

Protect Our Nation's Wild Horses

Senators, Representatives, and members of the Committee. My name is Tatyana Louise Spaulding, and I live in Louisville, Kentucky. I am a graduate student, writer, and long time horse enthusiast. I stand IN SUPPORT of SCR 4006 that urges Congress to establish PROTECTION for our nation's wild horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

As a small child, I remember watching the 2002 Dreamworks Animation Film, 'Spirit, Stallion of the Cimarron' that told the story of the brave mustang Spirit and his Native American friend and companion, Little Creek. Not only did this story tell the riveting tale, capturing the lives and struggles that wild horses faced during the expansion of the American West, but it also parallels the struggles that Native Americans faced, brilliantly and honestly addressing colonialism, with an inspiring message of how the land and animals deserve to be wild and free. Not only was this movie the beginning of my ever horse-obsession, but it also grew my love, appreciation, and awareness for the story of Native Americans in this country.

This past weekend, I had the immense honor and pleasure to attend a free online seminar to learn more on what's happening in our nation, regarding our wild horses. Several well-educated speakers, all from biologists to advocates shared their research on the validity that wild horses belong in this country and deserve as much protection as any other endangered species.

It has always been said that horses evolved on the North American continent, but migrated to Europe and Asia, dying out in North and South America 11,000 to 12,000 years ago, returning to the continent when colonizers and settlers stepped foot in the 15th, or 16th century. Now, even if this was true, that only is proof enough that wild horses belong in this country and have every right to remain, as they are not an invasive species, but the returning of a native species.

Wayne McCrory, a RPBio. Wildlife Biologist, and Ashley Avis' Documentary "Wild Beauty" both present research that suggests that wild horses did NOT die out on the American continent, but that many herds continued to thrive. Many Indigenous histories also show that it was NOT the settlers that introduced horses to their tribes, but that Indigenous People have ALWAYS used horses, showing that there had been a lack of proper research on the subject of wild horse herds. Not only that, but DNA samples on the genetics of several herds further shows that wild horses have always been here.

Wayne McCrory also shows evidence of the misconceptions that many people believe about wild horses. One of them is the issue of overgrazing; while it is shown that wild horses can overgraze, this is not due to the animal's grazing patterns themselves, but rather the LIMITED space they have to travel and graze. Limited space from fences, areas where they are allowed to live, AND having to share the grazing space with cows and sheep (which have been proven to be even LESS native than the wild horse!). McCrory also points out that wolves, cougars, and occasionally bears provide a natural maintenance on herd population, however, due to overhunting, this has negative effects, due to the predator populations not being allowed to grow.

In her powerful documentary "Wild Beauty", Ashley Avis also exposes the corruption regarding horse herd management, not only to the animals themselves but to the American taxpayer. Big corporations, working with the BLM have LIED to the public saying that the horses are starving and overpopulated, however fail to provide evidence for this; all the horses captured are fat, and healthy, only becoming sickly and dangerous when captured in the roundups. Furthermore, they are not sharing the land with small farmers and ranchers, but billionaire ranches, oftentimes paying much less to have their animals graze on PUBLIC LAND, while forcing small farmers and ranchers to keep their animals on their own private land. The documentary also exposed the millions of dollars it is causing taxpayers for these roundups, auctions, and euthanization for these animals.

Ladies and gentlemen, congress men and women, I implore you to pass this bill that will ensure the protection of these wild horse herds—icons of America. They are more American than any non-Native American person here, more so than even our President of the United States of America. Protecting these horses is more than just protecting the animals themselves but protecting the land in all its beauty and protecting taxpayers from corrupt corporations who only seek the next big profit. We blame the wild horses for supposed environmental issues, yet seek to replace them with even less native livestock. We blame the horses, when this country is in one the top of most polluting countries in the world and with CO2 carbon emissions. Ladies and Gentlemen, that is not from the horses, but from people and from companies.

Our wild horses deserve to be wild and free and protected. They deserve to have a healthy number of herd members to keep healthy DNA diversity, to utilize the and care for it in the way that mother nature intended. Please be the voice that they do not have. Thank you.