

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2015

Secretary Tom Vilsack
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Vilsack,

On August 5, 2015, we as members of the Arizona Congressional Delegation wrote to you urging the termination of any plans to initiate a round-up of the Salt River Horses. Our exhortation came in the wake of an enormous outpouring of support for the herd by our constituents who remain adamant that these horses be left alone and be allowed to live free.

Fortunately, the voice of our constituents was heard and the ordered impoundment of these horses was delayed for a period of 120 days, beginning August 18, 2015. At that time, the United States Forest Service (USFS) committed to working with stakeholders on a management plan that we hoped would protect the horses on the Salt River.

Unfortunately, it appears that little progress has been made in developing such a plan. With this in mind, we remain very concerned that, in this matter, the voice of our constituents is not being sufficiently heard. As we stated in our previous letter, Arizonans care deeply about the well-being of these beautiful horses.

As you know, wild horses have long been a draw to the American Southwest for tourists and conservationists alike. Obviously, the American people have long understood the importance of conserving these valuable resources. In fact, the United States Congress acted over half-a-century ago to pass the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 to ensure that the Secretary of Agriculture would have the flexibility necessary to develop and administer “renewable surface resources of the national forests so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people.”

We stand firm in our resolve to ensure that the Arizonans who frequent our national parks and pay for the continued conservation efforts within them have the most say in what happens to them. For this reason, we again urge the Forest Service at Tonto National Forest to conduct extensive outreach efforts to engage the neighboring public in order to develop a sound management plan that allows this herd to continue to live on the land where it has resided for so many years.

In light of the rapidly approaching deadline, we request direct responses to the following questions within seven days:

- Will the Forest Service agree to begin good faith negotiations with leading stakeholders to develop a collaborative, humane management plan to protect the Salt River horses and the habitat where they live?

• Do you believe the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act authorizes the Forest Service to manage these horses either as wildlife or an outdoor recreational resource?

• Will you agree to extend the 120-day moratorium on removing the horses by an additional 180 days to provide sufficient time for the parties to develop the agreement?

We cannot allow negotiations on this issue to remain at a standstill. In this case, a lack of progress in the development of a sound management plan puts the Salt River horses at great risk. We believe that as the USFS commits to good-faith negotiations and to developing new, innovative solutions that allow stakeholders to play an active role in the preservation of this valued herd, we will ensure greater success in our nation's future conservation efforts.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention in this matter.

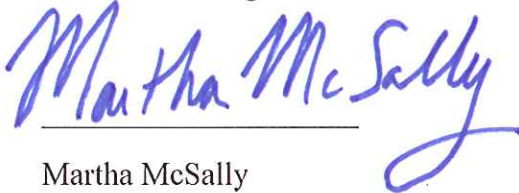
Signed,



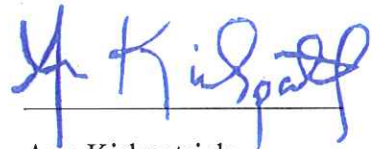
Matt Salmon
Member of Congress



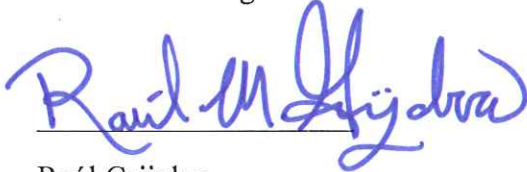
Trent Franks
Member of Congress



Martha McSally
Member of Congress



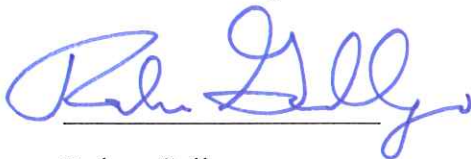
Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



David Schweikert
Member of Congress

Cc: Chief Thomas L. Tidwell, United States Forest Service
Mr. Neil Bosworth, Forest Supervisor, Forest Service, Tonto National Forest