

Group Petitions Governor Brewer for an Arizona State Heritage Horse

By Maureen Kirk-Detberner

On January 15, 2011, at the 2nd Annual Southern Arizona Horse Expo the Arizona Colonial Spanish Horse Project kicked off their petition for an Arizona State Heritage Horse. So far they have gathered over 300 signatures on their petition to have the Colonial Spanish Horse named as the Arizona State Heritage Horse.



When asked if the Arizona Horse Project has received opposition to the Arizona State Heritage Horse, Project Manager Maureen Kirk-Detberner stated that very few people have refused to sign the petition. When approached most people are excited for an opportunity to honor the horses of Arizona by naming a State Heritage Horse.

The history of the Colonial Spanish Horse in Arizona began even before the Arizona Territory was formed. Originally the horses were brought to the Americas by the Spanish explorers. Fernando Coronado crossed what is now Arizona in 1540 on these horses. In the 1690's the missionary Father Kino brought the Colonial Spanish Horses to help settle the area of Northern Mexico and what is now southern Arizona. These horses which were the foundation of the western settlement of the United States also became the foundation horse for modern breeds such as the American Quarter Horse and many others. The Arizona Horse Project believes that to honor the Colonial Spanish Horse as the Arizona State Heritage Horse honors all horses in Arizona.

Several states have named specific strains of the Colonial Spanish Horses as state horses. Florida has the Florida Cracker and North Carolina has the Carolina Marsh Tacky as their state horses. The Arizona Horse Project decided early on not to nominate a specific strain of the Colonial Spanish Horse as the state horse but instead to honor the history of all strains of these horses in Arizona. No other state has named the Colonial Spanish Horse as their state horse.



Last year the Arizona Horse Project sponsored a bill for The Arizona Sate Horse. That bill HB2634 passed all committees and was ready to be sent to the House for a vote. HB-2634 never made it to the floor for a vote as it was lumped with a state drink bill and lost favor in the house.

This year the Arizona Horse Project has expanded their approach to include a petition and proclamation as part of the continuing effort for an Arizona State Heritage Horse. The Arizona Horse Project has received the support of the American Quarter Horse Association, the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, the Spanish

Barb Horse Association, the Spanish Mustang Registry, Marshall Trimble (Arizona State Historian), the Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance and the signers of their petition.

On January 27, 2011, the Arizona Horse Project sent the proclamation to Arizona Governor Jan Brewer's Office for consideration. On February 3, 2011, Veronica Jones of the Governor's office replied, "I have discussed the proclamation with my Director and she indicated unfortunately we would not be able to offer a proclamation of support, but our office would be able to consider issuing an honorary designation." Next step for the Arizona Horse Project is to understand why the proclamation was denied and to complete the requirements for an honorary designation.

The members of the Arizona Horse Project asked Sen. Al Melvin, and Rep. Steven Farley for their support for the Arizona State Heritage Horse Bill. By this time next year, the Arizona Horse Project members are optimistic that the Colonial Spanish Horse will be named as the Arizona State Heritage Horse.

For more information on the project, the petition, the proclamation and the history of the horses please go to our website at www.arizonahorseproject.com.

