



To: Joint Committee on Agriculture
Select Committee on Tribal Relations

From: Kate Barlow, Policy Advisor to Governor Mark Gordon
Kit Wendtland, Special Counsel to Governor Mark Gordon

Date: August 15, 2022

Re: HEA 45 Wild Horse & Burro Management Update

Thank you for the invitation to update the Committee on the progress being made with funds provided by the Legislature during the 2022 budget session in HEA 45. Before the start of the biennium the Governor's office worked on proposals with the Shoshone & Arapaho Tribes Fish & Game and the Wyoming Honor Farm. Since the start of the biennium we have been working to develop cooperative agreements for the allocation of the HEA 45 funding and advance wild horse management this year.

Governor Gordon continues to recognize that Wyoming's wild horse population on federal and Tribal lands have long exceeded Appropriate Management Levels (AML) established by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This is ecologically not sustainable and threatens wildlife and multiple-use of our public lands. Wild horses are jurisdictionally a federal or Tribal matter; the Governor thanks the Legislature for the opportunity to use state funding and pre-established locally driven programs to help address this issue in concert with existing federal programs. The Governor is committed to using all the tools in the toolbox as a solution to the wild horse problem. This includes gathers, fertility controls, off-range hold facilities, adoptions, etc.

The HEA 45 projects described in this memo are a first step toward better management and comprehensive cooperative management. Accordingly, the details of the two projects are described below. The Governor's office is actively working with the Tribes and the Wyoming Department of Corrections to finalize agreements that will allow these projects to move forward quickly.¹

¹ As of August 15, 2022, the Governor's office is still negotiating agreement language with the Tribes and drafting the agreement with the Wyoming Department of Corrections. Status of these agreements is likely to change prior to the September 1-2, 2022, Joint Committee on Agriculture meeting.

Project #1: Shoshone & Arapaho Tribes Fish & Game Gathers

Purpose: The Wind River Reservation grazing lands encompass approximately 1.8 million acres of tribal trust land. These are truly feral horses as they are not descendants of the wild mustangs and have caused severe overgrazing in upland range and riparian habitats, altering plant composition, degrading water quality and severely outcompeting native wildlife like bighorn sheep, mule deer, antelope, elk, and moose. Additionally, excessive numbers of feral horses on grazing lands directly compete with preferred grasses and forbs that are typically used by permitted cattle.

The primary goal is to partner with the Tribes on an effort they will lead for the removal of nearly all feral horses from the highest populated areas on the Wind River Reservation. The secondary goal is to leave a remnant herd of free-ranging feral horses in the northern range for aesthetic purposes. The tertiary goal is to continue annual removals to maintain feral horse abundance within Appropriate Management Levels (AML). Removal in any given year will depend upon the amount of funding available.

The Governor's office is actively working with the Tribes on a cooperative agreement for the gathers and hopes to have it finalized early this fall. Tribal Fish & Game has indicated they are ready to proceed as soon as the agreement is finalized. The proposal totals \$400,000 to gather 1,200 horses and pay for various expenses as detailed below:

Services/Supplies		Amount
Capture & Sort	\$250/head x 1,200	\$300,000
Brand Inspection	\$20/head x 1,200	\$24,000
Veterinary Evaluation	\$5/head x 1,200	\$6,000
Hay	24 tons at \$350	\$8,400
Wages/Fuel/Security	4 Wardens	\$29,600
Shipping	Feed and water	\$16,000
Incidentals	Repair/Replacement of Equipment	\$16,000
Total		\$400,000

Project #2: Wyoming Department of Corrections, Wyoming Honor Farm Wild Horse Program

Purpose: The Wyoming Department of Corrections' Honor Farm (WHF) works in partnership with the BLM to help manage the wild horse population. Specifically, the WHF assists with the long-term management of the wild horse population by housing and training horses removed from public lands by the BLM. Inmates are selected and trained to work with these animals under the supervision of WHF employees. Twice per year the WHF hosts auctions to sell and find homes for the horses trained by the inmates, allowing the public to have access to horses that have been gentled in the training program. Finding homes for the horses through these adoptions in the long run, is good for the horse, the inmate, and the management of the wild horse population. In order for the Wyoming Department of Corrections (WDOC) to continue this work, it is important their corrals, pens, and equipment meet the BLM standards. BLM has indicated WDOC will be subject to an audit of their program in the near future.

The WDOC has submitted a proposal to the Governor's office requesting assistance with the purchase of fencing pipe, paddocks, pens, and funding for horsemanship training which will ensure the integrity and safety of the staff, inmates and horses. The Governor's office is actively working with WDOC to develop an agreement. WDOC's proposal totals \$100,000 as detailed below:

Service/Supplies	Amount
Saddles (22)	\$55,000
Fencing Pipe	\$30,000
Horsemanship Training	\$15,000
Total	\$100,000

Thank you again for the opportunity to update the committee on the funding from HEA 45. Should you have any questions feel free to contact the Governor's office.