

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 5, 2015

Mr. Neil Bosworth
Forest Supervisor
Tonto National Forest
2324 E. McDowell Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85006

The Honorable Mark Killian
Director
Arizona Department of Agriculture
1688 W. Adams St.
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Supervisor Bosworth and Director Killian:

We are writing to inquire about your plans for removing up to 100 horses from the Mesa Ranger District on the Tonto National Forest. A growing number of our constituents have expressed deep reservations about the Forest Service's intent to gather these horses and transfer them to the Arizona Department of Agriculture. We request that you postpone action until there has been sufficient public engagement in the process and that you respond to our questions below.

Whether they are treated as feral under state law or "wild" under federal law, horses are celebrated as icons of the West. However, we understand that the Forest Service is increasingly concerned that unclaimed horses on the Mesa Ranger District present a public safety risk. The concern appears to be that as the population continues to rise, so does the likelihood for vehicle accidents involving a collision with a horse on State Highway 87, or that campers and other recreationists enjoying the Salt River could be kicked or injured.

Again, please provide us with answers to the following questions:

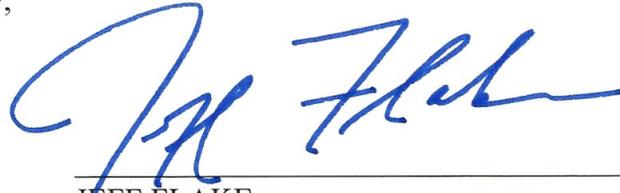
1. How many horses have been identified for impoundment and how many will remain on the District?
2. What will happen to the horses once they are transferred to the state?
3. How would you ensure that a roundup will be humane for the horses?
4. Where did these horses likely originate and how long have they been on the District?
5. Has the Forest Service explored entering into a management arrangement with horse advocates? If so, what elements of an agreement would the Tonto National Forest require and generally support? Would this agreement apply only to the horses on the District?
6. Does the Tonto National Forest have the authority to enter into a management agreement for these horses beyond the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971?

A timely response to this request is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John McCain in blue ink.

JOHN McCAIN
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Jeff Flake in blue ink.

JEFF FLAKE
United States Senator