

## **GAO Report Abstract, 1990**

*Rangeland Management: Improvements Needed in Federal Wild Horse Program RCED-90-110 August 20, 1990*

The General Accounting Office (GAO) reviewed the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) efforts to: (1) manage wild horses on public rangeland in 10 western states; and (2) remove and dispose of excess wild horses under an adoption program.

GAO found that: (1) due to insufficient information, it could not determine how many horses ranges could support, the extent of degradation they caused, and the number of horses that should be removed from herd areas; (2) despite congressional direction, BLM did not base its removal of wild horses from federal rangeland on how many horses ranges could support; (3) BLM often did not accompany horse removals with a reduction in livestock grazing levels or effective range management, resulting in inhumane range conditions and exploitation; (4) the number of wild horses BLM removed exceeded its adoption program's capacity; (5) BLM terminated the program in September 1988 after negative publicity and congressional pressure, but did not rescind the regulations authorizing such adoptions; (6) many horses remained at prison facilities much longer than the 30 to 60 days needed to halter train them, resulting in increased program costs; and (7) BLM took steps to tighten management of the halter training program, but did not establish standards for the training time or the number and quality of trained horses the prison facility should produce. GAO believes that: (1) BLM will not be able to meet its objective of limiting wild horse sanctuaries' financial support to their first 3 years of operation; and (2) BLM will either have to commit to a long-term financial commitment to the sanctuaries or be prepared to have the horses returned to its custody.

## **GAO Report Abstract, 1991**

*Public Land Management: Observations on Management of Federal Wild Horse Program T-RCED-91-71 June 20, 1991*

GAO discussed the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) wild horse program. GAO noted that:

(1) BLM removed thousands of wild horses from the range each year without the land condition data that would enable it to determine how many horses the land could support and how many needed to be removed to meet this capacity; (2) the number of wild horses BLM removed exceeded its adoption program's capacity; (3) BLM was making its removal decisions on the basis of an interest in reaching perceived historic population levels or the recommendations of advisor groups largely composed of livestock permittees; (4) the fee waiver adoption program led to the inhumane treatment and eventual slaughter of thousands of horses; and (5) since wild horse sanctuaries would probably not achieve the BLM objective of being self-sustaining in 3 years, the government would either have to commit to long-term financial support or have the horses returned to its custody. GAO also found that BLM: (1) was implementing a comprehensive management plan for Nevada, and anticipated full statewide implementation in about 4 to 5 years; (2) published a rule in September 1990 making it difficult for one person to gain control over a large number of horses; and (3) took such actions to improve the prison halter training effort as establishing quality standards for the training being provided, implementing tighter controls over the age of horses receiving training, and limiting the amount of time horses could spend in training facilities.

*Abstract provided courtesy of the American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign*