

Public Comment for Upcoming Commission Meeting

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Comments:

As a District 1 Resident of Placitas I would like to say that I have attended most of the meetings regarding the drafts of the no feeding of wild horses ordinance and it's become abundantly clear that the element lacking in this discussion is a true professional in herd management. The community & county will continue to move in circles if an EXPERT is not identified and hired. The community keeps asking for statistics and facts and the truth is, not one entity involved in this discussion has been able to provide this information. Why? Because it appears not to have been explored... I am talking about real facts and statistics. For instance, taking the current number of horses as provided by Mt. Taylor Mustangs and projecting what that number might look like in say 1-3 years and comparing that to the number of projected residents in that same time frame, a study to include available natural forage as calculated by current and projected number of horses (this information would help indicate the amount of supplemental feed needed to sustain current numbers), size of range land available now and projected BEFORE stating we have "too many horses for the land to support", have the expert study and provide this information so the public can understand. These are just a few examples of the facts folks are looking for... there has been mention of "mating season" this was disputed in the town hall meeting as "wild/free roaming horses do not follow the same pattern as domestics". Again, where is the expert who can educate all?

Until a true expert is put in place, everyone is a self proclaimed authority and THIS is the problem. I have heard mention of assuming perhaps "only 5 or so entities should be offering supplemental feed", where does this number come from? I have heard that perhaps "1 or 2 bands" could be "allowed" to stay in Placitas if round ups occur, again, who established this number and why? How does this fit into the long term plan for the wild horses? Where is the long term, scientifically backed plan? My intention here is not to argue that we have some behaviors involving the horses that are harming them & I completely acknowledge that historically there hasn't been an "easy answer" but as I write this, it seems quite simple... get the proper person in place and let them do the studies, provide the evidence and the short and long term plan. None of our county commissioners are wild/free roaming horse experts, nor are the community members or even 501c3s... find the person who has a degree, field experience in herd management and humane treatment of wild horses and THEN you can start speaking from a place of education. Until this has happened, I feel we can all freely express our OPINIONS, our sets of moral code, our THEORIES, and our observations but let's just be honest, these are not FACTS and facts, studies and stats are what we need. These horses deserve better, they don't deserve hasty & uneducated decisions made on their behalf. I fear that if you pass yet another incomplete ordinance without being mindful of a drastic change in feeding patterns, we face even more horses finding their way to the 165 in search of food. The example is this simple: If the majority of folks who are already feeding on the North side of the 165 clear up to the mesa all stop feeding at once, the horses will inevitably search further for food. Right now we have only 2 bands that are crossing the 165 the south side, The Ranchos Band (formerly called the Overlook Band, most often seen in previous years in Overlook, now in Ranchos & also crossing into Rainbow Valley) and the Tunnel Springs Band (most often seen between Overlook, Tunnel Springs and Placitas Heights). A no feeding band on the south side of the 165 I 100% support because changing the behaviors of 2 bands vs. the overall majority is actually plausible. This has potential to address the county concern of hits on the road IF the feeding stations and community members who feed in safe/appropriate areas on the north side of the 165 continue to feed and organize even better than before with true feeding and watering stations. Again, an OPINION but an opinion that comes from observing these 2 particular bands and their feeding patterns for the last 4 years. I agree with the many who spoke stating that the number of hits on the road are not excessive in a wildlife corridor. I have had a personal connection to almost all of the horses hit in the past 4 years and it's utterly heartbreaking, it's even more heartbreaking that these accidents could have been prevented. However, until signage and speed limits are evaluated by NMDOT for an amount of time that will provide further stats and studies that could potentially show a drop in these collisions, I don't feel we can properly evaluate a plan of action. Same applies to strategic feeding stations, they would need to be put in place for a measurable amount of time with studies provided regarding the feeding behaviors of the horses to determine success or failure. We have asked for and have demanded facts, studies and stats, please hear our voices and start implementing change that can be measured and studied by an expert in the field.