

Some background: We are cattle ranchers in Custer County located in the Pahsimeroi, Round Valley [Challis area], and above the reservoir in Mackay. We have a public lands grazing permit that includes area from the Chilly Slough to Copper Basin, managed by the BLM, USFS and IDL. We are members of local and state cattle associations and serve on local committees dealing with natural resource issues. I also serve on the BLM RAC [Resource Advisory Committee] that entails the east half of the state.

The Wild horse issue is a controversial one throughout the western states. The horse advocates believe they shouldn't be removed while the BLM is overburdened with unadoptable horses. They have allocated \$80.2M in fiscal 2015 to manage the animals, which includes the cost of maintaining the captured herd, control actions, and research on population control methods. The objection from the ranchers standpoint is the impact of 14,000 wild horses over the appropriate management level in the WHMAs and their impact on the range, most of which overlap grazing allotments. As ranchers we are assailed by the environmental extremists to remove the cattle from the range due to drought, endangered species concerns, or impacts on the water shed. They employ 'litigation management' of the federal agencies. Their approach with the agencies is hypocritical as they litigate to get the cattle off the range for protection, but the wild horse advocates sue to stop gatherings. As ranchers we have a property right vested in the grazing permit and a state livestock water right which were granted by the Taylor Grazing Act and State rights. The federal agencies are managing according to the Wild Horse and Burro Act except in the case of disposal (see article of April 2014 attached).

The hypocrisy of the advocates/extremists is further compounded because while they claim to be concerned about 'Range Land health', the agencies mission, their concern is only for their particular agenda. None of these groups provides 'on the ground solutions' until Andrea and WLP appear.

Andrea through her organization has faced obstacles greater than the adoption and management. She has had to overcome the natural suspicion of the community and other public land users who have experienced the NGO's disregard for social, economic, and cultural concerns of the community [as set forth in NEPA]. She has crafted an understanding with the community, ranchers, and local government officials by demonstrating 'on the ground solutions' without government monies.

There is much talk among the 'wild horse advocates' about solutions, and the most public is the proposal in Nevada by Madeline Pickens. While it is aggressive, looking to convert cattle range and private ground to accommodate 10,000 horses, she is also looking for the DOI to subsidize her operation. There is some push back from the cattle organizations as no consideration has been given to whether the range will accommodate the numbers [horses consume 40% more than cattle] and there will be no reduction in the cost to the government.

Which leads us to WLP. When introduced she had not secured the funding for the private property to maintain these animals and as such could not take possession. We had a ranch in the Pahsimeroi with corrals, that with modifications to meet BLM guidelines would handle the approximately 100 horses she worked to adopt from the recent Challis gather. We obtained the assistance of local ranchers and outfitters to transport them from the BLM facilities to the ranch. We sold her the hay and provided our cowboy for hire to manage and care for them. WLP raised funds and covered all expenses for modifications, transport, monthly lease.

There was a great many of comments from the community, but we were quick to remind them that this would be the first time that an advocate has used private funding to address a public land issue. Over time she has demonstrated that her program when fully funded will solve the wild horse issue in the Custer WHMA through private management and PZP for population control to maintain the herd size. Her actions have quieted the 'nay sayers' in the agency, local and ranching communities.

S. Bauchman, Challis Creek Cattle Co.  
Challis, Idaho