



Wild Horses & Burros

Oppose the 'Restore Our American Mustangs (ROAM) Act'

Radical Restructuring of Public Land Management:

The basic theory of public land management is captured in the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act (MUSY) which calls for the lands to be administered for timber, water, wildlife, fish, outdoor recreation, and range, (16 U.S.C. 528). Subsequent laws imposed additional management obligations.

One such law was the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (HBA) which called for the management of horses in the places where they then existed. HBA anticipated that horse populations would be coordinated with other multiple uses by requiring the Secretary of Interior to manage horse populations to the appropriate management level.



The ROAM Act overturns this effort to balance competing uses of public lands. It authorizes the Secretary to designate additional range on public lands as sanctuaries exclusively for horses following consultation with the wildlife agency of the affected state. Multiple use would be displaced in these newly designated areas.

This legislation makes it harder for the Department of Interior to maintain a sustainable population of horses both by imposing additional costs on administration and by limiting tools needed to manage populations.

The bill also bars keeping horses in holding facilities for more than 6 months, while this is a laudable goal, it simply departs from the period of time BLM is often forced to keep horses in holding facilities. The cost of alternative arrangements to holding facilities is both unknown and undoubtedly greater than would be the cost of continuing to use holding facilities in the present manner. The bill also imposes additional hurdles on the adoption of horses, increasing the cost of an already underutilized means of caring for the horses.

Summary

The ROAM Act allows for limitless expansion of wild horse and burro range and the designation of exclusive use areas for the animals. The bill takes away the ability to sell or humanely euthanize excess animals and makes the adoption process very time consuming. Additionally, it makes any transportation for processing criminal.

The current horse and burro program is underfunded and much of the range is overpopulated with little demand for adoption of excess animals. It is inhumane to allow overpopulation on designated range and this legislation is not the solution. The bill radically overturns longstanding management practices of public lands.

We urge the Senate to oppose the ROAM Act!