



BLM NEWS RELEASE

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BLM Proposes National Academy of Sciences Study

The BLM has asked the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council (NAS/NRC) to make an independent technical review of the Wild Horse & Burro (WH&B) Program to ensure that the BLM is using the best science available in managing wild horses and burros on Western rangelands.

The NAS/NRC has previously reviewed the BLM's management of the WH&B Program and produced three separate reports; however, these reports are now 20 to 30 years old. In those reports, the NAS/NRC summarized what was known about wild horses and burros and made recommendations to the BLM for WH&B management, population estimation, and further research.

In the proposed effort, many of the topics discussed in the earlier reports would be included, such as population estimation methods, annual herd growth rates, population control measures, and whether populations will self-limit, as well as other subjects needing new research.

To sort through the many diverse and often conflicting opinions about how wild horses and burros should be managed, the BLM must continue to base its decisions on the best available science and involve the public in its decision-making process. Commissioning the NAS/NRC to review their three earlier reports and the current available information and research about wild horses and burros is a first step. A second step is to ask the NAS/NRC to make recommendations about future WH&B management and needed research. A third step is to take the NAS/NRC findings and recommendations and make them available to the public in a variety of ways, perhaps to focus groups or science forums.

Both the BLM and NAS/NRC will negotiate the terms and outline for the research study. The proposed study would tentatively begin about January 1, 2011, and would cost the BLM about \$1.5 million and take about two years to complete.

Congress created the NAS/NRC to be a non-Federal, not-for-profit source of scientific advice. The NAS/NRC enlists the nation's foremost scientists, engineers, health professionals and other experts to address the scientific and technical aspects of society's most pressing problems. Each year, thousands of these experts are selected to serve, without pay, on hundreds of study committees.

The BLM manages more land – more than 245 million acres – than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.