

## Coalition Members N

Rebekah Stetson, *Former President, Nevada Wildlife Federation, Chairwoman, Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands, Ecosystem Health Consultant*

Willie Molini, *Former Director Nevada Department of Wildlife, Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Council*

Mike Cox, *Wildlife Staff Biologist, Nevada Department of Wildlife*

Karen Boeger, *Founding Board Member, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Director, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife*

James Sedinger, *Foundation Professor of Wildlife Ecology Professor of Wildlife Ecology, Emeritus*

Keely Hopkins, *Pacific States Assistant Manager, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*

Tina Nappe, *Conservationist, Former Nevada Wildlife Commissioner*

Pat Bruce, *Stewardship Program Director, Friends of Nevada Wilderness*

Judi Caron, *Director, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife*

David Ricker, *Policy Chair, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers*

Sherm Swanson, *Coordinator, Nevada Creeks and Communities Team, Rangeland & Riparian Ecology & Management Professor Emeritus, UNR: AVRS & UNCE, Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Council*



Wednesday, April 13, 2022

To:  
Maggie Carlton, Chair, Public Lands Subcommittee  
Melanie Scheible  
Pete Goicoechea  
Alexis Hansen  
Justin Jones  
Clifford Manuela

From:  
Rebekah Stetson  
Chairwoman  
Coalition for Nevada's Health Lands, Wildlife and Wild Horses

Subject: Support for Management of Nevada's federal and state wild horses and burros

We are hoping the Public Lands Subcommittee will address the negative impact both federal and state managed wild and free-roaming horses are having on Nevada lands.

Nevada, the driest state in the nation, contains over fifty percent; an estimated 54,000 of the BLM managed wild horses and burros in the west. There are an additional estimated 10,000 horses and burros on USFS and other federally managed lands. Rough estimates of 3,000 horses are on state and private lands subject to almost no management from the State of Nevada.

We urge the Public Lands Subcommittee to support an increase of BLM's budget which includes funds for gathering and removing excess horses on federal lands in Nevada where they exceed range carrying capacity (appropriate management level - AML) and where they are severely degrading and impacting native vegetation and wildlife.

We also ask that you recommend to the Natural Resources Committee that the State of Nevada adequately fund a program for managing horses on state lands. Free-roaming horses and burros have expanded beyond their intended management areas on federal lands and have expanded onto state lands. They have a significant impact when their populations are not properly managed.

About 3,000 or more horses are on state and private lands located in the Virginia Range, Washoe Lake State Park, along the Truckee River including the Nature Conservancy's McCarran Ranch and are ever expanding into Reno and Spark's neighborhoods creating safety hazards for residents.

The RGJ stated "*Between 2012 and 2016, the Nevada Department of Transportation reported 116 horse-related crashes on all roads in the Virginia Range*". (RGJ 9/24/2021) About 75 horses, including at least five foals, have been living in Washoe Lake State Park and the Scripps Wildlife Management Area. They are enjoyable to see but they are destroying the vegetation upon which they and wildlife depend. Their manure is everywhere including the campgrounds and they frequently cross busy roads in Washoe Valley. Washoe Lake State Park was designated in 1977. Since then one of the goals was to restore the land from the days of cattle ranching. Washoe Lake State Park budget and personnel are unable to clean and keep the park safe for visitors and possible accidents with horses.

Because wild horses are coming into neighborhoods to find forage and causing accidents, the City of Reno proposes to build a border fence to keep them out. The Nature Conservancy cannot keep them out of McCarran Ranch where years of habitat restoration have been destroyed by excess horses.

At one time the horses were confined to the Virginia Range, which is mostly private land. Between the increasing numbers of horses and the drought, hungry horses are having to disperse seeking forage and water.

The drought seems to be deepening and with the increasing temperature and lack of moisture the grasses, forbs, and shrubs all require to withstand heavy grazing.

The Department of Agriculture has some responsibility for free-roaming horses on state or private lands but no funding.

We urge you to help resolve the excess horse issue on our state lands and support efforts to reduce wild horses to within their AML. We would greatly appreciate an opportunity to meet with you and present to your committee. Thank you for all that you do for our beautiful state!

Sincerely,  
Rebekah

Rebekah Stetson  
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*Our Goal – Achievement of healthy lands, wildlife populations, and free-roaming horses and burros through information, education, science, and effective and humane management.*