

Written Testimony
The Honorable Dina Titus, Member of Congress (NV-01)

Members Day Hearing
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
March 5, 2026

Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today to urge your continued support for the humane and sustainable management of our nation's federally protected wild horses and burros as well as the protection of our National Monuments.

The current approach by the Bureau of Land Management is simply not sustainable for taxpayers, for animal welfare, or for the long-term health of our public lands. Between fiscal years 2022 and 2024, BLM removed more than 41,000 wild horses and burros from the range. Today, over 64,000 of these animals are warehoused in costly short- and long-term holding facilities and that number may soon exceed those still living free on the range.

This strategy is not only inhumane, but also fiscally irresponsible. The agency's own data estimates that removal and lifetime holding costs taxpayers roughly \$48,000 per horse. In 2024 alone, nearly two-thirds of the entire program budget was spent on roundups and holding. The science is clear: the National Academy of Sciences has warned that repeated large-scale removals without robust fertility control can actually accelerate population growth through compensatory reproduction.

Congress has already spoken on this issue. Since fiscal year 2022, appropriations language has directed BLM to significantly expand the use of safe, proven, reversible immunocontraceptive vaccines. In FY26, we allocated \$11 million specifically for fertility control. Yet the agency continues to devote only a small fraction of its budget to these efforts, despite modeling showing that a comprehensive fertility control program could cut management costs by up to half.

We can and must do better.

For Fiscal Year 2027, I respectfully request that at least 10 percent of the Wild Horse and Burro Program budget be dedicated to implementing humane, reversible fertility control. This approach is science-based, cost-effective, and consistent with the intent of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. These animals are iconic symbols of the American West. They deserve humane stewardship, not a pipeline from the range to holding facilities and in some cases, across the border to slaughter.

I also want to take a moment to express the importance of protecting public lands, and in particular our beloved National Monuments. Public lands are part of the fabric of who we are and, in many instances, signify our solemn commitment to honoring the cultural heritage and traditions of Indigenous communities who have and continue to call these lands home. Public

lands are major economic engines. In 2023 alone, outdoor recreation contributed \$1.2 trillion to the United States' economy.

That is why I have proudly worked to secure National Monument designations in Southern Nevada over the years, including Avi Kwa Ame, Gold Butte, Basin and Range, and Tule Springs Fossil Beds. I am therefore deeply concerned with renewed efforts to sell off these special places or open them to oil drilling or development. Last year, when Republicans in Congress sought to sell off public lands in my District without our input or consent, the outcry was deafening. I was proud to lead the bipartisan effort to strip language to sell off public lands in Southern Nevada from the reconciliation bill before it was sent to the Senate.

The threat to our public lands, however, is far from over. The President has nominated someone to lead BLM who supported revoking National Monument designations and cosponsored bills to sell off large swaths of public lands without stakeholder input or Tribal consultation while in Congress. I have urged my colleagues in the Senate to oppose former Congressman Stevan Pearce's nomination. But we need to be vigilant. That is why I submitted a request for report language to ensure that the Trump Administration does not recklessly revoke or scale back National Monument designations.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I look forward to working closely with the Committee to protect our nation's wild horses and National Monuments.