

5.0 COMMISSION'S PLAN OF GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF WILD HORSES IN THE STATE OF NEVADA

5.1 The Role Of The Commission

In Section 4, it is pointed out that there is no lack of written reports identifying issues and problems with the current wild horse management programs. As one observer noted, "The subject of wild horses has been studied to death!" In many of its public meetings, the Commission heard views and testimony regarding the short comings of the federal wild horse program. The Commission sees no useful purpose in adding to this stack of reports critical of the federal law in general, or the manner in which wild horses are managed by the BLM and FS. The Commission believes that energies are better spent on seeking solutions.

The Commission's role must be placed in proper perspective. As a state agency, the Commission has no legal authority to change existing federal laws or BLM policy. This Commission is not a substitute for the BLM. Many of the concepts and proposals made by the public would have placed duties and responsibilities upon the Commission far beyond the Commission's fiscal and administrative capabilities. The Commission is mindful that the management of wild horses on federal lands rests within the exclusive jurisdiction of the BLM and FS.

Although federal law is preemptive as to the management of wild horses on federal lands, the citizens of the State of Nevada are affected by the federal government's management of those horses. The central premise of management of wild horses under federal law is that management is under the multiple use concept. Under a multiple use concept, all citizens of the State of Nevada are affected by the management decisions made by federal agencies under existing federal laws, regulations and agency policies. This includes all the users of the federal lands, such as the livestock industry, wildlife management by Nevada agencies, and the public at large. The role of this Commission is to act as the state agency charged with the legislative responsibility to advocate the protection and preservation of wild horses in the State of Nevada.

Having spent considerable time in public sessions and consensus workshops, the Commission is now prepared to select those proposals and ideas developed at the public forum sessions which it believes are realistic and obtainable goals and recommendations for the Commission. In addition, the Commission believes that good management of wild horses will require participation and contribution from all affected users, including the State of Nevada, wild horse advocacy groups, the livestock industry, and the public at large. In short, the protection and preservation of wild horses is not "just a BLM problem." This is an issue that requires broad based participation.

After a review of all the information available to it, particularly the results of the public forum workshop sessions (See Appendix C for the complete results of the Public Forum sessions), the Commission has identified the following issues of greatest importance to the citizens of Nevada:

- 1st To maintain and improve public rangeland health is the ultimate goal for the management of wild horses under a multiple use concept.
- 2nd Establish and maintain AML so that the number of wild horses on the federal range is in appropriate balance under a multiple use concept.
- 3rd Promote an effective wild horse adoption program, involving a wide variety of interest groups, that creates a greater demand than are available numbers of wild horses for adoption.
- 4th Promote Nevada's wild horses through tourism, education and cooperative efforts with the BLM and the various interest groups.
- 5th Reduce the level of conflict and improve communication and cooperation between federal agencies, the State of Nevada, the livestock industry, horse advocacy groups and other interested parties.

What follows in this Plan is how the Commission addresses the major issues articulated at the public forum sessions. The Commission's goals, strategies and recommendations for the protection and preservation of wild horses, and in the relative order of priority, are as follows:

5.2 Reduce The Level Of Conflict And Open Lines Of Communication

The Commission believes that the 1992 Federal Advisory Board is correct in its characterization of a "growing public disillusionment and polarization" in the wild horse program. It would be a worthwhile goal for this Commission to assist in reducing the level of conflict and open lines of communication between the various interest groups, state and federal agencies.

In some ways, this might be considered as the Commission's goal of highest priority as this goal produces the quickest and most positive results with the lowest expenditure of funds and resources.

The Commission is suited to this task. Since the State of Nevada has the largest population of wild horses, its citizens have the greatest stake in seeing a successful wild horse program. The Commission members represent a wide cross section of the different interest groups. As a permanent Commission, it is readily available for a grass roots review of issues by those directly impacted by the success and failures of the horse program.

5.3 Establishing And Maintaining AML To Preserve Rangeland Health

Preserving and improving public rangeland health is the ultimate goal underlying all discussions

regarding federal policy for the management of wild horses.¹ The vehicle to preserve rangeland health is in establishing and maintaining AML, based on the rangeland resources under a multi-use concept. Since the health of the rangeland is the ultimate concern, the establishment and maintenance of AML is the number one issue and top priority as identified by the citizens of Nevada. The problem is of particular concern to the citizens of Nevada because AML has not even been *established* for roughly half of the HA and HMAs in the State of Nevada.² Before good management can be devoted to *maintaining* AML, there must first be a determination of AML under the MUD process.

The urgency surrounding the issues of establishing and maintaining AML cannot be overstated as expressed by numerous participants at the Commission's public forums. A failure to maintain AML creates a "domino effect" starting with degraded rangelands that are insufficient to maintain healthy herds of horses, livestock and wildlife thereby impacting businesses and recreational opportunities. The net result is that BLM is forced to crises management and removal of excess horses after the health of the wild horse herds and rangeland becomes irreparably damaged.

The BLM has established a goal of reaching AML for all HMAs in the State of Nevada by the year 2003. However, goals have been set in the past and not been met. If there is one area that generates more criticism of the BLM, and loss of credibility, it is the BLM's failure to establish AML for all Nevada.³ Until BLM proposes a credible plan to demonstrate that AML will in fact be established within a relatively short period of time, this credibility gap between the various interest groups and the BLM will continue to grow wider.

The solution to the issues of establishing AML will require a renewed effort on both a federal and state level. Since this issue is largely an internal problem of the BLM, the Commission must call upon those with the greatest influence over federal policy making for assistance.

- *Help From Nevada's Congressional Delegation.* This single issue, if solved, would have the most significant impact on the citizens of Nevada. Nevada's representatives in Congress could greatly assist the BLM in solving this problem by working to implement the recommendations coming out of the public forums outlined below. In addition, Nevada's representatives could greatly assist in maintaining AML by supporting existing federal programs that are beyond the jurisdictional basis of the Commission and State of Nevada. One of the most effective federal programs is the

¹. See Section 4.2.1.

². See Section 3.4.

³. The 1992 Strategic Plan prepared by BLM forecasts that removal of all excess horses would be accomplished to reach appropriate management levels within 6 years (by 1998). In 1994, BLM represented to Congress that AML would be reached by the year 2002. By 1997, the Office of Inspector General, DOI, concluded: "Based on its historical removal rates, the Bureau cannot reach appropriate management levels." See Audit Report No 97-I-1104, August 1997.

ongoing research and testing of fertility control measures. Fertility control is a viable part of the overall management of wild horses by the BLM, but will require funding and aggressive management that can only be provided by direction from Congress.

- *Help From The Federal Advisory Board.* The Federal Advisory Board has a tremendous amount of influence on wild horse issues and many of its recommendations have been implemented. The Commission believes that the issue of establishing AML in Nevada is of such a serious concern that the Federal Advisory Board should be called upon to hold a special session devoted to this single issue. The recommendations of the Federal Advisory Board would have to be seriously considered by BLM, and with the help from Nevada's congressional delegation, possibly this issue could be put behind us.
- *Suggestions From The Public Forums.* A number of suggestions came out of the public forums for solving this problem which could be the focus of action by the Federal Advisory Board or Nevada's congressional delegation:

(1) Additional BLM staffing. Some analysis needs to be done to determine the realistic staffing levels that will be required by the BLM to accomplish its goal of establishing and maintaining AML by 2003. It would appear to the Commission that the BLM will need additional staffing to conduct credible monitoring of wild horse habitat areas to consolidate, reduce or combine HMAs and then to set AMLs. This may require a special allocation of funds, temporary staffing positions, a special team assigned to this specific project, or some other allocation of funds and personnel necessary to accomplish the task. Obviously, this is a problem that must be solved within BLM itself. However, the general perception of the Commission is that the BLM does not have sufficient staffing to accomplish the task. This must be corrected by appropriate federal authorities.

(2) Diamond Mountain and Fish Creek Working Groups. The Commission believes that to establish AML for the State of Nevada within the target range of year 2003, the BLM will need to establish a network of cooperative working groups of local interests patterned after the Diamond Mountain and Fish Creek experiments. Diamond Mountain involved three BLM districts, two state agencies, two county governments, and several private groups and individuals. Standards for rangeland health were assessed and proposed. The Fish Creek proposal involved an agreement with Eureka County and the BLM through which the county will, with full opportunity for public involvement, collect monitoring data for use by the BLM in writing allotment evaluations for the five allotments in the Fish Creek HMA. The data will be collected by Eureka County using approved BLM methods and procedures. This evaluation will set the carrying capacity for the allotments and establish appropriate livestock grazing practices on the allotments in this complex.

The Commission can assist the BLM in establishing such cooperative working groups in the different areas of the State where AML has not been established. Such cooperative working groups should provide the forum to resolve conflicts and establish AML for all users under a multiple use concept with a minimum of protests and disputes.

- *Participation By State of Nevada.* As previously noted, solutions to wild horse issues will require participation by all interested parties. This includes the State of Nevada. The State of Nevada must be prepared to assist the BLM in resolving the number one issue of concern to Nevada citizens. Nevada can assist the BLM in the following ways:

(1) Additional Commission Staffing. The Commission will recommend to the Nevada Legislature to add a position of Staff Specialist with expertise in rangeland and animal health. The Specialist would have the primary responsibility of working with the BLM and the cooperative working groups to establish AML for the State of Nevada. By having a qualified Staff Specialist with the expertise and credibility to work with the diverse groups, the Commission could greatly assist the individual working groups and the BLM to resolve conflicts in HMAs and in establishing AML.

(2) Assistance From NDOW. The Nevada Department of Wildlife has developed considerable expertise in the management of Nevada's wildlife, including innovative programs for the management of deer, elk, big horn sheep, migratory birds and other wildlife. NDOW also maintains a fleet of helicopters in performing its census, monitoring and management activities. Some of this considerable body of expertise developed in the management of wildlife can be used by BLM personnel in establishing and maintaining AML. The Commission will seek ways for NDOW to share its expertise with the BLM in solving the AML issues in Nevada.

5.4 Excess Horses And The Adoption Program.

The DOI's internal investigation by the Office of Inspector General documented that present wild horse policy and programs have not been able to eliminate the problem of excess horses. As a consequence, the health of the range and the wild horse herds have suffered.⁴ The conclusion of the Inspector General clearly defines the problem at hand:

Specifically, the Bureau had not been able to place sufficient numbers of animals through its Adopt-A-Horse Program; was prevented from disposing of excess healthy animals by legislative restrictions included in its appropriations acts; and had not aggressively pursued other options for controlling herd sizes, such as birthrate controls...

⁴. Department of Interior, Office of Inspector General, Audit Report No. 97-I-1104, August 1997.

In addition, the Bureau was not monitoring and evaluating the health of the herds. This occurred because the Bureau did not have or establish requirements for performing this function. Because the Bureau did not have appropriate information regarding the health of the herds, it could not properly evaluate the effect decisions regarding Program operations had on the health of the animals.

Since the issuance of this Audit Report, not much has changed to eliminate these problems. The fact remains that there are excess wild horses on the range and the adoption program is ineffective to absorb the excess numbers. It was the consensus of the Public Forums that to improve the health of the range and the wild horse herds, innovative and drastic changes are required in the present programs.

5.4.1 Sale Authority

The problem of excess horses on the federal lands is actually two issues in one. One issue is sale authority, and the other is the adoption program. The Commission has concluded that these two issues are actually two sides of the same coin and are therefore discussed together.

The Commission heard from a large contingency that would advocate that the BLM be granted sale authority or the right to sell excess horses. The Commission has taken a firm stand against the grant of sale authority. The reasons are two fold. First, it appears to the Commission that those advocating sale authority perceive this remedy as a “quick fix” to the problem of excess numbers. The advocacy for sale authority is seen by the Commission as the response to years of frustration with federal policies that have not worked to reduce excess numbers. This high frustration level is understandable. However, in the final analysis, the Commission feels that the solution to the problem of excess horses lies with an effective adoption program and not sale authority.

A second reason why sale authority is not approved at this time, is that the Commission has concluded that the public would not support such a policy. The advocates are equally divided on this issue, and for every advocate for, there were an equal number against. With such strong feelings running so high on both sides, this is an issue that generates divisive debate before legislative committees and within the BLM and other federal agencies. There is also the consideration that the debate over sale authority will undoubtedly further polarize the various groups divided over this issue. Such debate leads to delay. The problem of excess horses is genuine and needs immediate attention. The Commission concludes that sale authority is not a viable option at this time. For that reason, the Commission has turned its attention to major revisions of the adoption program as a solution to the problem of excess numbers.

Strong Note of Caution: The Commission is very aware of the fact that the status quo is unacceptable for the State of Nevada. There is a significant segment of Nevadans that view the current adoption program as a failure, and have no faith that adoption is the solution to the problem of excess horses. For this reason, the Commission will be monitoring this issue to see if a significantly changed

adoption program is capable of eliminating this problem within a time frame of three to five years. If a revitalized adoption program does not succeed, then the cry will be even louder for sale authority, a sunset version of sale authority, euthanasia or similar plan. Before the Commission is called upon to address such issues, all interested parties should work for the success of a cooperative new adoption program along the lines set out below.

5.4.2 Federal Adoption Program

The problems with the adoption program have been addressed by prior Federal Advisory Boards and in numerous agency reports, but with few solutions. The problem is easily stated. There are not sufficient numbers of horses being absorbed into the marketplace to have an effective management plan for the health of the range and the herds themselves. As a consequence, the adoption program, or the limitations of the adoption program, controls management in the field. This leads to poor management such as that only horses 5 years and younger will be removed because horses of this age are readily adoptable. This results in older horses being turned back and the federal lands used to merely warehouse old, sick and otherwise healthy horses considered as “unadoptable.” What the long term effect this policy will have on the health and viability of the wild horse herds is an open question.

The Commission has observed, as have others, that the absorption of wild horses by the public is largely a function of marketing. The basic question must be posed, “Is the BLM the best vehicle to market wild horses?” Stated another way, “Does the BLM have the personnel with the qualifications, skills and expertise to market horses?” The answer is that they do not. Most of the BLM wild horse specialists have their degrees and expertise in range/habitat with little training or expertise as wildlife biologists or in equine studies. Certainly advertising and marketing is not a part of the curriculum. Every Fortune 500 company turns to outside expertise for advertising and marketing. The same should be true for the BLM.

This is not meant in any manner as a criticism of the BLM, its personnel, or to take away from the excellent efforts that have gone into the adoption program. However, the BLM has been assigned the responsibility for a national marketing effort that is beyond their training and expertise. The Commission concludes that a successful adoption program is only possible if the marketing responsibility for the adoption program is taken off the shoulders of the BLM.

5.4.3 Suggestions For A New Federal Adoption Program.

The Commission has come to the fundamental conclusion that a drastic and fundamental change to the federal adoption program is necessary. Only the framework and concept is presented here. After receiving feedback and conducting further hearings, the structure of such a program could be finalized and presented to the Nevada congressional delegation for appropriate federal legislative and administrative changes.

Again, the Commission is building on ideas that have been considered in the past. For example, the third Federal Advisory Board which is now in place, has asked for proposals for a marketing consultant to look at the marketing of wild horses for the BLM.⁵ This is a good start, and creative ideas will undoubtedly come out of this effort. However, Commission believes that the time has arrived for a new concept for the adoption program.

The Marketing Opportunity. The Introduction to the 1992 Federal Advisory Board Report was prophetic in its observations that it was "ironic that the Wild Horse and Burro Act. . .has become mired in nearly continuous controversy." The Report notes that this is not only unfortunate but "more remarkable considering that the wild horse and burro program has the potential to be the Bureau's 'showcase' program." The potential that has been lost, and the marketing opportunity that goes unrealized, lies at the heart of this observation by the Advisory Board:

The mythical wild horse is inexorably interwoven into the fantasy and fascination the American society has for the "Ole West" and "Cowboys." Wild horses and burros are a symbol of our roots. Adding to this special identity is the unique opportunity for people through adoption and volunteerism to be a part of the wild horse program. As an imagemaker, the wild horse and burro program should have exceeded Smokey Bear".

No state better fits this model than the State of Nevada. Here is an opportunity for the BLM and the State of Nevada to join a unique joint venture of marketing wild horses and the "Nevada Wild Horse" in particular. To achieve a successful marketing plan, it will require the cooperation of the BLM, the State of Nevada, and participation by all the interest groups. However, to achieve success, fundamental changes to the adoption program are needed.

Private Foundation. During the public sessions, the idea of privatizing the federal adoption program was advanced. Although a strict legal definition of governmental privatization⁶ may not be appropriate, the concept has considerable merit and deserves careful consideration. The Commission is not recommending that the legal responsibility for wild horses be removed from the BLM. What is being suggested is that the marketing and adoption of wild horses be put in the hands of a private foundation of national scope.

The concept of a joint public/private arrangement for the federal adoption program is not a new concept. The Commission finds support for the idea in the Culp Report which made this recommendation:

⁵. The final report of the BLM's consultant was not available at the time this Plan was finalized.

⁶. A strict legal definition of "privatize" would contemplate that a governmental function would be entirely transferred to private enterprise. A complete change is not being suggested here, but more of a joint venture and sharing of responsibilities between government and private forces.

Support the establishment of a WH&B Foundation (private/nonprofit). The establishment of a WH&B Foundation would permit donations to BLM to assist with many aspects of the program, from herd management to care demonstrations at adoption events. There seems to be considerable public interest and potential support for such a private, nonprofit Foundation, and a model already exists from other agencies such as the national Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service. While the Foundation could be initiated by interest groups, it would take an Act of Congress to formally sanction this action.

How A National Marketing/Adoption Foundation Could Work. A cooperative effort would be required between the BLM and a national foundation. BLM would retain title to the horses until turned over to the adopter and the 1 year titling period ends. The foundation would take over the BLM's responsibility for the marketing, adoptions, pre and post adoption compliance checks, mentoring, and related activities.

Some of the marketing and adoption responsibilities that a foundation could undertake, many of which BLM has already undertaken, would include the following:

A) Break the country into Regions. The Regional offices could assist their territories with coordination and sponsoring of local adoptions, mentoring programs for adoption, training, and post adoption programs. Packets of information could be developed to include the "how to's" of hosting adoptions, packets of suggested material to pass out to potential adopters, and coordination of training programs.

B) Teams could be developed that provide training clinics on compliance checks for potential adopters, setting up and hosting adoptions, training programs, post adoption compliance checks, and post adoption training programs.

C) At the regional training clinics, individuals would actually receive certification upon successful completion of the program. They could then take those certifications to BLM and would be able to volunteer their time and have the training to be of help, not a hindrance.

D) Through an available 800 number and web site, the public would be provided the dissemination of information, guidance, and assistance in obtaining regional information on current scheduled adoptions, trainings, and shows.

E) Promote local and regional wild horse shows patterned after the National Wild Horse Show held annually in Reno. These local shows would be qualifiers for a National competition patterned after the National Cutting Horse Finals in Fort Worth and the National Snaffle Bit Futurity in Reno and dozens of similar events. The horse industry has learned that such shows build desire and demand for particular kinds of horses. This could add tremendously to the adoption program by not only building demand, but hosting adoptions at each state event.

F) A foundation could establish a registry that would not only allow the public a place to

register their wild horses but could also be used by BLM to assist in their tracking of adopted horses as owners change especially untitled horses. This has been a problem for the BLM. This would also be a way to bring funds into the organization. This could also track any inspections or compliance checks.

G) There could be coordination of sales of a wild horse magazine, t-shirts, training tapes, etc. to bring funds into the foundation.

H) Youth at risk wild horse programs (e.g., Mustang Troopers).

I) Police horse training programs to include all federal agency programs that use horse or burros in their work such as Forest Service, BLM, etc. In the Culp report, it was noted and suggested that Bureau personnel should be riding wild horses and at times those horses would end up in the adoption program where the public could adopt that trained horse.

J) The horse has been a major part of the culture of the Native American. The wild horse program affords many opportunities for the Native American to participate. Native American youth training programs and similar programs might better be instituted under the umbrella of a foundation rather than the BLM.

K) Video Marketing, of the adoptable horses. This could all be coordinated through the foundation.

L) Eliminate the myth of the “unadoptable” horse.⁷ The BLM’s policy on unadoptable horses, arbitrarily defined as a horse 5 years and older, is totally wrong. Some horses may be more readily adoptable than others, but an otherwise healthy horse cannot be labeled as unadoptable. Training and gentling horses is the only ingredient that separates the adoptable from the unadoptable. The coordination of prison training programs, private training arrangements and similar programs will greatly solve what the BLM now considers as an unadoptable horse. A foundation is better suited to coordinate such training efforts than is the BLM.

No Need To Reinvent The Wheel. BLM has implemented many new and innovative ideas to improve the adoption program. A foundation would merely build on those programs. The major difference between the BLM and a foundation is that a foundation can call upon the existing expertise within the horse industry and wild horse interest organizations in creating the demand and a market for wild horses. One example is the Chincoteague Wild Ponies where demand is so strong that these ponies now command a price of \$1,600 and up.⁸ It may be stating the obvious, but the greatest demand for wild horses must surely exist with people who already have horses of one kind or another. However,

⁷. Wild horses that are suffering from health, physical and age problems should not be adopted, and would be subject to the BLM’s present policy on humane destruction.

⁸. See the article in *Mustang Manes & Tails*, Fall 1998.

it takes horse people to sell to horse people. The BLM simply does not fit this role.

The marketing of a wild horse should be no different than the marketing of any other kind of horse. The horse industry as a whole provides hundreds of examples of successful marketing programs. This includes the marketing of all kinds of organizations devoted to horse breeds, i.e. Quarter Horses, Paints, Thoroughbreds, Miniature, Appaloosa, etc. There are also numerous organizations which promote particular horse activities, with organizations promoting Racing Horses , Cutting Horses, Draft Horses, Reining Horses, Endurance Horses, etc. The Foundation could draw on this tremendous wealth of marketing expertise in marketing wild horses.

The livestock industry also provides numerous examples of marketing techniques that can be used in the wild horse program. Not only is this industry adept at marketing the different breeds of livestock, but pioneered the development of video marketing of livestock.

Why A Private Foundation. A private foundation has many advantages. A private foundation could better bring all the various horse groups and other interested parties under one umbrella to work together for the adoption of wild horses.

- A private foundation will enhance the possibility for private funding, grants and charitable contributions. People rarely make a contribution of funds to the federal government.
- A private foundation would put to work the people most interested in seeing a successful adoption program. This would include the numerous horse organizations now in existence who are dedicated to preserving the wild horses.
- The ranching and livestock community should support this concept, because a successful adoption program solves the problem they are most vocal about, the excess numbers.
- Federal/Private foundation arrangements have worked in the past. There are numerous examples now in place where private foundations have worked with federal agencies for the management of wildlife. One of the largest in Nevada is the partnership between the federal government and Ducks Unlimited. There is no reason why such a similar arrangement would not work for wild horses.

5.5 Promotion of Tourism and Nevada's Wild Horses

Another major theme developed at the Public Forums was that the Commission should play a major role in the marketing and promotions of Nevada's wild horses. The Commission can fulfill this role

with the full cooperation of the Nevada Legislature and other state agencies.

Nevada Tourism. Like the BLM, the State of Nevada has not taken advantage of the unique marketing opportunities afforded the symbolism and mystique surrounding the wild horse. In conjunction with the Foundation described above, Nevada could join in efforts to market Nevada's wild horses. Working with the BLM and the State Office of Tourism, the State of Nevada could develop a tourism plan centered around wild horses. Some of the ideas coming out of the Public Forums include:

(A) Promotion of the tourism possibilities afforded by the Red Rock Park near Las Vegas.

(B) Develop and promote a "Wild Horse of Nevada" video tape showing the wild horses including local "color" such as rural historical locations, ghost towns, Lehman Caves, etc. The tape could then move into such issues as management of wild horses on Nevada's public lands explaining the relationship between horses, wildlife, and livestock and the need for management to preserve healthy herds and rangelands. The tape could then cover removals, adoptions, and resistance free training techniques highlighting the special difference with wild horses. This would help promote tourism and adoption in one tape.

(C) Prison training programs through the Nevada prison system. Such training programs benefit inmates and the adoption program by working with older horses and providing gentle horses for the horse novice looking for that first horse. The Commission will actively promote a Nevada inmate training program in the State of Nevada.

(D) Develop an "Adopt a Herd Area" program to get the public involved with the ranchers in the management of the habitat and fund raising events to improve the range such as water developments that would benefit all users. This would benefit tourism in the state of Nevada as people would travel from across the nation to visit the herd area they are involved with or where their personal horse was adopted from.

(E) Work with local communities and ranchers to develop tourism packages and camping trips into herd areas to see wild horses in their native habitat.

(F) Assist BLM in developing brochures for distribution around the nation targeting specific herd areas and "local color" towns they can visit and stay in to come see wild horses. Tie that in with such places as ghost towns, the flavor of the old west, Lehman Caves, etc.

(G) Work with BLM to develop packets and brochures on each individual herd area explaining terrain, local history, herd area statistics, type of horses residing there i.e.: size, color, etc. What the Commission has found is that most people adopting want all the information they can get their hands on about their new member of the family. Adopters take pride in talking about their experiences with that wild horse and want as much information on background as possible. Brochures would not only benefit adopters but the education and tourism aspect of the program.

(H) Develop and maintain a web site for the Commission as the State of Nevada agency on wild horses, this could not only educate and inform the public of programs that the Commission is involved in but promote the tourism and adoption aspects of the program.

Wild Horse and Burro Visitor's Center. Joint venture with the BLM the location and construction of a Wild Horse and Burro Visitor's Center. Such a center could serve to provide as a library of information, including history, adoption, training, research coordination and tourism opportunities. Ideas that have been discussed include the following, which only presents a conceptual view of such a Center:

- (a) The outline for such a Center has been presented to the legislature on two different occasions and received tremendous support although not adopted. The suggested location was near the Pine Nut Herd Management Area outside of Dayton just 10 minutes outside of Carson City, Nevada's state capital, and convenient to Virginia City, Lake Tahoe, and Reno.
- (b) A campground could be developed for people in RV's to camp and roads developed so tourists could drive back into the herd area and actually see wild horses running free.
- (c) Waters could be developed within a distance from the road to encourage horses' presence but far enough away not to be hampered by tourists. Interpretive signs could be all through the area for not only the horses but Nevada wildlife, habitat, archaeology, etc.
- (d) At the center there would be viewing areas for horses up for adoption that would be user friendly. The setting could have trees, picnic tables, campgrounds, etc. The actual horse working area of the center would be away from public view but the BLM or volunteers could also put on daily scheduled demonstrations to inform the public of the operation and encourage adoptions.
- (e) The actual center itself could have offices for the various federal and state agencies responsible for wild horse management, including the commission's office. This would be one way to better facilitate coordination and interaction between state & federal programs.
- (f) There would be a theater as in other visitor centers around the nation that could show movies on wild horses in Nevada and also educate the public on the wild horse program and the need for management of the habitat and control of horse numbers which is still so misunderstood.
- (g) A gift shop and restaurant could be at the facility.

- (h) Volunteers could be used to staff the center and assist the BLM with the facility, giving tours, answering questions, assisting with the adoptions.
- (i) Horseback trips could be coordinated out of the center wherein visitors could ride out into the herd area with guides for day or overnight trips.
- (j) Research projects could be coordinated through this facility.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMISSION ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO NEVADA LEGISLATURE

To finalize this Nevada Plan, certain steps need to be taken by the Commission and certain action by the Nevada Legislature will be required to support the Commission's efforts. In Section 1.1, the Commission's authority under NRS 504.470 is set out in full. The Nevada Legislature has conferred a broad grant of duties and responsibilities upon this Commission. This Nevada Plan attempts to reduce to a manageable level, within the capabilities of staff and funding, those goals which it has determined are realistic and obtainable.

The major problem facing this Commission is that the legislative grant of authority under NRS 504.470 comes without funding. The only funds available to the Commission are generated by the interest earned on the Heil Trust funds. This level of funding is totally inadequate for the Commission to begin to accomplish even a modest level of duties and responsibilities under NRS 504.470. Accordingly, the Nevada Legislature must be prepared to appropriate sufficient funds for the Commission to carry out the goals outlined in Section 5.0. To accomplish these tasks, the Commission will be undertaking the following actions and requesting the appropriate funding from the Legislature:

Regular Commission Meetings. To carry out the plan outlined in Section 5, the Commission should hold regular Commission meetings. For these meetings to be effective, the Commission should continue to meet in the different locations in the State so affected users have a chance to be heard. In addition, the Commission anticipates that special meetings will have to be held to implement the goals of establishing AML and a national public/private foundation outlined in Section 5. The Commission will propose a travel budget for at least 6 regular meetings per year.

Adequate Staffing Level. The Commission operates with a staff consisting of one Administrator and no support staff of any kind. The Commission finds this totally inadequate. The Commission will ask the Legislature to supplement the Heil Trust funds in order to maintain the following minimum staffing level:

- Full time Administrator with the primary duty to carry out the goals of the Commission outlined in Section 5.
- Full time secretary to perform clerical duties and assist the Administrator.

- Full time staff specialist with range habitat and animal health expertise. This position will work with the BLM and local interest groups to assist BLM in HMA planning, establishment of AML and assist in resolving conflicts between the various interest groups.
- Up to date computer technology so that the office of the Commission has its own internet web site, e-mail address, and appropriate word processing, spread sheet and communications software.

Funding A Study of National Marketing/Adoption Foundation. The Commission has suggested a substantial change in the federal wild horse adoption program by creating a national marketing/adoption foundation. The Commission should be in a position to go forward with the study of the feasibility of this proposal. This study would be funded either by an appropriation from the Legislature or from the Heil Trust. The funding must be in a sufficient amount to permit review of similar public/private foundations, necessary legislative and administrative changes, establish the level of cooperation of interest groups, and to retain any expertise necessary to put such a foundation into place.

Cooperation Of State Agencies. The Commission will ask the Nevada Legislature for assistance from other State agencies including the State Prison System in establishing a wild horse training program throughout the Nevada State Prison system; the assistance of NDCNR in providing staffing and working with BLM to establish AML as outlined above; and in the location of a Nevada Wild Horse Center.