

FOAL Newsletter

Honoring a Legacy: FOAL Establishes Wild Horses Endowment Fund

FOAL is proud to announce the creation of the **FOAL Friends of a Legacy - Wild Horses Endowment Fund** with the Wyoming Community Foundation. With an initial investment of \$50,000 from FOAL, this endowment was created in honor of Bettye and Marshall Dominick to serve as an enduring tribute to the two people whose vision, grit, and generosity sparked everything FOAL is today. From the moment Bettye and Marshall first stepped onto the McCullough Peaks range, they carried with them a deep belief that the wild horses deserved thoughtful stewardship and a community willing to stand up for them. This endowment ensures that their legacy of care will continue long into the future.

By establishing this fund, FOAL is taking a meaningful step toward long-term stability. The endowment will grow over time, generating annual support for the programs and habitat work that are so close to the Dominicks' hearts. It also gives donors a way to honor Bettye and Marshall in a lasting, tangible way—one that reflects their incredible commitment to the land, the horses, and the people who rallied around both.



This is more than a financial milestone; it is a promise. A promise that FOAL will continue the work the Dominicks began, safeguarding the McCullough Peaks Mustangs and strengthening the community that surrounds them. Through this endowment, FOAL's mission will be supported for generations to come. If you are interested in learning more about the Wyoming Community Foundation, or contributing to

the new FOAL endowment fund, please visit: <https://wycf.org>. The ultimate goal is that the FOAL endowment would be large enough to face the unpredictable challenges we all know the wild horses have faced and will continue to face.

Story by Heather Green, FOAL Executive Director

Ever Wonder Who's Watching?



As the mustangs come into their watering hole, the waiting photographers immediately start clicking their cameras, with each hoping that this will be that prize photo that they have been waiting for. The mustangs cautiously approach the water, pick their spot, and begin their drinking as if they haven't drunk for days. After their thirst is quenched, they sometimes even roll in the water, enjoying a special mud bath. Then, as mustangs do, they cordially move aside and let others enter the water to drink, as they mill with harem members or find a nice soft spot in the dirt to roll which gives them a nice coating of adobe colored mud to help ward off biting flies and bugs.

McCullough Peaks Mustang enjoys a nice reservoir bath. Photo by Phyllis Preator

Once all have watered, the mustangs begin to exit their watering scene, sometimes at a trot or even a gallop. As the dust clears, so do the photographers. Whew, the watering hole is once again QUIET! Ever wonder who may have been watching the scene besides you?

I'll never forget the first time that I saw the Plains Spadefoot Toad. It was years ago when I was riding the quiet back country. As I rode along at a walk, my eyes always surveyed the ground for tracks. I was looking for a group of horses that had a habit of liking "not to be seen". As I approached what looked like an abandoned watering hole, the ground became alive with action. All around my horse, were what I thought... jumping crickets, so I pulled my horse to a stop. The movement on the ground stopped. I again moved forward, and again the ground had little critters jumping everywhere. I discovered it was the vibration of my horse walking on the ground that caused the little critters to jump.



Plains Spadefoot Toad, Photos by Phyllis Preator

So, I stopped my horse, pulled out my Canon Rebel from the saddlebag and started recording the moment. A closer look, showed me that they were not crickets, but toads!! They were very small toads, less than an inch long, with orange dots on their backs. I was in Heaven. I love discovering something new to add to my repertoire. Once back home, I consulted with a herpetologist and was told that they were the "**Plains Spadefoot Toad**". As the years went by, I discovered this toad to be quite common in our McCullough Peaks area and also surrounding areas that host the same type of desert terrain.

After my discovery of this toad, it



became natural for me to keep my eyes on watch, not only for horse tracks, but for hopping toads. I am still amazed at myself, that I had ridden this area for so many years and had never seen those toads. But to date, with my friend and I taking up the sport of "frogging" (looking for frogs), I have documented not only the **Plains Spadefoot Toad**, but also the **Boreal Chorus Frog** and the **Rocky Mountain Woodhouse's Toad**...all three living in areas of the McCullough Peaks. One must remember though, they are seasonal and can best be seen in the spring.

So, do you ever stop to wonder who may be watching you or the other photographers at a watering hole? Make a habit to widen your focus and look around; you may be surprised at who you meet. The McCullough Peaks hosts a very active ecosystem. There's usually something for everyone, besides just the horses. *Written by Phyllis Preator, May 2026*

Second Annual Picnic in the Peaks

FOAL is busy preparing for the second annual Picnic in the Peaks. Pack a picnic lunch, a lawn chair, an umbrella, and join us for this free, family-friendly event. The picnic is scheduled for June 13th, from 10am to 1pm, and will be 28 miles east of Cody on HWY 14, at the Wild Horse Interpretive Trail/FOAL Kiosk. Though the specific program schedule is still being finalized, be sure to watch for more information about the event on our website, Instagram and Facebook pages. Free refreshments will be available along with an opportunity to follow Mel Sell from Cody Wild Mustang Tours, LLC. to see and learn more about the wild horses after the picnic. We look forward to seeing you there!

FOAL Welcomes New Board Member, Virginia Schmidt



Virginia at the Double Doc Ranch with her horses, Rubio (left) and Stardust (right).

Virginia Schmidt was birthed and raised on the land of Cody, Wyoming. She grew up on the Double Doc Ranch – a horse facility east of Cody – where she learned to ride a horse before she could walk. She also spent a good deal of her childhood and adult life on her family’s cattle ranch on Beaver Creek in Shell, Wyoming. The ranch land included grazing leases in the Bighorn Mountains as well as on BLM land on Whistle and Dry Creek east of Cody. Thus, her family’s cows shared grazing land and rights with the McCullough Peaks Wild Horses before her family sold those leases in recent years. A lifelong lover of horses, wilderness, and wildlife, and a passionate advocate for sustaining the land for future generations (of ALL species!), Virginia is thankful to join FOAL because she has ridden “both sides of the fence.” Through her own experiences and long-time relationships, she understands the ranching perspective. Through her lifelong claim to the Bighorn Basin as “home” as well as through her extensive and far-flung world travels, she recognizes this land and its sacred creatures as some of the greatest treasures on our earth. May we work together to protect this shared treasure, and may we listen deeply so that we may speak for those who cannot speak: those with whom we share this wild home.

Written by Virginia Schmidt, FOAL Board Member

Living Waters Initiative: An Update

FOAL’s Living Waters Initiative (LWI) was established in 2020 with the goal to improve the holding capacity of 20 reservoirs located within the McCullough Peaks Herd Management Area (HMA) by 2030. The intent is to capture and store as much water as possible whenever precipitation does occur, for the benefit of all the creatures living within the HMA (wild horses, multiple bird species, pronghorn, mule deer, other wildlife, and, yes, cattle which graze there under permits from the BLM). We have carefully selected existing reservoir sites which should provide water sources throughout the HMA for many years to come.



Figure 1: Lotus Reservoir just before any rehab work took place in 2020.

Soils within the HMA tend to be very erosive, hence nearly all attempts (over 300 reservoir sites within the HMA) have filled in with silt and/or washed out so as to be either non-functional or minimally functional. With that in mind, we have incorporated silt traps upstream of each restored reservoir pond. We have also lined the overflow points on the dikes so as to prevent breaching. These projects have been performed by skilled local contractors hired by FOAL.



Figure 2: Lotus Reservoir in late 2025 holding water well. No additional work has taken place on Lotus since initial rehab.

To date, we have accomplished restoration of 17 reservoirs. The results have been so noteworthy that FOAL has expanded the goal. We now hope to refurbish 25 reservoirs by December, 2030. As we plan for those eight projects, it is our sincere desire to consult with the BLM and the permitted cattlemen as reservoir sites are selected which should provide mutual benefits for all.

Written by Marshall Dominick, FOAL Board Member

July 15th is Our Moment

FOAL is proud to once again join nonprofits across the state in this year's WyoGives celebration. As a small organization with one part-time employee and a deeply committed working board, we rely on their passion and dedication to carry out our mission to protect and preserve the wild horses of the McCullough Peaks. While grants occasionally support specific projects, the heart of our work is sustained by private donors who believe in safeguarding these iconic herds.

This year, FOAL is again participating in the **Hughes Charitable Foundation Incentive Pool**, a remarkable \$1,000,000 fund that boosts every donation made through the WyoGives.org platform on **July 15th, 2026**. Last year, your generosity—combined with the incentive pool—resulted in an additional boost of **\$2,392**, increasing the impact of your gifts by nearly **35%**. That kind of multiplier truly matters for a small nonprofit like ours.

We are deeply grateful for the support you've shown FOAL over the years. Your contributions make it possible for us to advocate for the McCullough Peaks Mustangs, respond to their needs, and continue to support their habitat for generations to come. If you are considering a donation in the coming weeks, we encourage you to make it on **July 15th** through the WyoGives platform so your gift can go even further.

WyoGives is more than a fundraiser. It's a statewide moment. On July 15, communities from every corner of Wyoming come together in a shared act of generosity. For 24 hours, WyoGives rallies around the causes that make our state stronger. Be part of the momentum. Be part of July 15.

To visit FOAL's WyoGives profile, please go to:
<https://www.wyogives.org/organizations/friends-of-a-legacy>.

WYOGIVES.ORG

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Keeping the Mustangs Wild and Free
www.FriendsOfALegacy.org

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