*** Archery Trade Association *** Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies *** Backcountry Hunters & Anglers *** Boone and Crockett Club *** Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation *** Conservation Force *** Delta Waterfowl *** Houston Safari Club *** Izaak Walton League of America *** Masters of Foxhounds Association of North America *** Mule Deer Foundation *** National Association of Forest Service Retirees *** National Deer Association *** National Wild Turkey Federation *** North American Grouse Partnership *** Pheasants Forever *** Pope and Young Club *** Professional Outfitters and Guides of America *** Public Lands Foundation *** Quail Forever *** Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation ***Safari Club International *** Safari Club International Foundation *** Sportsmen's Alliance *** Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership *** Whitetails Unlimited *** Wild Sheep Foundation *** Wildlife Management Institute ***

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Monday, November 17, 2025

Dear Chair Westerman:

We understand that you and your committee are facing several requests from members and other stakeholders to advance statutory adjustments to the *Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971* (WFRHBA). We respectfully ask that you work with your colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to allow the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to execute the statute as it is currently written before making any changes to it. Doing so would sustain horses and burros as a feature of western ecosystems compatible with everything else we value.

Further, if your committee is to take up the issue of feral equids on our public lands, we ask that you and your colleagues address the problem directly and comprehensively. The WFRHBA provides the tools necessary to restore ecological balance, specifically, by authorizing the removal of excess animals, adoption and sale without restriction, and humane euthanasia when no adoption market exists. These provisions were carefully designed to ensure that horse and burro herds remain a valued part of our public lands, without overwhelming the capacity of the range or displacing native wildlife.

Over the past several decades, Congress has repeatedly restricted the agencies' ability to fully implement the management framework Congress originally envisioned. Annual appropriations riders—particularly those preventing sale or humane euthanasia of unadopted horses and burros—have rendered the statute unworkable. As a result, the agencies cannot meet the law's requirement to maintain a "thriving natural ecological balance" among horses and burros, wildlife, livestock, and other public land uses.

Today, that failure is plainly visible on the landscape. Populations of horses and burros now exceed three times the Appropriate Management Level (AML) set by federal law. The ecological consequences are devastating: rangelands are degraded, riparian areas are trampled, and forage and water resources for wildlife and livestock are depleted. Many grazing allotments have gone

unused for decades due to overuse by feral equids, and the resulting habitat damage continues to threaten the health and diversity of our public lands.

Meanwhile, the cost to taxpayers has ballooned. The federal government now spends more than $100 million annually—over 70 percent of the program's total budget—to maintain more than 67,000 animals in off-range holding facilities. This system is financially unsustainable and ecologically irresponsible.

We urge you to work with your colleagues on the Appropriations committee to reestablish lawful management under the WFRHBA by removing the perennial riders that have prevented its execution. Our shared public lands, and the wildlife, rural economies, and communities that depend on them, deserve nothing less. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of America's natural resources and your commitment to sound, science-based management of our public lands.

Sincerely,

Archery Trade Association
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Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Boone and Crockett Club
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Delta Waterfowl
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