

Public Comment for Upcoming Commission Meeting

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Comments:

Dear Commissioners, I would strongly support the proposed legislation to stop the watering of feral/free roaming horses in the Placitas area. The current horse population in the Placitas region exceeds the ability of the landscape to support these animals and has resulted in serious degradation to plants and other animals in the natural environment. As a past president of the Overlook Subdivision and a scientist I understand the complexity of this issue and that it is emotional charged for many people one way or the other. However, the truth is the current practices carried out by a small group of individuals feeding and/or watering these animals for extended periods has exacerbated the overpopulation problem and created safety issues. It has created larger horse herds that are essentially tame and congregate around these feeding sites on private properties and public right of ways. These animals are no longer afraid of the roads in the area, especially NM 165, having been involved in several auto accidents. Sooner or later, a serious accident will occur with a horse through someones windshield and a serious injury or death will occur. I personally have had several close calls while driving the posted speed limit. I generally find that vehicular traffic on NM 165 generally goes the posted speed limit or less.

On top of the safety hazards discussed above, the ~150 horses in the area are roughly 3x or more what the current biosphere can sustain according to the BLM and range management specialists. This is only likely to get worse as the drought conditions experienced during the last decade are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Horses in North America went extinct at the end of the Pleistocene period ~10,000 years ago along with the predators which controlled their populations such as Dire wolves and Sabertooth tigers. They currently have no predators. Attempts on birth control have only been partially successful as the herds continue to grow in size. Huge areas of land have almost no forage with grass cropped to the ground, every rock turned over, excessive erosion, horse dung everywhere, and no food for other animals. All one has to do is look at the landscape inside fenced areas in comparison to areas not protected to see the radical difference.

Sandoval County needs to implement a comprehensive range management plan for these animals and I would strongly urge it to do so.

Thank you for your consideration and service
William Brown, MS Geology