

Advocates Say 'Whoa!' To USFS Roundup at Devil's Garden

Advocates file formal protest against September roundup of wild horses at Devil's Garden Plateau in the Modoc National Forest in California.

ALTURAS, CA, UNITED STATES, August 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Advocates Bonnie Kohleriter, Mary Koncel, and [Wild Horse Education](#) (WHE) organization have filed a formal challenge against the United States Forest Service (USFS) plans to roundup the Devil's Garden Plateau Wild Horse Territory (WHT).



Devil's Garden wild horses

With two weeks notice, the USFS announced a roundup will begin to remove 350 wild horses from the Devil's Garden Plateau (WHT) in the Modoc National Forest in California. Over the last seven years, over 3,000 wild horses have been removed from the territory.

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Bonnie Kohleriter

The [planned removal](#) would reduce the horse population below the legally mandated Appropriate Management Level (AML), a move that the advocates argue exceeds USFS authority and violates federal law. In addition, the removal is being conducted using planning documents vacated by the U.S. Court of Appeals in 2013.

In 2022, USFS began the process of creating a new management plan. The process to create a new plan

entered the last phase in late 2024. Instead of completing the new plan, USFS is trying to squeeze a roundup in under the 2013 plan, presumably to satisfy a settlement they entered into with livestock permittees in 2017*. Any settlement with any party is not a substitute for completion of the mandated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to correct the plan vacated by the Court. (*Livestock permittees filed suit to force a removal. The permittees did not have to complete a court battle as USFS simply capitulated in an agreement.)

"This herd is very near to my heart. Wild horses complete this landscape that I hold so much reverence for. I have been visiting and researching Devil's Garden for a long time. In reality, each new management plan brings them closer to disappearing forever. It breaks my heart. Their habitat is public lands and these horses belong to the public and belong on this land." said advocate Mary Koncel.

"Instead of an equal playing field where transparent planning occurs, advocates are continually swept aside in the same way USFS sweeps this herd closer to disappearing year-after-year. One sidebar agreement after another with ranchers is not data-based or equitable decision-making. USFS must complete the new plan, execute legitimate, fact-based assessments, and allow all formal challenges prior to doing any more removals," said Bonnie Kohleriter.

Wild Horse Education representative Laura Leigh says the organization is committed to stopping this duplicitous roundup and pushing for fair and transparent planning to preserve the Devil's Garden wild horses.

Plaintiffs are represented by Greenfire Law, PC of Berkeley, California.

Laura Leigh

Wild Horse Education

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