

Good Day

I am writing in support of keeping the long horn cattle in the North unit and the wild horses living in the South unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. There is historical and economical value for these animals.

The historical value, there have been wild horses living in the footprint of the south unit long before the park was fenced in. Some of the ancestors to the current bands may have been owned by the park's namesake. Theodore Roosevelt wrote about the horses and even brought wild horses into the footprint.

The economical value for tourism is far more important. Most people consider North Dakota to be a flyover/drive through state. They don't realize the gem that Theodore Roosevelt National Park offers. Other National Parks offer bison, Elk, pronghorn, prairie dogs, namely Glacier and Yellowstone. The wild horses are unique to TRNP. Once people see the wild horses it touches them in a very special way. I have experienced the awe of first time witnessing the wild horses. First myself visiting the park with friends and getting to see these magnificent creatures. One of my friends had commented prior to seeing that she wasn't a horse person, but after seeing them she felt a connection to them. Myself, I felt that special awe of seeing horses in family units and how close they were to each other. The next time I brought my 90 year old mother to the park to see if we could find the horses. We were on our way to meet up with my niece and her family, who live in Williston. My mother spotted the first band near the Prairie dog village, she couldn't contain her excitement to see horses wild and free. Later that day my niece and her family met up with us and we went back out to TRNP. This time I saw the joy in the faces of four children experiencing the awe of seeing the wild horses. Since they live in Williston they have visited TRNP many times, but this was the first time seeing the horses. The last one was this past May, I was in Medora for a weekend. Prior to getting together with my friends, I decided to drive through the park to see if I could find the horses. There was another family that I kept encountering, there were two young boys with their parents. I stopped at one place and was watching a band of horses in the distance with my binoculars. The family was going passed me, I stopped them and asked if they wanted to see wild horses. They got out of their car and joined me. Since they didn't have binoculars, I shared mine with them. I handed them to the older boy and directed him where to look. I watched his face turn to excitement as he spotted the horses. He handed the binoculars to his younger brother and helped him to see the horses again, I watched the awe and excitement cross his face as he spotted the horses. We then allowed mom and dad to use the binoculars to see the wild horses. They expressed sadness that they forgot their binoculars and were appreciative of my sharing the experience with them. They were on their way to Glacier so they didn't have much time to spend at TRNP, but they planning to return in the future.

I believe that it is a misguided decision to remove the unique opportunity for people to see wild horses running free. Instead North Dakota Tourism and TRNP should celebrate and promote the wild horses so that people want to visit Instead of just driving through.

Thank you for allowing me to share.