

National Wild Horse & Burro Initiative

August 25, 2010

CURRENT STATUS

On July 30, 2010, the Bureau of Land Management announced it is extending the public comment period on its Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B) Program Strategy Development Document to September 3, 2010.

The extension will provide members of the public with an interest in the management of America's wild horses and burros an additional 30 days to comment on the document, which outlines possible management actions under consideration by the BLM to implement. The BLM will use the feedback to prepare a report to Congress for the WH&B program.

BACKGROUND

In October, 2009, Secretary Salazar and BLM Director Robert Abbey announced the Department's new WH&B initiative. The goal was to improve the management of the nation's wild horse and burros, to ensure healthy public lands and reduce the cost to American tax payers.

The BLM engaged the U. S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (Udall Institute) to help involve employees, stakeholders and potential partners in developing the plan. On June 4, 2010, the draft plan was released to the public describing a new and sustainable way forward for managing our nation's wild horses and burros.

The proposed long-term plan for management of wild horses and burros includes management strategies aimed at addressing the following issues:

- The potential reintroduction of wild horses into herd areas where they don't currently exist.
- Potentially increasing the use of fertility control.
- The methods the BLM uses to determine appropriate management levels.
- The appropriate amount of forage made available for wild horses and burros, wildlife and livestock.
- The possibility of relaxing adoption requirements.
- Reviewing issues related to the boundaries of herd areas in 1971, the year the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act was enacted.

The 1971 Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act directed BLM to manage wild horses and burros in a natural, thriving, ecological balance. Although, the law provides for the humane destruction of excess wild horses and burros, BLM has not utilized this method of population control. Since approximately 1983, the Interior department's appropriation language that directs BLM not to destroy healthy wild horses and burro that have not been adopted. This direction is anticipated to continue for the indefinite future.