

**CHAPTER 37—PUBLIC RANGELANDS
IMPROVEMENT**

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§ 1901. Congressional findings and declaration of policy

(a) The Congress finds and declares that—

(1) vast segments of the public rangelands are producing less than their potential for livestock, wildlife habitat, recreation, forage, and water and soil conservation benefits, and for that reason are in an unsatisfactory condition;

(2) such rangelands will remain in an unsatisfactory condition and some areas may decline further under present levels of, and funding for, management;

(3) unsatisfactory conditions on public rangelands present a high risk of soil loss, desertification,¹ and a resultant underproductivity for large acreages of the public lands; contribute significantly to unacceptable levels of siltation and salinity in major western watersheds including the Colorado River; negatively impact the quality and availability of scarce western water supplies; threaten important and frequently critical fish and wildlife habitat; prevent expansion of the forage resource and resulting benefits to livestock and wildlife production; increase surface runoff and flood danger; reduce the value of such lands for recreational and esthetic purposes; and may ultimately lead to unpredictable and undesirable long-term local and regional climatic and economic changes;

(4) the above-mentioned conditions can be addressed and corrected by an intensive public rangelands maintenance, management, and improvement program involving significant increases in levels of rangeland management and improvement funding for multiple-use values;

(5) to prevent economic disruption and harm to the western livestock industry, it is in the public interest to charge a fee for livestock grazing permits and leases on the public lands which is based on a formula reflecting annual changes in the costs of production;

(6) the Act of December 15, 1971 (85 Stat. 649, 16 U.S.C. 1331 et seq.), continues to be successful in its goal of protecting wild free-roaming horses and burros from capture, branding, harassment, and death, but that certain amendments are necessary thereto to avoid excessive costs in the administration of the Act, and to facilitate the humane adoption or disposal of

excess wild free-roaming horses and burros which because they exceed the carrying capacity of the range, pose a threat to their own habitat, fish, wildlife, recreation, water and soil conservation, domestic livestock grazing, and other rangeland values;

(b) The Congress therefore hereby establishes and reaffirms a national policy and commitment to:

(1) inventory and identify current public rangelands conditions and trends as a part of the inventory process required by section 1711(a) of this title;

(2) manage, maintain and improve the condition of the public rangelands so that they become as productive as feasible for all rangeland values in accordance with management objectives and the land use planning process established pursuant to section 1712 of this title;

(3) charge a fee for public grazing use which is equitable and reflects the concerns addressed in paragraph (a)(5) above;

(4) continue the policy of protecting wild free-roaming horses and burros from capture, branding, harassment, or death, while at the same time facilitating the removal and disposal of excess wild free-roaming horses and burros which pose a threat to themselves and their habitat and to other rangeland values;

(c) The policies of this chapter shall become effective only as specific statutory authority for their implementation is enacted by this chapter or by subsequent legislation, and shall be construed as supplemental to and not in derogation of the purposes for which public rangelands are administered under other provisions of law.

(Pub. L. 95-514, § 2, Oct. 25, 1978, 92 Stat. 1803.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Act of December 15, 1971, referred to in subsec. (a)(6), is Pub. L. 92-195, Dec. 15, 1971, 85 Stat. 649, as amended, popularly known as the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, which is classified generally to chapter 30 (§1331 et seq.) of Title 16, Conservation. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1331 of Title 16 and Tables.

This chapter, referred to in subsec. (c), was in the original "this Act", meaning Pub. L. 95-514, Oct. 25, 1978, 92 Stat. 1803, which enacted this chapter and amended sections 1739 and 1751 to 1753 of this title and sections 1332 and 1333 of Title 16. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out below and Tables.

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

SHORT TITLE

Pub. L. 95-514, § 1, Oct. 25, 1978, 92 Stat. 1803, provided: "That this Act [enacting this chapter and amending sections 1739 and 1751 to 1753 of this title and sections 1332 and 1333 of Title 16, Conservation] may be cited as the 'Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978'."

§ 1902. Definitions

As used in this chapter—

(a) The terms "rangelands" or "public rangelands" means lands administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of

¹ So in original.

Land Management or the Secretary of Agriculture through the Forest Service in the sixteen contiguous Western States on which there is domestic livestock grazing or which the Secretary concerned determines may be suitable for domestic livestock grazing.

(b) The term "allotment management plan" is the same as defined in section 1702(k) of this title, except that as used in this chapter such term applies to the sixteen contiguous Western States.

(c) The term "grazing permit and lease" means any document authorizing use of public lands or lands in national forests in the sixteen contiguous Western States for the purpose of grazing domestic livestock.

(d) The term "range condition" means the quality of the land reflected in its ability in specific vegetative areas to support various levels of productivity in accordance with range management objectives and the land use planning process, and relates to soil quality, forage values (whether seasonal or year round), wildlife habitat, watershed and plant communities, the present state of vegetation of a range site in relation to the potential plant community for that site, and the relative degree to which the kinds, proportions, and amounts of vegetation in a plant community resemble that of the desired community for that site.

(e) The term "native vegetation" means those plant species, communities, or vegetative associations which are endemic to a given area and which would normally be identified with a healthy and productive range condition occurring as a result of the natural vegetative process of the area.

(f) The term "range improvement" means any activity or program on or relating to rangelands which is designed to improve production of forage; change vegetative composition; control patterns of use; provide water; stabilize soil and water conditions; and provide habitat for livestock and wildlife. The term includes, but is not limited to, structures, treatment projects, and use of mechanical means to accomplish the desired results.

(g) The term "court ordered environmental impact statement" means any environmental statements which are required to be prepared by the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to the final judgment or subsequent modification thereof as set forth on June 18, 1975, in the matter of Natural Resources Defense Council against Andrus.

(h) The term "Secretary" unless specifically designated otherwise, means the Secretary of the Interior.

(i) The term "sixteen contiguous Western States" means the States of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

(Pub. L. 95-514, § 3, Oct. 25, 1978, 92 Stat. 1804.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in opening provision and in subsec. (b), was in the original "this Act", meaning

Pub. L. 95-514, Oct. 25, 1978, 92 Stat. 1803, which enacted this chapter and amended sections 1739 and 1751 to 1753 of this title and sections 1332 and 1333 of Title 16, Conservation. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1901 of this title and Tables.

§ 1903. Rangelands inventory and management; public availability

(a) Following enactment of this chapter, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall update, develop (where necessary) and maintain on a continuing basis thereafter, an inventory of range conditions and record of trends of range conditions on the public rangelands, and shall categorize or identify such lands on the basis of the range conditions and trends thereof as they deem appropriate. Such inventories shall be conducted and maintained by the Secretary as a part of the inventory process required by section 201(a) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 U.S.C. 1711), and by the Secretary of Agriculture in accordance with section 1603 of title 16; shall be kept current on a regular basis so as to reflect changes in range conditions; and shall be available to the public.

(b) The Secretary shall manage the public rangelands in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act (43 U.S.C. 315-315(o)), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701-1782), and other applicable law consistent with the public rangelands improvement program pursuant to this chapter. Except where the land use planning process required pursuant to section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 U.S.C. 1712) determines otherwise or the Secretary determines, and sets forth his reasons for this determination, that grazing uses should be discontinued (either temporarily or permanently) on certain lands, the goal of such management shall be to improve the range conditions of the public rangelands so that they become as productive as feasible in accordance with the rangeland management objectives established through the land use planning process, and consistent with the values and objectives listed in sections 1901(a) and (b)(2) of this title.

(Pub. L. 95-514, § 4, Oct. 25, 1978, 92 Stat. 1805.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, referred to in subsec. (b), is Pub. L. 94-579, Oct. 21, 1976, 90 Stat. 2743, as amended, which is classified principally to chapter 35 (§1701 et seq.) of this title. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1701 of this title and Tables.

The Taylor Grazing Act, referred to in subsec. (b), is act June 28, 1934, ch. 865, 48 Stat. 1269, as amended, which is classified principally to subchapter I (§315 et seq.) of chapter 8A of this title. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 315 of this title and Tables.

§ 1904. Range improvement funding

(a) Authorization of additional appropriations

In order to accomplish the purposes of this chapter, there are hereby authorized to be appropriated the sum of an additional \$15,000,000