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Praise for Arizona's wild horses on House floor

By: Sean Dieterich, The Independent

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An Arizona congressman has honored Arizona's wild horses on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Rep. Raul Grijalva, a Democrat from District 7, read into the Congressional Record June 6 a tribute to wild horses in Arizona, particularly those from the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. As a District 7 representative, Grijalva serves the areas of Tucson, Nogales and Yuma.

Grijalva also serves as chairman of the National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Committee, a subcommittee within the House Natural Resources Committee. The subcommittee works with land management agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

In Grijalva's speech on the House floor, he referred to the horses as "living symbols of the West," citing the language used in the passage of the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act. He said the wild horses on the Rim Country are dated back to the horses brought by Eusebio Kino, a Catholic missionary who came to eastern Arizona in 1653.

"Our Arizona Rim wild horses are the direct descendants of the Spanish horses prized by the conquistadors," he said in the Congressional Record.

Natalie Luna, spokeswoman for Congressman Grijalva, said he made his speech in response to concerns raised by some in his constituency, mainly with actions taken by the BLM and the USFS in rounding up excess horses on their land. She said those constituents alleged the agencies were not following the 1971 law.

"The congressman had several constituent groups express their concerns about the wild horses," she said. "He was hoping to give a little more attention to this issue and protect a part of America's and Arizona's heritage."

Luna said Grijalva is optimistic that this issue will get the

attention it deserves and that some action will be taken to protect horses in Arizona.

"He is hopeful that with a lot of the local voices and other members of Congress that we can save the horses from slaughter and they are able to live in the areas they have long lived in," she said.