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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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As the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepares to enter a Reno, NV courtroom to answer charges on First Amendment rights violations and Contempt of Court charges, yet another instance of discriminatory press and public access took place.

This time it occurred at the Warm Springs, OR wild horse roundup (what the BLM euphemistically calls a "gather"). The roundup that began on Nov. 2, 2010 and is expected to continue until Nov 14, had only 2 scheduled public observations days, Nov 5 and 6, which would allow only 10 people who had put in a request with the Burns District BLM office 3 months earlier.

On day one of public observation, while no horses were captured, an additional observation day was not rescheduled. A new BLM contractor, "Sun J," based in Utah, flew out of sight for 5 hours but could be heard nearby. It is not known what was happening out of view during that time, but no horses were captured that day. The roundup operations were ended for the day after an observer who became concerned about the length of time horses were being run, spoke with BLM's PR person on the scene. After speaking with the contractor, the BLM decided to stop the roundup for the day, allegedly to let the horses rest.

That afternoon access to view horses at the temporary holding corrals was limited to 5 minutes of viewing from a distance of 50 feet. Access to view the mares and foals was denied because the contractor's two year-old child was playing near the mares and foals' pen with his grandfather and BLM did not want to disturb them. According to witnesses, the area near the mares and foals' pen was littered with the child's toys and the child had free rein to run and play.

"It was impossible to see the mares and foals and to see their condition, to see if any were lame or had injuries," said Laura Leigh, a photojournalist and videographer who is well known for her work documenting and reporting on the wild horses. "So while we saw no horses captured today, we were allowed mere minutes of standing at a distant fence and seeing relatively nothing. I asked if we could have access the following day and I was told no. It was a one shot deal to visit the roundup and corrals and this was my day to visit."

However, a videographer from an online DVD magazine that specializes in interviewing artists on video had been given access that had been denied everyone else when she was allowed an additional day.

On Saturday a stallion broke his neck on a fence panel. "The panel the stallion hit appeared to have been improperly set up since prior to the stallion breaking his neck, at least eight horses had a problem in that same corner and had contact with the panel. "The wranglers put a lot of pressure on with whips and bags and he jumped for it," said Brogan Horton of Animal Rescue Unit. I think they all thought it was an exit, even a foal had attempted it earlier. After the stallion went down, a screen was put up but we could see

him struggling and then we were asked to leave”.

Reports from eyewitnesses say a young colt of about 4 or 5 months would not go into the trap. Two wranglers on horseback, double lassoed the foal with two ropes around his neck and disappeared with him behind a bluff. The wranglers rode back without the foal, and according to video of the incident, 41 minutes had passed while the wranglers ate lunch and then went to retrieve the foal from behind the bluff. The foal walked into the trap clearly exhausted with his head hanging very low.

“It is imperative that the public knows what is happening out there and it is pretty clear that BLM does not want the public to see anything at all. Who is calling the shots out there? Why the secrecy and the brazen denial of our rights and even common decency. I think it is obvious why the BLM does not want the public to see what they are doing. If this is what happens when people are watching, we have a big problem and I hope the courts can bring relief when the lawsuits are heard,” said Maureen VanDerStad of Grass Roots Horse, the equine welfare group that is supporting Laura Leigh’s legal actions.

Laura Leigh filed a lawsuit this past September on the BLM’s prior restraint of her First Amendment rights in regard to access denied at the Silver King, NV wild horse roundup which occurred in September, and asks for full accountability on the whereabouts of all the wild horses already captured.

For the Warm Springs herd management area in Eastern Oregon, which covers more than 475,000 acres, the agency had set herd size at 111 to 202 horses and burros. The BLM plans to remove 360 horses from the Warm Springs herd.

For pictures and more information on legal filings please visit [www.grassrootshorse.com](http://www.grassrootshorse.com)