



NORTH DAKOTA BADLANDS HORSE

THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL PARK WILD HORSES

12880 Bogus Jim Road, Rapid City, South Dakota 57702

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SCR 4014

Submitted for North Dakota Badlands Horse by Marylu Weber, President, March 10, 2023

To the North Dakota House Agriculture Committee,

Greetings,

Thank you for allowing my representative, Julie Roswick, to speak to you this morning.

I speak in favor of SCR 4014, however, I respectfully request these changes:

Line 3: the word "livestock" be replaced with the word, "ungulate"

Line 20: the word "livestock" be replaced with the words, diverse ungulate"

REASONS:

1. Theodore Roosevelt National Park staff and the National Park Service are basing their arguments for allowing the complete removal of horses from the park on the recent change of designation of the horses from feral/wild to livestock.
I am sure this legislature would not want to inadvertently feed into that change of designation, giving fodder for the National Park Service to continue with its plan to remove all the horses from our park.
2. Recent genetic studies are finding that today's horse is the same species as those that were once thought to have become extinct on this continent.
 - a. "Although mammoths are gone forever, horses are not" says Ross MacPhee of the American Museum of Natural History, another co-author. "The horse that lived in the Yukon 5,000 years ago is directly related to the horse species we have today, *Equus caballus*. Biologically, this makes the horse a native North American mammal, and it should be treated as such."

- b. MacPhee also stated, “It had been thought that they mysteriously went extinct in this hemisphere almost 12,000 years ago. However, recent scientific research and archeological digs have provided a considerable body of evidence that some remnant horses did survive and continued to endure up to the time of the colonization of the Americas by Europeans. Archeological sites such as Wolf Spider Cave in Colorado, Horsethief Cave and Little Box Elder Cave in Wyoming, and Pratt Cave in Texas have provided horse bones which were radiocarbon dated to show horses lived in the western United States during the period between 8,000 years ago all the way to 1481 AD.”

- c. Executive Director of the Western Watershed Project, Eric Molvar, recently wrote to the park: “Horses evolved in North America, all the way to the Yukon horse (*Equus lambei*). Barron-Ortiz et al. (2017) examined mitochondrial DNA samples and concluded that *E. lambei* and *Equus caballus ferus* (the modern horse) are one and the same species. Thus, the horses that roam Theodore Roosevelt National Park evolved to that species here in North America. Fossil DNA evidence places wild horses in North America as recently as 5,700 years before the present (Murchie et al. 2021), well into the Holocene Epoch, meaning that they were not just a creature of the mammoth steppe, but that they were sympatric with (and co-evolved with) the full suite of modern vegetation communities found in North America today.”

For these reasons, I urge this committee to amend SCR 4014 as stated above.

Thank you for your dedication to do what is right for North Dakota and preserve Theodore Roosevelt National Park’s wild horses, the only wild horses existing in a national park west of the east coast.

Respectfully submitted,
Marylu Weber, President of North Dakota Badlands Horse