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Contacts: Neda DeMayo, 805-757-5364  
Suzanne Roy, 919-697-9389  
Jill Anderson, 805-757-5364

## Historic partnership between Nevada rancher and California wild horse sanctuary offers hope for captured Nevada mustangs

*Gerlach, Nevada (June 1, 2010)* . . . [Return to Freedom](#), a California-based wild horse sanctuary, has partnered with the [Soldier Meadows Ranch and Lodge](#) north of Gerlach, Nevada, to offer the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) a plan to return as many as 1,700 recently-captured wild horses from the Calico Mountains Complex to their home range.

The horses were captured between December 2009 and February 2010 in one of the BLM's largest and most controversial helicopter roundups in years. The proposal offers a cost-effective alternative to the BLM's current plan to transfer most of the mustangs to Midwestern holding facilities, where stallions will be gelded and family bands will be permanently separated. The plan also includes a pilot program for on-the-range management of the wild horses in this northwestern Nevada area.

"What we are proposing is not another sanctuary, but a new direction for the management of wild horses that keeps them on the range and saves millions of tax dollars. This historic partnership with a local rancher expands options for the preservation of natural habitat, wildlife and wild horse herds," said Neda DeMayo, Founder of Return to Freedom. "We are hopeful that the BLM will accept our proposal for a pilot program to maintain healthy herds on healthy ranges in the historically unique and beautiful Calico Mountains Complex in Nevada."

Under the proposal submitted last month to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, the BLM could transfer many of the horses to the private lands at Soldier Meadows Ranch while range improvements -- including repair of critical water sources -- are implemented. Horses could be released back onto the range as the improvements are completed. Long-term management of the 379,000-acres of complex that are encompassed by the Soldier Meadows Grazing Allotment would focus on strategies to maintain the horses on the range, avoiding the traumatic and costly captures, removals and steep off-the-range holding costs.

In 2008, the BLM asked the public and advocacy groups to participate in creative solutions to the problems the agency faces in its Wild Horse and Burro Program. Return to Freedom and Soldier Meadows Ranch are answering that call.

"We can make a real difference in the whole area by repairing water sources and creating a habitat that is conducive to all the wildlife in this beautiful area," said Jim Kudrna, owner and operator of Soldier Meadows Ranch and Lodge. "By partnering with us on this innovative plan,

the BLM can show the American public that it is interested in solving this problem instead of continuing to put expensive Band-Aids on wild horse management issues." Mr. Kudrna observed.

Soldier Meadows Ranch and Lodge, acquired by Kudrna Nevada, LLC in 2005 and managed by Jim and Kathy Kudrna, consists of nearly 10,000 acres of private property, a year-round Lodge and Visitor Center and the Soldier Meadows Allotment which is comprised of approximately 379,000 acres of Multiple Use Public Lands administered by the BLM and currently used for cattle grazing and wild horses.

The Lodge and wild horse preserve at Soldier Meadows Ranch would be operated by Return to Freedom with the participation of other organizations for educational programs, eco-tourism and volun-tourism to engage the public directly with this historical area.

Return to Freedom Sanctuary, incorporated in 1997, is dedicated to preserving the freedom, diversity and habitat of America's wild horses through sanctuary, education and conservation. RTF has rescued and relocated approximately 1,000 horses over the past decade, and manages intact bands representing various strains of America's wild horse herds at its 310-acre sanctuary in Santa Barbara County.

*Copies of the proposal are available upon request.*