



PRESS RELEASE

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

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For Immediate Release

January 31, 2019

Colville Tribes Improves Wild Horse Management on Reservation

Nespelem, WA-- The Colville Business Council passed three resolutions to earlier this month to improve wild horse management on the Colville Reservation. The resolutions are designed to address a variety of serious problems caused by the steady increase of wild horse populations over the past decade. .

The CBC approved new Wild horse Chase and Capture regulations, including a reward to tribal members of \$383 per horse captured. The Council also approved a contract for aerial assisted capture of wild horses and tribal code revisions to allow the use of motorized vehicles in wild horse chase and capture.

“The Colville Business Council responsibly addressed the need to better protect our lands, water, wildlife and native plants on the reservation with these decisions,” Colville Business Council Chairman Rodney Cawston said today. “These decisions also provide a plan to protect a healthy population of wild horses here.”

The attached graph from the Tribe’s Wild Horse Management plan shows the population increases of wild horses. In 2015, aerial researchers looking for big game on the Reservation documented 860 observed horses. Horses were not the reason for these research flights, but were documented when observed. The total number of wild horses on the Reservation likely is much higher, given natural reproduction rates.

Chairman Cawston noted that these steadily increasing horse numbers have caused serious environmental damage to wildlife habitat, and to native plant life. Overgrazing by wild horses has led to the spread of invasive plant species, soil compaction and erosion. Wild horses also compete for forage with big game animals such as deer and elk, and for habitat occupied by sharp-tailed and other grouse species. A number of wild horses on the reservation died from starvation in the winter of 2016-2017, an event which points directly to an excessive population. The Tribes goal of the wild horse management plan is for horses to maintain a

healthy and desirable horse population, minimize the negative impacts to the environment, and decrease competition with big game species.

Cody Desautel, the Tribes' Director of Natural Resources, said today that the Tribe has made several attempts to address this issue over the last eight years, beginning with the CBC approval of a Wild Horse Management plan in 2010. In 2011 the CBC approved a contract with tribal members to verify aerial count numbers, and to capture and release wild horses. A reward was offered, based on horses' weights, in 2011. In 2014 the Tribes issued a request for proposals (RFP) and as a result a contract was awarded for aerial wild horse capture. Desautel said that under this contract, 423 horses were captured in an 8 day period. A reward of \$150/horse (mares and geldings) and \$250/stud was issued for 2016-2018, resulting in the capture of 71 wild horses in 2016-2017, and 81 horses in 2017-2018.

"The CBC's decisions will benefit the natural environment, improve habitat for our wildlife and native plants, and will also result in healthier wild horse herds," Desautel said. "These represent responsible stewardship and natural resources management."

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About the Colville Tribes:

Today, more than 9,537 descendants of 12 aboriginal tribes of Indians are enrolled in the Confederated Tribes of the Colville. The tribes, commonly known by English and French names, are: the Colville, the Nespelem, the San Poil, the Arrow Lakes, the Palus, the Wenatchi (Wenatchee), the Chelan, the Entiat, the Methow, the southern Okanogan, the Moses Columbia and the Nez Perce of Chief Joseph's Bands.

