

Questions and Answers Regarding Ecosanctuaries

These questions and answers are provided to the interested reader for a general interpretation of ecosanctuary topics. Applicants must refer to the Request for Applications posted on Grants.gov for complete information on the requirements for ecosanctuary proposals, and should not rely on these general questions and answers for application purposes.

- 1. Why did the BLM have two separate announcements for proposals?** Having separate announcements helps keep the process organized because the two types of funding opportunities carry different levels of evaluation. Proposed ecosanctuaries that involve private lands exclusively may be the least complex to evaluate. These ecosanctuaries were invited under Request for Applications (RFA) issued on March 15, 2011. Proposed ecosanctuaries on a combination of public lands and private lands would increase the need to evaluate proposals against public land laws, regulations and policies that apply to the public lands portion of the proposal. These ecosanctuaries were invited under the RFA issued on March 24, 2011. In this open and competitive process, it will be easier and fairer to evaluate proposals for ecosanctuaries on private lands only against similar private land proposals; and to evaluate combination proposals against similar combination proposals.
- 2. When would the first ecosanctuary be able to receive horses?** It is expected that any successful proposed ecosanctuary on private lands may be selected earlier than proposals using combination public and private lands. Horses would be provided under signed Assistance Agreements (AA) following completion of environmental compliance documents. Combination proposals would also need to complete any needed Resource Management Plan (RMP) amendments. There is a potential that a private land ecosanctuary could be ready, under signed agreement, by late fall 2011. Our expectation is that any approved combination public and private land ecosanctuary may be delayed until 2012 or even 2013, due to the requirements of law, regulation and policy on public lands.
- 3. Why does it take so long to create an ecosanctuary on public lands?** Public lands are managed under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and other public land laws that require consideration of multiple uses, as well as public participation, in management decisions. A change in existing land use or forage allocations on public lands may require the BLM, under FLPMA, to amend the governing RMP. The RMP amendment process could take two or more years to complete the analysis and required public participation components.
- 4. Where will eco sanctuaries be located?** An ecosanctuary may be proposed either solely on private, Tribal, state or other lands or in combination with public lands. Public lands managed by the BLM are largely located in the western United States, and combination proposals would likely occur in the West. Ecosanctuary proposals on private, Tribal or state land would not be limited to the western U.S.
- 5. How much money is the BLM going to pay per horse?** Ecosanctuary proposals will be evaluated based on a potential cost savings to the Federal government over other long-term pasture contracts. Other evaluation factors are listed in the RFAs.
- 6. Where is the money going to come from?** The Federal budget, allocated by Congress, is used to fund government programs, including management of wild horses and burros, both on the range and in long-term pastures, or any potential ecosanctuary. The American taxpayer provides the dollars that Congress distributes. The BLM hopes to find savings for the taxpayer by working

with ecosanctuary applicants to host wild horses in long-term pastures, with the added benefit of public visitation to the horses and possibly an increased number of training and adoption facilities.

7. **Why are ecosanctuaries only allowed to have non-reproducing herds?** Horse herds increase at the rate of about 20 percent each year, so that means horse numbers may double in any four-year period. Horses to be placed in an ecosanctuary have been determined to be excess horses, above the Appropriate Management Level (AML) allowable in Herd Management Areas (HMAs) on the public rangelands. Since the U.S. taxpayer funds long-term pastures and/or future ecosanctuaries where excess horses have been placed, we do not wish the number of excess horses located outside of active HMAs, and associated costs for care, to increase over time.
8. **What happens if an ecosanctuary applicant has a grazing permit for cattle? Can it be used for these excess wild horses?** If an ecosanctuary applicant has a grazing permit for public lands and is interested in relinquishing a grazing permit so that forage from public lands may be re-allocated to excess wild horses, this should be indicated in the application for an ecosanctuary.
9. **Can I be paid to allow excess horses to graze on my current livestock grazing permit?** Applicants for an ecosanctuary must define how excess wild horses would be provided with forage and water. An AA would define what the ecosanctuary applicant would agree to provide, and what the BLM would agree to provide. If forage is provided from public lands, that portion of the forage would be provided by the BLM, and thus not subject to a payment to any ecosanctuary proponent.
10. **Why is there a difference in the BLM's fence requirements for public and private proposals?** The terms of private land long-term pasture contracts and private land ecosanctuary proposals require fencing to specific standards in order to contain excess wild horses. Public lands are managed by the BLM for multiple uses, including wildlife habitat, so that fencing requirements for combined public and private land proposals may be different, depending on the considerations of both containing excess wild horses and allowing appropriate wildlife passage. Actual specifications would be determined by the local BLM office.
11. **Will the horses have other identification markings in addition to the freemark?** All Long-Term Holding horses have 3-inch or 4-inch hip brands that correspond with the four last numbers of their freemark and would be the same for ecosanctuary horses to be held in long-term pastures. Sale eligible wild horses that are sold would receive an additional freemark of a letter U on the left side of their neck.
12. **Are there statistics available regarding the age range of horses that ecosanctuaries would receive?** Typically, the BLM would want to place horses with the highest potential for adoption in ecosanctuaries that also provide an adoption outlet. The specific age range of adoptable horses at ecosanctuaries would be determined by a number of factors, depending on the availability at short-term holding facilities, other expired long-term holding contracts, and if there is an adoption component at the ecosanctuary.
13. **Who is responsible for vetting any adoption applications?** The BLM has the responsibility to review and approve adoption and sale applications, complete adoption and sale paperwork, and collect adoption and sale fees. The ecosanctuary partners would have the interested adopter or purchaser complete the adoption or sales application and then send it to the appropriate BLM office for approval.

- 14. Is an applicant required to own land? The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (WFRHBA)** allows the BLM to enter into cooperative agreements with landowners. A landowner may propose agreements that include a third-party organization to manage horses, and with the BLM to provide horses. This should be indicated in the proposal.
- 15. What are the BLM's intentions and/or restrictions regarding funding for capital improvements, such as establishing accommodations for visitors through a visitor center?** While public visitation should be a part of the opportunity provided by ecosanctuaries, there is no specific objective in the ecosanctuary program for the government to fund or construct visitor centers. If an applicant includes a visitor center, or visitor facilities in the ecosanctuary proposal, those costs would be defined in the proposal, and the contributions of each party proposed, so that the overall cost to the government can be evaluated. In looking for ecosanctuary partnerships, the primary goal is that the overall cost to government should decrease when compared with long-term pasture costs; however, the potential added costs to provide adequate public facilities may also be considered.
- 16. How will public access be provided at ecosanctuaries?** A primary goal of ecosanctuaries is that some level of public visitation would be provided in a safe and non-disruptive manner. Public access across and onto private lands should be defined in the ecosanctuary proposal.
- 17. Would ecosanctuary partners be able to attend gathers?** Successful partners with ecosanctuaries would be primarily responsible for long-term pasturing of excess wild horses. Members of the public may attend gathers, when it is safe and non-disruptive to do so. The BLM will improve accessibility of the public to the operations, and in particular, will continue to work with partners to increase understanding of all wild horse program operations.
- 18. Why are the ecosanctuaries to be located on combination private and BLM-managed public lands required to be within Herd Areas (HA)?** Under current law, the management of wild horses and burros is geographically constrained on public lands. The BLM is not authorized to relocate horses to areas of public lands outside of HAs, the areas identified as having been used by wild horse herds in 1971. Because ecosanctuary horses are still considered wild horses, when on public lands, they must be kept within Herd Areas. However, the Secretary of Interior is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with other landowners and with state and local governmental agencies and may issue such regulations as he deems necessary. This allows wild horses to be kept on privately owned lands irrespective of HAs.
- 19. Can ecosanctuary proposals include lands within HMAs?** Proposals may include lands within existing HMAs. Applicants should be aware, however, that before accepting such a proposal, the BLM would have to consider and analyze a decision to adjust the boundaries of affected HMAs through the Land Use Planning process. Such decisions would likely cause the affected HMAs to be reduced in size or totally eliminated. This is required for a number of reasons, among which is that excess horses that have been removed from the range and held in ecosanctuaries must be separated from wild herds to allow for separate management and to prevent reproduction