

Summer on the Front Lines

A Wild Horse Education Advocacy Newsletter



Summer has been relentless. Our team has moved between field work at roundups and range assessments, wildfire concerns, active litigation, and outreach to Congress.

Each front demands attention because wild horse and burro protection is not a single-issue fight: what happens on the range shapes what happens in holding, in the courts, and in the halls of government.

This week's renewed attention to wild horses comes through a New York Times report by Dave Philipps. The story is an important alarm, but it also echoes a pattern Philipps exposed in his groundbreaking 2012 ProPublica reporting on the sale program. The current moment has brought many new readers to “wild horses”—and, unfortunately, an influx of social-media “experts” ripping videos and images off websites as clickbait. Be careful who follow.

If the New York Times story brought you here, **please go beyond becoming simply social-media traffic.** Read WHE's [Advocate Weekly Briefing: From Roundups to Slaughter—and an Action Item](#) for concrete ways to contact Congress and engage with the issues including maintaining the prohibition against open sales to slaughter, pausing the program and gaining a Government Accounting Office (GAO) audit. The information gained from a current audit will be key in the battles coming next spring as this administration has formally announced they are “revising” wild horse and burro regulations to include unrestricted sale.



Start with the Foundations

Whether you are new to this work or have advocated for years, the strongest advocacy starts with reliable reference material. These resources explain the policy choices behind the headlines and offer context you can use when speaking with elected officials, reporters, and your community.

The numbers behind the program

The Wild Horse and Burro Program should not be judged in isolation as an unusually costly public-lands program. WHE's analysis argues that the underlying system is broken: population estimates and removal targets are used in ways that can drive funding and policy while failing to reflect transparent, science-based range data. Learn how the 2026 population report is being used—and why its assumptions matter.

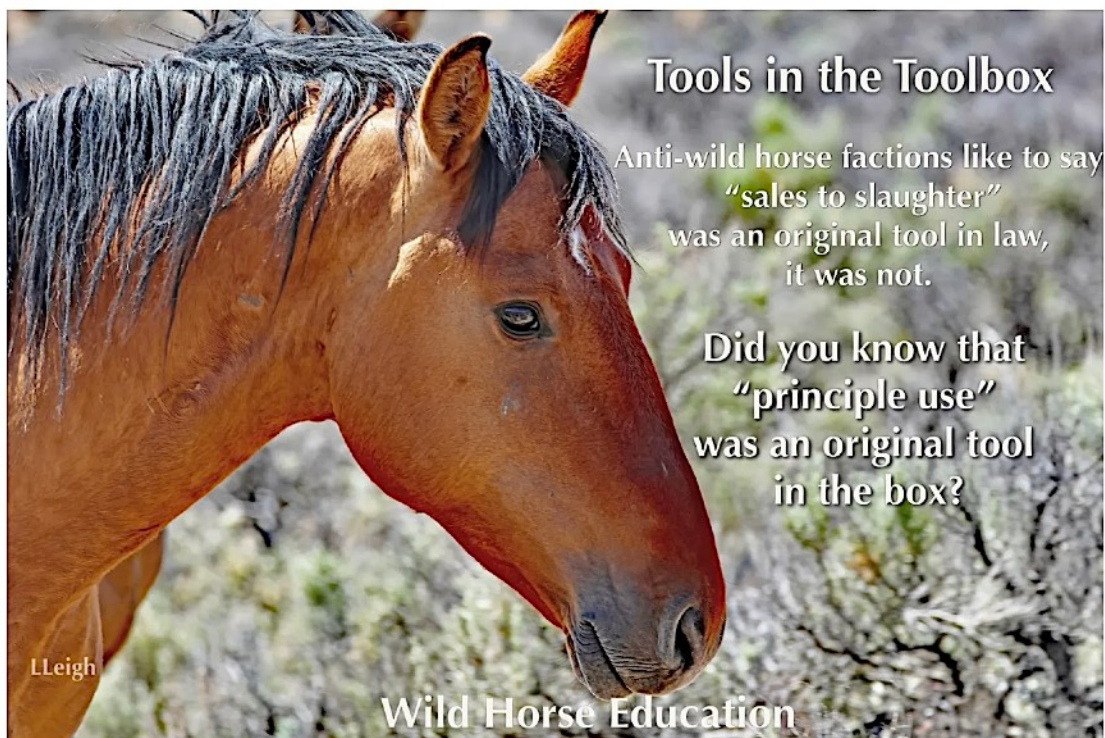
Read the full resource: [BLM's 2026 Population Statistics Report: A Political Tool, Not a Science Document](#)



AML: the baseline that controls everything

Appropriate Management Level, or AML, is the baseline BLM uses to decide how many wild horses and burros may remain on a range. “Appropriate” can sound neutral, but the history and support for these figures must be examined. WHE details how AMLs were often carried forward from past agreements and why advocates should demand disclosure, data, and genuine management planning.

Read the full resource: [Bottom Line: AML](#)



What “tools in the toolbox” really means

When BLM or ranching interests call for more “tools in the toolbox,” the phrase is frequently used to advance killing or unrestricted sale. But other lawful tools remain available and underused: reassessing boundaries and forage allocations, applying principal-use protections, addressing livestock impacts, restoring lost territory, and creating transparent, science-based plans. WHE’s resource lays out these alternatives.

Read the full resource: [Tools in the Toolbox: Let’s Take a Look at Tools Never Used](#)

Litigation Is a Defense of the Wild

“Lawfare” is a label opponents often reach for when they lose in court. The term is not new—but in wild horse advocacy, the record is not one of excessive litigation.

Since passage of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, comparatively few cases have been filed by advocacy organizations each year, even as ranching interests have regularly used litigation to pursue their own objectives. *That imbalance helped allow flawed management practices to harden over time.*

That is changing. In addition to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) cases, WHE has brought an unprecedented wave of litigation against the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program in the last 24 months. These cases confront severe flaws in on-range management, and the work is producing results. WHE is building on our two landmark 2024 rulings to press for real herd management planning—not decades of decisions driven by livestock agreements rather than disclosed science.

This work reaches the fundamentals: the numbers permitted on the range, the lines defining herd habitat, and the protection of habitat essential to the survival of wild herds and more.

Litigation is not a soundbite or a tactic for its own sake. It is a long-overdue defense of the wild, aimed at making the agency account for the systems it has used (abused) for more than 50 years.

This summer, WHE’s efforts have helped pull three herds from the roundup schedule, and a lawsuit filed last week seeks to make that four. Before year-end, three additional cases are expected to reach important milestones that could bring long-term relief to three more herds, including Devil’s Garden in California.

If BLM were following the law, lawsuits could not win. Even though there is a clear distinction when it comes to what is simply morally wrong and what is illegal, we are still breaking ground in the courts.



Why Public Attention Matters

Wild horses and burros need public attention—but attention must move beyond the moment of outrage. They need people willing to stand and take action.

They need eyes and voices at ground zero: to learn the record, comment on plans, call Congress, support field documentation, and defend herds before removal turns living communities on public land into a distant memory.

We must confront the system that leaves wild horses and burros vulnerable both on and off the range.

That means legally challenging removal plans built on unsupported baselines, resisting pathways to slaughter and destructive sterilization, insisting on enforceable welfare standards, and demanding management that is transparent, lawful, and rooted in sound science.



Wild Horses and Burro Need You From Ground Zero to Outrageous Outcomes

Wild horses and burros landing in a kill auction begins with habitat loss and fragmentation of *public land* driven by greedy private *profit lines*.

Baselines set in handshakes with powerful private interests have set the framework that has abused a system originally intended to protect wild horses and burros.

Right now the goal is to reach population numbers that are one-third lower than at the times Congress passed the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act and declared that "wild horses and burros were fast-disappearing from the landscape."

The law to protect wild horses and burros passed 55 years ago. At every step those protections were rolled back including a devious move in 2004, Conrad Burns (R-MT) slid a rider into an Omnibus Spending Bill without formal disclosure making the "Sale

Program” legal and stripping wild horses and burros of any protection of going to slaughter once title transfers.

Even though the law mentions “humane” seven times, BLM has not even created a set of enforceable welfare rules.

Advocacy is by definition a commitment. A commitment to learn and speak out.

[You can click here to send a fast letter to your representatives.](#)

Or you can make a call:

- **Capitol Switchboard:** Call **(202) 224-3121** to be connected directly to your senator or representative’s office.
- **House Direct Line:** Call **(202) 225-3121** for U.S. House Representatives.
- **Senate Direct Line:** Call **(202) 224-3121** for U.S. Senators

Sample script:

My name is _____. I live in zip code _____ and am a constituent.

Please ensure that the 2027 Appropriations bill:

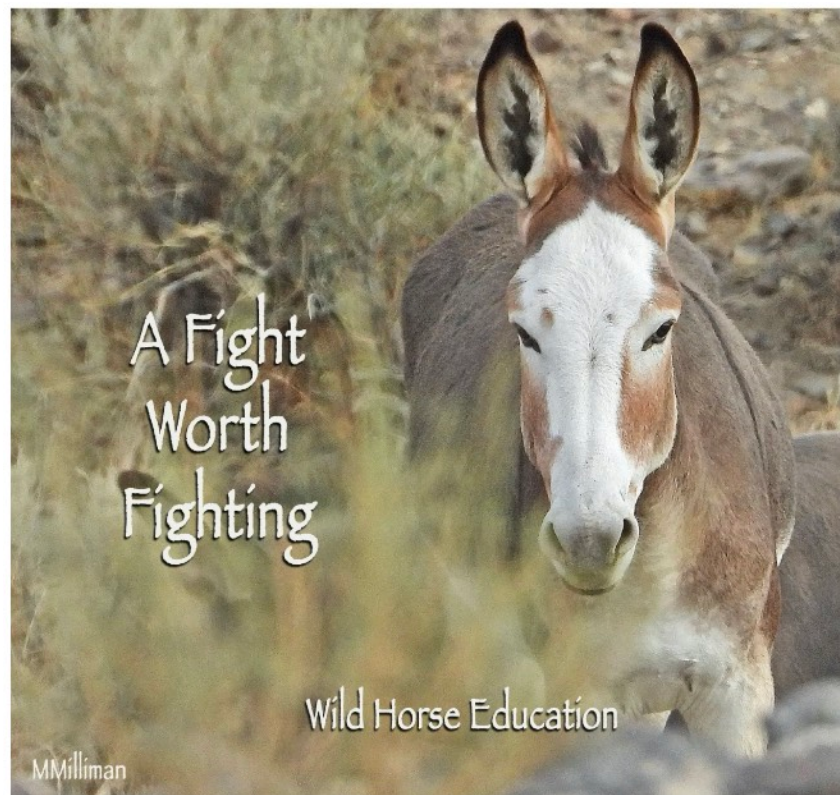
1) Maintains language prohibiting funding from being used for unrestricted sale or killing of healthy wild horses and burros. Suspension of the program pending an investigation is needed as lack of any oversight allows ongoing violations.

2) Insert a prohibition on funding being used for surgical, chemical or experimental sterilization. BLM is approving plans that included dangerous and unproven experimental procedures including gluing oviducts of mares closed.

3) Tell BLM to complete formalization of welfare standards including public participation. Strike the words “comply with CAWP” from the bill. Those words mean to comply with a program, not an enforceable welfare standard and are causing harm.

Deep reform is desperately needed in this program that rejects data-based analysis and transparency.

The very least Congress can do is to ensure the most abusive and cruel aspects of this program are reined in.



Protecting our wild horses and burros is a fight worth fighting.

Our teams are in the field covering roundups and checking on herds that have experienced wildfire.

Our teams are in the court and the halls of Congress addressing unlawful actions and working toward gaining deep reform.

Thank you for being and active advocate.

Visit WildHorseEducation.org to stay informed and support our vital work.