

Staff Reports

WINDOW ROCK – The growing population of feral horses on the Navajo Nation is a problem that cannot be ignored, but it will not be resolved with a horse hunt, President Russell Begaye said.

“We understand the concerns of the people,” Begaye said. “We know the issue of horses is an emotional one with strong feelings on all sides. My administration will not condone a horse hunt for controlling the overpopulation of feral horses. But we do need to implement a management plan to preserve and protect Navajo land for future generations.”

The president’s statement comes on the heels of a 2018 Horse Hunt Proclamation issued last week by the Navajo Department of Fish and Wildlife. That proclamation has been rescinded and the hunt has been canceled. Fish and Wildlife will pursue alternate methods of feral horse management.

According to a 2016 study conducted by Fish and Wildlife, there are as many as 50,000 feral horses on the Navajo Nation, with heavy populations in remote locations and winter range areas like the Carrizo Mountains. One horse consumes approximately 32 pounds of forage and 10 gallons of water per day. The Navajo ecosystem cannot support the number of feral horses that exist.

“The numbers are extreme when considering the amount of overgrazing that currently exists and the negative impact it has on the livestock and wildlife in the various ecosystems on the Nation,” Vice President Jonathan Nez said. “In addressing this issue, we are calling upon our Navajo citizens to bring forth their input to address feral horse management within their regions. We must also consider how factors like low precipitation will impact our grazing areas. We need to be prepared for the coming drought.”

The Navajo Division of Natural Resources (DNR) has documented extensive damage to the land, wildlife habitat, vegetation and other natural resources caused by the overpopulation of feral horses on the landscape. Implementation of a horse management plan is critical to ensure

Feral horse hunt canceled in lieu of alternate considerations

Written by gallupsun

Thursday, 01 March 2018 18:07

a sustainable future while preserving the land and natural resources that sustain Navajo tradition and culture.

DNR has developed a multi-pronged Horse Management Plan that includes as other methods to address the population. Alternative approaches include trapping, castration, birth control and adoptions.

“All of these methods, together, will address the problem of overpopulation that is causing extensive damage to our ecosystems,” Begaye said. “If we don’t take action now, the overgrazing will have major impacts on drought conditions that we anticipate in both the short and long term.”

The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management on Monday approved a new State of Emergency Drought Declaration. The commission is anticipating large-scale drought conditions this summer, which will create a critical shortage of water and range feed for livestock, resulting in poor physical condition of livestock and an increase in disease.