



File Code: 2200**Date:** June 11, 2021**Route To:****Subject:** Horse Management – Apache National Forest**To:** Michiko Martin, Southwestern Regional Forester

The management of the horses on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests has been a topic of discussion dating back several years. Recently, concerns regarding the environmental impacts from the horses on the Apache National Forest within the Black River Watershed have been elevated to my attention internally as well as by the public. Environmental impacts of the horses include direct effects to habitats of federally listed species, challenges in managing critical watersheds, and competition for forage with wildlife and authorized livestock. I tasked the Forest staff with assessing the origin of the Apache horses in an effort to determine how to appropriately manage these horses. This letter documents my conclusion regarding the Apache horses located on the Alpine and Springerville Ranger Districts in the Black River area of the Apache National Forest.

Based on the information presented in the “Assessment of Horses on the Apache National Forest” (Fink 2021) as well as an “Unauthorized Livestock History” report prepared by Forest Service historians (Kline and Quarles 2021), forest records, my communications with individuals within and outside the Forest Service, and my overall knowledge and experience as Forest Supervisor on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, my conclusion is that the unclaimed horses currently found on the Apache National Forest are “unauthorized livestock” in accordance with Forest Service regulations per 36 CFR 261.2.

These horses are not wild horses nor the progeny of wild horses and have not intermingled with wild horses as defined by 36 CFR 222.60 (b) (13). These horses originated from unauthorized livestock associated with past grazing permits and other private owners including the neighboring Fort Apache Indian Reservation. There were no unclaimed horses present at the establishment of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. These horses became established in about the mid-2000s. Heber Wild Horses did not migrate from the Heber Wild Horse Territory to the Apache National Forest. I have determined that management of the Apache horses should follow the guidance for unauthorized livestock outlined in the Forest Service directives and regulations.

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