



February 7, 2025

To: North Dakota Senate State and Local Government Committee

We'd first like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding SB 2331 on behalf of American Wild Horse Conservation ("AWHC"). AWHC is the leading national nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the American wild horse and burro in viable free-roaming herds for generations to come, as part of our national heritage. On behalf of our over 800,000 supporters and followers nationwide, including more than 1,000 North Dakota citizens, AWHC strongly urges the Committee to support SB 2331.

Wild horses have long been part of the TRNP landscape, reflecting the rugged frontier that shaped Theodore Roosevelt's legacy of conservation. These horses also share a deep historical connection to Indigenous cultures—including the Hunkpapa Lakota leader, Sitting Bull—whose people relied on them for hunting, travel, and overall survival on the Northern Plains. When the park was established in 1947, wild horses were already present, and strong public support led to their formal recognition as a historic and cultural feature of TRNP in the early 1970's. Decades of park management plans have affirmed their significance, ensuring visitors can experience the Badlands as Roosevelt had. Given their deep ties to the history of North Dakota, it is essential to take a proactive approach to their humane management.

SB 2331 presents an opportunity for North Dakota to play a role in the management of the TRNP wild horses as an important part of the state's history, culture, and economy. The working group model provides an opportunity for diverse interest groups to come together to develop win-win solutions for preserving wild horses, their habitat, and their value as an ecotourism resource for local communities. SB 2331 establishes an important oversight and collaborative role for the state, helping to safeguard the preservation and humane management of these wild horses under federal care.



The working group model for state-federal collaboration is being successfully implemented in Colorado. The Colorado Wild Horse Working Group—created through state legislation and passed with strong bipartisan support in 2023—is implementing a collaborative approach to humane, science-based management of federally-protected wild horses in Colorado. As in North Dakota, Colorado recognizes these wild horses as a significant driver of tourism and local economies, and the Working Group has facilitated productive dialogue and data-driven management strategies that prioritize the welfare of wild horses while simultaneously addressing ecological and land-use concerns. Establishing a similar framework in TRNP will provide North Dakota with a voice, role, and oversight in the federal management of this unique herd.

AWHC is happy to support SB 2331 because it fosters cooperative, humane, and scientifically informed wild horse management. We urge the Committee to pass this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Fernando Guerra  
Director of Law and Policy  
American Wild Horse Conservation

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Abbey Benesh  
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