

Testimony on Theodore Roosevelt National Park (2025)

Regarding: Senate Bill 2331

Chair and committee member, my name is Karen Mertes, a passionate visitor from Illinois. I am asking that you vote in favor of Senate Bill 2331. This bill would establish a much-needed unbiased working group dedicated to protecting the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP). This group would be made up of stakeholders across the state of North Dakota that would come together with the National Park Service to ensure that the goals of preserving a viable herd are met, along with a possible management plan for these horses.

It's crucial to maintain a herd that is genetically diverse and healthy to ensure the long-term survival of these horses in their natural habitat and over the last decade I have seen many concerning practices by TRNP that make it clear there is a need to form this working group. I also fear the overuse of GonaCon on every horse will leave the remaining herd sterile, and interbreeding of the non-responders left unchecked.

The wild horses embody the spirit of freedom and add to the park's natural beauty, enhancing all visitors' experience. To preserve all aspects of this beautiful country we must work together in ways that are innovative.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Mertes". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Karen Mertes

Dated this 1st day of February, 2025