

**North Dakota Stockmen's Association
Testimony to the
House Agriculture Committee on SCR 4014
March 10, 2023**

Good morning, Chairman Thomas and House Agriculture Committee members. For the record, my name is Julie Ellingson and I represent the North Dakota Stockmen's Association.

The Stockmen's Association filed formal comments to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park about its proposed Livestock Plan in January. In those comments, we made two main points:

- 1) the National Park Service should take the appropriate steps to maintain the health of its cattle and horse herds and, like any other good neighbor, maintain good fences and keep its animals contained, so as not to cause conflict with any neighboring private herds; and
- 2) the National Park Service should not be using the faulty premise that livestock grazing is detrimental to the rangeland as rationale to remove the animals from the park.

We were very disappointed to hear National Park Service officials say in a recent public meeting, "I would offer that there is a large body of evidence in the published

research demonstrating that livestock in native ecosystems or in places where natural landscapes occur cause significant impacts, so we know that they are out of place in terms of the ecosystem,” while the Park superintendent also said in a media interview, “The more hoofed animals you have on the landscape, the more pressure that it puts on the landscape.”

We strongly disagree with these assertions, and so would volumes of scientific evidence, including that which has been conducted by our own North Dakota State University experts, who have demonstrated that native plant species can flourish under proper management with livestock grazing.

Grazing is, in fact, an effective tool to manage a wide variety of forage, spurring growth of perennial grasses, decreasing invasive species, increasing organic matter, improving soil health and carbon storage and suppressing wildfire.

That’s why we asked the Senate to add the whereas statement beginning on line 20 to this resolution. Our thoughts: If the National Park Service uses unsubstantiated anti-grazing rationale to support its decision to eliminate livestock from Theodore Roosevelt National Park, this not only sends the wrong message to the public, but contributes to a false narrative about grazing and can have spillover impacts on other grazing decisions, especially those on federal ground.

We feel strongly that a resolution regarding the Theodore Roosevelt National Park Livestock Plan must include this very important topic. I understand that some groups would prefer that the word "livestock" not be included before "grazing" and we would be OK with striking it on lines 3 and 20, as long as our grazing statements remain intact.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.