



# Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands, Wildlife and Free-Roaming Horses

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## RESOLUTION Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Management July 2020

**Whereas, The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WFRHBA),** as amended, ensured free-roaming horses and burros (FRHB) existing on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or Forest Service (FS) managed lands in 1971, would be protected and managed as valued components of our public lands. Their range was to be sufficient to sustain herds, while ensuring a "thriving natural ecological balance" with wildlife, livestock and other public land multiple uses in accordance with the Multiple Use, Sustained Yield Act of 1960.

**Whereas,** the WFRHBA directed BLM and the FS to determine, including in consultation with wildlife agencies, appropriate numbers (Appropriate Management Level (AML)) of FRHB to retain thriving natural ecological balance of habitat, forage, and water needs of wildlife, livestock and FRHB by assessment of plant and riparian sustainability. Once over AML, FRHB numbers were defined as excess to the carrying capacity of the land.

**Whereas,** BLM and FS have used and do use various public processes to set and adjust AMLs on a herd-by-herd basis including but not limited to Resource Management Plans, Land Management Plans, and Multiple Use Decisions and typically analyzed through requirements of and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

**Whereas,** in Nevada, water comprises a mere 2% of our public lands, in the form of scattered springs, small streams and ephemeral playas, and is essential for the survival of wildlife, livestock & FRHB alike. Since 2010, AML determination must include the level of functionality of those small riparian/water sources on which all living things on public lands depend.

**Whereas,** in order to assist in achieving the thriving natural ecological balance mandate, BLM and the FS remove above AML excess FRHB, make them available for adoption or placed in short term or long-term holdings, including lifetime pastures, or treated with fertility inhibitors and returned to public lands.

**Whereas,** Nevada is host to over 50% of all FRHB West-wide on our semi-arid and arid Great Basin and Mojave Desert lands.

**Whereas,** in Nevada, population numbers to ensure thriving natural ecological balance was determined to be an AML of 12,800 horses and burros in 83 Herd Management Areas (HMA's).



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**Whereas**, today in Nevada every HMA on average is 300% over AML, with 50,000 FRHB on BLM lands and 2,500 on FS lands. Some HMAs have populations at thousands of percent above AML. In addition, outside of WFRHBA authorization and direction, with little to no management, there are approximately 5500 other feral or stray horses and burros on state, tribal and 500 military lands.

**Whereas**, FRHB populations double every 3-5 years. The over AML populations of FRHB of the last four decades have, in many areas, impacted ecosystem health, habitat, forage, and water resources, in turn imperiling the health and well-being of wildlife, livestock, vegetation, and FRHB themselves.

**Whereas**, inadequate, short-term congressional BLM budget allocations have prevented the effective removal of excess FRHB required for healthy ecosystems and resulted in additional problems including insufficient pasture and holding facilities, no logistically effective long-term fertility inhibitors and populations above AML growing exponentially.

**Whereas**, in 2019 humane advocacy, wildlife and livestock organizations including the Humane Society of the United States and ASPCA collaboratively crafted a plan, [\*The Path Forward for Management of BLM's Wild Horses & Burros\*](#), proposing a pathway to reduce FRHB populations to AML using non-lethal methods. The underpinnings of this plan, in turn, became part of the 2020 [\*BLM Report to Congress for Achieving a Sustainable Wild Horse & Burro Program\*](#) which hinged on requiring sufficient short and longer-term funding for success.

**Whereas**, the NV Legislature recognizes "Wild Horse Annie's" (Thelma Johnson's) work, which assisted in culmination of passage of the 1971 Wild and Free-Roaming Wild Horse and Burro Act, ensuring a place for FRHB on public lands while retaining a thriving natural ecological balance with other multiple uses on those lands, is failing to achieve those contract goals that were made in good faith and that balance needs be restored as quickly as possible.

**Therefore, be it resolved** that the NV Legislature supports BLM's 2020 Report to Congress urging sufficient short-term funding for immediate effectiveness and longer-term funding for sustained efficacy and overall success, apportioned according to FRHB numbers in each state.

**Be it further resolved**, given the impacts of excess FRHB on our fragile Nevada Great Basin and Mojave ecosystems, the NV Legislature supports reducing excess FRHB to achieve AML, using non-lethal means, within 10 years to protect and restore the health and viability of our public lands and habitats for wildlife, FRHB, and other uses into the future.