

February 9, 2023

ND Energy & Natural Resource Committee Senate

Chairman Curt Kreun and committee members,

My name is Frank Kuntz with the Nokota horses. I am here to testify in favor of SCR4014. I am so very pleased that Governor Burgum and the tourism office and others are stepping up to the plate to save the wild horses in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP). These horses belong there! The TRNP created that type of horse. But what are we saving? After 40 some years of total mismanagement of the wild horses in TRNP with the introduction of domestic breeds like the Quarter Horse, Arabian and a Shire cross stud and changing the historic phenotype horses that were there before the white man came here. In 2018, a genetic analyst of the wild horses in TRNP showed that the horses there are one of the worst inbred wild horses on public lands. It also stated that they need to introduce new bloodlines.

Also, the TRNP has been using the horses there as guinea pigs for the drug Gonacon to permanently sterilize the mares in the park. What will be the long-term effect of this drug? And will the TRNP continue to dart the mares with Gonacon? And what new blood lines will they introduce?

I also noted that in Governor Burgum's press release that the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt was important to the state of North Dakota. I did not hear one word about Sitting Bull's people's legacy. That was their type of horse that was in the TRNP when it was fenced in.

So, if we are going to save the wild horses in TRNP based on science and genetics and historical evidence, let's do it the right way.

Slowly reintroduce the Nokotas, the State's Honorary Equine into the TRNP, set up an interpretive center in the park, which should include the history of the descendants of Sitting Bull's horses. After all Sitting Bull's name is well known worldwide.

The TRNP should stop using Gonacon on the horses in the TRNP. TRNP should work with the tribes to take some of the excess horses to the reservations for use in therapy programs for traumatized, PTSD people, etc. And find a way to help the tribes with some of the infrastructure to help make it happen.

It's a win-win situation for all ... TRNP, the State of ND, and the native people of North Dakota.

Thank you,

Frank Kuntz