

Update from the
AMERICAN HORSE COUNCIL
Your Unified Voice in Washington

Kansas has holding facilities that maintain thousands of unadoptable Mustangs. Our opinions count!

ACTION ALERT!

BLM Seeks Public Comment on New Plan to Deal with Wild Horses

Introduction

Under the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) of the Department of Interior is required to protect and manage America's wild horses and burros on public lands in the West.

This has proven to be a formidable and controversial task as the 25,000 animals in 1971 have grown to 38,000 still roaming free and 35,000 now being held by BLM in holding pens in the West. A recent report by the Government Accountability Office found that the cost to care for these horses - \$30 billion or about 70% of the Agency's budget to manage the Wild Horse and Burro Program - threatened to overwhelm it. GAO has said that continuing current practices is not sustainable.

BLM Draft Plan

In response to the GAO recommendations that BLM find long-term solutions to managing this problem, BLM has issued a draft plan outlining goals, objectives and actions entitled "Working Toward Sustainable Management of America's Wild Horses and Burros." The draft plan can be viewed on [the BLM website](#).

The Agency has solicited public comments on the plan. It will use these comments to develop a final proposal that will be presented in its 2010 Report to Congress later this fall. Comments must be submitted by September 3, 2010. Your organization may wish to comment.

The goal of the plan is to reduce the number of unadoptable horses being held; reduce the costs of care; and preserve and manage the horses. Interior and BLM have announced that the euthanasia of excess animals or sale "without limitation" (potentially slaughter) will not be considered.

New legislative and appropriations authority will be needed from Congress to implement elements of this initiative.

Goals, Objectives and Management Actions

Seven key proposed goals are described in BLM's draft plan. The plan lays out specific objectives and actions to achieve these goals that include:

- Sustainable Herds - Balancing growth rates with the number of animals that can be adopted each year.
- Preserves - BLM proposes both federal and partner-owned preserves where unadopted horses can roam as freely as possible.
- Treasured Herds - A few herds are deemed special. By showcasing these herds there may be opportunities for ecotourism; private groups and volunteers may step forward to manage these "special" herds.
- Place Excess Animals into Private Care - Placement of more excess animals into private care, even in the face of dwindling demand, will reduce the numbers that must be cared for in short-term corrals or long-term pastures and reduce costs.
- Communications - Use new technologies to partner with stakeholders and others to manage animals and tell the story of these horses.
- Animal Welfare - Develop and implement a Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program for these animals where they are, in facilities, educated employees and external reviews of care.
- Science and Research - Use the best available science and research to manage wild horses and burros.

The proposed actions to accomplish the goals and objectives of each of the key elements are listed and more specifically described in the plan. BLM is seeking comment on these action items and is working to address each of these areas during the development of the final proposal.

Questions and Comments

The plan asks anyone interested in commenting to respond to several questions:

- Would you support increased use of fertility control and sex ratio adjustments to slow population growth?
- Would you support male-only herds in some areas? If so, how should the areas be identified?
- Under what conditions would you support placement of animals in good homes overseas?
- What suggestions do you have to increase the number of excess animals placed in private care?
- Would you support revising adoption requirements (such as lower fence heights, reduced shelter requirements, or reduced or waived title waiting period)?