went to her left side, I noticed a huge bulge where her spinal column would be. She had hoof marks from the stud on her neck. I suspected the stud had fractured some of her vertebrae.

After about ten minutes of observation, I decided that the mare was not going to be able to load in the trailer or survive long outside of the trap. She was slow and clearly in a great deal of pain. The mare was obviously suffering and was not going to have quality of life.

In my opinion, if the mare were released, she would have gone through a lot of pain before passing a slow and horrible death. Her foal outside the trap was old enough to be weaned.

Given all of these considerations, I decided to euthanize the mare as an act of mercy. "

Clearly, by his own admission, Mr. Blair was having great difficulty attempting to force two wild horses from a wilderness area (the mare and her stallion) into a trailer.

It's my belief that the truth of the matter is that during the 'hours spent' trying force two wild horses into a trailer, the mare seriously injured her neck, resulting in her death. Of course there was no necropsy performed, which might disprove Mr. Street's statement.

"Unlike Mr. Blair, I am a field researcher and wild horse ethologist that has studied free roaming wild horses in the wilderness and around Pokegama for the past 8-years continuously, and I have logged over 15,000 hours of close observational study of wild horse behavior and ecology. In that time, I have never witnessed any band stallion or bachelor stallion kicking any mare laying on the ground. The highly questionable and unbelievable statement by Mr. Blair seems to assign blame for a human-caused injury, likely caused by attempting to force wild horses into a trailer, to the loving companion of the mare", said William E. Simpson II - Founder & Executive Director of Wild Horse Fire Brigade.

"It would be highly unusual for a wild stallion to aggressively attack one of his mares as his principal role is to act as guardian and protector of his band. Stallions have an immense responsibility under pressure to manage their herd and protect the mares and foals. They are on watch at all times. If the mare were already injured he would likely stand over her, nudge her and continue to protect her. Aggression on the part of the stallion towards other horses is primarily associated with sexual competition, dominance, or territory (protecting the group and resources", said Professor Julie Murphree, PhD - Equine Science Advisor at Wild Horse Fire Brigade.

A great deal of [new research](#) and understanding of wild horse ethology has come to light over the past eight years (2014-2022) as a result of the intensive and continuous study and published research of wild horses living naturally in the wilderness by William E. Simpson II.

One of many examples of the unexpected behaviors of wild horses is how they respect and honor dying members of the herd, as was documented in this published article:

'How wild horses deal with death and grief - A rare insight', which can be read here:

<https://www.horsetalk.co.nz/2018/07/04/wild-horses-death-grief-insight/>

It's most unfortunate that many of the personnel at the BLM are actually willfully ignorant of the many scientific facts related to wild horse behavioral ecology and ethology. These facts, offer important insights as to how America can better manage its iconic wild horses.

Some of the research and peer-reviewed published studies that support the rewilding/relocating initiative integral to the wild horse management plan known as the 'Natural Wildfire Abatement

and Forest Protection Plan' (aka: Wild Horse Fire Brigade') are found at:

<https://www.wildhorsefirebrigade.org/resources>

Under the direction of Professor-Litigator Michael Harris, Vermont Law will be filing a response to Mr. Blair Street's 'Declaration, as well as a 'permanent injunction' in January 2023, to prevent any future roundups in and around the Pokegama wild horse Herd Management Area, one of the few remaining wild horse Herd Management Areas in Oregon

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