

August 6, 2024

Dear _____,

I write to you today on an urgent matter happening on our public lands in Utah. While we may not live in Utah, public lands belong to all Americans including you and I and that makes this an American issue, not a state issue. Public lands are funded by all Americans and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) requests millions of dollars each year from Congress to maintain these lands.

There is a wild horse herd management area in Utah that is not being managed properly by the Bureau of Land Management, and wild horses and wildlife are dying because of it. I'm sorry for the graphic photographs, but these were taken just 2 days ago and show a wild mare becoming trapped in a muddy pond while her foal and an orphaned foal try not to get stuck as well.

How did this happen? The Muddy Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA) is 208,810 acres and has several livestock grazing allotments within the herd area, at least six of them allowing more than 2,320 cows to graze vs just 270 wild horses. The grazing allotments are separated by fencing within the HMA and when cows are present, the gates are closed not allowing wild horses to move freely around the herd area. Many times the cattle are removed but neither the ranchers nor the BLM open the gates. When cattle are on the allotments, they drink the waterholes until they are dry. Ranchers then truck in water to water troughs. But once the cattle are removed, the troughs are removed or turned upside down and water is no longer trucked in. Not only are the wild horses now without water, but so are all the wildlife, birds, and insects in the area.

There is Muddy Creek that runs through the HMA, but it is over 20 miles from where this dry pond is and the gates in between may be still be closed. A local advocate in the area who took these photographs, called the Utah BLM office and asked if water could be delivered to these horses and the answer was "Absolutely not". And the public is not allowed to take water out either as BLM claims that is illegal and has, in fact, arrested members of the public for doing so in the past. Why is trying to protect wildlife from dying of thirst illegal when the lack of water is human caused?

From the BLM Utah social media page: *"Given the location of this HMA and the arid nature of the landscape, it is common that animals naturally migrate to available water sources when these ponds dry up in summer months."* But the waterholes dried up because of heavy, extensive use by livestock. However the BLM refuses to acknowledge or address that fact.

Climate change is real. But what's even worse is that climate change is highly exacerbated by the presence of livestock in arid, desert areas. If livestock were not drinking from the waterholes in numbers greatly higher than the number of wild horses, water would still be available. If the grazing allotments did not require fencing and gates, then the wild horses, who are a federally protected species and principally meant to be on the herd areas, would be able to free roam and have access to all water sources within the HMA.



I write to you today to ask for immediate intervention into this issue. Direct the Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, to direct the BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning to have water delivered immediately to the Muddy Creek HMA wild horses and wildlife. Time is of the essence. Phone calls to Secretary Haaland and Director Stone-Manning go unanswered by the public.

From the BLM Utah social media page: *"While not currently trucking in water, if the situation arises where animals need water to survive, the BLM will take action. We remain committed to the health and safety of the wild horse population and other wildlife in the Muddy Creek HMA. Our efforts are focused on monitoring and providing necessary aid to ensure their well-being."*

But BLM already waited too long and the mare and one of the foals in the photos died as a direct result of the BLM's lack of action.

As a constituent and an American taxpayer who has a stake in our public lands and wildlife that live there, I am asking for immediate assistance with this very important issue. We want to see water tanks and water delivered to the Muddy Creek HMA in areas where wild horses and wildlife are presently found to avoid more cruel and inhumane deaths from dehydration.

Thank you,

