

For Immediate Release

Wild Horse Groups Win Another Round and Vow to Preserve Targeted West Douglas Herd

Groups Warn that BLM Withdrawal of EA for Roundup Doesn't Ensure Agency Won't Try Again

The Bureau of Land Management has officially withdrawn its 2011 plans to decimate the West Douglas Wild Horse herd, a small, isolated herd of wild horses in northwestern Colorado. Plaintiffs in two lawsuits challenging the BLM's long-held efforts are claiming a victory, but are concerned BLM will issue another decision to eliminate the herd in the future. Therefore, plaintiffs have vowed to continue their work in the courts and through public campaigns to prevent BLM's long-held plans to destroy this herd.

The battle over the West Douglas herd is nearly two decades old, and only through the effort of concerned citizens and organizations have the horses been saved from the BLM's desire to remove them all from their homelands. "The BLM has long known their management practices put them on shaky legal grounds, and they are worried they will be prevented from zeroing out this herd, as they have done to so many others throughout the West," stated Barbara Flores of the Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Coalition. "It appears they are trying to find legal grounds for eradicating this herd through a temporary retreat and regrouping."

In 2009, the individuals and organizations won the first case in the United States against BLM's practices of eliminating wild horse herds when Judge Rosemary Collyer set aside BLM's 2008 roundup plans. When BLM announced in 2010 that it was going to try again, Habitat for Horses Advisory Council, Inc. joined the efforts. R.T. Fitch of HFH Advisory Council explained, "BLM's path of destroying wild horse herds has got to be stopped. We have supported the recent litigation with extensive resources, and we do not intend to back down." Another suit was filed in 2010, and a motion to hold BLM in contempt of Judge Collyer's order was filed.

"Experts have predicted that wild horses and burros will go extinct in eleven years if BLM continues with its present course of roundups and removals," advised Ginger Kathrens, Volunteer Executive Director of The Cloud Foundation.

For now, the groups remain vigilant. They have presented suggestions for just how to accomplish this by a range science expert and professor, but BLM has so far refused to implement them. "BLM's promise to take a comprehensive look at wild horse management in the White River Resource Area is just window-dressing unless BLM agrees to find ways to maintain the horses among other multiple uses," explained Hilary Wood of Front Range Equine Rescue, a plaintiff in suits against BLM since 2006.