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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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In the Spirit of Compromise

Equine Advocate Drops Law Suit

CHICAGO, (EWA) – Laura Leigh, artist, wild horse advocate and Subject Matter Expert for the Equine Welfare Alliance, in a gesture of support for the concept of cooperative dialogue dropped her lawsuit against Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) last week.

“Conversations with both Gene Seidlitz of the BLM’s Winnemucca district and Paul Steblein of Sheldon NWR lead me to the decision to show my support for the type of dialogue possible here and drop my legal action. I do however expect to have continued contact with both of these individuals as this process moves from theory to reality.”

Leigh’s attorney, Gordan Cowan of Reno Nevada said, “This was a ‘feel good,’ heartfelt issue that made me proud to have followed it through on a pro bono basis.”

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) California, Oregon and Nevada District Offices along with U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) are in the planning stages of creating a two million acre management complex for wild horses in Southeast Oregon, Northeast California, Northwest Nevada and the Sheldon NWR located in Northeast Nevada and Oregon.

“In general I am very happy about this,” said Paul Steblein, Complex Manager Sheldon-Hart Mountain NWR, “this is an opportunity to create constructive ways to manage horses across the landscape.”

The 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act mandated the protection of these animals as a national heritage species.

The act states in part: “It is the policy of Congress that wild free-roaming horses and burros shall be protected from capture, branding, harassment, or death; and to accomplish this they are to be considered in the area where presently found, as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands.”

Currently USFWS land, although under the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior as is BLM, is not mandated by the regulations in the 1971 act.

"The advocates have a lot to offer this process," Leigh stated "often there are accusations that advocates want to see horses 'just run free and destroy the range' that's not the case. Advocates actually offer a viable management strategy."

Steblein stated, "This is a time where we stop pointing fingers and figure out how to solve this."

Leigh said she couldn't agree more.

The Equine Welfare Alliance is a dues free, umbrella organization with over 100 member organizations and hundreds of individuals worldwide. The organization focuses its efforts on the welfare of all equines and the preservation of wild equids.

www.equinewelfarealliance.org