



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE  
COST ESTIMATE**

October 8, 1997

**H.R. 1856  
National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community  
Partnership Act of 1997**

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Resources on October 1, 1997*

**SUMMARY**

H.R. 1856 would amend the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to promote community involvement at national wildlife refuges. To encourage the use of individual volunteers, the bill would direct the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to conduct pilot projects under which a full-time volunteer coordinator would be hired for one refuge in each service region. The bill would also address more formal agency-community relationships by authorizing the USFWS to execute cooperative agreements with organizations such as nonprofit groups, academic institutions, and state or local agencies. Under such agreements, the partner organization could help finance programs and projects that benefit wildlife refuges. Amounts received by the agency under these agreements (that is, profits from sales or other activities conducted at refuges by the partner organization) would be deposited in a separate account in the U.S. Treasury and would be available without appropriation for related expenditures.

The bill would authorize the appropriation of \$2.05 million annually through fiscal year 2003, including \$1.05 million for costs related to the regional pilot projects and \$1 million for implementing community partnerships and other volunteer activities.

Assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts, CBO estimates that the USFWS would spend about \$10 million over the next five years. The legislation would affect direct spending by allowing the agency to collect and spend amounts earned by partner organizations under cooperative agreements; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would apply, but any receipts and spending resulting from this authority would offset each other over time. H.R. 1856 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

## ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

For purposes of this estimate, CBO assumes that the entire amounts authorized by H.R. 1856 would be appropriated for each of fiscal years 1998 through 2002. Outlay estimates are based on spending patterns for similar programs. The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 1856 is shown in the following table.

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<b>SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION</b>						
USFWS Baseline Spending Under Current Law						
Estimated Authorization Level <sup>a</sup>	524	542	560	579	598	618
Estimated Outlays	523	539	558	578	597	617
Proposed Changes						
Estimated Authorization Level	0	2	2	2	2	2
Estimated Outlays	0	1	2	2	2	2
USFWS Spending Under H.R. 1856						
Estimated Authorization Level	524	544	562	581	600	670
Estimated Outlays	523	540	560	580	599	619

a. The 1997 figure is the amount appropriated for USFWS resource management. The levels shown for 1998 through 2002 are CBO baseline projections assuming increases for anticipated inflation.

The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment). The volunteer pilot projects and community partnership agreements authorized by this bill would constitute new programs in the federal budget. There is no spending for such activities under current law. The table shows changes relative to CBO baseline projections, including increases for anticipated inflation, for USFWS resource management activities. If the comparison were made to a baseline without discretionary inflation, the cost of the bill would be the same—the authorization level would be \$524 million for each year under current law and \$526 million for each year under H.R. 1856.

Enacting H.R. 1856 also would increase offsetting receipts and outlays from direct spending authority by allowing the USFWS to collect and use amounts earned by partner organizations. CBO estimates that this authority would generate receipts of less than

\$500,000 annually. Because these amounts would be offset by additional spending, the net impact on the federal budget would be negligible in each year.

## **PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS**

The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 specifies pay-as-you-go procedures for legislation affecting direct spending or receipts. Although enacting H.R. 1856 would affect direct spending, CBO estimates that the amounts involved would be less than \$500,000 annually.

## **IMPACT ON STATE, LOCAL, AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS**

H.R. 1856 contains no intergovernmental mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments. State and local entities might voluntarily incur some costs should they choose to enter into cooperative agreements with the Secretary of the Interior, as authorized by this bill.

## **IMPACT ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

This bill would impose no new private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA.

## **ESTIMATE PREPARED BY:**

Federal Costs: Deborah Reis

Impact on State, Local, and Tribal Governments: Marjorie Miller

## **ESTIMATE APPROVED BY:**

Robert A. Sunshine

Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis