

Birgit Pruess, Ph.D.
3696 Harrison St. S
Fargo, ND

February 2, 2023

RE: SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4014

Dear members of the 68th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota,

I am resident of Fargo, ND and testifying as a private citizen and not in representation of any group. Please, accept the below as my testimony IN FAVOR of SCR4014 regarding the herd of wild horses that currently lives in Theodore Roosevelt National Park in Medora, ND. Note that I got my Ph.D. in biology and understand ecology and genetics.

I have followed this herd of wild horses in the South Unit since 2014 and know by now every name, parentage, age, and whatever you might want to know about the horses. I also appreciate the longhorn cattle in the North Unit. I have with concern watched our national park announce that they may remove the horses and longhorns, with a slightly better option of reducing the horses to 35 to 60 animals. This is not enough to keep the herd genetically viable.

The justification for the removal is based on ecological claims that have been presented in a one way sided way. Yes, there are negative aspects of horses and other grazing animals on grassland ecology. However, there are positive aspects of horses (this applies to horses only, not other grazers) on grassland ecology as well, such as the digging of deep water holes that can then be used by other animals during times of draught. Likewise, the genetic claims that these horses are livestock are outdated. Recent DNA evidence suggests that horses evolved on the North American continent and have likely never gone extinct, as was postulated previously. Likewise, all horses currently roaming on this planet are genetically of the species *Equus caballus*. Our are not genetically inferior to any other horses.

Adding to this lack of a biological justification for removing the horses, the resolution outlines the historical reasons for the maintenance of both the horse and the longhorn herds very well. I also appreciate that the resolution will be send to the United States Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the National Park Service, and each member of the North Dakota Congressional Delegation. It is time to take it up a step.

As in all my testimonies, I much appreciate the hard work and dedication that each member of my state legislative assembly puts into our state. Thank you.

Sincerely and respectfully

Birgit Pruess