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Chair Grijalva, Bipartisan Group of Lawmakers Write to House and Senate Interior Appropriators Urging Clarity, Funding Limits on BLM Horse Program

Washington, D.C. – Chair Raúl M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and a bipartisan group of lawmakers today wrote to the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate appropriations panels with oversight of the Department of the Interior (DOI) to urge funding limits and additional clarity on a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) pilot program to manage wild horse populations in the West.

The letter, available at <http://bit.ly/2RDM29C>, is directed to Sens. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) and Tom Udall (D-N.M.), chair and ranking member respectively of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies; and Reps. Betty McCollum (D-Minn.) and David Joyce (R-Ohio), the chair and ranking member respectively of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.

The House and Senate versions of the Interior-Environment appropriations bill – which are currently being reconciled – each include funding for an untested pilot project that calls for a dramatic increase in round-ups and removals. The House bill provides \$6 million in additional funding for the program while the Senate bill provides \$35 million, and each bill includes report language calling for a total removal of 130,000 horses over the next decade.

As the authors point out, “That plan has never been presented for consideration in the authorizing committees of jurisdiction, would triple the number of horses and burros in holding, and could cost taxpayers billions.” They also note concerns that the House and Senate report language “opens the door to surgical sterilization procedures” that face opposition “by many stakeholders, including veterinarians.”

The authors urge appropriators to take three steps in a final conference version of the funding bill:

- Limit new funding for the pilot program to the \$6 million contained in the House bill;

- Clarify report language so new funding can be used solely on implementing the Porcine Zone Pellucida fertility control vaccine; and
- Clarify report language to ensure it prohibits use of any appropriated funds to conduct surgical sterilization procedures.

In addition to Grijalva, the letter is signed by Rep. Deb Haaland (D-N.M.), who chairs the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands; and by Reps. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), David Schweikert (R-Ariz.), Grace Napolitano (D-Calif.), Joe Neguse (D-Colo.), Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), Tony Cárdenas (D-Calif.), Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.), Dina Titus (D-Nev.), Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) and Ann McLane Kuster (D-N.H.).

"We commend House Natural Resources Chair Raúl M. Grijalva for leading a bipartisan group of lawmakers in requesting restrictions on funding appropriated in the FY 2020 spending bill that would impact America's federally protected wild horse and burro populations," said Suzanne Roy, Executive Director of the American Wild Horse Campaign. "We are deeply grateful to Rep. Grijalva for continuing his longstanding work as a great champion for wild horses."

"We applaud Chair Grijalva's tremendous leadership and tireless work to prevent the devastating roundup and incarceration of our iconic American wild horses," said Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action and a lifelong horseman. "We must continue to do everything within our power to defend these symbols of our nation."

"We thank Chair Grijalva for his leadership on this important issue," said Ginger Kathrens, Founder of The Cloud Foundation. "The appropriation of additional funds to this program, especially as BLM has failed to present any kind of plan to Congress, would be a grave mistake. If Congress chooses to appropriate additional funds, we strongly support Chair Grijalva. There are intelligent, cost-effective ways to manage healthy herds on healthy rangelands but this plan is not one."

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