

SUMMARY: Under HUD's regulations for the Public Housing Operating Fund Program, public housing agencies (PHAs) with 250 or more units are required to convert to asset management. PHAs with less than 250 units may elect to convert but are not required to do so. On September 6, 2006, HUD published a **Federal Register** notice providing interim guidance to assist PHAs in the conversion to asset management. On that same date, HUD posted on its Web site Public and Indian Housing (PIH) Notice 2006-33, Changes in Financial Management and Reporting Requirements for Public Housing Agencies Under the New Operating Fund Rule (24 CFR part 990), that provided interim guidance on changes in PHA financial management and reporting necessitated by the conversion to asset management. Both the September 6, 2006, **Federal Register** notice and PIH Notice 2006-33 were issued for public comment. This notice advises the public that HUD has posted its final guidance for both subject areas on the HUD Web site. The final guidance takes into consideration the public comments received on both sets of interim guidance, and responds to the significant issues raised by the public commenters.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Elizabeth Hanson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Departmental Real Estate Assessment Center, Office of Public and Indian Housing, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20410; telephone 202-475-7949 (this is not a toll-free number). Individuals with speech or hearing impairments may access this number through TTY by calling the toll-free Federal Information Relay Service at 800-877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

HUD's regulations for the Public Housing Operating Fund Program at 24 CFR part 990 provide the formula for distributing operating subsidy to public housing agencies (PHAs) and establish requirements for PHAs to convert to asset management. Subpart H of the part 990 regulations (§§ 990.255 to 990.290) establishes the requirements regarding asset management. Under § 990.260(a), PHAs that own and operate 250 or more dwelling rental units must operate using an asset management model consistent with the subpart H regulations. PHAs with fewer than 250 dwelling rental units may elect to transition to asset management, but are not required to do so. PHAs are required to implement property-based management, property-

based budgeting, and property-based accounting, which are all defined in the subpart H regulations and are essential components of asset management.

On September 6, 2006 (71 FR 52710), HUD published a notice in the **Federal Register** providing interim guidance pertaining to various aspects of a PHA's conversion to asset management. Also on September 6, 2006, HUD posted on its Web site Public and Indian Housing (PIH) Notice 2006-33, providing interim guidance on changes in PHA financial management and reporting that result from the conversion to asset management. Both the September 6, 2006, **Federal Register** notice and PIH Notice 2006-33 were issued for public comment.

II. This Notice

This notice advises the public that HUD has posted its final guidance on the HUD Web site. The final guidance takes into consideration the public comments received on the interim guidance. Given the similarity in subject matter, the posted guidance incorporates the subject matter of the September 6, 2006, **Federal Register** notice and PIH Notice 2006-33. HUD has also posted a summary of the comments received on the two interim guidance documents, and HUD's responses to the comments.

The final guidance and public comment summary may be downloaded at HUD's asset management Web page: www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/am/.

Dated: March 29, 2007.

Paula O. Blunt,

General Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment for the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge Horse and Burro Management Program and Announcement of a Public Meeting

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability and announcement of a public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces that a draft environmental assessment (EA) for an interim Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) Horse and Burro

Management Program (Program) is available for review and comment. The EA provides a consolidated and updated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) evaluation of the Sheldon Refuge Program. The EA analyzes the environmental effects of various alternatives for managing the Refuge's horses and burros until a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Refuge is completed.

DATES: Comments must be received by May 17, 2007 (see addresses). A public meeting will be held on May 8, 2007 in Lakeview, Oregon (details of the meeting will be posted on Internet).

ADDRESSES: Address comments on the draft EA by e-mail to Sheldon-Hart@fws.gov or in writing to: Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 111, Lakeview, OR 97630. The EA will be available on the Internet at http://www.fws.gov/pacific/news/2006/Sheldon_Horse_EA_draft.pdf.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul Steblein, Project Leader, Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge, at e-mail Sheldon-Hart@fws.gov, fax (541) 947-4414, or phone (541) 947-3315.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Sheldon Refuge encompasses approximately 572,900 acres of semiarid desert in the northwestern corner of Nevada, and approximately 630 acres across the State line, in Oregon.

The Sheldon Refuge was established in the 1930's for the conservation of antelope (American pronghorn), migratory birds, and other species of wildlife. By law, the Service must manage its refuges to achieve the purpose(s) of the refuge and accomplish the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which focuses on the conservation, management, and, where appropriate, restoration of native fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. The terrain of Sheldon Refuge is characterized by flat, open expanses of sagebrush lands, narrow canyons that empty into rolling valleys, and broad rimrock tables that end abruptly in vertical cliffs. Surface water supplies are severely limited. Annual precipitation averages less than 13 inches in the western portions of the Refuge, and decreases to 6 inches in the easterly parts. With elevations averaging approximately 6,000 feet, the area has been appropriately labeled high-desert country.

Alternatives

The draft EA for Sheldon Refuge's Horse and Burro Management Program identifies and describes four

alternatives. Program objectives for all of the alternatives are based on the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge Renewable Natural Resources Management Plan (Management Plan) and associated NEPA document published in 1980, and include: (1) Maintaining a manageable feral horse and burro population (75 to 125 horses, 30 to 60 burros) in balance with other wildlife species for the enjoyment of Refuge visitors; (2) stopping range deterioration and improving wildlife habitat and watershed conditions, and reducing impacts on existing water resources; (3) ensuring that the Refuge range provides ample forage for all wildlife populations endemic to the area; and (4) reducing the spread of feral horses and burros into key wildlife areas. Alternative B, the Status Quo Alternative, is the Service's preferred alternative. The alternatives are briefly discussed below.

Alternative A, No Agency Action on Horse and Burro Management. Under Alternative A, the Refuge would discontinue the ongoing program of horse and burro population management. Program objectives from the 1980 Management Plan would not be met. Program elements such as gathering, providing interim care for and adoptions of the Refuge's horses and burros would no longer be conducted. Without any control, horse and burro populations on the Refuge could double approximately every four years, severely impacting Refuge lands, water sources, wildlife habitats and associated fish, wildlife and plant populations, and posing a safety risk along major public roads. Implementation of this alternative would likely prevent the Refuge from being managed to achieve the purposes for which it was established. The environmental effects of this alternative contrast with those of the three action-based alternatives; B, C, and D.

Alternative B, Status Quo. Under Alternative B, the Refuge's current horse and burro management program would continue until a CCP has been completed for the Refuge. Implementing this alternative would include minor improvements to the program through an adaptive management process. This alternative would place horses and burros up for adoption through several private adoption agents. Agents are screened and certified based on adequate facilities, appropriate knowledge on horse care and handling, successful record of prior horse adoptions, and interviews with character witnesses and a veterinarian. The adoption agents would screen potential homes for the horses and

burros, care for them in the intervening time, and coordinate transportation. The horses and burros would be shipped to the agents from the Refuge and then transported to their adopted homes. Refuge staff would use three methods to gather horses and burros: (1) Corrals set with bait (such as hay) to draw in burros; (2) horseback riders to herd horses into corrals; and (3) helicopters to herd horses into corrals. Management of horses and burros consumes staff time and funding, detracting from the Refuge's ability to conduct other programs necessary to achieve Refuge purposes as well as Refuge management objectives associated with native wildlife species and wildlife dependant public use. However, implementation of Alternative B would best accomplish current management objectives for horse and burro management and would be the most cost effective program.

Alternative C, Adoption of Horses and Burros through Individuals. Under Alternative C, Refuge staff would: screen individuals and organizations for suitability for potential adoption of gathered horses and burros; care for them until they are picked up by the adopter; coordinate brand inspections; secure health certificates; and facilitate transportation. Other aspects of the program would be the same as under Alternative B. Refuge staff would use three methods to gather horses and burros: (1) Corrals set with bait to draw in burros; (2) horseback riders to herd horses into corrals; and (3) helicopters to herd horses into corrals. Implementing this Alternative would require allocation of more staff time and resources which would detract from other Refuge programs, such as facility maintenance, working and meeting with the public, wildlife monitoring and studies, range and fire management, and law enforcement.

Alternative D, Conduct Horse and Burro Gathering by Bait and Horseback Techniques Only. Under Alternative D, using wranglers on horseback only to gather horses and burros is proposed, rather than using both helicopters and horseback. In addition, burros would be drawn into corrals with bait. An adoption agent would screen and select the adopters to ensure good homes, and care for the horses and burros in the intervening time. This Alternative, using bait and horseback gathering only, would be less efficient and less effective than using both helicopters and horseback riders. This approach would delay completion of the gather and achievement of other Refuge conservation objectives. Selection of this alternative would allow impacts from horse and burro populations to

continue for longer periods, and reduce funds available for other Refuge management and operations.

Public Comments

Public comments are requested on the draft Environmental Assessment for the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge Horse and Burro Management Program and its evaluation of the environmental effects of the four alternatives. Comments on the draft EA will be analyzed and addressed in final documents. All comments received from individuals become part of the official public record available for public review. Requests for copies of comments will be handled in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, Freedom of Information Act, NEPA regulations, and Service and Department of the Interior policies and procedures.

Dated: April 11, 2007.

Don Weathers,

Acting Regional Director, Region 1, Portland, Oregon.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[OR 038-1220-AL-24-1A; HAG07-0036]

Call for Nominations for National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center Advisory Board

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Solicitation of applications.

SUMMARY: This notice is to request nominations for the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center Advisory Board. The seven member terms on the Board expired December 29, 2006. The Board provides advice and recommendations to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on resource management issues associated with the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center.

DATES: Submit completed nomination forms and nomination letters to the address listed below no later than May 17, 2007.

ADDRESSES: Applications are available from, and candidates should send nominations to: Pam Robbins, OR-912, Bureau of Land Management, (pam_robbins@blm.gov), P.O. Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208, (503) 808-6306.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Pam Robbins, (503) 808-6306.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Individuals and organizations may