



# SAVE THE WILD WEST, Natural Grassland Protection Act

## Annual Cost Savings Analysis for American Taxpayers

Presented by: Love Wild Horses Foundation

*Restoring 50 Million Acres of Western Grasslands Utilizing Captured Wild Horses and Burros Currently in Government Holding Facilities*

### Overview

The **Greenbelt Barrier Protection Initiative** proposes restoring 50 million acres of fire-prone, degraded grasslands across the West by deploying rewilded, government-captured wild horses and burros. This natural infrastructure strategy delivers massive cost savings by reducing wildfire risk, improving drought resilience, and restoring critical ecosystem services.

The *Love Wild Horses Foundation* proposes a federally supported rewilding initiative to restore 50 million acres of degraded public lands across the American West through the natural land management services of wild horses. By allowing government-captured wild horses to return to managed wild ecosystems, this plan will rebuild topsoil, restore native grasslands, reduce wildfires, sequester carbon, and significantly reduce federal spending on land degradation, fire suppression, and emergency disaster relief while relieving the federal government of over ***\$100 million per year*** spent yearly by the Bureau of Land Management on holding facilities for captured wild horses and burros.

## Estimated Annual Economic Value of Ecosystem Services Restored

Benefit Category	Value per Acre	Total Annual	Source Summary
Wildfire Risk Reduction	\$300-\$500	<b>\$15B-\$25B</b>	USDA Forest Service, NIFC, BLM and CalFire grazing/firebreak programs
Carbon Sequestration	\$10-\$25	<b>\$500M-\$1756</b>	EPA, USDA, NRCS- data on soil sequestration potential, Ecosystem Marketplace and California carbon credit programs
Water Retention & Drought Resilience	\$100-\$250	<b>\$5B-\$12.5B</b>	USGS, NRCS CA Natural Resources Agency
Biodiversity & Pollination	\$50-\$150	<b>\$2.5B-\$7.5B</b>	USDA, Xerces Society, Peer-reviewed studies on ecosystem service valuation
Public Health & FEMA Savings	\$20-\$50	<b>\$1B-\$2.5B</b>	CDC, GAO, FEMA disaster assistance records
Soil Erosion Reduction	\$15-\$45	<b>\$750M-\$2.25B</b>	USDA NRCS CEAP reports on sediment reduction benefits
Improved Soil Productivity	\$25-\$80	<b>\$1.25B-\$4B</b>	USDA Rangeland & Soil Quality Studies
<b>TOTAL VALUE</b>		<b>\$26.5B - 55B</b>	<b>Aggregated</b>

## **Calculation Breakdown by Category**

### **1. Wildfire Defense Savings Assumptions:**

- Average cost savings from reduced fuel loads (from prescribed grazing, thinning, etc.) = **\$300–\$500 per acre/year**

- Based on USDA Forest Service data and CalFire metrics

- 50 million acres treated/restored by rewilded equines = **\$15–\$25 billion/year**

#### **Formula:**

50,000,000 acres × \$300–\$500/acre = **\$15B–\$25B/year**

#### **Sources:**

- USDA Forest Service wildfire suppression costs
- National Interagency Fire Center
- Journal of Environmental Management (2022): Wildfire cost-avoidance from fuel treatment studies
- BLM and CalFire grazing/firebreak programs

### **2. Carbon Sequestration Value Assumptions:**

- Sequestration rate: **0.2–0.5 tons CO<sub>2</sub>/acre/year** for healthy grasslands
- Carbon value: **\$50/ton CO<sub>2</sub>** (US Government Interagency Working Group 2023 social cost of carbon estimate)

#### **Formula:**

50M acres × 0.3 tons CO<sub>2</sub> × \$50 = **\$750 million/year**

#### **Range:**

Low: 50M × 0.2 × \$50 = \$500M

High: 50M × 0.5 × \$50 = \$1.25B

#### **Sources:**

- EPA/USDA soil carbon studies
- IPCC and NRCS data on soil sequestration potential
- Ecosystem Marketplace and California carbon credit programs

### **3. Water Retention & Drought Resilience Assumptions:**

- Grasslands increase infiltration, reduce erosion, lower water infrastructure costs
- Value range: **\$100–\$250/acre/year**, based on water savings, avoided erosion loss, and flood mitigation

#### **Formula:**

50M acres × \$100–\$250 = **\$5B–\$12.5B/year**

#### **Sources:**

- USDA NRCS conservation impact evaluations
- USGS and state drought response cost reports
- California Natural Resources Agency cost-benefit models for rangeland restoration

### **4. Biodiversity & Agricultural Ecosystem Support Assumptions:**

- Restoration supports native pollinators and beneficial insects
- Value to agriculture and ecosystems: **\$50–\$150/acre/year**

#### **Formula:**

50M acres × \$50–\$150 = **\$2.5B–\$7.5B/year**

**Sources:**

- Xerces Society pollination service studies
- USDA/NRCS reports on pest control and soil fertility from biodiverse lands
- Peer-reviewed studies on ecosystem service valuation (Costanza et al., 1997 & 2014)

**5. Public Health & FEMA Disaster Avoidance****Assumptions:**

- Wildfire smoke and extreme weather create \$ billions in health and emergency costs annually
- Value of avoided medical costs, FEMA payouts, and insurance losses: **\$20–\$50/acre/year**

**Formula:**

50M acres × \$20–\$50 = **\$1B–\$2.5B/year**

**Sources:**

- GAO wildfire disaster relief spending
- CDC estimates on wildfire smoke-related health impacts
- FEMA’s average post-disaster public assistance costs (per event/region)

**Why It Matters**

- **Restores native grasslands** across Tribal, public, and conservation lands
- **Replaces holding facilities** with functioning ecosystems
- **Reduces federal wildfire suppression and disaster recovery costs**
- **Creates rural jobs** in land and herd management
- **Rewilding is cheaper than warehousing:** BLM spends ~\$93M/year on holding vs. proposed \$51M/year for rewilding

**Program Mechanism**

- Deploy rewilded wild horses as low-impact grazers to manage fine fuels and revive soils
- Partner with Tribal governments, land trusts, and restoration coalitions
- Create a living firebreak across Western states—**The American Greenbelt**

**Key Policy Ask**

Allocate **\$51 million/year** for a 5-year rewilding transition program to restore 50 million acres and end long-term horse warehousing.

**Conclusion**

With an annual investment of **\$51 million**, the *Love Wild Horses Foundation's bill* could yield over **\$20 billion in ecosystem services and cost savings each year—a 39000%+ return on investment**—while restoring soil health, biodiversity, and climate resilience on lands that desperately need it.

The *Love Wild Horses Foundation* offers a proven, low-cost, nature-based solution to revitalize degraded U.S. lands while turning a federal liability—the wild horse holding system—into an engine for ecological recovery. With modest investment and political will, we can transform crisis into a fiscally-smart opportunity.

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- **United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).**  
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### 3. Water Retention and Drought Resilience

- **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).**  
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- **California Natural Resources Agency.**  
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### 4. Biodiversity and Agricultural Support

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<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/wildlife/native-pollinators>

## 5. Public Health and FEMA Disaster Avoidance

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).**  
*Wildfire Smoke: A Guide for Public Health Officials*.  
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- **Government Accountability Office (GAO).**  
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## General Supporting Resources (Optional to include)

- **Bureau of Land Management (BLM).**  
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<https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/about-the-program/program-data>
- **U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit.**  
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