

North Dakota Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Re: SCR 4014
February 5, 2023

Dear Committee Members

I am writing in support of SCR4014, which urges the National Park Service to reconsider their intention to eliminate wild horses and longhorn steers from Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Both of these small herds are important links to the ranching and Native histories in western North Dakota, particularly the open range era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Marquis de Mores. As you know, the western heritage of the badlands is a source of pride to North Dakota citizens and a huge draw to visitors from other parts of the country. And the wild horses-which lived in the badlands before the park was created- are the star attraction for many.

Although Theodore Roosevelt National Park was created to commemorate the former president's legacy, the park superintendent recently indicated that the horses and longhorns are no longer needed because they are moving away from interpreting Roosevelt's ranching history to focus more strongly on conservation biology. I believe that is a disservice to Roosevelt, North Dakota, and the American public.

I conducted research on the history and management of the horses in the park while working for the NPS in North Dakota in the 1980s. The cultural and historic significance of the horses was made very clear in interviews with ranchers and others in western North Dakota. For the record, I am attaching a pdf of an article that I published on this topic in *North Dakota History* in 1991, "Badlands Broomtails: the Cultural History of Wild Horses in western North Dakota."

However, thanks to tourism and the internet, today there are now many more people who care about the horses. Thousands of people from North Dakota and beyond visit the park to experience the thrill of seeing and photographing the horses, and tens of thousands more follow them almost daily on various websites. And what could be a more stirring or beautiful sight? Could there be a more effective way to connect with history than to see the descendants of the wild horses that Roosevelt himself wrote about?

The horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park are a national and state treasure, and they should remain there for future generations. Thank you for supporting them.

Sincerely

Castle McLaughlin, Ph.D