

## Leo Heils Will

Comments/Info on NV Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses

August 7, 1972 –THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF LEO HEIL:

I, Leo Heil, of Reno, Washoe County, Nevada do hereby make publish and declare in my own handwriting, this to be my last will and testament, and do hereby revoke all former wills and codicils thereto by me at any time make.

V. The residue of the estate is given to the State of Nevada for the preservation of the wild horses in Nevada. (Signed Leo Heil on 8-7-72).

(Such a simple and straight forward statement, but Leo Heil never realized that Nevada's wild horses were such a vast political issue and that the powerful anti-wild horses forces would anything to destroy the intent of his last will and testament for Nevada's wild horses.)

1-13-2007 See Rose Strickland article Feb 97...in regarding to your conclusions. The percent of federal lands in Nevada at the time of Question No. 4 on the 11-5-96 ballot was reported as 86.7%. Try to find out the percentage now...a well kept secret. I doubt the percent is 60% now.

Western Sportsman –the official voice of the Nevada Wildlife Federation, the state affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation –February 1997 issue.

February1997

by Rose Strickland

Nevada State Senator Dean Rhoads' Legislative Committee on Public Lands (and also regarded as the father of the Sagebrush Rebellion and is a public lands permittee and rancher) is wasting no time after November's elections to eliminate or cripple the state's role in protecting the wild horses on public lands in Nevada. For those Nevadans who wondered when the Rebels would try to cash in a favorable vote on (Nevada) Question 4 on the last ballot (11-5-96) and escalate its efforts to take control of public lands and resources, a meeting notice issued the following week indicated that wild horses would be the first target of the Sagebrush Rebels. Advocates of keeping public lands in public hands point to these proposals as the first solid indications of how the state would manage the public lands and public resources if the dreams of the Sagebrush Rebels come true.

Approximately 20 years ago, Leo Heil (See below Mr. Heil's Will dated 8-7-1972) bequeathed about \$230,000 to Nevada, with the simple requirement that the funds be used to protect Nevada's wild horses. For the first few years, the funds were tied up politically until eventually it grew to \$1.3 million. Threats by local public lands forced the state to utilize the bequest. Protecting the base trust of \$900,000, the Commission and a very small staff must exist of the interest only from that bequest. It is this staff's job to look after the welfare of wild horses in Nevada. The commission and staff must be doing their jobs too well, since they have attracted the ire of Nevada's Sagebrush Rebels. They have been very successful in drawing attention to inadequacies and irregularities in how federal agencies manage wild horses. Such efforts recently

lead to the appointment of a national task force to investigate the BLM's actions in the tragic suffering and death last summer of wild horses in drought-stricken Southern Nevada.

The Public Lands Committee (Senator Dean Rhoads' special interest committee) will be considering two legislative options on wild horses. The first is to repeal the state law setting up the Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses (The commission is now referred to as only the Commission on Wild Horses...they deleted Preservation) and to return the balance of the Heil Trust Fund for Wild Horses to the estate of Leo Heil. (Not successful at this time)

The second (SB 211 directed at and thru the Nevada Commission on Preservation of Wild Horses and the Heil Trust Fund was passed) is to make up to twelve amendments to the state wild horse laws. These changes in Nevada state law are designed to fill the Commission with anti-wild horse representatives and staff, siphon wild horse funds to the State Agriculture agency to remove "estrays" horses ---wild horses unlucky enough to be caught outside an official herd management area---, and change the mission of the wild horse commission from protection and management to removal and disposal of wild horses. One amendment redefines wild horses to only those horses who live in "herd management areas", small areas of public lands with arbitrary boundaries drawn by the Bureau of Land Management. Another amendment would remove the requirement that three commissioners be representative of the general public and instead requires the members to be a public land rancher, a county commissioner but only from a small county, a veterinarian nominated by the State Agriculture Board, and a wildlife biologist nominated by the State Wildlife Commission. (The commission now is essentially composed of private vested interests that are anti-wildhorse. The commission is now a very weak and controlled voice for the wild horses.) Another amendment apparently is supportive of reestablishing the tradition of mustanging whose inhumane treatment of wild horses stimulated Nevada Wild Horse Annie's efforts culminating in the (1971 federal) Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Protection Act on December 15, 1971.

While wild horses are the first target of the Sagebrush Rebels, newly emboldened by the passage of (Nevada) Question 4, public land advocates wonder about the next target. Will it be an attempt to eliminate the Nevada Division of Wildlife and the Wildlife Commissioners to give control of the state's wildlife to the counties? Or will the Rebels attack Nevada's existing National Forest wilderness areas or the BLM's wilderness study areas? Other agenda items indicate the Committee interest in mining reclamation and the Superfund Law, the Clean Air Act, elk, land exchanges and public acquisitions of private land, and in how to force the State government to become an active advocate for transferring public lands to state or county control (sagebrush rebels).

Conservationists who value the public lands in Nevada and Eastern California are urged to join the on-going campaign to keep public lands and resources in public lands. For more information, contact the Nevada Wildlife Federation at 775-885-7965 in Northern Nevada and 702-254-6815 in Southern Nevada.

Editors Notes: NvWF executive board member, Elsie Dupree (now Nevada president since 2000) attended this meeting. The NvWF position is the public lands should remain public and that all decision regarding public lands should be made with the public included in the process. NvWF is

concerned that the actions described in the above article are the first step in excluding public comments on such public lands issues. Such actions could lead to public exclusion on big game, endangered species, and wildlife habitat issues of Nevada' Wildlife.

Both SB 27 and SB 211, anti-wild horse and public lands bills, passed the 1997 Nevada Legislative sessions.

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