

ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SIXTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WYOMING
2015 GENERAL SESSION

A JOINT RESOLUTION requesting Congress, state and local authorities to take action to prevent further damage and remediate damages caused by free-roaming feral horses on rangelands in the West and to develop effective fertility control methods to reduce the populations of free-roaming feral horses in the West.

WHEREAS, Wyoming has recognized the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 and free-roaming horses are defined as feral under W.S. 11-48-101(a)(iii); and

WHEREAS, the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) estimates that almost fifty thousand (50,000) feral horses roam BLM managed rangelands in the West, with nearly three thousand (3,000) of those feral horses, the majority of which descend from animals turned out by ranchers, roaming public rangelands in Wyoming; and

WHEREAS, free-roaming feral horses have virtually no natural predators in Wyoming nor the West and BLM evidence suggests the population of feral horses can double in size about every four (4) years if left uncontrolled; and

WHEREAS, BLM estimates that the current free-roaming population of feral horses significantly exceeds the number that can exist in healthy balance with other public rangeland resources and uses, including wildlife and domestic livestock grazing; and

WHEREAS, free-roaming feral horses, among other things, trample and destroy vegetation, hard-pack soil, over-graze and decimate riparian areas causing degradation in areas that provide important habitat for native species such as pronghorn, mule deer, bighorn sheep and sage grouse; and

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WHEREAS, the state of Wyoming has a federally approved sage grouse conservation plan, the efficacy of which is being compromised by continuing habitat damage resulting from free-roaming horses; and

WHEREAS, the number of free-roaming feral horses removed from public rangelands in the West by BLM in compliance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, now far exceeds the number of feral horses adopted or sold; and

WHEREAS, those feral horses not adopted by the public are held in long-term pastures or short-term corrals costing BLM nationally an estimated fifty-eight million dollars (\$58,000,000.00) per year; and

WHEREAS, evidence suggests the development and use of effective fertility control methods can limit the populations of free-roaming feral horses, lessen the need to remove free-roaming feral horses from the state's rangelands, improve the health of the rangelands in the West, conserve wildlife habitat and save taxpayers money; and

WHEREAS, the following reports provide, among other things, data, statistics and recommended strategies to manage free-roaming feral horses in the West and protect the state's rangeland resources and uses: Range-wide Interagency Sage-grouse Conservation Team, Near-Term Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Action Plan (September 2012); Ted Williams, Horse Sense, Audubon (September/October 2006); David Ganskopp and Martin Vavra, Habitat Use by Feral Horses in the Northern Sagebrush Steppe, Journal of Range Management Volume 39(3) (May 1986); K.W. Davies and C.S. Boyd, Effects on Feral Free-Roaming Horses on Semi-Arid Rangeland

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Ecosystems: An Example from the Sagebrush Steppe, Ecosphere Volume 5(10) (October 2014); Linda Zeigenfuss et al., Influence of Nonnative and Native Ungulate Biomass and Seasonal Precipitation on Vegetation Production in a Great Basin Ecosystem, Western North American Naturalist Volume 74(3) (2014); Erik Beever and Peter Brussard, Examining Ecological Consequences of Feral Horse Grazing Using Exclosures, Western North American Naturalist Volume 60(3) (2000); Kelly Crane et al., Habitat Selection Patterns of Feral Horses in Southcentral Wyoming, Journal of Range Management Volume 50(4) (July 1997); Erik Beever, Management Implications of the Ecology of Free-Roaming Horses in Semi-Arid Ecosystems of the Western United States, Wildlife Society Bulletin Volume 31(3) (2003); and Erik Beever and Cameron Aldridge, Influences of Free-Roaming Equids on Sagebrush Ecosystems, with a Focus on Greater Sage-Grouse, Studies in Avian Biology Volume 38 (2011).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WYOMING:

Section 1. That the Wyoming Legislature calls on Congress and federal agencies to adequately fund and support all efforts to manage free-roaming feral horses on rangelands in the West at the appropriate management level, utilizing all management and control methods authorized by Section 3(d) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.

Section 2. That the Wyoming Legislature calls on Congress in conjunction with all appropriate state and local governments to engage in cooperative efforts to remediate and minimize the environmental impact of free-roaming feral horses on rangelands in the West. These

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efforts should include the development and use of effective fertility control methods to reduce the free-roaming populations of feral horses on rangelands in the West.

Section 3. That the Wyoming Legislature calls on Congress to prohibit the reintroduction of feral horses back onto the western rangelands outside the current herd management areas, nor onto existing herd management areas at or above the authorized management levels.

Section 4. That the Wyoming Legislature calls on Congress and federal agencies to prioritize these requested management activities to the sage grouse core areas and priority habitat strongholds in order to reduce the possibility of an endangered listing for the sage grouse and to stop the resource damage now occurring.

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Section 5. That the Secretary of State of Wyoming transmit copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, to the Wyoming Congressional Delegation, the Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Land Management and the Director of the Wyoming Office of the Bureau of Land Management.

(END)

Speaker of the House

President of the Senate

Governor

TIME APPROVED: _____

DATE APPROVED: _____

I hereby certify that this act originated in the House.

Chief Clerk