



Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates  
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Chairman Roers and Committee members:

My name is Christine Kman. I am the co-founder and president of Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates (CHWHA). We are a nonprofit organization based in Dickinson, ND that advocates for the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of SB 2331. I am asking that the committee give a "Do Pass" on this bill.

Our organization, along with the State of North Dakota including our state and federal legislators have spent the last 3 years fighting for the wild horses of TRNP to remain IN the park.

Since the park has a clear history of trying to eliminate the wild horses, and some very questionable management practices, CHWHA has worked with our legislators to draft SB 2331.

This bill calls for the state of North Dakota to form a working group to help TRNP manage the wild horses. The state of Colorado has passed similar legislation that IS working in Colorado. We believe this is a model that can be replicated in North Dakota.

The legislation calls for various stakeholders within the state of North Dakota to be appointed to this working group. The group will meet at least twice a year. The goal is for them to come before the legislature in 2027 with their findings and documentation on any appropriated needs.

One question often asked is what will make the park not only be part of these meetings, but also listen to the recommendations of the state.

That is where SCR 4006 comes in. A resolution that asks our federal legislators to help get federal protection for the wild horses that call TRNP home.

The committee met yesterday and gave a "DO PASS" to SCR 4006. Federal legislation will give necessary power to this working group to be able to ensure the horses are managed in a way that takes North Dakota's priorities into consideration. There is a need for oversight when it comes to the management of the wild horses at TRNP.

There are two other national parks that have federal protection for their wild horses. In both of those parks an organization was named in the legislation stating that the parks HAVE TO work with their state group to manage the wild horses. We believe that this working group, run by the state of North Dakota,



is the organization best suited to work with the park to make sure the state's priorities are considered in their management decisions.

Most would not argue North Dakota's rich equine history. The management of Theodore Roosevelt National Park does continuously.

In March of 2024, they released the paper that we believe was crafted to try to refute the historical significance of the wild horses and help prepare them to litigate over the findings of the State Historic Preservation Officer, Bill Peterson. He sent a letter to the park weeks before they abandoned their plans to remove the horses that emphasized the historical significance of these horses.

We know that no matter what anyone's personal feelings are on wild horses, one fact remains clear: These horses drive tourism in our state. A simple formula shows that the wild horses that currently call TRNP home bring AT LEAST \$37 MILLION DOLLARS to North Dakota's economy EVERY SINGLE YEAR!

In January of 2023, Governor Doug Burgum held a press conference offering the park whatever resources were available from the state of North Dakota to allow the horses to stay. He continued sharing this sentiment with the park up until his last days in office.

The ONLY response his office EVER received from the park was that the state should remove the horses from TRNP, take ownership of them and put them in a state park where they could manage them the any way they choose. Needless to say, Governor Burgum never took them up on that offer. He knew, as most of us sitting in this room today know, that part of the draw of these horses is that they reside in the badlands of North Dakota and in a national park named to preserve the legacy of President Theodore Roosevelt and his time in North Dakota. As you know, Theodore Roosevelt National Park is also unique as it is the ONLY national park named for a person.

When the park was forced to abandon their plans to eliminate the horses in April of 2024, CHWHA celebrated, but warned everyone that it would just be a matter of time before the park was back again with a new plan to try to eliminate the horses.

6 months later, our words became reality. The park gave the state 2 weeks notice that they would be rounding up all the wild horses, hand injecting all the mares with a very controversial birth control drug called GonaCon, and removing up to 15 horses that were non-responders. The aggressive use of GonaCon is just another attempt for the park to silently eliminate the horses. Please note: as part of an experiment between the park and Colorado State University on the horses in the park, they found that 2 injections of GonaCon have caused 19 of the 24 mares to STILL not return to fertility since their 2nd injection in 2013.



The park also told us that during the recent helicopter roundup, they would be taking DNA samples from all the horses to collect data to help them better manage the herd.

That March 2024 report shows that in 2022, the park already had DNA on 98% of the horses. We know from the [usaspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov) website that helicopter contracts to roundup the horses were put out for bid AT LEAST 60 days before the roundup. Remember, the state of North Dakota and the taxpaying public were only given 2 weeks' notice.

During the roundup, 15 mares were fitted with GPS collars. The park states that they need to monitor the land usage of the horses to help determine future management plans. That March 2024 report also shows that the park already knows the land usage of the horses. Requests by our organization to have the collars removed have been denied.

The park's actions over the last 3 years have rightfully sparked anger from the general public. The October roundup and the tracking collars have elevated a movement, independent of our organization, for the public to boycott Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Since 2023, the Medora City Council passed 3 of their own resolutions asking that a viable and healthy herd of wild horses remain in TRNP. The Billings County Commission passed one of their own.

The History of the park shows the need for oversight from this federal agency. In 2023, Attorney General Drew Wrigley said, "Yes, this is a national park, but it falls under the stewardship of the state of North Dakota."

We could not agree more. And that is why we ask that this committee give a Do Pass to SB 2331 today.

Thank you for your time this morning and for all your hard work this legislative session.

I now stand for questions.