

December 26, 2009

President Obama,

I willingly spent a great deal of time and energy on your campaign and rejoiced at your election. But with time, I have had to tell myself that you were not taking on "small" issues for the sake of larger ones when my heart said no, you were not going to do anything different than George W. Bush. Hush, I said, Barack would not ever be like that! But your choice of your Secretary of the Interior and your tolerance of the rapid entrapment of the wild horses has not changed from the Bush regime.

On Monday, Dec. 28, 2009, the BLM intends to roundup approximately 2,400-2,500 of the estimated 3,000 wild horses in the Calico Mountain wild horse complex of Northern Nevada. They will be driven by helicopters in icy winter conditions, over rocky ground, for long distances. Some horses will be injured or die just as they have in recent BLM helicopter roundups.

What does this one roundup cost taxpayers? Apparently **nearly \$2 million dollars** for the roundup contractor and the BLM personnel. Then sorting and transporting the horses will likely cost **another \$1 million!** Are they crazy in this economy? The Calico range is not in poor condition and the horses are healthy, but the BLM increased **livestock** grazing permits significantly last year. That's the core issue.

Mr. President, you appear to spend more energy on selecting a dog than enforcing the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act. Perhaps you disagree with that act. If so I would like to discuss that with you. But that will not occur, certainly not before Monday.

I am so mad, I won't stand by anymore! It is time for the public to stand up to the BLM and the Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, and say **no more taxpayer dollars for inhumane roundups of wild horses**. I intend to protest outside the entrance to the BLM-managed Red Rock Canyon on Sunday, December 27, 2009 at 1pm. It is time to take it to the streets as we said in the sixties. And I will. But I wish in my heart of hearts that I could talk to you personally instead.

Every year for over 20 years, I have gone on safari to Africa's wildlife parks where wildlife tourists spend millions and employ thousands of local people. Many tourists have asked me where they could view wild horses in North America? My answer is NOWHERE!

Those would-be tourists are shocked and disgusted when I explain that the BLM holds 34,000 horses in pens at a taxpayer cost of OVER \$100,000 PER DAY, yet sources independent from the BLM estimate there may be just 15,000 mustangs left in the wild. The BLM claims that wild horses destroy the range but **the dirty truth is that cattle on public land outnumber wild horses 100 to one!** According to the Government Accountability Office, we taxpayers subsidize beef interests at a net loss of \$123 million a year – and most are big cattle corporations like Annhauser Busch and the Hilton Family Trust, not small family ranchers. In fact, economists estimate that additional direct and indirect costs may run that subsidy to half a billion or even a billion dollars. Oh yes, I am mad!

East and Southern Africa depend on the wildlife safari industry for a major part of their economy. **Why don't we create new jobs in the West with Wild Horse Sanctuaries?** Having done wildlife safaris from rough to "high-heeled" worldwide, I know there is a big audience to view wild horses. Some well-heeled folks will need luxury tented camps with all the comforts laid on; but many more, including families, need the inexpensive safari jeep and bunkhouse accommodation for a 1 to 2 day peek at the Mustangs at the edge of a Wild Horse Sanctuary. Serious hikers and horse-back riders would fill campgrounds deeper in the Sanctuary while wilderness lovers would definitely pay to sit in blinds at remote waterholes where they could photograph truly wild Mustangs.

Nevada has half of America's wild horses but we need to get those wild horses and burros out of the holding pens and return them to **public land designated primarily for their use in 1971**. Recently, Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, proposed to move 26,000 wild horses to preserves east of the Mississippi purchased at a starting cost of \$96 million. I hate to be rude but what was Salazar smoking? **The Mustang is a creature of our spectacular West!** They are the essence of its freedom and history.

Let's keep the jobs here! Motels, B&B's, restaurants, food suppliers, tour guides, transport companies, etc. will blossom as tourists come to see wild horse sanctuaries but stay to enjoy our Western landscapes and people.

I felt you of all people would understand and be sensitive to the balance of nature that these critical animals bring to the Western landscape and history. Despite your overwhelming responsibilities for the economy and the health issue, stewardship of Nature is something we do not have time to postpone. It is obvious that your appointee does not care about that critical balance. The West and the horses cannot wait any longer.

Come out here and see for yourself what wild horses do for the soul and the landscape, then watch them harried by helicopters and standing in pens. Worse, follow the horse trucks to Canada and see them in their last moments at the slaughterhouse. Could you explain why this is necessary to your daughters? I think not.

The treatment of wild Mustangs is a huge black eye for the Obama administration. **It is time you put a moratorium on BLM roundups and invested some of the bank bailout money – our tax dollars – into creating Wild Horse Sanctuaries on public land.** It is obvious that the West is badly in need of job diversification and the wild Mustang is our equivalent of lions or elephants. Let us invest in a wild horse safari industry and keep the horses alive, wild and free.

I would be happy to connect your designated team members with folks who know the safari industry from the inside out. But all that is really needed are the sanctuaries and small business loans; our rural citizens will invent the rest of the business plan.

Respectively,

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