

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

January 25, 2025

RE: SB2331

Dear members of the 69th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota,

I am a resident of Fargo, ND. Please, accept the below as my testimony IN enthusiastic FAVOR of SB2331 to install a working group to guide the management of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

The horses enjoy the support of over 100,000 fans, including the entire 68th Legislative Assembly, former Governor Burgum, Senator Hoeven, all five of our tribal nations, and many others. Not to forget about myself. Two years ago, our State Legislature voted unanimously in support of a resolution to save our horses. In April, Senator Hoeven got federal support for our horses. We all thought the situation had improved at that time. However, there was a helicopter round up in October where almost all horses were captured and the mares were hand administered another shot of Gonacon, which is used for birth control. 15 mares were outfitted with collars, one mare died shortly after being released. Data were provided to the public, though in a shape that I as a scientist can only consider sloppy (or deliberately misleading). All mares have been treated with Gonacon by now, most of them many times. Though some mares seem resistant to the drug and keep reproducing, which balances the gene pool in favor of their genes and reduces genetic diversity. By now, we are faced with a herd that is mostly sterile, though it is currently not known whether at least some of the mares could come back to fertility if taken off Gonacon. Five mares were taken off Gonacon and we will see what happens to them. This method of birth control was researched in TRNP for some 12 years, but the aggressive use that is being done right now was never covered by the research study.

The collars were unnecessary for the collection of location data for the horses. There are thousands of horse fans visiting the park. Everybody who has access to Facebook knows where the horses are and what the drivers are behind their movements. The collars are uncomfortable, it is not known whether this discomfort may change the behaviour of the horses, and there is a potential for injury to the horse. Helped by one or the other out of state non-profit, TRNP is still doing what they can to get rid of the horses.

Note, the photo is from the TRNP Facebook page. As another note, everybody who has access to Facebook knows what the names of the horses are. TRNP was dependent on ‘helpers’ to identify their horses. Maybe they are not quite as ‘knowledgeable’ as they claim to be.



If we are to keep 200 horses in the park, it is necessary to have a genetically viable herd and I doubt we have that right now. However, we should do what we can to keep these horses and hope a good number of them will return to fertility. For this reason, it is necessary to have this working group to get people together from broad and diverse backgrounds to guide the TRNP decisions that seem a bit biased towards getting rid of the horses. I especially like section 1. g, where out of state non-profits are excluded from the working group. These groups were beneficial 10 years ago, but have lately contributed to the demise of the horses.

I have a friendly amendment: instead of a University System representative in 'equine studies', I would say 'equine science'. This is from someone who works within the University system. Equine studies is more about management of domestic horses and learning how to ride a horse. Equine studies is more open than that. One might add 'or related research or educational area'. This is a well meant suggestion, I would be happy without this amendment as well.

Altogether, I support SB2331 and recommend a PASS vote.

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, Ph.D.