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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Office of the Secretary

[WO-220-1060-00-24 1A]

#### Notice of Reestablishment of the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Reestablishment of the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board.

**SUMMARY:** This notice is published in accordance with Section 9(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (5 U.S.C. App.). Pursuant to Section 7 of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (Pub. L. 92-195), notice is hereby given that the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture are reestablishing the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board to provide advice concerning management, protection, and control of wild free-roaming horses and burros on the public lands administered by the Department of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management, and the Department of Agriculture, through the Forest Service.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Bud C. Cribley, Wild Horse and Burro Program Specialist, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Room 314, 1620 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, (202) 452-5073.

#### Certification

I hereby certify that the reestablishment of the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board is necessary and in the public interest in connection with the Secretary of the Interior's statutory responsibilities to manage the lands and resources administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

Dated: December 23, 1997.

**Bruce Babbitt,**

Secretary of the Interior.

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

#### Notice of Intent To Revise the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Manual and Establish Regulations as They Relate to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Pub. L. 105-57)

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Refuge Improvement Act) was signed by President Clinton on October 9, 1997. The Refuge Improvement Act amends and builds upon the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (NWRSA), (16 U.S.C. 668dd *et seq.*). This notice advises the public that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will be developing new or revised policies pursuant to the Refuge Improvement Act. The key policy areas to be addressed are listed later in **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**. This notice also identifies opportunities for public review and comment.

Interested persons contacting the Service as described in **ADDRESSES** below, will be provided draft Service Manual chapters as they are prepared and will be notified of due dates for written comments. Final chapters will be issued following review of public comments. Proposed regulations will be developed through the rule making process.

**ADDRESSES:** Requests to receive copies of the specific draft Service Manual chapters as they are prepared should be sent via mail to: Refuge Improvement Act Project, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Refuges, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Rm. 670, Arlington, VA 22203, Fax (703) 358-2248, or email to: Refuge\_Improvement\_Act@FWS.gov.

Each request should include a complete mailing address to which the draft chapters will be sent.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The nearly 93 million acre National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System) has been administered, since its inception, under a collection of Presidential proclamations, Executive Orders, administrative orders, and laws. Until 1966, and enactment of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSA), there was no single Federal law that governed administration of the Refuge System. The NWRSA provided guidance for refuge management; but in the 32 years since its passage, Refuge System acreage

has grown more than threefold, wildlife management issues have increased in complexity and controversy, and the demands for recreational and economic uses of refuges have increased substantially.

The Refuge Improvement Act amends and builds upon the NWRSA in a manner that provides an "Organic Act" for the Refuge System similar to those laws which exist for other Federal Lands. The Refuge Improvement Act will serve to ensure that the Refuge System is effectively managed as a national system of lands, waters, and interests for the protection and conservation of our nation's wildlife resources.

The Refuge Improvement Act's principal focus is to establish clearly the wildlife conservation mission of the Refuge System, provide guidance to the Secretary of the Interior for management of the Refuge System, provide a mechanism for unit-specific planning, and give managers clear direction and procedures for making determinations regarding wildlife conservation and public uses of units of the Refuge System.

The Service will be implementing the Refuge Improvement Act by developing new or revised Service Manual chapters for the Refuge System. All units within the Refuge System will be managed with regard to these chapters which will guide management strategies for achieving individual unit purposes and the Refuge System mission.

Key issues to be addressed in specific Service Manual chapters include:

- Biological integrity of the Refuge System;
- Appropriate general public uses for the System;
- Implementation of the compatibility test; and
- Comprehensive conservation planning.

Public input into the development of these key Service Manual chapters is essential. The Service will provide these draft chapters to interested agencies and individuals as described above in **ADDRESSES**. These draft chapters will also be available on the National Wildlife Refuge System web site: (<http://refuges.fws.gov>) during the pre-rulemaking public review and comment period. Any resulting proposed regulations will be available for public review and comment through the rule making process.

Due to the varying levels of complexity of issues, some chapters will require more time for development than others. Therefore, specific draft chapters will be made available to the public as they are prepared. The Refuge