



November 5, 2009

Senator John McCain  
241 Russell, Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCain:

Sportsmen/women and other conservationists from all over Arizona have formed an alliance that has resulted in this letter to inform you of our great concern and very strong opposition to H.R. 1018, introduced by Congressmen Nick Rahall and Raul Grijalva recently passed by the House and now introduced by Senator Robert Byrd as SR 1597 in the Senate.

We respect the need for humane treatment of animals, whether it is domestic livestock, wild horses and burros, or big game species. That being said, we fear this legislation, though well intended, will have severe negative consequences for wild horses and burros, and also for the health of our rangelands, our wildlife/fish resources, and our economy. These consequences are numerous well-documented examples of damage from wild horses and burros in Arizona and throughout the west.

We are asking for your help in ensuring that this Bill doesn't further imperil Arizona's native rangelands and wildlife habitats. We strongly urge you to actively oppose SR 1597, which would amend the "Free Roaming Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971". If enacted, the Bill would identify new, appropriate rangelands for wild (feral) free-roaming horses and burros, including use of land acquisitions, exchanges, conservation easements, voluntary grazing buyouts, and negotiation with private landowners to allow for the federally supervised protection of wild horses and burros on private lands. It would also create exclusive use zones and sanctuaries for wild horses and burros. We believe that elevating the importance of one non-native species over the biodiversity of our rangelands will be detrimental to Arizona's native wildlife and will lead to continued destruction and degradation of our public lands. This sportsmen/women and conservationist alliance supports the multiple-use concept on our public lands and the science based management of Arizona's wildlife through the Arizona Game and Fish Department and Commission.

This bill would also change the management procedures to mandate return of animals removed during emergencies (such as drought or fire) and forbid holding animals in temporary facilities for more than six months. As we experience continued year after year of drought conditions and range fires it is imperative that the Bureau of Land Management have appropriate flexibility to manage our wild (feral) horse and burro herds. By limiting the management tools of the agencies, even more wild horse deaths will occur from starvation or lack of water.

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The management implications of this bill will only complicate the process of determining Appropriate Management Levels on our rangelands. Finding and keeping Appropriate Management Levels is key to the balance of management and impacts on public lands. Tipping the scale towards the domination of wild (feral) horses and burros does not correlate with the directive of the Bureau of Land Management.

A new procedure for selecting a Joint Advisory Board on Wild Horses and Burros will be put into place if this Bill were to become law. The Amendment also includes radical changes to the make-up of the Board, whose purpose is to advise the Secretary of Interior on management of wild horses and burros.

We believe SR 1597 will make a difficult situation much worse. There will be severe ecological consequences if passage of this legislation occurs. Melding the intent of this bill with other current land management laws, policies and regulations may put the Bureau of Land Management at odds with its stated and sworn mission. H.R. 1018 passed the House last month, leading those who compose this alliance to strongly urge you to oppose SR 1597, which will negatively impact Arizona's wildlife and wildlands.

Sincerely,



Ryna Rock, President  
Arizona Wildlife Federation

Jeff Collins, Chair  
Arizona Council Trout Unlimited

Jim Unmacht, President  
Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society

Nick Heatwole, BOD Legislative Chairman  
Yuma Valley Rod & Gun Club

Ty Nuessle, President  
Phoenix Chapter, Safari Club International

Bob Meulengracht  
Arizona Chapter, Mule Deer Foundation

Steve Sams, Chair  
Arizona Chapter, National Wild Turkey Federation