

Honorable Legislators,

I am testifying in support of SB 2331. My name is Janelle Ghiorso and I'm a member of Chasing Wild Horses Wild Horse Advocates. I have worked tirelessly to stop the NPS from removing the wild horses from the park for the last couple of years.

During the public comment period for the Environmental Assessment that sought the removal of the wild horses from the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, I did extension research. I found a "secret meeting" among the authors and others who collaborated to reliable these wild horses as, not wild horses but instead as "livestock". There are ramifications to doing so, which is not only illegal but it is dangerous for the horses.

The NPS accidentally put the secret meeting notes into the EA. Thankfully, we knew that they would remove them, so they were downloaded by us. As soon as they realized that the public had the meeting notes, they did remove them.

The NPS employees have singled out the wild horses at the park for removal for years. These horses were fenced into the park since before the park was created, because it was their home range prior to the park being created. They are native to the park. It is and always has been their home since before Theodore Roosevelt settled there and they were an important part of his experience. The Park Service wants to erase that and we need each of you to make sure that doesn't happen.

I submitted my 135 page public comment on the EA, pointing out all the legal issues and substantial concerns with that assessment and it's alternatives. I pointed out my knowledge of the secret meeting, the obvious predetermined alternative that the Park Service was likely to choose, and I questioned the motives for the removal.

These wild horses were experimented on using GonaCon and many have been sterilized. The Park Service continues to try to sterilize any which aren't already. The effects of GonaCon to behaviors or health of the horses is not a concern to the park's personnel. The unnecessary radio collars and potential of accidental death, from getting caught on a branch, to getting a hoof caught during a scratch of their neck, aren't a concern for the personnel either.

It's obvious that these cherished wild horses, that people come to the park from across the country and around the world to see are important and deserve to be protected. They may be to much work for park personnel but the park has intervened when they could have just left them alone. Advocates have offered to help and the park needs to be open to that. I have to wonder if they are hiding something. I wonder why they wanted to dispose of the horses involved in a public funded experiment?

I will close my comment before it becomes another 138 page document. I can provide you with my actual public comment if you wish. The Park Service did drop the EA and I believe it was because of the illegalities that commenters pointed out and the public outcry.

I urge you to support SB 2331 to protect the wild horses for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Signed,
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