

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 20, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W., Room 6612
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell,

We are writing to express our deep disappointment to learn that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) did not follow current law, or its own policy of restricting the sale of horses to slaughter, while managing the Wild Horse and Burro Program, which ultimately led to nearly 1,800 horses being sold to slaughter.

According to a recent Department of Interior's (DOI) Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigative report, BLM failed to prevent livestock hauler Tom Davis from acquiring 1,794 wild horses between 2008 and 2012, which Davis subsequently sold to kill buyers who then sent the horses to Mexico, where they were slaughtered for human consumption. Furthermore, BLM spent approximately \$140,000 in taxpayer funds in transporting those horses to Mr. Davis.

The OIG report also states that these actions were in direct contradiction of BLM's own policy. While BLM was temporarily empowered by the 2004 Burns Amendment to the Wild Horse and Burro Free Roaming Act to sell horses without limitation, the Bureau's subsequent 2005 policy mandated that horses be sold to good homes, and not be sent to slaughter.

Moreover, these actions were also in direct contradiction of Congressional mandates that wild horses not be sent to slaughter. In October 2009, Congress passed an Interior and Environment Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2010, which included a provision stating that none of BLM's funding could be used "for the destruction of healthy, un-adopted, wild horses and burros in the care of [BLM] or its contractors or for the sale of wild horses and burros that results in their destruction for processing into commercial products." This limitation was renewed in appropriations bills for fiscal years 2011 and 2012, covering the period that BLM was selling horses to Davis. This prohibition is still in place in the current budget.

BLM actions, which led to the slaughter of horses, are completely unacceptable and while BLM cannot reverse these serious errors made in the past, it is essential that the Bureau act expeditiously to prevent them from happening again. To accomplish this, we request the DOI provide our offices with a detailed report on how it plans to make amends for BLM's actions, which were in direct violation of Congressional intent. We ask that this report include, at a minimum, a thorough response to the following issues:

1. Steps the BLM is taking to recover the \$140,000 in taxpayer funding used to send these horses to slaughter;
2. Protective measures and protocols the BLM is employing to ensure that such a situation does not occur again;
3. A detailed explanation for why the BLM has failed to take actions against employees who were responsible for making decisions and acting in direct violation of Congressional appropriations language.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We are looking forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress