

August 3, 2018

To Whom it May Concern,

We are reaching out to express our concern regarding the Cooperative Agreement and Federal Grant Money (W9126G-12-2-0019) between US Army Corps of Engineers, Texas State University, JRTC- Fort Polk, subcontractors and/or agents involved in the horse removal program at Fort Polk, LA. Specifically, the current 501c3 on the Army's list to take horses, *Meridian Falls Ranch* (MFR) and the subcontractor hired to capture horses, *Jacob Thompson Cattle, LLC*.

Meridian Falls Ranch out of Texas has been engaged in some questionable practices & policies and is a likely shadow organization that is in fact selling or sending the horses to kill pens and auctions. Jacob Thompson Cattle, LLC or Thompsons Horse Lot out of Pitkin, LA has a well-known questionable and shady history in terms of animal welfare and practice as well as a long history of felony and criminal charges involving livestock. Considering this the public is watching closely. <https://pegasusequine.wordpress.com/2017/12/28/documentation/>

There is confirmation that the last group of horses rounded up in July 2018 went directly to the Thompson Feed Lot (Jacob Thomson Cattle LLC) even though multiple people have reached out to MFR to assist in the placement of these horses. Although, it does not state that the horses cannot be sent to a slaughter house in your contracts, you should be aware that many rescue groups, concerned citizens, and locals had offered to assist MFR in the placement of the horses rounded up in May 2018, June 2018, and July 2018. No one, to our knowledge, who has reached out to MFR to aid in the horse placement, adopt, or foster has received any kind of follow through from them. Unfortunately, Meridian Falls Ranch (MFR), acting as your agent, failed to communicate properly with these groups including; not returning phone calls and/or answering messages. Eventually, this included removing their online presence and making it extremely difficult for legitimate adopters and rescues to assist them in placement. Involving a 501c3 Animal Rescue organization implies that the horses will be rescued, cared for, and adopted. Currently with Meridian Falls Ranch in charge, the "good faith" expectation is blatantly disregarded and to the detriment of the horses, the US ARMY Fort Polk - JRTC Installation and the Texas State University

We also have several reports stating that the 12 horses from round up in May 2018 taken by MFR went to Elkhart Auction in TX and the same is suspected for the 32 from June 2018. Currently, as of 08-01-2018, the 33 horses from July 2018 round up are sitting at the Thompson Kill Pen lot where the Thompsons are selling the horses for \$385 per horse making very costly and difficult for legitimate animal welfare organization to rescue these horses. In addition, the Army's own Environmental Assessment states the following;

"EIA testing would be conducted by LDAF representatives using the Coggins Test."

This test (Coggins) is required to move horses within and between state lines. For the last 3 round ups (May 2018, June 2018, July 2018) this test was not executed. Which is in violation of state law and opens the installation and university up for scrutiny. Because this test is not occurring on base it is making it difficult for individuals / organizations to facilitate placement. As stated in the document titled, "Scope of Work for Thompson Horse Lot & Co. Horse Capture & Maintenance Project Joint Reserve Training Center at Fort Polk, LA" under the section titled "Methodology":

"Thompsons Horse Lot & Co. will coordinate with Ft. Polk to have a veterinarian draw blood once the horses are captured on the installation. It is Ft. Polk's responsibility to provide a veterinarian to draw blood and no costs budgeted for this service."

“No horses will be removed from JRTC/Ft. Polk until blood test results have been obtained and horses are approved for adoption or give away.”

As stated in the contract between TSU, Thompson, and Fort Polk a blood draw will be conducted on base. By not following this the Army and TSU are exposing themselves to public scrutiny. Responsibility of this expense should reside with the Installation and/or funded by the Federal grant money allocated for this initiative by the Army Corps of Engineers to Texas State University.

As stated in the document titled *“Statement of Objectives for Horse Capture and Maintenance for JRTC/Fort Polk, LA”*. Master Cooperative Agreement No. W9126G-12-2-0019. Pg. 5 of 20, Section 2.0 Authority: 2.3 AND Pg. 6 of 20, Section 3.0 Description of Objectives, 3.3 Task 3 (pictured below)

2.3 In accordance with section 6305 – *Using cooperative agreements of the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreements Act of 1977* (31 U.S.C. § 6301 et seq.), substantial involvement is expected between the Department of Defense and the recipient when carrying out the activity contemplated by the cooperative agreement. The DoD agrees to participate at a national level in support of the CESU program as accepted in the Master MOU for the establishment and continuation of the CESU program Article II 1-4 and Article VI 1-7.

The installation further (hence DoD) agrees to provide substantial involvement as directed under Article II (A) Gulf Coast CESU Master Agreement # W9126G-12-2-0019 to include, but are not limited to, the following:

- INSTALLATION is involved in development of study methodology, data gathering, analysis, and/or report writing
- INSTALLATION actively participates and collaborates in carrying out the project plan of work, reviews and approves activities, helps train or select project staff or trainees
- INSTALLATION incurs in-kind or direct expenditures in carrying out the activities specified in the project agreement. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Providing computing services
 - Providing staff time to work on the project
 - Coordination for range access
 - Coordination with **veterinarians** and animal welfare groups

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF OBJECTIVES

3.1 Task 1: Capture: To contain at large livestock in an enclosure that reasonably assures detention of the animals.

Limitations on number of animals captured: {on Fort Polk and under the Environmental Assessment – the number of animals captured at any given time is within a loose definition of one to three bands. The EA specifically states “This COA would start with the capture of lots of horses consisting of one to three bands (10-30 horses). The intent of capturing small groups of horses over an extended period of time is to permit the various participating organizations sufficient time to move the horses through their adoption programs rather than overwhelming those organizations with all of the horses in a one to three month period.” (§2.3.7)}.

Thompsons Horse Lot & Co. will coordinate with Ft. Polk to have a veterinarian draw blood once the horses are captured on the installation. It is Ft. Polk’s responsibility to provide a veterinarian to draw blood and no costs budgeted for this service.

In addition, there are several references noted in the contracts that imply that Army Corps does not wish to overwhelm rescue organization(s). However, frequency of round ups and lack of Coggins test does just that, overwhelms Rescue Organizations.

Below is also a list of questionable history associated with Meridian Falls Ranch and board member(s):

Shandi Ann Lebron aka Crystal Lebron, the founding president now VP (effective Jan 2018) of Meridian Falls Ranch has numerous charges and or convictions regarding livestock:

- Livestock Cruelty conviction from 2016. (Case CR1501027)
- Arrest Warrants in Arlington, TX (Citation No. 000576152, 000576153, 00610041, 00610043, 008213280)
- Arrest for Abandon Endanger Child Criminal Negligence in Red River County TX on 10/22/2017

We implore those able to make decisions to first vet the 501c3 organization to make sure that they do in fact save horses and based on evidence we respectfully ask the following:

- Meridian Falls Ranch be removed from the 501c3 list immediately and other 501c3s listed be evaluated.
- TSU/Fort Polk and TSU actively seek and find creditable rescues/sanctuaries to add to their list if this plan is to continue.
- TSU/Fort Polk remove Thompsons as subcontractor

In an interview on KXAN Austin dated 06-15-2018, TSU Director and contracting party, Dr Todd Ahlman, said no horse would go to slaughter.

Ahlman says *"so far every horse captured by Thompson's Horse Lot has found a new home". "There is no horse slaughter happening, that's misinformation being driven by social media," said Ahlman. "They have all been adopted to nonprofit horse rescue groups, and what happens to these horses after they go to these nonprofit groups, we have no control over. I can tell you that none of the horses have gone to the Thompson's and have gone that route." ... "That (horse slaughter) is a separate part of their business that has nothing to do with this contract and nothing to do with this process," said Ahlman.* <https://www.kxan.com/news/local/hays/activists-slam-texas-state-for-removing-wild-horses-from-army-base/1241891401>

Despite Mr. Ahlman's statement, as of August 1st, 2018 the horses from July 2018 round up are sitting at the Thompson Horse Lot, a known kill buyer, again opening both the Installation and the University up for scrutiny.

The contract with TSU, Fort Polk & the Thompson's is set to expire in September 2018. This presents an excellent opportunity for the Army to begin to work with some local concerned citizens, rescue groups, and adopters who will legitimately find and provide homes for these horses. Please consider revising your policy and procedures regarding the Fort Polk Horse Capture and Removal plan. Meridian Falls Ranch needs to be immediately removed from the 501c3 list and an evaluation of the remaining 501c3s needs to be conducted. In order to restore a good faith intention, Fort Polk and TSU needs to actively seek a creditable rescue(s) to add to the list. If a contractor such as TSU is to be used to facilitate this process, the rules and expectations need to be revised and reviewed to ensure that the project is properly conducted and does not reflect badly on the Installation or University.

If the Army would like citations, sources or documents supporting this information about Meridian Falls Ranch Crystal Lebron or the Thompsons, Pegasus has some documentation that it can share.

We do not want this to continue as is without first fully and ethically considering the potential effects on the welfare of the horses, as well as the potential effects on the cultural landscape per section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, a complete Environmental Impact Statement, work to find sanctuary with Kisatchie's 604,000 acres and there should be an organization included whose sole purpose is to protect the welfare of these animals.

We are concerned for the safety and long-term welfare of the horses being removed. Please feel free to reach out to Amy Hanchey, President of Pegasus Equine Guardian Association to assist in anyway needed.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a petition created at the beginning of June 2018, which is about to reach 10,000 signatures. [Protect Louisiana's Wild Horses](#)

Respectfully,

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