



4790 Caughlin Parkway, PMB 227
Reno, Nevada 89519-0907

January 14, 2010

STATEMENT TO THE MEDIA REGARDING WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT AND THE CALICO COMPLEX GATHERS

As a conservation and sportsmen advocacy group, the Northern Nevada Chapter of Safari Club International (Chapter) is extremely interested in the management of public lands in Nevada. A major component of this management is to ensure the proper population levels and distribution of all wild and domestic animals in order to maintain healthy and sustainable ecosystems.

The 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act makes it very clear that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has management authority of horses and burros on the lands they manage. The Act further directs the BLM to manage horses in order to maintain a “thriving ecological balance”.

In recent years, horse populations with the Calico Complex (including the Granite Range, Calico Mountains and Black Rock Mountains) have expanded unchecked resulting in an overpopulation of horses. The appropriate management level for the Complex has been established for a range of 572 to 952 horses. The current population is estimated at 3,040 horses. Overpopulation has been apparent and conflicts with other wildlife has been observed and documented by the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the BLM and members of this Chapter. For this reason the Chapter has fully supported the BLMs roundup and removal of excess horses from the Complex.

Prior to the start of the gather several horse advocacy groups filed a motion in DC Federal Court to stop it. They claimed that the 1971 Act did not authorize the gather. At the Chapter’s request, Safari Club International (SCI) filed a court brief in support of BLMs proposed action, citing the impacts to native wildlife and hunting opportunity within the Complex. The judge ruled in favor of the BLM and allowed the gather to proceed. Part of the judge’s ruling stated:

The Court concludes that the plaintiffs reach these conclusions by relying on a strained reading of the statute that is ultimately untenable.

Having struck out in Federal District Court, advocacy groups have since turned to the court of public opinion. Northern Nevada has become ground zero for a major media debate that has featured celebrities calling on political figures to halt the gather. Much of the hysteria has been based on manipulated or false information. Most notably, advocacy groups have implied that the gather will result in the extinction of the wild horse in the Complex. This premise is false!



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In the fervor of the public debate, it would be easy for the average American citizen to forget the real issues at hand:

1. The United States Congress has made it very clear that public lands are to be managed in order to maintain multiple use and a “thriving ecological balance”, not for the sole use of any one species or interest
2. The Federal Court System has upheld these laws and reaffirmed the Congressional intent of such laws
3. The most important aspect of this entire debate is doing what is best for the public’s land, ALL of the animals and wildlife that live there and the citizens who enjoy them

Several facts remain true even through the myriad of misinformation that has confused this process:

1. Horses have a place on public lands in harmony with native wildlife such as the Sage-grouse, bighorn sheep, mule deer and Lahontan cutthroat trout. They should not be given priority status over all other native wildlife
2. It has been repeatedly documented and observed that the current overpopulation of horses in the Calico Complex have had negative impacts on native wildlife species, particularly on limited water and riparian habitat
3. A minimum of 572 horses will be left within the Calico Complex preventing extinction, allowing room for growth, and providing an opportunity for habitat to recover from current over use
4. The only way to ensure a “thriving ecological balance” within the Calico Complex is to actively manage horse numbers to stay within the range of appropriate management levels

The Chapter remains committed to the wildlife and sportsmen of the State of Nevada. We will be guided by what is best for our public resources and the laws that protect them!

Jeremy Drew, President
Northern Nevada Chapter of Safari Club International