



COROLLA WILD HORSE FUND I N C O R P O R A T E D

1126 Schoolhouse Lane * P.O. Box 361* Corolla, NC 27927

Phone (252) 453-8002 Fax (252) 453 -8073

www.corollawildhorses.com * info@corollawildhorses.com

Re: Denial of request to allow Corolla wild Colonial Spanish Mustangs to remain at a genetically healthy level.

- The Corolla Wild Horse Fund is the nonprofit organization charged with managing the wild horses on the Currituck Outer Banks.
- A management plan for the wild horse herd was created in 1997 and is reviewed at least every 5 years by the Currituck Outer Banks Wild Horse Advisory Board. The plan calls for a maximum herd size of 60. Sixty is not a genetically viable number for a wild horse herd. The current herd number is 101. The herd has been physically reduced by 41 since September of 2006, when the count was 119 as part of the CWHF's mandate to comply with the plan. Thirty-three of the forty-two horses have been placed in adoptive homes.
- The herd lives on ±12,000 acres, contained between two sound-to-sea fences that are eleven miles apart.
- Members of the Currituck Outer Banks Wild Horse Advisory Board are: Corolla Wild Horse Fund; Currituck County; USF&W; NC Estuarine Research Reserve; and two citizens residing in the four wheel drive area who are appointed by the county commissioners. The group meets quarterly.
- USFWS owns a little more than 1/3 of the 12,000 acres (approx.4,103; NCERR owns 441 acres. The other 2/3 of the land is privately owned by multiple individuals and limited partnerships.
- The first fulltime CWHF Executive Director and fulltime Herd Manager were hired in September and July 2006. The management plan was up for the five year review at this time.
- As totally new staff, as yet unfamiliar with the area, the herd, the management plan, the Advisory Board, etc., the new staff made only minor updates to the plan, although as experienced horse people had concerns about the recommended number in the plan.
- CWHF was able to stabilize their finances, institute a darted contraceptive program, add a fulltime administrative position, create a successful adoption program (33 horses between November 2006 and August 2008), register the horses as Colonial Spanish Mustangs, pull DNA samples via remote dart and hair follicles, create a professional website, open a Wild Horse Museum and two mission related stores, initiate a nationwide membership program, recruit and train over 40 volunteers, and rescue and rehabilitate seven injured horses - all in less than two years with three staff.

- On January 10, 2008, CWHF Director met with a multi-disciplinary team from North Carolina State University regarding collaboration on an impact study and carrying capacity study on the area defined as a horse sanctuary. A concept paper was developed by NCSU and shared with USFWS and NCERR for comment.
- DNA testing was conducted by Dr. Gus Cothran, Texas A&M University. Dr. Cothran is the leading equine geneticist in the country as well as an expert on feral herds. The preliminary report found the herd to have high levels of inbreeding and a low level of genetic diversity at a herd size of 90.
- CWHF Director presented the findings at the April 16, 2008 Wild Horse Advisory meeting and requested that the herd number be increased to a minimum of 110 based on the DNA findings and recommendation of the Dr. Cothran. The request was denied by USFWS and NCERR.
- A second request was then made for a moratorium on the physical removal of horses until the results of the planned impact and carrying capacity study are known. The darted contraception program would be continued during the moratorium. This request was also denied.
- In early June 2008, CWHF Director received a letter from USFWS and NCERR formally denying both requests and reiterating the need to reduce the herd to 60 by September 2009.
- On July 1, CWHF Director met with USFWS, NCERR, the Nature Conservancy (owns a very small tract of land in the sanctuary) and NCSU regarding the impact/carrying capacity study. USFWS and NCERR insist that the herd must be 60 for one year prior to the study. The study will take an additional two years after that for a total of three years at 60.
- It is not necessary to artificially reduce the herd to 60 for the impact study. The study can be done at whatever the current herd size is at the time and computer modeling can be used to determine impact and capacity at lower and higher numbers than the current herd size. In addition, a similar study was conducted in 1997 with a herd size of 45. Little or no impact was reported and what impact there was recovered by early summer. Sixty is not a significant increase from 45. Findings at the current herd size would be of more value.
- A wild horse herd of Colonial Spanish Mustangs also lives on NPS Cape Lookout National Seashore (Shackleford Banks). This herd is managed at 120 – 130 as mandated by the 1997 Shackleford Banks Act (Congressman Walter B. Jones). Their land mass is 3,000 acres. The Corolla horses have 12,000 ± acres but are to be managed at the genetically unsupportable number of 60.
- On October 16th Congressman Walter B. Jones traveled to Corolla to meet with USFWS/NCERR. **The Corolla Wild Horse Fund is deeply grateful to the Congressman for his support of the Corolla wild horses as well as wild horses everywhere.** The management plan still calls for 60 horses but we made some real progress and Congressman Jones has promised further action.
- There are 1,100 members of the Corolla Wild Horse Fund nationally/internationally who believe that the wild horses of Corolla are worth protecting and preserving for generations to come.