

## **Why you should care that a single non-profit is tackling the wild burro situation.**

As long as I am the Executive Director of the Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue, we will never accept government funding.

As the largest equine rescue, we have set the standards for donkey husbandry including: housing, medical treatments, nutrition, training and adoption. We rescue, on average, 750-1000 donkeys each year. We treat them medically and emotionally. We give them two permanent forms of identification. We move them around the country to our Satellite Adoption Centers so that they can be placed in long term adoptions with people that understand how loving these animals are.

While there will always be people who mistreat and overbreed donkeys, we have solved the Lion's Share of the problems plaguing the domestic American Donkey. With operations extending throughout the lower 48 states, Hawaii and even into the Caribbean, Peaceful Valley has evolved into the preeminent force for donkeys in the Western Hemisphere. But what about the wild burros?

As we delve into this problem, let me clarify a few terms. A "Donkey" and a "Burro" are the same animal known as the *Equus Asinus*. We use the term Donkey to describe a domestic animal and the term Burro to indicate a free-roaming, wild donkey. A Jack is a male, uncastrated donkey and a Jennet is a female. A Mule is a hybrid cross between a male donkey and a female horse.

In 1971, Congress passed the Wild Horse and Burro Act. This act protected the many free-roaming Wild Horses and Burros as a part of our Western Heritage. The Act was ignored by most agencies of the Department of Interior (DOI) and was whittled down to simply mean that Wild Horses and Burros were to be protected on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forestry Service (USFS) lands only and at levels that they deemed appropriate. The BLM became the "Go-to" organization to control wild populations on military bases and other lands administered by other agencies. This has resulted in a 43,000 animal surplus that overburdened their adoption program and resulted in maintenance costs that exceed half of their current annual budget. Many in their own Advisory Council members recommend that these surplus animals be sold to slaughter or euthanized in order to cut costs.

Peaceful Valley was contacted by the National Park Service last year. We were asked if we could assist them with their burro overpopulation problem. The National Park Service (NPS) has a zero horse and burro policy and they can use "Direct Elimination" (shoot on site) if they can find no other alternatives. Their burro removal plan was written in three phases:

Phase 1: Reach out to other DOI agencies and ask for assistance.  
The BLM is the only agency capable of helping and they cannot.

Phase 2: Reach out to Non-Profit for assistance.  
PVDR is the only organization with the staff, facilities and resources for a project this large.

Phase 3: Terminate

As we began building a plan for the removal of the Death Valley National Park and the adjacent Mojave National Preserve, we were contacted by the US Army Training Center at Fort Irwin. That connection led to a meeting with NASA Goldstone Deep Space Communications Center and eventually to the China Lake Naval Weapons Center. All of these areas are unfenced and

share common borders. All told this area exceeds 4,500,000 acres of burro habitat, all needing to be managed.

As I said in the beginning, we will not take government money, even if it was available. My reasons are simple, at least to me. If I take their money, I will have to cede a certain amount of control over to them. In fundraising school, I befriended a few people with the Salvation Army and Goodwill, two ministries that took government money and had to stop preaching in many situations as a result. I will not alter my mission for anyone, let alone a government that has failed, so miserably, at a task where I now have to step in. Where is the logic in that?

But alas, that is not my main reason.

All donations received from donkey lovers are tax deductible. At the bottom of every receipt it indicates that "The donor derives no benefit from it". But that really isn't totally true. They gain a tax write off and they also gain the satisfaction everyone gets when they are doing a good deed. But I always think charities should do more. I think they should be a benefit to everyone in our great country. I think that our nation's non-profits should be the first line against poverty, hunger, homelessness and yes, even wild burros.

Non-profits can mobilize quicker, adapt to ever changing needs and do things much more efficiently than the government, be it state or federal, ever could. For every dollar that someone gives to the donkeys, that is one less dollar in the taxable pool. That impacts all hardworking American Tax Payers. So where is your benefit?

Let me explain.

The BLM houses 43,000 horses and burros at an annual cost of over \$2,000 per animal. PVDR provides the same storage but ours are on vast tracts of land where the burros still enjoy a sense of freedom and still receive the same medical and hoof care that the donkeys on our main ranches receive. We provide this sanctuary at an annual cost of \$200 per donkey. When a burro reaches its 10th birthday in the BLM system it must be sold according to a law passed by Congress in 2004. PVDR buys these donkeys, we must exchange money to keep to the letter of law, and places them into our Adoption Program, alleviating the cost of their storage from the American Tax Payer. To date, Peaceful Valley has brought in nearly 1,000 of these BLM "Sale" Burros.

I have created a 10-year budget for PVDR's Donkey Management Plan in the Southern California Desert. This nearly \$30,000,000 budget will solve the current burro overpopulation problem and establish legitimate guidelines for proper burro management. Our team of academics will perform studies throughout the capture process and assess the effects of burro removal and whether it has had a positive or a negative effect on local flora and native wildlife. The Federal Government, if they had the funds to perform this project, would spend four to ten times that amount without the same results that PVDR can guarantee. That is a Tax Payer savings of up to \$300,000,000.

You are welcome.

But how can PVDR guarantee better results than the government could produce?

Glad you asked, let me explain.

For the past 20 years, we have built and perfected a donkey adoption program that spans the Continental United States. As of the writing of this article we have over 30 Satellite Adoption Centers with more coming onboard every month. With this system we can adopt donkeys lo-

cally, all across the country, and make sure that they are in good homes. In our Adoption Program, the adopters do not legally own the animal, but are its primary caregiver. If their life changes, i.e. job transfer, sickness, age, etc. the donkey gets returned to us for placement in a new home.

To increase our transportation abilities, PVDR operates a Federally Registered Trucking Division. We employ professional drivers and handle all of our own transport. We have built training centers and donkey distribution hubs near both Mesquite, Nevada and Lynchburg, Virginia and we manage all operations from our main facility in San Angelo, Texas. With our system in place, and with a strong advertising presence, Peaceful Valley can accommodate the many burros that will eventually be removed from the desert without the need for costly storage.

Quite frankly, the Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue is the only solution to this very real problem. With very little predation, there is nothing to keep the burro population in check except for starvation due to over grazing. I would hope that those reading this article may want to support our efforts, if for no other reasons than all of us, burro lovers and non burros lovers alike, will receive a very real benefit from our very important work.

Please visit [www.wildburros.org](http://www.wildburros.org) and review the 10-year budget, the 10-year Budget Summary as well as the donation opportunities.

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