

Alliance of Wild Horse Advocates
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EDITORIAL OPINION

BLM's Slippery Slope

The old adage goes, "*If you've dug yourself into a hole, your first step should be to throw away the shovel.*" The BLM apparently doesn't see the logic in this bit of wisdom and instead of throwing away the shovel, they've called for a backhoe.

BLM's handling of the Pryor Mountains (Cloud) gather on the heels of the West Douglas court decision started BLM's slide down the slippery slope to disaster. The agency's handling of their proposed Calico Mountains Complex roundup of some 2,700 horses will only add speed to BLM's downward plunge.

While the Pryor Mountains gather brought BLM's activities into the media spotlight, the Calico Mountains Complex may very well bring to the forefront the incredible levels of incompetence and arrogance involved in the agency's overall wild horse management policies, priorities and activities. BLM's announcement that the 10,000 plus comments it received from the public are irrelevant and that BLM District Manager Gene Seidlitz will sign a finding of "no significant impact" with respect to BLM's roundup plans is pure political lunacy.

While some of the animosity towards the agency may be based on perception, BLM is nonetheless responsible for projecting the image that it is little more than a massive roundup machine, on a never ending obsessive path of gobbling up horses in an operation fed by huge amounts of our tax dollars. Instead of working with the various parties of interest and seeking some form of practical compromise, BLM's arrogance has motivated thousands of American citizens, through the groups that these citizens support, to drag BLM into court and expose every flaw and act of misconduct that they can. If the Obama administration and Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar won't straighten things out, very likely the public will as the groundswell of outrage continues to grow.

The unfortunate side to all of this is that some adjustment to the horse populations in the Calico Mountains Complex may be warranted. However BLM's range data appears to be so unreliable and contradictory that the public has no confidence that they know what they are doing, or that the number of horses scheduled to be removed is justified. When BLM conducts itself as it recently has, the conflicts produced can be harmful to the horses, the range, other range users and the taxpayers.

In a previous editorial I called for the replacement of Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar. I did so because I perceived that he would entrench his agencies in a battle against the American public. This is exactly what appears to be happening. Such conduct is un-American and an embarrassment to the Obama Administration. However if Mr. Salazar and Mr. Obama don't get it, the citizens and advocacy groups may just get their points across.

This is a completely unnecessary battle. However BLM created this situation and it's up to BLM to take a new track and try to create a more cooperative range management environment. The agency's first positive step would be to cancel the order for the backhoe.

Note:

This commentary reflects the views of the writer who is solely responsible for its content.