



To: Joint Agriculture, State and Public Lands & Water Resources Committee
Select Committee on Tribal Relations
Select Federal Natural Resource Management Committee

From: Kate Barlow, Agriculture Policy Advisor to Governor Mark Gordon
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Date: September 22, 2023

Re: 2022 Wyo. Sess. Laws CH 97 Wild Horse & Burro Management Report

Thank you for the opportunity to report to the Committee on the progress being made with funds provided by the Legislature during the 2022 budget session in Wyo. Sess. Laws CH 97. Since the Office's last report on October 1, 2022, state funds appropriated in that legislation for wild horse management have been almost completely expended on successful collaborative efforts with the Wyoming Department of Corrections' Honor Farm, as well as Shoshone and Arapaho Tribal Fish and Game.

Governor Gordon continues to recognize that Wyoming's wild horse populations on federal and Tribal lands have long exceeded Appropriate Management Levels (AML) established by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This is not ecologically sustainable and threatens wildlife and multiple-use of our public and Tribal lands. Wild horses are jurisdictionally a federal or Tribal matter; however, 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 and Tribal programs. The Governor is committed to using all the tools in the toolbox as a solution to the wild horse overpopulation. These tools include gathers, fertility controls, off-range hold facilities, adoptions, etc.

The projects described in this memo represent concrete first steps towards better and comprehensive cooperative management. Accordingly, the details of our two projects with the Wyoming Honor Farm and Shoshone and Arapaho Tribal Fish and Game are described below.



Project #1: 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.

Pursuant to a 2022 agreement, the Governor's Office provided the WHF with one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) for the purchase of fencing pipe, new saddles, and horsemanship training. All but roughly three thousand nine hundred twenty dollars (\$3,920.00) was expended, with the remainder left over due to difficulties in matching the remaining amount with the costs of purchasing further goods and services, not due to a lack of need. The purchase of fencing pipe allowed WHF's Wild Horse Program to maintain compliance with BLM standards, and new saddles helped revamp an old and worn line of equipment that was, in some cases, at least twenty years old. Finally, professional horsemanship classes, both for inmates and supervisors, augmented staff and inmate experiences in the program, helping to upgrade an already valuable opportunity for growth and rehabilitation. All told, the program succeeded in selling forty-five of their trained wild horses at a sale this year in May. A table detailing the expenditure categories for expended funds is provided below.

Expenditures	Total: \$96,080.00
Training for staff and inmates	\$11,080.00
Fencing for corrals	\$30,000.00
Saddles	\$55,000.00

Project #2: Shoshone & Arapaho Tribal Fish & Game Gatherers



Purpose: The Wind River Reservation grazing lands encompass approximately 1.8 million acres of Tribal trust land. Wild horses present on these lands are truly feral horses, as they are not descendants of wild mustangs. They 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 of this project is to partner with the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes (“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.

In 2022 and 2023, the Governor’s Office distributed four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000.00) to the Tribes for the purpose of funding feral horse roundup efforts. In total, this money funded the gather and removal of one thousand, four hundred twenty-nine (1,429) feral horses from the Wind River Reservation in early 2023. Importantly, this total is over two hundred horses more than Tribal Fish and Game’s estimated maximum success rate detailed in their initial proposal. Additionally, matching funds provided from federal and other sources allowed further Tribal efforts to gather close to six hundred more horses, for a total amount of almost two thousand. Finally, the Tribes were also able to secure funding from non-state sources for other significant removals this summer as well. A table detailing the total number of horses gathered using state funds, as well as the expenditure categories for those funds, is provided below.

Number of Horses Removed	Total: 1,429
Expenditures	Total: \$399,998.50
Capture and Sort	\$357,454.93
Brand Inspection	\$3,135.06
Veterinary	\$7,737.00
Hay	\$6,650.00



Wages/Fuel/Security	24,135.30
Shipping	\$0.00
Incidentals	\$886.21

Thank you again for the opportunity to update the committee. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Governor's office.