



Strategic Relations Inc.

**Alberta Environment and  
Sustainable Resource Development**

**Alberta's Feral Horses  
Managing Populations**

CONSULTATION REPORT



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development is undertaking a review of the strategy for the management of feral horse populations that are subject to the Horse Capture Regulation under the *Stray Animals Act* (the strategy). The primary objective of the review is to gain an understanding of stakeholder perspectives.

Strategic Relations Inc. (SRI) was engaged by the Ministry of Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) to assist with facilitating stakeholder discussions, record and summarize the commonalities and differences. This report is intended to accurately reflect stakeholder input.

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## STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PURPOSE

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The primary purpose of the consultation was to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to offer advice, solutions, and generally share their concerns, if any, pertaining to the Strategy

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## SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER INPUT

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Despite the differing perspectives and objectives of stakeholders, common themes emerged through the consultation. In its review of the current strategy for the management of feral horse, ESRD should give consideration to the following:

### General

- The issue continues to receive a high level of public attention and is polarizing community perspectives – thus, it needs to be addressed
- While stakeholders had differing perspectives as to why (e.g. dedication to feral horse populations, public pressure, etc.), there is agreement the feral horse populations should remain on the landscape
- There is a commitment to the primary objective of the consultations – an effective and appropriate management approach for feral horse populations in the impacted area
- All stakeholders were supportive of humane treatment of the animals

### Major Issues

- A minority of stakeholders expressed concern the feral horses currently have no status as a distinct species
- Majority of stakeholders realize it is difficult to maximize all uses on the landscape given competing needs and interests
- While a significant majority of stakeholders recognize management of the population is required, there are differences in how that is best achieved
- Some stakeholders relate this issue to the management of wildlife generally
- Overall negative impact on the environment (e.g. reforestation efforts, overgrazing, damage to personal property, etc.)
- Most stakeholders recognized the sensitivity of processing captured horses
- Many stakeholders noted there is a general lack of research relating to the issue (e.g. population counts, impacts on environment, other herbivores and carnivores, etc.)
- Some stakeholders expressed concern regarding current population counts

- Significant majority of stakeholders recognized there are some safety concerns for the horses, humans and other animals/wildlife (e.g. presence of horses on roads)
- Views on the appropriateness and application of the capture program varied from strong support to strong opposition
- Some stakeholders questioned the GoA's commitment/availability of resources to appropriately manage the population
- There was an overall lack of trust of and appreciation for differing perspectives amongst stakeholders

#### Solutions and Associated Barriers

- Solutions
  - A significant majority of stakeholders supported the need for a management plan for sustaining the horses and the environment/habitat they occupy – the management plan could include multiple approaches, some being:
    - Relocation
    - Adoption
    - Controlled hunt
    - Financial support for ranchers and farmers suffering loss
    - Independent third party oversight of the Strategy implementation
  - Most stakeholders agreed the population count will be at the center of any solution
  - Numerous stakeholders indicated supporting scientific evidence is critical to the solution (e.g. impact of feral horses on grasslands and reforestation efforts)
  - Some stakeholders emphasized this relates to an overriding issue, being what the landscape can sustain having regard to competing interests and uses
  - While many suggestions were made as to how to improve the capture program, most stakeholders endorsed the continuation of such program – a minority did not
  - While not preferred, a significant majority of stakeholders supported processing as an acceptable option for captured horses
  - A minority of stakeholders recommended legislation be adopted to protect the horses – some suggested they were currently protected under the criminal code and GoA capture regulations
- Barriers
  - Many stakeholders stated the emotional and high profile nature of the issue may preclude the parties being able to resolve their differences
  - General lack of research and associated science to assist with development of strategy
  - Lack of legislation and/or commitment of GoA to resolving the issue
  - Some stakeholders suggested focusing on the population as a whole, as opposed to those herds creating problems, is a barrier to finding a solution

#### How Best to Move Forward

- All stakeholders believed an inclusive mechanism is the best way to protect the feral horses within Alberta – all parties should be included and have a say
- There is a stated preference for employing a steering committee which should include the key players, and in turn should broadly distribute information and enable input from other stakeholders

## INTRODUCTION

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The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development is undertaking a review of the strategy for the management of feral horse populations that are subject to the Horse Capture Regulation under *the Stray Animals Act* (the strategy). The primary objective of the review is to gain an understanding of stakeholder perspectives.

Strategic Relations Inc. (SRI) was engaged by the Ministry of Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) to assist with facilitating stakeholder discussions. This report is intended to accurately reflect stakeholder input.

## BACKGROUND<sup>1</sup>

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Free roaming horses on public land are descendants of domestic stock, which ESRD considers to be feral animals. High fecundity, low rates of capture and higher numbers of escaped and illegally released horses have recently resulted in significant increases in the population and areal distribution of feral horses. Since 2007 the range of these animals has expanded beyond areas traditionally occupied – the horse counts conducted by the GOA in the Eastern Slopes have similarly increased from an estimated 200 animals in 2006 to over 1,000 in 2011.

In the early 1990s, concerns about mistreatment of horses captured on public land led to the creation of the Horse Capture Regulation under the *Stray Animals Act*. This regulation was developed to ensure the humane treatment of feral horses during capture and effectively manage horse capture activities through the number of capture licenses issued, the capture season, the ratio of males to females, and methods of capture.

Various research studies conducted between 1975 and 2012 in the eastern slopes have suggested feral horses are a significant resource management issue affecting rangeland, wildlife distribution and habitat values, reforestation, and in some cases public safety. Over the last few years as horse numbers appear to have increased, ESRD staff have experienced a corresponding increase in complaints from grazing disposition holders, the timber industry, municipalities, RCMP and local landowners with respect to the impacts of feral horses.

Following the removal of 216 horses during the winter of 2011-12 under the horse capture regulation, significant concerns were publicly voiced by the Wild Horses of Alberta Society (WHOAS) and its supporters. While the Horse Capture Regulation has been effective at ensuring humane capture and removal, ESRD is of the view it would be beneficial to initiate a dialogue with WHOAS and other key stakeholders to discuss possible management strategies.

The intent of such consultation is to assess potential opportunities to improve the Strategy pertaining to the management of feral horse numbers and the associated impacts. Although research on feral horses is incomplete, it is essential the strategy blend existing scientific data with field data compiled by technical and professional staff in the department, and stakeholder input.

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<sup>1</sup> This section is a summary of information provided by ESRD to SRI.

## STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCESS AND DELIVERABLES

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### Consultation Objective

Solicit stakeholder input to assist with supplementing the current management strategy for feral horses in Alberta within the areas subject to the current Capture Regulations.

### Associated Parameters

- Strategy must be science based
- Establish and utilize appropriate processes to gather data to support science based decision making
- Internal and external support for the Strategy essential
- Stakeholders must be effectively engaged and enabled to participate in the development of the strategy
- Develop strategy to:
  - Establish and nurture trust amongst all parties
  - Facilitate stakeholder input
  - Identify and assess available options
  - Enable evolution as circumstances warrant
- Effectively communicate throughout the process to encourage stakeholder participation and keep public advised as to progress

### Deliverables

The key deliverables as per SRI's engagement with ESRD were/are:

- Contact those stakeholders as identified by ESRD to solicit input pertaining to the questions outlined below.
  - Understand the organization's interest / commitment to feral horses
  - What are the major issues from your perspective and reasons/rationale?
  - How do you view your relationship with government at this time?
  - What are some of your solution options?
    - Which do you prefer?
    - Why?
    - What barriers do you perceive to achieving the preferred outcome?
  - How do you see best advancing the development of a framework (e.g. steering committee, workshop, ...)?
  - How do you see you or your organization being involved going forward? (as part of committee / workshop or input solicited periodically)?
- Provide a final report (this document) relating to the initial phase of consultation
- To be determined

To ensure the deliverables were achieved, the following activities were undertaken:

- Met with ESRD representatives to review the issue, discuss stakeholders to be contacted and develop overall consultation approach
- Reviewed documentation/reports provided by ESRD and stakeholders to better understand the overall issue and associated challenges and opportunities
- Conducted 14 interviews (via telephone or personally) with selected stakeholders to advise as to the overall initiative and solicit input regarding the strategy within the parameters of the questions as outlined above
- An open and transparent environment was established to encourage participation and full disclosure of opinions and potential solutions

SRI contacted the following stakeholders during the initial consultation phase (if more than one individual contacted number is indicated in parentheses):

- Alberta Fish and Game Association
- Alberta Farm Animal Care Association
- Alberta Professional Outfitters Association (contacted – no interview as of yet)
- Alberta SPCA
- Alberta Wilderness Association
- Feral Horse Capture Permit Holders
- Livestock Identification Services Ltd.
- Rangeland Expert at the University of Alberta
- RCMP (2)
- Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association
- Spray Lake Sawmills
- ESRD Field Staff
- Sundre Forest Products
- WHOAS (Wild Horses of Alberta Society)

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW INPUT

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Throughout the engagement, all stakeholders demonstrated an understanding of the nature and requirements of the feral horse issue. They were fully cooperative and supportive of the process, sharing information and making themselves available and providing responses in a timely manner.

### SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW INPUT

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While specific input was sought through the interview process, the Executive Summary and main body of this report summarizes only some common themes arising from an analysis of the stakeholder responses to the following questions (see Deliverables above for a listing of all questions asked of stakeholders):

- What are the major issues from your perspective and reasons/rationale?
- What are some of your solution options?
  - Which do you prefer?
  - Why?
  - What barriers do you perceive to achieving the preferred outcome?
- How do you see best advancing the development of a framework (e.g. steering committee, workshop, ...)?

The remaining questions, though useful and necessary, provided the background required to enable SRI to conduct an open, transparent and effective consultation process and position ESRD to achieve the initiative objective. The detailed stakeholder interview input may be found in Appendix A.

#### **Common Themes (summary of Stakeholder Interview Input)**

Despite the differing perspectives and objectives of stakeholders, common themes emerged through the consultation. When moving forward with the consideration and implementation of potential changes to the strategy, ESRD should give consideration to the following:

##### General

- The issue continues to receive a high level of public attention and is polarizing community perspective – thus, it needs to be addressed
- While stakeholders had differing perspectives as to why (e.g. dedication to feral horse populations, public pressure, etc.), there is agreement the feral horse populations should remain on the landscape
- There is a commitment to the primary objective of the consultations – to an effective and appropriate management approach for feral horse populations in the impacted area
- All stakeholders were supportive of humane treatment of the animals

##### Major Issues

- A minority of stakeholders expressed concern the feral horses currently have no status as a distinct species
- Majority of stakeholders realize it is difficult to maximize all uses on the landscape given competing needs and interests
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- Some stakeholders relate this issue to the management of wildlife generally
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- Most stakeholders recognized the sensitivity of processing captured horses
- Many stakeholders noted there is a general lack of research relating to the issue (e.g. population counts, impacts on environment, other herbivores and carnivores, etc.)
- Some stakeholders expressed concern regarding current population counts
- Significant majority of stakeholders recognized there are some safety concerns for the horses, humans and other animals/wildlife (e.g. presence of horses on roads)
- Views on the appropriateness and application of the capture program varied from strong support to strong opposition
- Some stakeholders questioned the GoA's commitment/availability of resources to appropriately manage the population
- There was an overall lack of trust of and appreciation for differing perspectives amongst stakeholders

### Solutions and Associated Barriers

- Solutions
  - A significant majority of stakeholders supported the need for a management plan to sustain the horses and the environment/habitat they occupy – the management plan could include multiple approaches, some being:
    - Relocation
    - Adoption
    - Controlled hunt
    - Financial support for ranchers and farmers suffering loss
    - Independent third party oversight of the Strategy implementation
  - Most stakeholders agreed the population count will be at the center of any solution
  - Numerous stakeholders indicated supporting scientific evidence is critical to the solution (e.g. impact of feral horses on grasslands and reforestation efforts)
  - Some stakeholders emphasized this relates to an overriding issue, being what the landscape can sustain having regard to competing interests and uses
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  - While not preferred, a significant majority of stakeholders supported processing as an acceptable option for captured horses
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- Barriers
  - Many stakeholders stated the emotional and high profile nature of the issue may preclude the parties being able to resolve their differences
  - General lack of research and associated science to assist with development of strategy
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  - Some stakeholders suggested focusing on the population as a whole as opposed to those herds creating problems is a barrier to finding a solution

### How Best to Move Forward

- All stakeholders believed an inclusive mechanism is the best way to protect the feral horses within Alberta – all parties should be included and have a say
- There is a stated preference for employing a steering committee which should include the key players, and in turn should broadly distribute information and enable input from other stakeholders

## CONCLUSION

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Throughout this process, all stakeholders demonstrated sensitivity to and a requirement for proactive measures to ensure management approaches for feral horse populations are appropriate and effective. Stakeholders were fully cooperative and supportive, sharing information with SRI to enable the completion of the initial phase of this initiative.

The results of the stakeholder interviews are included in this Final Report. The input provides a framework around which the strategy can be reviewed and potential enhancements considered.

## APPENDIX A

### FERAL HORSES - STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

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To encourage participation in and full disclosure during the interview process, SRI did not identify the stakeholders making the comments in the summary below. Further, where stakeholders expressed similar opinions, SRI consolidated the same and referenced whether such comment was made by, for example, a majority of respondents.

It should also be noted while specific input was sought through the interview process, this report summarizes only some common themes (see Executive Summary and main body of this report) and the responses to the following questions (see Deliverables in the main body of the report for a listing of all questions asked of stakeholders):

- What are the major issues from your perspective and reasons/rationale?
- What are some of your solution options?
  - Which do you prefer?
  - Why?
  - What barriers do you perceive to achieving the preferred outcome?
- How do you see best advancing the development of a framework (e.g. steering committee, workshop, ...)?

The remaining questions, though useful and necessary, provided the background required to enable SRI to conduct an open, transparent and effective consultation process and position ESRD to achieve the initiative objective. The detailed stakeholder interview input is below.

#### **Major Issues**

Below is the stakeholder input to the specific question “What are the major issues from your perspective and reasons/rationale?”

#### Feral Horse Status

- Horses currently have no status as a distinct species
- Public sentiment precludes completely removing the horses from the landscape; whether or not they are indigenous is irrelevant due to the public engagement level

#### Management

- Significant majority of stakeholders indicated management of populations is needed – some Stakeholders indicated it is a large and expensive undertaking
- Can’t maximize all uses, but can optimize all uses, given the multitude of uses and related impacts, including displacement of herbivores. The relationships are very complex but must be understood to develop an effective management plan
- Livestock are managed through numerous mechanisms and wildlife is managed through natural attrition and hunting – thus, horses should be subject to the same

- Need to address feral horses from a herd management perspective – horses will manage themselves to a certain degree
- All stakeholders indicated management of populations must be done humanely
- If left unmanaged the count will increase and pose significant threat to grazing lands

#### Priority

- Concern limited resources being dedicated to develop a policy for feral horses when greater need is to update policy and legislation for native species
- Any policy for feral horses must be developed in conjunction with a policy for native species

#### Environmental and Associated Impacts

- Some stakeholders suggested horses impact reforestation efforts – view directly contrary to this also expressed
- Some stakeholders stated horses graze down to the roots while cattle do not – view directly contrary to this also expressed
- Some stakeholders suggested:
  - Horses in direct competition on grazing leases, thus making it difficult to effectively manage grasslands
  - Horses in direct competition with native ungulates
  - Horses grazing may impact continued use of GoA lands if receive low rating
  - Considerable damage to fences, resulting in “stealing mares” and cattle escaping – insurance not available to cover such damage or time
  - Horses consume winter forage provided to cattle
- General decline in grasslands, which is impacted by multiple uses, including horse presence on the landscape
  - Horse presence adds to the complexity
  - Shrub encroachment
  - Weed invasion from fragmenting the land base (e.g. roads)
  - Fragmentation due to oil and gas – roads, pipelines, cut-lines, wells introduce weed infestation
  - Timber management (there is a positive outcome to this in that it opens up secondary habitat) – horses and cattle in cut blocks may impact reforestation
  - Recreation use is increasing – off-road vehicles impact health of grasslands and the more people the higher the chance of displacing herbivores

#### Slaughter

- Most stakeholders indicated while contentious, slaughter needs to remain an option – minority of stakeholders expressed opposition to slaughter

#### Research

- Many stakeholders indicated research required showing feral horses have increased in numbers and such numbers having a significant negative impact on the environment and/or in conflict with native species
- Benefits of count considerably outweighs the cost of the count – is central to stakeholder communications and any subsequent management plan
- Many stakeholders expressed concern the number of feral horses is not known

- General lack of wildlife research on the eastern slopes over the past 30 years – regular reporting required including wildlife counts and an assessment of habitat (improvements and disappearance)
- What role do the feral horses play in maintaining predators when the native ungulates have moved from an area?

### Feral Horse Populations

- Many stakeholders indicated the crux of the issue will be setting the target number and how to manage to those numbers – to find the sustainable number for the horse population
- Number of horses is not the main issue – the main issue is how you deal with the problems – no sense in counting total horse population if problems are isolated
- Many stakeholders stated the number of horses has increased
- Increasing anecdotal evidence wild game species and their predators are in significant decline on the eastern slopes over the past 10 years
- Feral horse numbers are high in the bighorn backcountry whereas a steady decline in the number of native game species and large carnivores
- Does decline in ungulates in some areas mean the carnivores have moved and thus the feral horse populations are able to increase?
- Numbers must be managed but not sure as to optimum number
- Some stakeholders indicated environmental factors are currently keeping the populations in check (e.g. predation and winter conditions)

### Safety

- Many stakeholders expressed a general concern regarding safety of the horses, other livestock and humans through continued and increasing interaction with the horses
- Studs have charged staffers
- Many stakeholders stated problems encountered on roads due to horse presence in proximity to or on the same
- Some horses are carriers of disease – possibility of transference to other livestock
- Capture program led to a reduction in complaints and incidents

### Capture Program

- Poor public perception of program
- Requires third party oversight (e.g. SPCA) to provide assurances program is being operated properly and ensures humane treatment of horses
- Concern some horses may wind up in the possession of those who do not know how to properly handle or care for them
- Should preclude roping as a means of capture – use rope once trapped in pen to get on the trailer
- Ensure once horses are captured they go through the system properly –horses must be dealt with lawfully through any commerce based sale

### Miscellaneous

- Very political issue – GoA has good data but sometimes it gets “twisted”
- Inappropriate use of media to advance positions as opposed to working in a collaborative manner
- At times criminal investigations have been hindered by third party interference
- Reluctance of some stakeholders to engage in full and effective debate

- Emotions tend to hold sway over the debate, needs to be fact based – good information exists but is not being used effectively
- Shot horses in Sunde not yet solved and remains an issue
- Approach and attitude of some in ESRD must change from one of nuisance to taking the issue seriously
- Is the government willing to invest what is required to manage herds?
- Need to understand the rights and obligations of Aboriginals under treaties – traditional interests must be respected as horse capture is part of the culture

## **Solutions and Associated Barriers**

Below is the stakeholder input to the specific questions: “What are some of your solution options? Which do you prefer? Why? What barriers do you perceive to achieving the preferred outcome?”

### Solutions

#### General

- Solution must be flexible
  - U.S. tied its hands with legislation – keep our management options open, avoid full scale protection
  - Don’t know if the recent increase in population is short or long term so must keep the solutions flexible
- The resource that gets lost in this discussion is the vegetation – if we don’t have suitable and sufficient habitat everything else is irrelevant

#### Specific Solutions

- Relocation
- Adoption
  - Focus capture on younger animals to enable gentling down and potentially adoption
  - Need regular/annual management plan because number of horses captured may exceed adoption program capacity
  - Works well in Australia and close to urban areas – but not all horses will be or are capable of being adopted, thus slaughter is the likely scenario
  - When horse captured apply a freeze brand and if adopted then able to track the horse owner if later recaptured – enhances accountability
  - Potential for WHOAS to operate an adoption program
- Financial support for ranchers who have suffered economic loss due to feral horse activities (e.g. fence repair)
- Controlled hunt (much like licenses issued for wildlife)
- Examine potential of interrupting the reproductive cycle or sterilization of studs
- On an ongoing basis there should be some independent animal welfare oversight of the strategy and the implementation thereof

## Management Program

- Once we have the minimum number needed to maintain the herd integrity, then anything above that population is determined by how much habitat is available and how that habitat is allocated to sustain the multiple users/uses
- Given horses have an environmental impact they should be managed through AUM's or hunting
- Don't focus on a specific number – monitor and where there is a problem deal with it (e.g. remove horses from a problem herd as opposed to simply removing horses from the total population)
- Prefers a province-wide approach, but recognizes the Eastern Slopes are the priority as that's where the problem is
- GoA has a responsibility to protect the horses
- Regular monitoring and culling of herds when necessary
- Manage horses on basis of feed available in impacted area (potential for alternating of livestock and horses in an area)
- Engage third parties (e.g. Stakeholders) to verify counts
- Single point of contact for anyone with concerns or complaints

## Research

- Many stakeholders recommended the population counts continue – address any deficiencies to ensure it is reasonably accurate and thus all stakeholders can have confidence in the same
- Conduct a range health assessment and impact of the horses on the range
- Invest in more scientific research to understand impact from a local perspective, but don't reinvent the wheel given there is a lot of research out of the U.S.

## Capture and Associated Processes

- All stakeholders indicated any capture program must be done humanely
- Many Stakeholders indicated the capture program was a good one and thus should continue
  - Keep capture numbers the same as last year
  - With capture come up with an overall number and distribute appropriately between males and females – do not go back to the three males and one female ratio
- Suspend capture program for a period to determine if population increasing
- Increase formality relating to application process
  - Don't make process so onerous as to discourage parties from applying
  - Perform criminal record check on applicants
  - Create different and specific zones so permit holders understand where they can and can't operate
  - Establish opening and closing of season
  - Specify trap parameters and requirements to ensure humane treatment
  - Permit holders should document when checked traps
  - Detail about how/when/where trapping will occur, intended use of horses once captured, pictures of vehicles and trailers to be used (to assist in monitoring for non-licensed persons potentially travelling through the areas and shooting horses)
  - Horses that are captured should be photographed, age recorded and records retained for five years
- Ensure once horses captured they go through the system properly – dealt with lawfully through any commerce based sale
- Capture option is viable to address the number of feral horses on the landscape, but concerned with the training, expertise and experience of those involved in the same
- All horses should be tested for Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) upon capture – if test positive should be slaughtered

- No roping for capture

## Slaughter

- While not preferred, a significant majority of stakeholders indicated slaughter must remain an option – a small minority opposed slaughter under any circumstances
- Slaughter should not be required if herds managed properly
- While not endorsing it, euthanasia may be a more humane way of handling excess horses as opposed to slaughter
- Nuisance horses should likely be slaughtered – this is in the best interests of the herd
- Need processing option for some horses; do not use inflammatory language – use “processing” or “humanely destroyed” rather than slaughter

## Stakeholder Engagement

- Must engage all stakeholders in a meaningful way regardless of position
- Reward program for info leading to prosecution for criminal activity (should be distinct from enforcement side)

## Barriers

- Emotions – if individuals dig in their heels we will not be able to move this issue forward
- Public perception – some stakeholders suggested public support renders it difficult to manage the horses appropriately
- Inaccurate and/or ill-timed public communication – misinformation the media gets from stakeholders, including the GoA, is counter-productive
  - Barrier to doing what is right in some instances is the bad publicity
- Clarity on options and long-term goal – will assist with overcoming fear, emotions and objections
- Many stakeholders suggested a significant science gaps exists – appropriate solutions depend upon adequate research
  - In McLean Creek horses switch their habitat mid-winter to cut blocks – we don’t know why they are doing it – are they avoiding the cold, looking for food?
  - When horses are in the cut blocks are they damaging the regen effort?
  - Even if we know the number of horses in the total population, some remain skeptical about those numbers
  - Work will generate lots of additional questions – likely will need commitment to continued research and monitoring
  - Preconceived notions of the impact of horses – need further studies to determine if there is an impact and, if so, the impact substantiated and clearly communicated
- Lack of being decisive – if we come up with good recommendations, act on them
- Lack of endangered species legislation and commitment to protecting wildlife
- Many stakeholders suggested the count is inaccurate/not known and/or the methodology of the count is deficient
  - Ensure stakeholders believe the count; may be advisable to have either WHOAS member or individual they trust such as a wildlife biologist participate in/observe the count
- Tendency to manage total population as opposed to herds causing problems
  - Horses are being taken out of areas they shouldn’t be taken and not from areas they should be taken from
- Some stakeholders suggested lack of protective legislation was a barrier – others suggested the horses are protected under the criminal code



## How Best to Move Forward

Below is the stakeholder input to the specific question “How do you see best advancing the development of a framework (e.g. steering committee, workshop, ...)?”

### General

- Need research prior to developing a strategy to ensure the dialogue has substance and can support the development of sound options
- Key is to involve everyone (one member from each key stakeholder group) to ensure the process is fair and all viewpoints considered
- Process must be transparent, use layman terms, straightforward and get input from everyone
- Individuals will determine the success of this initiative – need to remove the emotions and come up with effective management recommendations
- Likes the outcome of this exercise – has potential to achieve/convert into useful range management recommendations
- Consider having a “science advisory committee” to enable a more global approach to avoid piecemeal localized efforts that don’t integrate with other work
- Participants must recognize while their input will be considered the final decision rests with the GoA, therefore their input is in the form of recommendations
- Can develop a regional/local model and evolve/expand to other areas horses are currently occupying, as appropriate
- Need to do some strategic press releases and media relations (strategic resource representation)

### Steering Committee

- Significant majority of stakeholders preferred the steering committee approach, provided those organizations not on the committee were provided with an opportunity for input
- Steering committee is the way to go if there is leadership and driving forward to a solution
- Majority on steering committee should be from the horse community
- Steering committee should continue to meet after the final recommendations are made to provide some level of oversight regarding implementation, monitoring, tracking herds, etc.
- ESRD needs to seriously consider the advice given as opposed to giving it “lip service”
- While not necessary for their organization to sit on a steering committee, would like to review the Terms of Reference and have an opportunity to offer comments on the same
- If a steering committee is utilized need to ensure participants are not biased and able to work with others
- Need transparent, constructive and open people
- Workshops build momentum but this can dissipate, could use workshop but only for short-term inclusive launch of steering committee intended for long term
- Workshops and open houses are a waste of time