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EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

August 5, 2015

Secretary Tom Vilsack
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Vilsack,

Last week, the Tonto National Forest staff published a notice warning that unauthorized horses in a portion of the forest near the Salt River near Mesa, Arizona would be rounded up and impounded without further notice beginning Friday, August 7, 2015. The notice went on to say that this round-up would continue over the next twelve months.

Wild horses have long been a part of the landscape of the American West. In fact, many acknowledge these horses to be a part of a lineage that goes back for centuries. Furthermore, wild horses have long been a draw to the American Southwest for tourists and conservationists alike.

Of course, it is critical that we maintain the natural beauty of our landscape and the integrity of those animal populations that inhabit it. While it is important to maintain these ecosystems for their own sake, it is also essential that we continue to cultivate a deep appreciation for these natural treasures in ourselves and our neighbors. We know this as a result of our nation's long and storied conservation history; there is simply no way to be successful in our efforts at conservation without engagement and participation by our citizens.

Naturally, in order to generate the enthusiasm necessary to support a long-term conservation strategy, we must ensure that the priorities of the American people are understood. In short, we must protect what we care about. In doing so, we continue a long tradition of conservation through participation and promise to preserve these national treasures for future generations to enjoy and love.

Arizonans care deeply about the well-being of these beautiful horses. Obviously, this sentiment has been heard "loud and clear" amidst the public outcry since the warning was initially posted by the Forest Service in late July. With this in mind, we ask that you terminate any plans to initiate a round-up.

We believe that the Arizonans who frequent our national parks and pay for continued conservation efforts in them ought to have the most say in what happens to them. We ask that the Forest Service at Tonto National Forest conduct extensive outreach efforts to engage the

neighboring public. It is our sincere hope that in the course of these efforts, both sides will develop a better, more thorough understanding of the unique challenges surrounding this issue.

Thank you for your attention in this matter. We look forward to the swift withdrawal of this proposed round-up. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices if you require any further information.

Sincerely,



Matt Salmon
Member of Congress

Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress

David Schweikert
Member of Congress

Cc: Chief Thomas L. Tidwell, United States Forest Service

Mr. Neil Bosworth, Forest Supervisor, Forest Service, Tonto National Forest