

June 19, 2009

The Honorable Nick Rahall
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
2307 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1203 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rahall and Ranking Member Hastings,

Conserving and protecting important western habitat for plants, wildlife and fish means ensuring the long-term viability of ranching as a business and heritage. Private landowners, particularly ranchers, are a key to protecting the West's iconic open lands, wildlife corridors, rivers and streams, and a hard-won way of life. One of the most important things we do to ensure the sustainability of quality habitat is to help keep ranchers on the land. H.R. 1018, Restoring Our American Mustangs (ROAM) Act, would undermine efforts that have united conservation and ranching interests to achieve real, on-the-ground results throughout the West. We urge you to oppose H.R. 1018.

Western rangeland supports populations of native plants, wildlife, livestock and wild horses. It is our position that effective management of this rangeland must be based on science, not emotion. H.R. 1018 fails to support science-based management of this resource. This bill would expand wild horse range in the West, create wild horse-specific sanctuaries, and allow for the transfer of wild horses to other federal lands where they do not currently exist. Should H.R. 1018 become law, the outcome is a bleak one for the already-overpopulated horses, and for the public lands that are to be managed with a balanced approach to achieve a sustainable and productive condition. H.R. 1018 props up a program in need of comprehensive reform. Doing so without seeking a fuller understanding of the outcomes for rangeland habitat, plant and wildlife species, and the lessees of public land grazing allotments would be short sighted and irresponsible.

In addition to expanding wild horse range, H.R. 1018 makes the removal of excess horses from the range difficult. In the context of their range habitat, wild horses are a non-native species that can be in direct competition with both private ranchers and endemic populations. We strongly oppose any limits or obstacles to the effective management for multiple uses and for healthy populations of native plants and wildlife.

Thank you for your consideration of the potential impacts H.R. 1018 has for the working West, effective conservation partnerships with private ranchers, and for your support of science-based multiple use management of our Nation's valuable public lands.

Sincerely,

California Cattlemen's Association
California Farm Bureau
Colorado Woolgrowers
Family Farm Alliance

**Kansas Livestock Association
Montana Association of State Grazing Associations
Montana Public Lands Council
Montana Stock Growers Association
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Public Lands Council
Society for Range Management
The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
Washington Cattlemen's Association
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust**

**CC: House Committee on Agriculture
House Committee on Natural Resources**