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Conservation Groups Donate over \$130,000.00 to Protect Apache National Forest from Feral Horse Invasion

Conservation Groups, including member groups of the Arizona Sportsmen For Wildlife Conservation ("AZSFWC"), have donated over **\$130,000.00** to remove feral horses from the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. The horses moved on to the National Forest in 2011 after the Wallow fire burned up the boundary fence between the White Mountain Apache Tribal lands and the Apache National Forest.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe has refused return of their horses whose population has been doubling every three to four years. The feral horses have denuded miles of upper elevation stream side vegetation threatening local extinction of the endangered New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse and damaging endangered Apache Trout streams. The mouse represents the health of the upper elevation stream side meadows.

In 2022, a Federal judge agreed to a legal settlement where the Forest Service would remove the horses to protect the habitat from feral horses but until now, budget constraints prevented complete removal. ASFWC members and others have now given more than **\$130,000.00** to help continue the removals.

"The contributions by these groups has confirmed that true conservationists understand the need for a healthy forest and the protection for natural wildlife to thrive," said ASFWC Executive Director Jim Unmacht.

The contributions represent a first for feral horse removal and reflect the serious concerns among conservationists regarding the widespread damage caused by feral horses.