

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

March 19, 2007

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

I am writing to you concerning the very real and current crisis of extinction wild burros now face in California and am pleading for your intervention.

While this crisis stretches nationally, no place has been so devastated in both habitat and population as California. The true irony is that, California is the only known state that has both state and federal laws to protect wild burros on public lands. Despite this, either through lack of compliance or enforcement, wild burros and their habitat have been devastated.

In summary, in Southern California when the California Desert Conservation Plan was passed in 1980, just in the Desert District alone, burros had over 3.5 million acres of habitat and 2,700 burros were “approved” for use in the area. Today, this same area has been slashed to less than 300,000 acres of habitat and only 229 burros or less will be “allowed” to continue living there. That’s a 90% reduction in both habitat and population, *just within Southern California!*

The entire state of California has only three remaining “official” wild burro herds and the Bureau of Land Management has deemed the total statewide “appropriate management level” to be 345 burros or less. *That’s 345 burros for the entire state!*

While a statewide recovery plan needs to be urgently implemented, the luxury of time to draw these plans is still available as they are not *all* gone yet.

Who does not have time left is the Clark Mountain burros; they demand immediate intercession! Federal agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management, have taken the majority of California’s most historic herd from their range and ***it must be stopped NOW*** or they will soon vanish forever.

The Clark Mountain burros have lived in an isolated region of California for at least two hundred years and have not interbred with any other herds. Because of this, results of genetic tests conducted for the Bureau of Land Management stated that the Clark Mountain burros were identified as the most genetically unique wild burro herd of all burro herds tested in the West and therefore, within the United States.

In the environmental assessment that determined the burros' removals, BLM stated that the removal of the Clark Mountain burros would result in *"this species.....and their unique genetic characteristics being permanently lost."* Yet, they still issued a decision to eradicate them.

The land use plan that they used to "authorize" these removals, the NEMO Amendment, made no mention of eliminating the herd or its habitat. What it did contain was a transfer by BLM of a critical water source to National Park Service, who initially agreed to let the burros to continue to use it. However, when that agreement expired, NPS refused to renew it or even try to find an alternative plan, even when citizens volunteered free labor and supplies to pipe the water back in for the burros.

Now the majority of this historic herd sits in the Ridgecrest holding facilities waiting final processing which will result in the assurance of this unique and distinct populations extinction.

There are many issues involved in this that create complications; desert tortoise, bighorn sheep, native versus non-native, state versus federal. However, the bottom line is, California state law under Fish and Game Code 4600, clearly states wild burros are to be protected. It reads:

"It is unlawful to kill, wound, capture, or have in possession any undomesticated burro. An undomesticated burro is a wild burro or a burro which has not been tamed or domesticated for a period of three years after its capture. The fact that a burro was killed, wounded, or captured on publicly owned land, or on land owned by a person other than the person who killed, wounded, or captured the burro is prima facie evidence that the burro was an undomesticated burro at the time it was killed, wounded, or captured."

"Neither the commission nor any other department or agency has any power to modify the provisions of this section by any order, rule, or regulation."

Therefore, I am requesting your urgent intervention in this crisis. Please put a halt to the dispersing of the ninety-six plus Clark Mountain burros now being held in the BLM Ridgecrest holding facility and prevent the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service or any other agency from removing the remaining handful of this historic herd from their home range and finalizing their extinction.

As a California property owner, I would appreciate a response as soon as possible that affirms your support and strong leadership in the preservation of California's few remaining wild burros as well as your plans to intercede and save the last of the "most genetically unique herd in America", the Clark Mountain burros.

Sincerely,

NAME/ADDRESS REMOVED