



# BLM NEWS RELEASE

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Bureau of Land Management  
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## **BLM Selects Proposed Wild Horse Ecosanctuary on Private Land for Environmental Review**

As part of an ongoing effort to reform its national Wild Horse and Burro Program, the Bureau of Land Management announced today that it has selected for environmental review a private land site proposed as the location for a wild horse ecosanctuary. The selection of the to-be-reviewed site, a private ranch in southeastern Wyoming 30 miles west of Laramie, means that the BLM will conduct an environmental assessment of the site under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 to determine the proposed ecosanctuary's environmental viability.

The BLM expects its NEPA analysis of the private land described in the ecosanctuary proposal to be completed in three to six months, after which the agency will make a decision about whether to enter into a formal partnership with the private landowner. The proposed 250-horse ecosanctuary would help the BLM feed and care for excess wild horses that have been removed from Western public rangelands; the facility would also be publicly accessible while providing potential ecotourism opportunities.

The Bureau's selected proposal came from Richard Wilson, owner of a more than 4,000-acre ranch situated in Wyoming's Centennial Valley, a summer and winter recreational area that encompasses the town of Centennial, located on Highway 130. In all, 19 parties submitted private land ecosanctuary proposals to the BLM in response to its Request for Applications posted on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) on March 15, 2011. Proposals were turned down if they did not meet the BLM's minimum requirements, including ownership or control of the necessary land and a proven ability to provide humane care for at least 200 wild horses. If a partnership agreement with Mr. Wilson is finalized, the BLM would sponsor the ecosanctuary at a funding level comparable to what the agency pays ranchers who take care of excess wild horses on long-term pastures in the Midwest. The partnership agreement would also contain a fundraising component, the money from which would help defray costs for operating the sanctuary, thus saving taxpayer dollars.

"This selection is a milestone in our overall effort to reform the Wild Horse and Burro Program and put it on a cost-effective, sustainable track," said BLM Director Bob Abbey. "Although the Wyoming ranch can likely handle more than 250 horses, taking a cautious approach will enable the BLM and Mr. Wilson to properly assess and resolve any issues that may arise in the early phases of this innovative partnership."

Mr. Wilson and his wife Jana, managers of their family-owned Deerwood Ranch near Centennial, Wyoming, said the ranch "is a perfect place, a safe haven for wild horses." The Wilsons have 15 horses of their own. "I'm excited about the prospects of operating an ecosanctuary for wild horses," said Mr. Wilson, who has 26 years of ranching experience. "I look forward to the possibility of working with the BLM in caring for these icons of the American West."

The BLM is also analyzing a second set of proposals that would involve the establishment of wild horse ecosanctuaries on a mixture of private and BLM-managed land. The Bureau is still analyzing these proposals, for which the Request for Applications was posted on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) on March 25, 2011, and has made no selection at this time.

The BLM is preparing to publish a proposed wild horse and burro management strategy that emphasizes population control techniques; promotes public-private ecosanctuaries to hold excess wild horses and encourage ecotourism; seeks to boost adoptions by making more trained wild horses available to the public; and establishes a

comprehensive animal welfare program that is built on sound science and research. The BLM developed the proposed strategy after actively soliciting input from both the public and the agency's Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board on how to best ensure the health of America's wild horses and burros, both on and off the range.

The BLM manages more land – over 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.

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