2025 SENATE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SB 2331

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

State and Local Government Committee

Room JW216, State Capitol

SB 2331 2/7/2025

Relating to the Theodore Roosevelt national park working group; to provide a report; and to provide an appropriation.

Members Present: Chairman Roers; Vice Chair Castaneda; Senators: Barta, Braunberger, Lee and Walen.

9:00 Chair Roers called the meeting to order.

Discussion Topics:

- Natural state resource
- · Establish a working group
- Protection of wild horses

9:00 a.m. Senator Boschee, District 44, introduced the bill and submitted testimony #36156.

9:13 a.m. Christine Kman, President Chasing Horses Wild Horses Advocates, testified in favor and submitted testimony #35907, #35906, #35904, #35905 and 35908.

9:19 a.m. Frank Kuntz, Keeper - Nokota Horses, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36180.

9:23 a.m. Sandra Hagen Solin, Lobbyist American Wild Horse Conservation and Colorado Working Group Representative, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36120.

9:35 a.m. Erik Molvar, Wildlife Biologist, testified neutral and submitted testimony #35988.

9:41 a.m. Castle McLaughlin, retired anthropologist, testified in favor and submitted testimony #35976.

9:47 a.m. Holly Bice, President/CEO Bice Policy Group, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36126.

Additional written testimony:

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#33312, #33329, #33391, #33452, #34290, #34552, #34532, #33137, #33293, #33360, #33785, #34229, #34528, #34574, #34588, #34646, #34643, #34680, #34721, #34743, #34758, #34759, #34782, #34800, #36039, #34802, #34833, #34835, #34878, #34883, #34888, #34894, #34901, #34908, #34914, #34916, #34924, #34927, #34939, #34978, #35035, #35313, #35327, #35364, #35367, #35381, #35388, #35390, #35391, #35411, #35431, #35432, #35451, #35450, #35463, #35480, #35484, #35488, #35493,
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Senate State and Local Government Committee SB 2331 2/07/2025 Page 2

#35499, #35504, #35505, #35507, #35509, #35519, #35530, #35531, #35534, #35535, #35536, #35540, #35556, #35557, #35570, #35571, #35581, #35584, #35595, #35596, #35598, #35604, #35606, #35607, #35617, #35624, #35630, #35636, #35640, #35655, #35657, #35658, #35666, #35669, #35672, #35675, #35681, #35689, #35696, #35698, #35700, #35703, #35711, #35743, #35746, #35758, #35781, #35803, #35813, #35830, #35841, #35850, #35852, #35857, #35863, #35868, #35881, #35911, #35923, #35926, #35948, #35971, #35972, #35974, #35981, #35985, #35999, #36009, #36011, #36044, #36045, #36046, #36050, #36063, #36065, #36068, #36069, #36071, #36085, #36087, #36091, #36094, #36108, #36128, #36131, #36143, #36145, #36160, #34747, #35481, #35459

9:51 a.m. Chair Roers closed the hearing.

Susan Helbling, Committee Clerk

My favorite part of Theodore Roosevelt National Park is the wild horses. Park management has been aggressively trying to eliminate the herd of wild horses for years, even though the majority of ND residents and park visitors have repeatedly stated they want the herd to remain. I believe SB 2331 should pass so the wild horses are finally protected and remain in the park forever.

Michelle Jennison Fargo, ND



Our organization is in support of providing protection for the wild horses in the park. They represent an important part of our national history. With appropriate herd management focused on natural predation and birth control darting program the herd will enhance the ecology through decreasing wildfire fuels and reseeding the land. Also, importantly for the economy of North Dakota the tourism industry will benefit from the tourist and photographers who will travel to observe the wild horses in their natural environment.

Sincerely, Tami Jones, President Idaho Wild Horse Alliance Boise, Idaho Birgit Pruess, Ph.D. 3696 Harrison St. S Fargo, ND January 25, 2025

RE: SB2331

Dear members of the 69th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota,

I am a resident of Fargo, ND. Please, accept the below as my testimony IN enthusiastic FAVOR of SB2331 to install a working group to guide the management of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

The horses enjoy the support of over 100,000 fans, including the entire 68th Legislative Assembly, former Governor Burgum, Senator Hoeven, all five of our tribal nations, and many others. Not to forget about myself. Two years ago, our State Legislature voted unanimously in support of a resolution to save our horses. In April, Senator Hoeven got federal support for our horses. We all thought the situation had improved at that time. However, there was a helicopter round up in October where almost all horses were captured and the mares were hand administered another shot of Gonacon, which is used for birth control. 15 mares were outfitted with collars, one mare died shortly after being released. Data were provided to the public, though in a shape that I as a scientist can only consider sloppy (or deliberately misleading). All mares have been treated with Gonacon by now, most of them many times. Though some mares seem resistant to the drug and keep reproducing, which balances the gene pool in favor of their genes and reduces genetic diversity. By now, we are faced with a herd that is mostly sterile, though it is currently not know whether at least some of the mares could come back to fertility if taken off Gonacon. Five mares were taken off Gonacon and we will see what happens to them. This method of birth control was researched in TRNP for some 12 years, but the aggressive use that is being done right now was never covered by the research study.

The collars were unnecessary for the collection of location data for the horses. There are thousands of horse fans visiting the park. Everybody who has access to Facebook knows where the horses are and what the drivers are behind their movements. The collars are uncomfortable, it is not known whether this discomfort may change the behaviour of the horses, and there is a potential for injury to the horse. Helped by one or the other out of state non-profit, TRNP is still doing what they can to get rid of the horses.

Note, the photo is from the TRNP Facebook page. As another note, everybody who has access to Facebook knows what the names of the horses are. TRNP was dependent on 'helpers' to identify their horses. Maybe they are not quite as 'knowledgeable' as they claim to be.



If we are to keep 200 horses in the park, it is necessary to have a genetically viable herd and I doubt we have that right now. However, we should do what we can to keep these horses and hope a good number of them will return to fertility. For this reason, it is necessary to have this working group to get people together from broad and diverse backgrounds to guide the TRNP decisions that seem a bit biased towards getting rid of the horses. I especially like section 1. g, where out of state non-profits are excluded from the working group. These groups were beneficial 10 years ago, but have lately contributed to the demise of the horses.

I have a friendly amendment: instead of a University System representative in 'equine studies', I would say 'equine science'. This is from someone who works within the University system. Equine studies is more about management of domestic horses and learning how to ride a horse. Equine studies is more open than that. One might add 'or related research or educational area'. This is a well meant suggestion, I would be happy without this amendment as well.

Altogether, I support SB2331 and recommend a PASS vote.

As in all my testimonies, I much appreciate the hard work and dedication that each member of my state legislative assembly puts into our state. Thank you.

Sincerely and respectfully Birgit Pruess, Ph.D.

January 31, 2025

Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing in support of federal protection for the wild horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Wild horses are fast disappearing from our western lands.

These horses are important to telling the history and legacy of TRNP and Theodore Roosevelt. This is a heritage herd. People from all over the world visit the park to see them and learn about the history of American West. I urge you to guarantee their future. Prevent their removal and support humane and scientifically sound management. They are irreplaceable. Please protect them.

Respectfully,

June Johns

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,

Karen Mertes

Dated this 1st day of February, 2025

Karen Mertes

Do Pass.

I believe SB 2331 should pass so the wild horses living in Theodore Roosevelt National Park are finally protected from park management trying to eliminate them and remain in the park forever.

Pat Kerzman West Fargo, ND



Testimony on Theodore Roosevelt National Park (2025)

Regarding: Senate Bill 2331

Dear Chair and Committee members,

My name is Renee Villari and I reside in Arkansas. Although I have not had the privilege of visiting Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) yet, I am a lover of nature and a passionate advocate for animals. I've been following the fight to save the wild horses at the park as these majestic horses instantly remind me of our American Heritage and the symbol of freedom.

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.

- 1. Freedom and natural beauty
- 2. Wilderness conservation
- 3. Visitor attraction
- 4. Genetic viability
- 5. Unbiased management

Think about this: You have the opportunity now and the power to help. Please find it in your heart to approve Bill 2331.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Renee Villari

Dated this 3rd day of February, 2025

February 3, 2025

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

My name is Regina Knapp. I am asking for your support for SB 2331 to create a working group for the Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP).

The park was created to preserve a period in American History. The wild horses are a living part of that history. The horses are culturally and historically significant in the landscape of this park and in many other areas of the Western States. The horses add historic authenticity to the scenery of this park. Theodore Roosevelt would want the animals, especially the wild horses, to have a designated place to roam free. With over 600,000 visitors to the park each year, the surrounding areas and local community significantly benefit from the wild horses.

Sadly, the TRNP intends to eliminate this historic wild horse herd. The park's management aggressively treats the horses with birth control (GonaCon) and unnecessarily harasses the wild horses with GPS collars that are unsightly and can potentially cause injury to the horses. To make matters worse, the park's management has not been transparent with the public regarding the wild horses. I've been following Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates (CHWHA) since 2020 and admire their diligent efforts to help the wild horse herd to live and thrive within the park. I visited the park last year to see first hand how the wild horses live in the park environment. The wild horse population is small and were not as common to see as the bison and other animals in the park.

I urge you to support this bill to ensure a viable wild horse herd remains in the park. The park is a wonderful place to visit. It is even more breathtaking when you can see the few wild horses roam wild in the parks rugged landscape. There is nothing more inspiring than a wild horse living free and wild with minimal human interference and management. I want this historic herd around for visitors to enjoy for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, Regina Knapp February 3, 2025

To members of the 69th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota, specifically Mike Lefor and Vicky Steiner,

Do you believe in Jesus Christ? He loves horses. The horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park deserve our protection. We need to continue Roosevelts legacy and preserve our countrys values and freedom. I support a Theodore Roosevelt National Park Working Group for the wild horse herds at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park are not protected under the 1971 Wild Horses and Burros Act.

The wild horses are wild and need to stay wild. Putting collars on them, trying to remove the herd, and trying to sterilize the herds with GonaCon is unacceptable. It inhumane and against the values with which our country had been founded on. Freedom. Wild horses are free and will always be free no matter how much the legislators and/or BLM try to control them. It is a waste of our tax dollars and against democracy to try and control these herds. Sterilization will cause the herds to die out. According to the National Academy of Sciences, an independent and bipartisan group, roundups only exacerbate the population growth of wild horses. They realize they are lower in number and make up for it.

I oppose round-ups, collars, and GonaCon. I am only in support of a safe and temporary birth control which is PZP. I would prefer to leave the wild horses alone but if our country must control, conquer, and destroy like the English do, then continue roundups and sterilization. If our country believes in freedom, then leave the wild horses free.

Thank you,

Nasreen Brooke Naeemullah

Please pass SB 2331. I fully support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to protect these horses.

Please pass SB 2331

Thank you.

Marguerite Nico

faxgoddess@gmail.com

469.667.4439

Please Pass SB 2331! The wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park need our protection to remain in this Park in western North Dakota. I grew up in Mandan, ND and my mother came from north of Medora, ND. We frequently visited TRNP while visiting family there. Seeing the wild horses was a treat. As a wild horse advocate, I have been working with CHWHA to keep these horses in the Park. The National Park Service needs to listen to the people who visit. They overwhelmingly want the wild horses to Remain in the Park! Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ruth J Kary

Wild Horse Advocate

Please Pass SB 2331

Please PASS SCR 4006 - Please PASS SB 2331 !!

As a resident and tax paying constituent of ND, I have watched with fear and concern over the treatment of the Wild Horse Herd at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

It appears that the NPS is adamant about either removing the horses from the Park or sterilizing them into extinction with the overuse of Gonacon, which I adamantly oppose.

These horses have as much right to be here as we do and I'm rightfully concerned about maintaining a genetically and WILD horse herd.

Thank you for listening to my concerns!

Gabriella Theodore

730 9th St North #23

Fargo, ND 58102

I strongly support SB2331. This bill calls for the state of North Dakota to pull together a wild horse working group similar to what Colorado has done. This will help watch over the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt park. Making sure there is a viable herd and they remain in the park. Safe and sound. Having the park work with stakeholders across the state to conduct a working group. This will keep North Dakota priorities front and center for future management of the wild horses that call Theodore Roosevelt National park home.

Bill SB2331 is very important to pass with bill SCR 4006 (federal protection for wild horses in Theodore National park). Both bills need to pass so the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt national park will stay protected in the park.

The wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt are a historical presence to the park. Leaving Teddy Roosevelt's legacy. They are a very unique presence to the park and need to stay there and live for many generations to come.

These wild horses are well known throughout America. Many historians believe they are descendants of Sitting Bull's horses and related to the rare Nakota breed.

The wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National park are cherished by North Dakota and horse lovers everywhere. They are the only wild horses in North Dakota. They are also a great asset to the state of North Dakota, by providing tourism. Many tourists come to the state to see these wild horses. I know I will.

Please support and help pass SB2331, a working group needs to be made to help protect the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt park.

Thank you for your time.

For the wild ones

Rebecca Falk

I am writing to support SB 2331:

A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 54-60 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the Theodore Roosevelt national park working group; to provide a report; and to provide an appropriation.

Wild Horses (Mustangs) are an iconic species that evolved on the soils of America. It is vital to maintain their presence in our landscape as herds are rapidly being removed from public and federal lands across the west at the request of private interest groups who use public lands for their benefit.

A working group is essential to work alongside legislators to assist and collaborate for best intentions and preservation of wild horses.

I am planning a trip to Theodore Roosevelt National Park this summer just to see the wild horses in their habitat....hopefully, without collars on. This is the only reason I intend to visit North Dakota for any foreseeable future.

Please provide support and the passage of SB 2331.

Thank you for your time.

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Please Pass SCR 4006 and SB 2331

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My name is Andrew Marx and I support bill SB2331 because the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt national park are very important for me. This herd has gone through so much in the last years and many people love them and visit the park just because of them. The park management is really not to be trusted- they are working to remove every single horse from the park. Since many years they are trying to get rid of those majestic animals- the newest campaign with the roundup and the collars and hand-injections with Gonacon was a real mess. They are aiming to erase the herd by making them genetically unviable. Therefore the herd needs federal protection badly.

There need to be a collaboration of the Park Management with a working group. Thank you for your consideration

Andrew Marx

Testimony in SB 2331" 2/4/2025

To the Sixty-Ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota:

My name is Sabina Louise Pierce, and I am a National Geographic Explorer, photographer and storyteller working on a project on the North Dakota Native American Nokota Horse Please pass SB 2331"

I am writing in regards to SB2331 to make a bill to form a working group to manage for the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. urging the U.S. Congress to establish federal protection I have made many trips out to your beautiful state and have spent much time with the TRNP wild horses as they are the origins of the Nokota Horse. These horses are rich in history and cultural connections with your state along with being the last herd of wild horses in it too.

I believe they need Federal protection to preserve this historic wild horse herd in the Little Missouri Badlands, where they have been present since at least the late nineteenth century. These horses relate to North Dakota's heritage, originating from both ranch and Native American herds. Theodore Roosevelt and other open-range ranchers documented their presence, and they have been a distinctive attraction since the park's establishment. They attract visitors from across the state and beyond, contributing to tourism in Medora and gaining a dedicated global following on social media.

Even though they one of the main draws attracting visitors, and are rich historical and cultural significance, the National Park Service has considered eliminating the herd over the past sixty years. The most recent attempt came through an Environmental Assessment (EA) process in 2022, ending this past year. Many North Dakotans opposed the removal of the horses, and the decision was only halted due to the intervention of influential Senator Hoeven. While the park has since abandoned the EA plan, they have not made a long-term commitment to preserving the herd. They continue to use of the immunosuppressant GonaCon on mares as a strategy of gradual reduction through eventual sterilization and eventual elimination with the horses aging away.

There is concern that the National Park Service may not voluntarily commit to maintaining the horses or ensuring their long-term health and viability. Local and regional NPS staff have expressed opposition even this year.

Passing this resolution could help secure lasting protection for the wild horses, ensuring they remain a part of North Dakota's history and landscape.

Sincerely,

Sabina Pierce

National Geographic Society Explorer

02/04/2025

Dear Committee Members –

I am asking that you please pass SB 2331.

Sincerely, Isabella Kuzniak I love our nation's wild horses - I want to see them protected from harm!

I support the formation of a working group to collaborate with Theodore Roosevelt National Park on managing the wild horses.

Thank you!

Best,

Peter Wood Maryland February 4, 2025

RE: SB 2331

Dear Senate State and Local Government Committee,

I am in favor of providing federal protection for the Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) wild horses. They are a living historical remnant of true American freedom and draw thousands of people to the TRNP every year. Federal protection is a necessity to ensure that these living symbols of our country's resilience and strength do not become another sad, tragic footnote to our history.

Passing SB 2331 and providing a working group that will review the situation in the park, provide a report of their findings, and set an appropriation will be a huge step to further the protection of these iconic pieces of North Dakota and American history

Thank you for your consideration and please vote to protect and preserve this iconic herd and pass SB 2331.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Longman Tucson, Arizona

The WILD BEAUTY Foundation

February 1st, 2025

To the Members of the Committee,

My name is Ashley Avis, and I am the founder of The Wild Beauty Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to the protection and preservation of America's wild horses. I am also a film director devoted to bringing wildlife themes to the world.

Our film, Disney's BLACK BEAUTY along with our award-winning documentary WILD BEAUTY: MUSTANG SPIRIT OF THE WEST, the latter in which the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park are featured— have inspired tens of millions of children and adults across the globe to cherish, respect, and fight for the existence of our fast-disappearing wild world. We cannot afford to lose it.

I am writing today to express my strong support for SCR 4006 and SB 2331, both of which are essential to ensuring a future for the wild horses of TRNP.

For the past several years, the fate of this historic herd has been in jeopardy. The park's plans to eliminate these horses and dismantle their families— whether through outright removal or permanent sterilization—have been met with overwhelming public outcry. These are icons of North Dakota, not only a cherished part of its cultural and ecological landscape, but a living tribute to Theodore Roosevelt's legacy and his deep commitment to conservation. To erase them would be a travesty— an irreversible wound on the wild, one that will never heal.

SCR 4006 is a first vital step in securing lasting federal protection for these horses—something that should serve as a model across the West. This resolution sends an undeniable message: North Dakota values its wild horses and is committed to their future. Passing this will call upon federal lawmakers to take meaningful action, ensuring these horses remain free-roaming and protected for generations to come. Future children and families who deserve to see wild horses in the *wild*, galloping across the astonishing tapestry known only to North Dakota.

But a resolution alone is not enough. That is why SB 2331 is equally essential. By establishing a North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group, this bill creates a real, structured plan to ensure responsible management of the TRNP horses. This group will bring together key stakeholders, require accountability, and develop sustainable solutions—rather than leaving the fate of this herd to bureaucratic decisions that lack transparency and public input.

We must learn from the past three years. Park officials have openly stated their intention to "halt reproduction" in the herd, and we know that without intervention, we may very well find ourselves in the same fight again.

Please stand with the wild. Please stand with the children, and the community, and the tourists who visit every year just to see this herd and experience its unique spirit. A spirit forged in the rocks and the skies of indomitable North Dakota. Fight beside these horses, don't allow them to fade away.

I urge you to support and pass both SCR 4006 and SB 2331. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ashley Avis

Founder & Filmmaker

The Wild Beauty Foundation

Dear Legislator,

I urge you to support SB 2331, which seeks to establish a state working group dedicated to collaborating with Theodore Roosevelt National Park on the management of wild horses.

This is an important wildlife issue that requires our attention, and we need your support to pass this bill.

Thank you Sincerely Madhu Anderson Green River, Wyoming SB 2331 – I am writing to you today to ask that you give a "DO PASS" on SB 2331.

SB 2331 will form a working group to work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to manage the wild horses. If we don't take action now to ensure that North Dakota's ONLY wild horse herd always remain in the park it might be too late.

Blake McCann's (National Park Service) has stated – they are trying to "halt reproduction of this herd"! This is totally unacceptable and oversight is needed now!

The continued and aggressive (and unfounded) use of GonaCon on this herd CAN make mares foal out of season, as we have seen become all too common with the TRNP herd. The brutal North Dakota winters make it hard on these young babies.

The time is right for this to happen!

Please "DO PASS" on SB 2331.

Stacie Umetsu

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Rachel Lynch. I am a volunteer and advocate with **Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates** and the **American Wild Horses Conservation** non-profit organizations. I am here today to ask that you vote in favor of Senate Bill **2331**. This bill would create the formation of a working group that would work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to help manage the wild horses. The resolution before you is asking our federal legislators to help get federal protection for this herd since they are not protected under the Wild and Free Roaming Horse & Burro Act.

In my home state of Missouri, there are federally protected wild horses whose origination began during the Dust Bowl of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s when families were no longer able to care for their livestock. Set free, these once-cared-for horses were left on their own to survive. They formed small bands of families and propagated along Missouri's beautiful rivers and streams, known today as the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Here, Missouri's wild horses have been allowed to roam free, carefully managed, happy, and still roaming free under federal protection.

There is a wonderful history to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park horses, similar to the horses from Missouri. A history of the land. A history of the free-roaming horses that call this park their home. A history to the testimony of what it means to be free in the land of the free.

"The history of our country is in the bloodlines of our wild horses. Horses played a role in every significant development in our nation's history, from building the West to fighting alongside Americans in our most significant

history, from building the West to fighting alongside Americans in our most significant wars. They're the horse we rode in on. Only the power of the people will... preserve these national icons for future generations of Americans to enjoy."

- Ellie Phipps Price, president of the American Wild Horse Campaign*

Please vote in favor of Senate Bill 2331.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Rachel Lynch
Concerned Horse Advocate

2-5-2025

Please accept this letter as my written testimony in SUPPORT of establishing federal protections for the wild horse herd at Theodore Roosevelt National Park and forming a state working group to collaborate with Theodore Roosevelt National Park on managing the wild horses.

Sincerely,

Danielle Peterson Danielle RA Peterson 116 Woodland Drive Camano Island WA 98282 Re: SB 2331 Relating to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park working group 2/4/25

I am asking that you vote in favor of Senate Bill 2331. This bill would establish an unbiased working group dedicated to protecting the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. This working group would be comprised of stakeholders across the state of North Dakota that would collaborate with the National Park Service to ensure that the goals of preserving a viable herd are met, along with a possible management plan for the horses. It is critical to maintain a genetically diverse and healthy herd in order to ensure the long-term survival of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park horses.

I have many concerns about the actions the National Park Service has taken with the wild horses, including the overuse of GonaCon (birth control drug) and a recent roundup to attach obtrusive collars on mare's necks for two to three years. It is clear to me that the need for an unbiased working group is long overdue.

The wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park are the only wild herd in North Dakota and it is critical that a working group be established to ensure that these majestic wild horses remain in Theodore Roosevelt National Park for generations to come. Please vote in favor of Senate Bill 2331.

Respectfully,

Bonnie Cormier

I love our nation's wild horses - I want to see them protected from harm!

I support the formation of a working group to collaborate with Theodore Roosevelt National

Park on managing the wild horses.

Thank you!

Best regards,

Linda Peters

I am in SUPPORT of forming a state working group to collaborate with Theodore Roosevelt National Park on managing the Wild Horses, as long as the members are from legitimate non-profit Wild Horse and Burros advocacy organizations who have been advocating for the protections of Wild Horses and Burros in support of the Federal Act of 1971. I'm an Equine Facilitated Psychotherapist and have done extensive research on how Horses and Burros, espscially in the Wild, help heal humans, particularly military veterans considering their high rate of death by suicide. You can start an emotional and mental health and well being project for veterans upheld by veterans as a safe place to come for healing and being of service to such Noble Wild Horses! Serving and Protecting, with Honor, being part of a unit again,

experiencing a sense of community and altruism, for a Just cause, would be very healing! And having Indigenous Nations lead the Way, on such Sacred Lands would be even more healing for all.

Dawn Ulle 30572 Mallard Cove Westlake, OH 44145 440.590.5330

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SB 2331

As a volunteer of CHWHA, I hear by testify **that I whole heartedly support** the Bill, **SB 2331**, which is asking the state to form a working group to manage the wild horse of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Please pass SB 2331

Kaitlin Galanos League of Humane Voters Chapter President SB 2331 – I am writing to you today to ask that you give a "DO PASS" on SB 2331.

SB 2331 will form a working group to work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to manage the wild horses. If we don't take action now to ensure that North Dakota's ONLY wild horse herd always remain in the park it might be too late.

Blake McCann's (National Park Service) has stated – they are trying to "halt reproduction of this herd"! This is totally unacceptable and oversight is needed now!

The continued and aggressive (and unfounded) use of GonaCon on this herd CAN make mares foal out of season, as we have seen become all too common with the TRNP herd. The brutal North Dakota winters make it hard on these young babies.

The time is right for this to happen!

Please "DO PASS" on SB 2331.

Stacie Umetsu

Please pass SCR 4006 AND SB 2331 in support of wild horses. Thank you,
Laura Fuson
Carson City NV

SCR 4006 is a resolution that asks:

"That the Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly urges Congress to enact legislation establishing federal protections for the wild horse herd of Theodore Roosevelt National Park to ensure the long-term health and preservation of the herd for generations to come." SCR 4006 is a resolution asking our federal legislators for help to secure federal protection for this herd.

SCR 4006 states that The state of North Dakota wants federal protection for **Theodore Roosevelt National Park horse herd**. The park has a long history of continually trying to get rid of the horses. One of their methods is to use GonaCon in a way that is far too aggressive for typical birth control.

Senate Bill number 2331

Toni Walker 1769 Heather Ave Latimer Iowa 50452 Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Christine Snow. I am testifying today to ask that you vote In Support of **Senate Bill 2331**. This bill would create the formation of a working group that would work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to help manage the wild horses. This would be similar to working groups currently in Colorado and Missouri.

The resolution before you is asking our federal legislators to help secure federal protection for the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park since they are not protected under the Wild and Free Roaming Horse & Burro Act.

I love to visit TRNP, especially to see the iconic and majestic wild horses in the park, as well as the rest of the wildlife, all living free and wild in their natural habitat.

Thank you for your time and consideration for this important issue.

Sincerely,

Christine D Snow

Kearney, MO

Wild horses are being eradicated across the West and it has been horrible to witness. We can stop this terrible injustice from happening in North Dakota. Please pass SCR 4006 to protect Theodore Roosevelt Park's iconic wild horses.

Stephanie Selensky Fargo, North Dakota

I support SB 2331 Please Pass SB 2331

Sincerely, Diane Smith

DO PASS SB 2331... PLEASE!!!

The beloved herd of wild horses in the ND park, the ONLY park named after one of our most beloved presidents, Theodore Roosevelt, are in dire need of your protection.

The park service has failed miserably and consistently in their duties for decades now. It is time North Daloka protects these valuable assets once and for all.

By granting the establishment of the management group, the NPS will have its feet held to the fire and will definitely have to have true transparency. They will no longer be able to wield their assumed authority, willy-nilly and indiscriminately, causing infertility in the herd, but for a few mares that have broken through, i.e. seem resistant to the drug. They use this drug without proper care for the genetics of the herd. For all we know, they have ruined the genetics through indiscriminate use, rather, abuse, of Gonacon. Injecting young fillies, 8 months and up, before their reproductive organs are even fully formed. It's abuse to the animals and abuse of power. This 'contraceptive' was never meant to be used the way the park has been, and continues, to use it. It's past time for them to be called into account and held accountable. This bill, SB 2331, will do just that.

This bill, SB 2331 needs to pass.

Thank you all in advance for caring about your horses and seeing to their proper management.

You might remember seeing horses running wild when you were younger, either on TV or in person. It stirs the mind of a child and as an adult that memory should never fade, it keeps you young. That memory is a foundation of why we call the Plains home. Last year, my wife discovered a national park coloring book for adults. For Roosevelt national park, the Nokota wild horses were highlighted. I drove up from Sheridan Wyoming last October to view the round up, the couple of pictures I took, I sent to officials. This is not how we want the public to view our west. Tourists come, visit, and they return to their homes. Some may even have a picture with the horses in the background on their Christmas cards, others "pop the question" with the horses in the distance. We create memories here; they vacation where we live.

WE have the opportunity to watch elders, children, and generations of people from all over enjoy this. We can make history for generations to come. Protecting the Wild horses in TRNP may not make into history books, but someone, some family, some tour group generations from now will visit TRNP, and because of the outstanding leadership here in the State of North Dakota, they will see why this is where the horses stay wild. Let this be a time in this states great history to Be Legendary.

We are all aware of the myriad of reasons as to why we want our WILD HORSES to remain on our lands.

I CANNOT stress this enough — we NEED our Wild Horses — We NEED our Wild Horses to live freely on our lands.

Not only do our Horses benefit, BUT our Planet benefits in a very big way, which in turn benefits the Human race. Please pass SB 2331

From: Lynn Brubaker | brubaker@dia.net Subject: SB 2331 Date: February 5, 2025 at 11:15 AM To: Lynn Brubaker | brubaker@dia.net

PLEASE PASS SB 2331.

Thank you.

Greetings, Senate State and Local Government Committee members.

A 57-year resident of North Dakota before retiring to South Dakota, I am Marylu Weber, president and co-founder of the North Dakota 501c3 nonprofit, North Dakota Badlands Horse (NDBH). My husband and I created NDBH in 2009 to make the public aware of the wild horses that have roamed the area of Theodore Roosevelt National Park since before Theodore Roosevelt lived there. NDBH has consistently and cooperatively worked alongside park staff for the betterment of these horses. Having personally volunteered for the park for over 20 years, I have had the privilege and joy of seeing huge improvements in management and handling. However, recently, we have witnessed the deterioration of trust between our park staff and the public. This is disappointing and detrimental; it must be rectified.

Possibly, meetings of a working group, as suggested in SB 2331, might be a neutral forum for stakeholders to openly share concerns, suggestions, and hopes concerning the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. This working group could invite input from other groups and individuals with knowledge about these horses, specifically or general horse genetics, behavior, reproduction, management, etc. Most importantly, members could hear the park staff's plans and reasons for various horse management decisions with both groups seeking mutual understanding. Providing a place for this thoughtful and respectful conversation would be a huge step toward a return to trust between the National Park Service and the public.

Knowing that sometimes putting down a mortally injured horse is the most humane action, I would like to see the words "and nonlethal" struck from page 2, line 19. With this small change, I ask you to give SB 2331 a DO PASS.

Thank you for your service to North Dakota and your consideration of this bill!

Marylu Weber, President, North Dakota Badlands Horse

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, Janelle Ghiorso 20349 E. Walnut Dr. Sonora, CA 95370 Janelle.nationaltreasure@gmail.com

SB 2331 PLEASE DO PASS Claudia Hebert-Low

My husband and I were ND residents for several years (2009-2019). After I moved to ND in 2015, I became a Theodore Roosevelt National Park volunteer so I could be a part of the amazing wild horse program. I adopted one of the horses in 2016 and have continued to follow this iconic historic herd for the last 5 years since our move to West Texas. I, now, am a board member for the non-profit organization, North Dakota Badlands Horse, and travel to ND several times a year to assist with documentation and promoting the horses. I am in support of the Bill 2331, however, I feel the words "and nonlethal" from paragraph 3 should be removed. When horses are near death due to injury or illness, I feel the word "nonlethal" would prevent the Park from relieving these horses of unnecessary suffering. These resilient horses heal and survive many tortuous circumstances, however, sometimes it becomes necessary to end their misery. This, I believe, is humane.

Please take into consideration the many supporters of this herd. NDBH has been supporting the horse program of Theodore Roosevelt National Park since 2009. I feel our organization has a lot of diverse information to offer the working group and would like to be considered as such.

Thank you for allowing my testimony and considering my previous and current involvement with this iconic historical herd.

Truly, Claudia Hebert-Low BOD North Dakota Badlands Horse

SB 2331

Testimony of North Dakota Badlands Horse Sherry Mills Moore, Vice President

Good morning,

My name is Sherry Mills Moore, and I am the Vice President of North Dakota Badlands Horses ("NDBH"). NDBH is a 501(c)(3) formed in North Dakota in 2009 to continue the work of Marylu Weber, and others, who were tracking, advocating for and assisting the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park ("TRNP").

NDBH supports SB 2331. This bill gives the state an opportunity to provide resources and input to TRNP to assure the care and welfare of the wild horses. Back when the national park system was looking into eliminating the horses the people spoke, as did you, and the Governor, and our Congressional delegation and it worked, the horses are still here. Now TRNP is making a plan for managing them. SB 2331 brings together the stakeholders and the experts to make recommendations for the management plan.

While supporting the bill, we do ask for an amendment. The words, "and nonlethal" should be removed from Paragraph 3. We would not want the state foreclosed from being able to make recommendations about putting down a horse who is suffering from a severe injury or disease. Any management plan needs to be able to include provisions to allow the same.

The amendment would read:

3. The working group may use management activities including birth control, removals, and permanent placement of horses after removal. All management activities must be humane and nonlethal.

Thank you for your past support of the TRNP horses, and please support a "do pass" recommendation on SB 2331.

February 5th, 2024

RE: SB 2331

Chair and Committee Members:

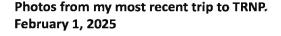
I am Maria Ricks, a volunteer for Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates, from Dickinson, North Dakota. I am writing today to ask that you support SB 2331. This bill would create a working group that would work with Theodore Roosevelt National Part to help manage the wild horse population. Being a recent transplant from central Minnesota, TRNP is the reason I made the move to Western North Dakota. TRNP would not be as known or visited if not for our wild horses. We need to work together with the NPS to ensure safety of these animals and enjoyment for the generations to come.

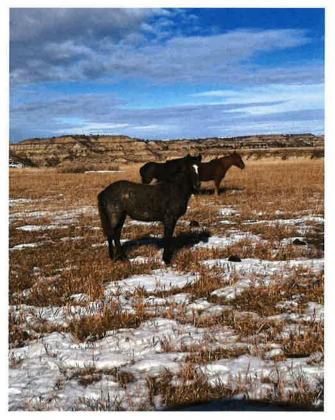
Sincerely,

Vlaria Rick

nariavricks0@gmail.com







The wild horses in Theodore National Park are beautiful and wonderful. Visitors come from all over the world to see them. Theodore National Park had 900,000 visitors last year. This number is expected to increase significantly every year particularly with the 2026 opening of the Theodore Roosevelt National Library. The wild horses are always in the top three reasons why people visit the park. Using an average daily expense of \$125 for 300,000 people a year is \$37,500,000. Removal of the wild horses would be a terrible tragedy.

The wild horses lived here before the park was founded. They are descended from the famous Nokata horses of Sitting Bull. In the 1800's the famous artists Frederick Remington and George Caitlin depicted the wild horses. President Theodore Roosevelt who ranched in the Little Missouri between 1883-1886 describes the wild horses living here.

The wild horses living in Theodore Rooselvelt National Park are an economic boon. They are historically important. Please pass this bill to protect them and keep them in the park.

Thank you.

Sincerely, Jane Purtzer

T.R. Horses

Please pass SB2331 to develop a group to oversee the TR National Park Service's management of wild horses because the TR National Park Service people are not providing the horses with the protection they need to remain a viable herd for future generations to appreciate. Our wild horses are precious.

and

Please encourage your colleagues to enact the legislation below, SCR 4006. Leave a good legacy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF NORTH DAKOTA, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN: That the Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly urges Congress to enact legislation establishing federal protections for the wild horse herd of Theodore Roosevelt National Park to ensure the long-term health and preservation of the herd for generations to come...

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X\$versionY\$archiverT\$topX\$objects †_ NSKeyedArchiverÑ Troot€¢ U\$nullo)Please secure the welfare and lives of our Theodore Roosevelt National Park s beautiful wild horses

Please give them the protection they need from the mismanagement of the Theodore Roosevelt national Park.

Please protect them from the mismanagement of the use of GonaCon, a fertility drug that has not been scientifically researched, and what the outcome will be for the horses that are given overdoses of the drug, GonaCon

The Parks sole target is to have these wild horses eradicated from the park

Please Pass SCR 4006 Please Pass SB 2331 Thank You \$)271LQSV\

2



900 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, SE, WASHINGTON, DC 20003 · 202-337-2332 · AWIONLINE.ORG

February 7, 2025

North Dakota Legislative Council State Capitol Senate State and Local Government Committee 600 East Boulevard Avenue Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: SB 2331—A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 54-60 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the Theodore Roosevelt national park working group; to provide a report; and to provide an appropriation.

My name is Tessa Archibald, and I am an equine policy associate for the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI). Additionally, I manage the Homes for Horses Coalition (HHC), a network of over five hundred equine rescues and sanctuaries around the country, including multiple rescues and sanctuaries in North Dakota. AWI, HHC, and our collective membership are deeply committed to the protection of domestic and wild equines.

I am writing to urge the Committee to support SB 2331 to establish a working group for the management of wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

In 2023, pursuant to Colorado Senate Bill 23-275, the state of Colorado established a wild horse working group and charged it with making "recommendations on humane, non-lethal alternatives for wild and feral equines that are taken off the range in Colorado," as well as "recommendations regarding other wild horse management topics, including fertility control, to the Colorado Department of Agriculture for implementation." As a Colorado citizen and equine welfare professional, I was appointed to serve on this working group, representing equine advocates.

The Colorado working group is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders, which has been an asset to addressing wild horse management challenges in the state. It has promoted collaborative efforts, produced creative ideas, and importantly, detailed humane actions that can be taken to maintain healthy herds on our rangelands. The group has also inspired the participation and engagement of the public, which has in turn led to more volunteers engaged in our local wild horse protection groups and more visitors to regions where wild horses are found. The Colorado wild horse working group has produced a year one report, which can be found on the Colorado Department of Agriculture website.²

¹ "Colorado Wild Horse Working Group (CWHWG) Charter—Final," October 2023. https://drive.google.com/file/d/107EoNjK2qfWQuFSanMRT2Ul2n7G1dQ78/view

² "Colorado Wild Horse Working Group Year One Recommendations for Wild Horse Management," 2024. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LXjENakpKborRHwqsVrO3ZKza_qdKpzQ/view?utm_id=Wild+Horse+Report

The proposed action in SB 2331 would be an asset to the public, the state of North Dakota, and the National Park Service, providing informed and collaborative humane management solutions to protect the iconic herd living in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. I implore the committee to move forward in approving the creation of a working group to promote, support, and maintain the wild horses of North Dakota.

In closing, I wish to thank Senators Boschee, Rummel, and Kessel, and Representatives Lefor and Steiner for their leadership on this issue. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Tessa Archibald Equine Policy Associate, Animal Welfare Institute Manager, Homes for Horses Coalition North Dakota Legislative Council Senate State and Local Government State Capitol 600 East Boulevard Avenue Bismarck, ND 58505

Subject: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2331 – Protecting the Wild Horse Herd at Theodore Roosevelt National Park

Chairperson Roer, Vice Chairman Barta, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 2331. My name is Kerry Ferguson, and as the Executive Director of <u>The Cloud Foundation</u> (TCF), I am honored to advocate for the responsible management and long-term protection of the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

SB 2331 is a critical step toward ensuring that the TRNP horses—animals deeply woven into the cultural and historical fabric of North Dakota—are managed in a collaborative, transparent, humane, and science-based manner. By establishing a state working group, this bill promotes cooperation between stakeholders, including state officials, conservationists, local communities, and the National Park Service. This cooperative approach will allow for thoughtful solutions that balance ecological concerns, public interest, and the historical significance of these horses.

Theodore Roosevelt himself deeply valued the presence of wild horses on these landscapes, and their continued existence aligns with the conservation legacy he left behind. These horses are more than just an attraction; they are a living connection to our nation's history and a vital part of the park's identity. They also contribute significantly to North Dakota's tourism economy, drawing visitors from across the country—including numerous visits from TCF staff and board members— and from around the world who seek to experience the beauty and heritage of the American West.

Leaving the fate of this iconic herd solely in the hands of federal agencies, without state or public involvement, risks decisions that may not reflect the interests and values of North Dakotans or US Citizens. SB 2331 ensures that the people most directly impacted by these decisions—the state's residents, local businesses, and future generations—have a voice in shaping the future of these horses.

On behalf of The Cloud Foundation's staff, board, and our nearly half a million supporters, I urge you to support SB 2331 to foster the collaboration and protection of North Dakota's heritage, and to uphold the conservation principles for which Theodore Roosevelt himself advocated.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kerry L Ferguson, Executive Director
The Cloud Foundation
kerry@thecloudfoundation.org

719-203-8321

Julie Schaul 115D Coral St Santa Cruz, CA 95060

To whom it may concern,

Regarding Wild Horse and Wild Horse Habitat Preservation

These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

They symbolize Roosevelts conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the parks namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

They Have No Federal Protection

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNPs horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

Wild Horses Boost North Dakotas Economy

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

Public Support Is Overwhelming

North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Groupwill promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorados success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Sincerely,

Julie Schaul, Student

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 A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

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• A **North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group** will promote humane wild horse conservation. Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing today in support of establishing federal protections for the wild horse herd of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park for the following reasons:

• These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

• They Have No Federal Protection

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A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Lisa Welden

I am urging Congress to establish federal protections for the wild horse herd at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. They are a historic part of the landscape and bring equine enthusiasts to the park increasing revenue to the community of Medora.

I support federal protections!

2/5/2025

SB2331 Testimony

Hello.

North Dakotans and people across the country want the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) protected. The support for them is overwhelming. These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation and unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight. This type of working group has been successful in Colorado for state participation in wild horse protection. A group in North Dakota would ensure the wild horses remain a treasured part of North Dakota's landscape.

Thank you.

Monet Raths

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Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Good afternoon,

I'm writing to voice my support for SB2331, which would establish a North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group to oversee the care and management of the wild horses in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park. These horses are the living embodiment of what he hoped to achieve not only for the park itself, but for the wildlife that lives in it.

These horses currently have no federal protection, which is desperately needed to ensure their continued survival. They are an iconic part of this park and an important national symbol. Most Americans are in favor of preserving our wild horses, and I am one of them!

They also bring in valuable tourist dollars and other income to the surrounding communities.

If they are placed under the care of the proposed North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group, this would be the optimum solution for these animals. This group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Thank you for your time and attention!

Dr. Michele Clark

North Carolina Central University

A Bill to Establish a Wild Horse Working Group

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We need to protect our wild horses and burros! Please help!

Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Birgitta Jackson of Houston, Texas. I am asking today that you vote in favor of Bills SCR 4006 & SB 2331. Bills would create the format of a working group that would work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to help manage the wild horses. The resolutions before you are asking the Federal legislators to help give federal protection for this herd since they are not protected under the Wild and Free Roaming Horses & Burro Act

This heard of horses is important to me for historical reasons as well as humanitarian reasons. I remember visiting the park when I was 7 years old, and the horses made a huge impact on me as a child. I am hoping to bring my grandchildren to the park when they are old enough to travel and deeply hope that the horses are there for them to enjoy. There truly is nothing like it!

Unfortunately, the ability to view wild horses in their element is dwindling fast, so it's even more important that a piece of our heritage remains.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Birgitta Jackson

9742 Wheaton Edge Lane Houston, Texas 77095

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SB2331 Hearing-

February 5, 2025

To our legislators,

Please protect our country and its wild horses and burros (wolves as well!). This hearing is about the Working Group needed for wild horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The past three years has been a nightmare for our wild horses- they continued to be under threat, with collars placed on them and used as guinea pigs for GonaCon.

GonaCon was not studied as much by scientists as PZP. PZP is a safe and temporary birth control. GonaCon has served to only sterilize the horses and put the mares out of season. This has resulted in horses such as Stallion Nichols and Mare Berkleigh birthing a foal, Colt Jasper, who died. He died because he was born in the brutal cold.

The collars were asked to be taken off and the park said they would. This however did not happen. The collars are hideous, unsafe, and restrict the horses' movement.

Roundups were attempted before 2022 but the public worked hard to keep the horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Roundups create more problems, not only are they inhumane but also cause more population growth. The National Academy of Sciences states that Roundups exacerbate population growth. The same organization explains that birth control slows population growth and is the only solution that works. When horses are rounded up, they know they are lower in number. The horses make up for this by reproducing at a faster rate.

Please protect our beautiful, wild horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. They deserve it.

Thank you for your time.

Nasreen "Brooke" Naeemullah

Sara Palmitessa St. Paul, MN 55122 612-695-3190 February 5, 2025

Committee on Natural Resources United States Congress Washington, D.C.

Subject: Urging Support for SB 2331 – A Bill to Establish a Wild Horse Working Group

Dear Members of the Committee,

I urge you to support SB 2331, which calls for the formation of a state-led working group to collaborate with the park and interest groups to ensure the long-term management and protection of the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP). This working group would ensure that these horses, a treasured part of North Dakota's landscape, are managed humanely and responsibly.

Modeled after Colorado's successful wild horse protection program, this initiative would bring together state officials, advocates, scientists, and stakeholders to develop a collaborative, science-based approach to conservation. The American Wild Horse Campaign (AWHC) led similar efforts in Colorado, demonstrating that state participation is key to effective and sustainable wild horse management.

TRNP's wild horses currently lack federal protection, making them vulnerable to removal. Their presence contributes to North Dakota's cultural heritage and drives tourism, benefiting local economies. Public support for their protection is overwhelming, as reflected in SCR 4006.

With the hearing scheduled for February 7, 2025, I urge you to act swiftly to ensure these historic horses remain part of North Dakota's legacy. Please support SB 2331 and help establish a working group dedicated to their long-term protection.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Sara Palmitessa

June 9, 2022



Dear Committee members,

I am writing to urge you to pass SB 2331. As a regular visitor to Theodore Roosevelt National Park, I have a stake in making sure that wild horses are both well-managed and present in significant numbers.

A working group, made up of committed stakeholders, is a positive way to ensure that wild horses receive the treatment and the consideration that they deserve in TRNP.

States like Colorado have made good use of the working-group model, and we have held talks on the creation of a similar work-group style arrangement in my home state of Wyoming.

The horses of TRNP are beloved. They deserve us at our best, and a collaborative, dedicated, and science-based working group strikes me as the best way forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chad Hanson

Chad Hanson, PhD chadhanson.org wyomustangs.org

Please protect this herd of wild horses for countless reasons. You have the opportunity to conserve & ensure that the future includes these beautiful creatures, adding to the gorgeous natural landscape. In a time of overproduction & overconsumption, please do your part in maintaining the preservation of these animals that behave in harmony with nature, without posing harm to positive development. Ecotourism will also be a method of appreciation. Future generations will thank you!

(SB 2331 calls for the formation of a state-led working group to collaborate with the park and interest groups to ensure the long-term management and protection of the wild horses. AWHC led the effort to pass legislation in Colorado, creating a successful model for state participation in wild horse protection. In North Dakota, this model would help ensure the wild horses remain a treasured part of North Dakota's landscape.)

To whom this may concern:

I, Macy Jo Kooima, am writing to you in support of finding a resolution for wild horse herds at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. I write this letter with great concern and sadness that we as a nation have let down such majestic animals that have served no harm to society. It is disgusting behavior to ship these horses off to essentially become slaughtered meat. We are better than this and need to care more about these animals who are rooted in this country's history and have only one mission.... To be wild and free. I ask we find a solution to protect these wild horses in North Dakota

I ask you to please make an effort in finding a resolution this Friday 2/ to allow these wild horses to roam as they should in North Dakota. Please hire a working group to protect the future of these wild horses, stop the harassment, separating them from their young ones/loved ones. It is gut wrenching and heart breaking to see such humans treat them so poorly. As a proud native to the foothills of Colorado, I am thankful we have taken successful steps in protecting these untamed creatures from human destruction. Your economy will benefit from it and the people writing to you today have shown overwhelming support in making sure these wild horses are free and protected. Please be on the right side of history and help them. This is so wrong not to do so.

Sincerely, Macy Jo Kooima This is in regard to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, Bill #'s SB2331 and SCR4006 that will be up for a vote this week. I am in favor of leaving the horses where they are. We need our wild horses to balance the ecosystem among other things. There is no good reason for removing them. They belong in this territory and many people enjoy seeing them there. This is their home. It would be a travesty if they were to be removed. Many horses get killed, injured and/or separated from their families in roundups, which are inhumane, barbaric and abusive. They are then held in holding pens for an uncertain amount of time. A good number are sent to slaughter. Please protect this group of horses and allow them to remain free in the park.

Testimony in Support of SB 2331: Establishing a Wild Horse Working Group

Good morning,

My name is Judith Worrall, and I am here today as a concerned citizen and advocate for North Dakota's natural heritage. I respectfully urge our state legislators to support SB 2331, a bill that calls for the formation of a state-led working group dedicated to the long-term management and protection of our wild horses. This initiative is both timely and critical for preserving a unique element of North Dakota's landscape.

Proven Success and Data-Driven Impact

The model pioneered in Colorado, led by the American Wild Horse Campaign (AWHC), has demonstrated that state-level involvement in wild horse management not only stabilizes the population but also creates a win-win scenario for both ecological balance and local economies. In Colorado, the implementation of a coordinated, state-led strategy has led to:

- Population Stability: Scientific assessments indicate that structured management plans have helped maintain healthy, sustainable wild horse populations, reducing the risk of overgrazing and habitat degradation.
- **Economic Benefits:** Studies have shown that wild horse sightings contribute significantly to local tourism. In Colorado, regions with active wild horse programs have experienced up to a 15% increase in park visitation, translating into substantial economic boosts for surrounding communities.

Ecological and Cultural Importance

Wild horses are an integral part of North Dakota's natural and cultural fabric. Data from regional ecological studies reveal that:

- Biodiversity Preservation: Wild horses naturally manage vegetation, which in turn supports native plant and animal species. Their grazing habits help prevent the proliferation of invasive species and reduce wildfire risks by maintaining healthier grasslands.
- Cultural Heritage: Surveys consistently show that over 80% of park visitors regard wild horses as a highlight of their experience. Their presence not only enhances the beauty and uniqueness of our natural landscapes but also deepens public engagement with conservation efforts.

A Collaborative Approach for Sustainable Future

SB 2331 is more than just legislation—it is a strategic partnership among the state, the park, and various interest groups. This collaborative model ensures that management decisions are

based on robust scientific data, stakeholder input, and proven practices from other successful state initiatives like Colorado's. By establishing a dedicated working group, North Dakota can:

- Facilitate Informed Decision-Making: Bring together experts, local stakeholders, and conservationists to create adaptive management strategies that address current challenges and future uncertainties.
- **Ensure Long-Term Protection**: Develop a proactive plan that secures the future of wild horses while balancing ecological health and economic interests.

Conclusion

The data is clear: implementing a state-led working group through SB 2331 will protect an irreplaceable symbol of North Dakota's heritage while promoting ecological balance and economic prosperity. I strongly support this bill and encourage our legislators to take action that honors both our natural legacy and the well-being of our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Judith Worrall

RE: SB 2331

I am IN FAVOR of this bill as it proposes forming a state GROUP working to collaborate with TRNP on managing the park's wild horses. By forming a dedicated state group, it involves people specifically knowledgeable to create an efficient organization that understands state priorities. I believe North Dakota is ready to assist the park in any capacity needed to manage a healthy and viable wild herd with TRNP. Please hear us, as we visit these horses and provide the tourism for the park.

These horses symbolize Teddy Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation. They also have great historical significance to all Americans.

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, not sure why that is but it needs to change. Without protection, my concern is they can be removed at any time, which would be a huge loss to future generations.

I am sure these beautiful horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas, which means their removal would negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.



Kathy Mabry < kmabry 625@gmail.com>

Re: ND legislative Bill SB 2331

Kathy Mabry <kmabry625@gmail.com>
To: Kathy Mabry <kmabry625@gmail.com>

Wed, Feb 5 at 4:27 PM

On Wed, Feb 5, 2025 at 4:17 PM Kathy Mabry kmabry625@gmail.com wrote:

As a retired park ranger, having worked for the National Park Service and other federal agencies in my career, I respectfully ask for your support of SB 2331 because the wild horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) are an extraordinary and integral part of the history of North Dakota, TRNP and this great nation. It is imperative that a working "boots on the ground committee" with representatives from non government organizations be established to partner with TRNP management to have a voice in all wild horses management decisions. Thank you for your consideration.

To the North Dakota State Legislature, I am writing to express my support for SB2331, a bill to establish a state-led Wild Horse Working group to collaborate with Theodore Roosevelt National Park and interest groups to ensure long-term protection and management of the wild horses.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversite.

These iconic horses are integral to American history and the identity of the American West. They symbolize President Roosevelt's strong legacy of conservation and embody the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to the preservation of American Public Lands.

Wild Horses boost North Dakota's Economy. These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors and their dollars to Medora and the surrounding areas. As an out-of-state resident & horse advocate/lover, I can attest to this and the ability to view wild herds in their natural habitats makes TRNP a must-visit for me, and is one of my top destinations within the US to visit so I can see these majestic creatures. Their removal would decrease tourism to the state and could negatively impact local businesses and jobs. Americans in North Dakota and across the country overwhelmingly support the protection of wild horses and want the TRNP herd to be protected.

I strongly urge the North Dakota Legislature to pass SB 2331 to help ensure that wild horses remain a treasured part of North Dakota's landscape. They represent freedom and are living testaments to the American West. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and submit this testimony in favor of protecting the wild herds of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Sincerely, Alana Dowden

To Whom It May Concern:

I am in support of the resolution SCR4006 which will protect the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses. Wild horses are part of our American history.

Thank you. JoAnn Pichiarello 2/5/25 Action to Protect the Theodore Roosevelt National Park Wild Horses

Action to Protect the Theodore Roosevelt National Park Wild Horses

February 5, 2025



Author
AWHC Contributor



The iconic wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) are at risk, and I support this legislation to secure their future.

This week, the North Dakota Legislature is considering two critical pieces of legislation that could lay the foundation for federal protection and humane, science-based conservation of this historic herd.

I have been informed daily as an online visitor to Theodore Roosevelt National Park of what has happened to many generations of horses in the wild there. Generations of horses wild in Theodore Roosevelt National Park who are KNOWN

NAMED

and LOVED

by their worldwide audience of visitors, both online and in-person.

Folks worldwide are anxious to visit the horses in the wild in Theodore Roosevelt National Park and be documented as being in support of long term protection for these generations of horses. Horses Well Known, Named and Loved.

I agree with AWHC and I too applaud Chasing Wild Horses for their excellent advocacy for the TRNP wild horses and documentation including getting this legislation introduced. We urge you to support their efforts at the

Upcoming Hearings:

SCR 4006 – A Resolution Calling for Federal Protection

Hearing Date: February 6, 2025, at 3:15 PM

SCR 4006 urges the U.S. Congress to pass federal legislators to protect this historic herd. While a resolution cannot require federal protections, it will provide a strong showing to Congress that these wild horses are important to North Dakotans, all Americans and their worldwide, concerned, audience as an integral part of this popular national park.

And

Please also support at these hearings

SB 2331 – A Bill to Establish a Wild Horse Working Group

Hearing Date: February 7, 2025, at 9:30 AM

SB 2331 calls for the formation of a state-led working group to collaborate with the park and interest groups to ensure the long-term management and protection of the wild horses. AWHC led the effort to pass legislation in Colorado creating a successful model for state participation in wild horse protection. In North Dakota, this model would help ensure the wild horses remain a treasured part of North Dakota's landscape.

I agree

• These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation!

They Have No Federal Protection

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

Public Support Is Overwhelming

North Dakotans, people across the country and their worldwide audience want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

• A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation. Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative.

humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

They Have No Federal Protection

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time. They need to be protected by establishing this group.

These horses are also a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs. North Dakotans and people all across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation. SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight that citizens want and these iconic animals need.

These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

Thank you for your consideration. I hope you will do the right thing.

Testimony:

These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

They symbolize Roosevelts conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the parks namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

They Have No Federal Protection

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNPs horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

Wild Horses Boost North Dakotas Economy

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

Public Support Is Overwhelming

North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorados success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

They Have No Federal Protection

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

- Public Support Is Overwhelming
- A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

I am in favor of a North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group. A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation. Why is this important?

 A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Why are these wild horses important?

These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

They Have No Federal Protection

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

Thank you for your consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Ashley Deasy

807 Riverside Drive, Apt. 1A New York, NY 10032 adamjesseburns@gmail.com 646-321-9238

February 5th, 2025

Testimony in support of SB 2331 - A Bill to Establish a Wild Horse Working Group

I am one of the very lucky few to have seen America's wild horses stampeding through canyons.

These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt. They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

They Have No Federal Protection. Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy. These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

Public Support Is Overwhelming. North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation. Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Sincerely,

Adam Jesse Burns

- 1. **These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt.** These horses are a living tribute to Theodore Roosevelt. They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.
- 2. **They Have No Federal Protection and should** Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.
- 3. **Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy.** These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.
- **4. Public Support Is Overwhelming** North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.
- 5. **Would provide a North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group** will promote humane wild horse conservation. Modeled after Colorado's success, SB2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs. Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNPs horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time. Public support for proper maintenance of the horses is overwhelming.

TRNP BILL SB 2331

Please DO PASS this bill.

The bill, SB 2331 which proposes forming a state working group to collaborate with Theodore Roosevelt National Park on managing the wild horses, is a necessary progression. A working group will help to protect the horses of the Park.

As these last three years have shown, they do need protection, because the Park appears to want to remove the horses, one way or another. This is not in accordance with the view of the many who visit the Park and who find the horses such an important part of the experience. Although I personally am unable to visit the park, I have several sets of relatives who have, and they cannot stop talking about their experience of seeing the horses in their natural habitat. I think this is key – the horses are wild, they are free, and this is important to people because they can experience awe.

Currently the Gonacon treatment is a worrying move on the part of the park. The treatment can lead to a situation where mares are unable to reproduce, and this already appears to be the case with some.

As with the Working Group in Colorado state, respectful clarity and collaboration from a number of stakeholders – and with the wellbeing of the horses at heart – is surely the way forward for all.

May I briefly refer to **3** on the working group proposal report. "All management activities must be humane and nonlethal." "Humane" can mean different things to different people, for example wild horse roundups in parts of the US are not humane, despite being under welfare guidelines known as CAWP. Perhaps this could be addressed as it is, I feel, important.

Thank you for your time and kind consideration. Please DO PASS this bill.

Lindsay Mann BSc (hons) applied animal behaviour UK

Please pass SB2331. The wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park need Federal protection. The Wild Horse Working Group will help ensure we have a well-managed herd forever in the park. The State of North Dakota has many resources to ensure We keep a viable herd in the park. But we need Federal protection to prevent the National Park Service and BLM from removing them or sterilizing them so they die off.

February 5, 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

The wild horses living in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park are not just beautiful animals roaming free for everyone to admire; they represent Teddy Roosevelt's love for nature and the wild spirit of the American West. They remind us of how Roosevelt helped create public lands and save America's natural beauty. Protecting these horses isn't just about respecting the park's namesake; it's about keeping alive the ideals of conservation that Roosevelt fostered.

Additionally they are a boon to the local economy. People come from all over to see them, creating profits for local businesses and increasing jobs. Losing the horses would be bad news for Medora, ND, and nearby towns.

Sadly, the TRNP horses aren't protected by the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act like most wild horses in the U.S. This means they could be removed or disposed of at any time in the future. We need to ACT now to keep them safe.

LOTS of people want to protect these wild horses. It's not just a few activists; it's a lot of North Dakotans and folks across the country. SCR 4006 will encourage Congress to pass legislation to protect the TRNP wild horses.

SB 2331, which is similar to a successful plan in Colorado, suggests creating a North Dakota wild horse working group. This group would include state officials, wild horse supporters, horse experts, and others to come up with humane ways to protect the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses. The goal is to make sure these iconic animals have a decent and hopeful future. Isn't that what we all want?

The wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) are not just majestic creatures roaming the rugged landscapes of North Dakota; they are a living tribute to Theodore Roosevelt himself, symbolizing his indelible legacy of conservation and the untamed spirit of the American West. By protecting these horses, we honor the park's namesake and his monumental contributions to public land preservation.

However, it is alarming to note that unlike other wild horse herds, the TRNP horses lack federal protection under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. This oversight leaves them vulnerable, as they can be removed at any time without legal consequence, threatening their very existence within the park that bears Roosevelt's name.

Moreover, these horses are not only a symbol of natural heritage but also a vital asset to North Dakota's economy. They draw thousands of tourists to Medora and the surrounding regions each year. The potential removal of these horses could devastate local businesses and lead to significant job losses, underlining the economic impact of wildlife tourism.

The wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) are not just majestic creatures roaming the rugged landscapes of North Dakota; they are a living tribute to Theodore Roosevelt himself, symbolizing his indelible legacy of conservation and the untamed spirit of the American West. By protecting these horses, we honor the park's namesake and his monumental contributions to public land preservation.

However, it is alarming to note that unlike other wild horse herds, the TRNP horses lack federal protection under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. This oversight leaves them vulnerable, as they can be removed at any time without legal consequence, threatening their very existence within the park that bears Roosevelt's name.

Moreover, these horses are not only a symbol of natural heritage but also a vital asset to North Dakota's economy. They draw thousands of tourists to Medora and the surrounding regions each year. The potential removal of these horses could devastate local businesses and lead to significant job losses, underlining the economic impact of wildlife tourism.

The proposal to establish a North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group through SB 2331, modeled after the successful approach in Colorado, is a testament to our commitment to humane and sustainable conservation. This group would bring together state officials, advocates, experts, and other stakeholders to ensure a collaborative, science-based approach to the conservation of the TRNP wild horses, helping to prevent their removal and ensuring long-term oversight.

We must act now to preserve this irreplaceable part of our national heritage and continue Theodore Roosevelt's vision for our nation's wild spaces and wildlife. Protecting the wild horses of TRNP is not only a tribute to our past but a crucial investment in the future of our natural world.

We must act now to preserve this irreplaceable part of our national heritage and continue Theodore Roosevelt's vision for our nation's wild spaces and wildlife. Protecting the wild horses

of TRNP is not only a tribute to our past but a crucial investment in the future of our natural world.	

TO: Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota

Regarding: Senate Bill No. 2331

Dear Legislative Assembly of North Dakota,

I support SB-2331 in its entirety. Thank you, Senators Boschee, Rummel, Kessel, and Representative Lefor and Steiner for introducing this bill.

People from around the world come to see this herd in TRNP. Horses are part of this park's diversity in cultural and natural resources. A One-of-A-Kind National Park.

It is important for the Non-profit Advocates/Organizations be represented and to be a part of the Working Group of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park to protect the horses in TRNP.

Section 1.2.A: Managing the population of the horses in TRNP to remain above two hundred horses is important to ensure the genetic viability of the herd, to prevent inbreeding and to maintain a healthy herd.

Section 1.3: The Non-profit Advocates/Organizations would like to work in a partnership with park staff, be part of the management activities of birth control, humane and nonlethal care.

We are asking you to include the Non-profit Advocate/Organization to provide safekeeping and protection for the horses who add beauty to the Badlands as iconic keystone animals, and to the cultural heritage of this national park. I have visited TRNP and would like to see the wild horses preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Jannett Heckert 7908 Mustang Loop Road Park City, Utah 84098 435-729-0010 To the Honorable Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

I write today in strong support of SB 2331, which seeks to establish a North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group to ensure the long-term management and protection of the historic wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. These horses are a vital part of North Dakota's heritage, embodying both the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt and the untamed spirit of the American West. Their presence in the park is significant not only from a historical and ecological perspective but also in terms of tourism and economic benefits to local communities. This bill presents a crucial opportunity for the state to take a leadership role in the humane and sustainable management of these horses through collaboration among policymakers, conservationists, and local stakeholders.

The wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park are a living tribute to our 26th president, whose deep connection to North Dakota shaped his vision for conservation. Roosevelt's experiences in the Badlands played a defining role in his environmental policies, ultimately leading to the creation of the national parks system. Preserving this herd within the park that bears his name is a meaningful way to honor his legacy and commitment to protecting America's natural resources. Allowing these horses to remain in the park ensures that future generations can experience a piece of history that reflects Roosevelt's conservation ethos.

Unlike other wild horse herds in the United States, the Theodore Roosevelt National Park horses lack federal protection under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. This means they can be removed at any time without the legal safeguards afforded to other wild horse populations. The absence of federal protection makes the establishment of a state-led working group all the more critical. Without structured oversight and a commitment to science-based conservation, the fate of these horses remains uncertain. SB 2331 provides a necessary framework to ensure that decisions about their future are made transparently and with input from the public and experts alike.

Beyond their historical and ecological value, these wild horses contribute significantly to North Dakota's economy. Theodore Roosevelt National Park is one of the state's most visited destinations, drawing tourists from across the country who come, in part, to see the wild horses. Medora and surrounding communities benefit greatly from the revenue generated by visitors who spend money on lodging, dining, and local businesses. The removal of these horses would not only be a cultural and environmental loss but would also have economic consequences for North Dakota. Ensuring their continued presence supports tourism and helps sustain the local economy.

Public support for protecting the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses is overwhelming. Thousands of North Dakotans, along with advocates from across the country, have expressed their desire to see these horses remain in the park. Establishing a state working group ensures that this public interest is reflected in decision-making and that conservation

efforts are guided by science, transparency, and collaboration. A structured approach to management, rather than abrupt removals, will help build consensus and ensure the best possible outcome for both the horses and the communities they impact.

SB 2331 offers North Dakota the opportunity to implement a model of humane wild horse conservation that has already seen success in states like Colorado. By bringing together state officials, wildlife experts, advocates, and local stakeholders, the proposed working group will create a collaborative, science-based approach to managing the herd. This model prioritizes humane conservation strategies, prevents unnecessary removals, and provides long-term oversight to ensure the responsible stewardship of these iconic animals.

Passing SB 2331 is a necessary step toward securing the future of North Dakota's wild horses. It reflects a commitment to Roosevelt's conservation legacy, acknowledges the significant economic and cultural value of these animals, and establishes a proactive approach to their management. I urge the committee to support this important legislation and help ensure that the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park remain a cherished part of North Dakota's landscape for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Mustang Comments

The mustangs at Theodore Roosevelt Park, and the mustangs all over the USA and world, need to be protected. Mustangs are beautiful and created by God for humans to enjoy and protect. They are a blessing and bring peace to humans as they are beautiful, wild, and free. They are good for the environment because they keep grass trimmed and do not tear up the roots (like cattle), nor do they destroy water beds (like cattle), and their manure is good for the soil. They are excellent for the economy because people from all over want to see them in the wild. They are good for nature because they are part of a balanced ecosystem.

Thus, the mustangs must be preserved!

<html><head></head><body style="overflow-wrap: break-word; -webkit-nbsp-mode: space; line-break: after-white-space;"> I am writing in support of protecting all of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses and any bill that aids in their ongoing protection. They are a national treasure and should be treated as such. Please consider SB2331 which proposes the formation of a working group which would serve to collaborate with and others ensure the horses management protection.<div>
</div><div>Sincerely,</div><div>Stephanie Stone</div><div>New York, NY</div></body></html>

Chair & Committee Members, My name is Linda Haake from Albany, New York.

Please pass SB2331. This bill would create the formation of a working group that would work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to help manage the wild horses. The park has a long history of continually trying to get rid of the horses. They are using Gona Con in a way that is far too aggressive for typical birth control. There needs to be some level of oversight to make sure the horses remain for generations to come.

I enjoy following these horses on the Facebook posts by Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates. I look forward to the pictures and stories of these amazing wild horses that they share. It brightens my day! It would be a shame if future generations were not able to enjoy them too!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda Haake

Testimony submitted February 5, 2025

SB 2331 - Relating to the Theodore Roosevelt national park working group; to provide a report; and to provide an appropriation

Senate State and Local Government Public Hearing on February 07, 2025 from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Dear Committee Members,

We are writing in support of **SB 2331** - a bill asking North Dakota to form a working group to work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to manage the wild horses. Ultimately, we would like to see the committee meet for two years, then the committee's oversight will enforce protection and prevent removal / eradication of the horses as well as prevent permanent sterilization of the herd (which will lead to herd die-off).

Visiting this iconic herd is on our bucket list and we are afraid that if the horses are not protected, we will never have the opportunity. We recently traveled to Nevada to see and photograph wild horses (and burros) – Theodore Roosevelt National Park is a place that we want to visit too, mostly to observe these majestic, beloved creatures which deserve to live wild and free.

Please support SB 2331!

Judy Salvadore and Bob Cazzani Saunderstown, Rhode Island USA

Sheri A. Pellegrini 6700B Reservation Road Yorkville, IL 60560

January 5, 2025

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Public Hearing

Re: SCR 4006 – A Resolution Calling for Federal Protection

of the Wild Horse Herd at Theodore Roosevelt National Park

Senate State and Local Government Public Hearing

Re: SB 2331 – A Bill to Establish a Wild Horse Working Group

Please be advised that I am in favor of SCR 4006 and SB 2331. As one of the overwhelming majority of Americans who support the protection of wild horses and wish for them to remain free in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, I agree with the propositions set forth by the American Wild Horse Conservation campaign, specifically:

- These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt. They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.
- <u>They Have No Federal Protection</u>. Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.
- Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy. These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.
- <u>Public Support Is Overwhelming</u>. North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.
- A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation. SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Sheri A. Pellegrin

Written Testimony in support of SB 2331 - A Bill to Establish a Wild Horse Working Group

Attention:

Senate State and Local Government Public Hearing

February 07, 2025 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

216 Room - ND State Capitol

Establishing Federal protections for a wild horse herd at the Theodore Roosevelt National Park would be a Living tribute to Theodore Roosevelt. They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

Sincerely,

Alex Nadolishny

100 S. Dos Caminos Ave., Ventura CA 93003

I respectfully request that you pass SB 2331 bill to form a state-led group to work with the park and interest groups to ensure long-term management of this special heard of horses in the TRNP that mean so much to many people of North Dakota and others such as myself from other parts of the country who want to save a piece of heritage of our country. We can't wipe everything out because it's not convenient for some who have monetary goals. We have to preserve some things for future generations and this heard of wild horses is one of those things.

To whom it concerns:

I am writing as a wild horse advocate to implore you to support the resolution to federally protect the wild horse herd at the Theodoor Roosevelt National Park. These horses are beloved by the public and draw wildlife observers, photographers and historians alike who come from across our country to witness them in their natural glory. The American mustangs have been hunted down and rounded up based on unsound science from the BLM, often influenced heavily by the agriculture lobby to ensure cow populations graze without competition on our public lands. However, we now know that American mustangs are in fact native wildlife that date back thousands of years on this land. They play an important, vital role in the ecosystem. Wild horses graze in a way that promotes plant diversity and regeneration. They consume vegetation that can fuel wildfires, which can help limit the intensity and spread of fires. Wild burros and horses also are a source of finding water in arid regions, increasing water access to other animals in plants in the area. As of 2024, we have reached a tragic truth – that there are more wild horses being kept in cruel holding facilities funded by expensive taxpayer funded private contracts, than our wild horses living freely on our public lands. Wild horse advocates see on a weekly basis, wild horses that are sold at auction (torn from their family, terrified and unhandled) and often flipped until they end of in the slaughter pipeline – where they are shipped to Mexico or Canada bound to slaughter. It is an American tragedy that shouldn't be happening on our watch.

Additionally, I am also writing in support of a state working group that will work in collaboration with the park to help manage the herd. By having an objective, independent working group that advocates for wild horse preservation, mutual goals for wildlife can be met with consideration of top scientific research and conservation considerations. As an American citizen, I demand you protect our most precious, native wildlife in the American mustang herds of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park. They belong to all of us.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dr. Cody Traweek

SB2331

Wild horses are important to North Dakotans and all Americans as an integral part of this popular national park.

Please protect these important and beautiful creatures.

This working group would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent costly and inhumane removals, and provide long-term oversight. Especially in light of the negative press that other states have achieved for their unscientific and inhumane "management" practices, North Dakota would be leading by example providing an exemplary model by which others to follow.

Dear State Legislators,

I am writing in support of SB 2331 urging Congress to protect the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. I am a strong supporter of our national parks. They are a living reminder of the natural beauty that inspired our forefathers to call this country their home. Theodore Roosevelt was a pioneer in preserving national parks so that future generations of Americans can appreciate the natural beauty of our country. America's wild mustangs are an iconic part of our heritage, and an important symbol of freedom. Sadly, they have been treated like vermin and herded mercilessly with helicopters and sent to slaughterhouses. This is a shameful way to treat such beautiful wild animals and they deserve our protection. Teddy Roosevelt loved horses, and we should honor him by protecting the wild horses that roam freely in the park that bears his name.

Sincerely,

Michelle Conklin Hillsborough, NJ I, Tara Murray of Jefferson, MA, support protecting our wild horses. They are as American as we are. They are a living monument as important as Mt. Rushmore or the Grand Canyon. They are our American Legacy and honor our past. Please protect them.

These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

They Have No Federal Protection

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

Public Support Is Overwhelming

North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Thank you.

Tara Murray

Chair and Committee members, my name is Lori Williams and I volunteer with Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates. I am asking you today to vote in favor of Senate Bill 2331. This bill is so important and would create a working group that would then work together with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to help manage the wild horses. The resolution before you is asking our federal legislators to help get federal protection for this herd since they are not protected under the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act. These horses are in dire need of federal protection.

The horses of TRNP are a treasure that need to be protected. These wild horses are so much a part of TRNP and have been there for generations and need to be there for generations to come. I myself have a planned vacation there all because of the wild horses. This is something we as a family have planned and are looking forward to spending time watching these beautiful beings in their natural habitat.

It would be beneficial for the State to be involved to help provide oversight with Wild Horse Management.

These horses desperately need federal protection. They are not protected under the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act so federal protection is a necessity.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this Senate Bill. I ask you to please vote in favor of Bill 2331. We truly appreciate your help in protecting these wild horses.

Lori Williams

February 6, 2025

To Whom in May Concern:

I am writing to ask you for support of SB 2331, which would create a working group to promote the human conservation of our magnificent wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

The Teddy Roosevelt herd is a conservation legacy and supporting SB 2331 is an opportunity to preserve the public land, horse that dwell in them and the American Spirit for future generations to enjoy in an ethical and collaborative manner.

Establishing a working group would establish vital collaborations amongst state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight. This model has been incredibly successful in protecting herds in Colorado.

Thank you for your support on this critical issue.

Annie Cumberland
Glenville, Pennsylvania



Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates P.O. Box 3562 Dickinson, ND 58602

Chairman Patten and Committee Members:

My name is Gary Kman. I am the co-founder and vice-president of Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates. 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 resolution.

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 from the park, and some very questionable management practices, we have worked with our legislators to draft SB 2331.

A working group to come together and work with the park to help manage the horses as well as provide much needed oversight to this park is greatly needed.

As our organization continues to work with Senator John Hoeven's office to secure federal protection, the state of North Dakota passing this resolution will help support CHWHA's tireless efforts.

We also 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 that I have shared with all of you as part of my testimony shows that the wild horses that currently call Theodore Roosevelt National Park home bring AT LEAST \$37 MILLION DOLLARS to North Dakota's economy EVERY SINGLE YEAR!

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.

Since the entire state of North Dakota is on record asking for a healthy and genetically viable herd of wild horses to remain in Theodore Roosevelt National Park, it only makes sense that you pass SB 2331 and listen to what the people of North Dakota have asked.

Thank you for allowing my testimony and for all your hard work this session.

Gary Kman
Vice President
Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates
www.chwha.org

North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

- These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.
- They Have No Federal Protection Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.
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 - A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

February 6, 2025

To whom it may concern:

The wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt's conservation legacy are iconic and symbolize the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park honors and protects his contributions to public land preservation. In addition to North Dakotans, citizens across the United States want these wild horses to be protected from removal and harm.

Modeled after Colorado's success in this regard, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

For the sake of these horses, Theodore Rosevelt's wishes, and our nation's heritage, I strongly urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Susan Rand

32583 Hanna Avenue Warsaw, MO 65355

February 6, 2025

North Dakota Legislative Council Bismarck, ND 58505

I'd like to ask you to protect TRNP's equines. SCR 4006 will recognize these horses and protect them. They aren't covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. They should be allowed to thrive in peace as a symbol of the untamed Wild West.

They are a living tribute to President Theodore Roosevelt and SB 2331 would be in their best interest. It would implement the will of most Americans, who naturally want these animals protected. It is unusual for me to ask for tax money to go to anything but infrastructure. But who would not want to do the humane thing and protect these horses?

Sincerely,

Jill M. Heins

Jill M. Heins

jilheins@hotmail.com

DOI: 10.1002/ece3.11197

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Population genomics provide insight into ancestral relationships and diversity of the feral horses of Theodore **Roosevelt National Park**

Melissa A. Thompson^{1,2} | Blake E. McCann² | Turk Rhen¹ | Rebecca Simmons¹

Correspondence

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Funding information National Park Service

Abstract

Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) manages a herd of feral horses (Equus caballus) which was present on the landscape prior to the establishment of the park. The population presents a unique scenario in that it has experienced fairly intensive and well-documented management since the park's establishment, including herd size reductions, intentional introduction of diversity, and subsequent attempts to remove introduced lineages. This provides an interesting case study on the genetic effects of diverse evolutionary forces on an isolated feral population. To explore the effects of these forces and clarify the relationship of this feral herd with other horses, we used genome-wide markers to examine the population structure of a combined dataset containing common established breeds. Using the Illumina Equine 70k BeadChip, we sampled SNPs across the genome for 118 TRNP horses and evaluated the inbreeding coefficient f and runs of homozygosity (RoH). To identify breed relationships, we compared 23 representative TRNP samples with 792 horses from 35 different breeds using genomic population structure analyses. Mean f of TRNP horses was 0.180, while the mean f for all other breeds in the dataset was 0.116 (SD 0.079). RoH analysis indicates that the TRNP population has experienced recent inbreeding in a timeframe consistent with their management. With Bayesian clustering, PCA, and maximum likelihood phylogeny, TRNP horses show genetic differentiation from other breeds, likely due to isolation, historical population bottlenecks, and genetic drift. However, maximum likelihood phylogeny places them with moderate confidence (76.8%) among draft breeds, which is consistent with the known history of breeds used on early North Dakota ranches and stallions subsequently introduced to the park herd. These findings will help resolve speculation about the origins of the herd and inform management decisions for the TRNP herd.

KEYWORDS

Equus, feral horse, genetic drift, genomics, population

TAXONOMY CLASSIFICATION

Genetics, Genomics, Population genetics

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²Theodore Roosevelt National Park, National Park Service, Medora, North Dakota, USA

1 | INTRODUCTION

Feral or free-roaming horses (*Equus caballus*) can be found in many locations within the United States and in many other countries around the world, some with more recent or well-documented origins than others. These populations are often isolated to varying extents and usually require some form of management. There is strong public interest in feral horses on public lands and concern about the genetic health of small populations. Here, we present a case study of a feral horse population which has undergone fairly intensive and well-documented management since the 1940s and 1950s. This creates a unique study system to examine the effects of diverse evolutionary forces interacting with management actions upon the population genetics of a herd. There is also increasing public interest in the origin of this population, and a need for evidence-based decisions when considering management strategies.

1.1 | TRNP herd history

Free roaming horses existed in the badlands of southwestern North Dakota when Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) was established in 1947. At that time, many of the horses roaming within the boundary of the park were owned and branded by local ranchers. The horses had either escaped or were released to forage and reproduce on their own, so that ranchers could recapture the horses and their offspring for later use (McLaughlin, 1989). In 1954, the park began work on the task of erecting a perimeter fence for the reintroduction of bison (Bison bison); an effort was made to round up the horses, which at that time were considered trespass livestock, to return them to their owners. Approximately 125 horses and mules were captured of the estimated 200 head present within the park boundary, 99% of which bore brands as evidence of ownership (McLaughlin, 1989). Over the next decade there were unsuccessful efforts to remove all remaining horses; in the 1970s, park administration decided to maintain the horses as a "historic livestock display" or "living history demonstration", reminiscent of the freeroaming livestock that Theodore Roosevelt documented during his residency (Harmon, 1986).

Reports vary as to the number of horses left in TRNP after these removal attempts, with some suggesting that the remaining founder individuals were one gray stallion and two mares. The consensus among reports, however, indicates that there were only about 16 individuals present in 1965 (Harmon, 1986; McLaughlin, 1989). Every few years thereafter the park conducted roundups to control population size by removing a portion of the herd. Population size was initially selected as 35–60 individuals (National Park Service, 1978). A habitat use and forage analysis later recommended a population maximum of 90 individuals to prevent overgrazing of some forage species (Marlow et al., 1992). More recently, a population objective of 70–140 animals was suggested following a genetic analysis which found low effective population size (Cothran, 1992). Ten roundups

were conducted from 1978 to 2013; each time the population was reduced by an average of 52% (TRNP records). Thus, the TRNP horse population has undergone 11 potential population bottleneck events. The herd has mostly been a closed population since the park perimeter was fenced. A few animals have likely entered the population over the years by mistake or intentional disposal by private persons, though all known trespass horses of the past 20 years have been removed (B. McCann, personal communications). In 1981 and 1982, several established TRNP stallions were removed as part of an attempt to augment the herd by introduction of "well-bred" stallions. Six stallions were introduced at this time, including an Arabian, a Shire-Paint cross, a Quarter Horse, and three feral stallions from a Wyoming herd. Each had varying levels of reproductive success within the population (McLaughlin, 1989). The Shire-Paint cross stallion was reported to be highly successful: he maintained a large band of mares for almost a decade and was considered the most dominant stallion in the park. An estimated 15% of the population could be traced to this single stallion in 1991 (Cothran, 1992). Introduction of stallions was discontinued in favor of maintaining the historic type; in 1991 and 1997 attempts were made to remove the introduced stallions and some of their known offspring (TRNP records).

An oral history of the herd collected from TRNP employees and local ranchers in 1989 suggested that some of the horses which eluded capture originally were descended from "Indian type" horses of Spanish descent (McLaughlin, 1989). The horses used for ranch work in late nineteenth century North Dakota some 70 years prior to the park's establishment were often "Indian type" horses crossbred with other European breeds from the eastern US, Texas, Colorado, and Idaho (Crawford, 1931; Huidekoper, 1947; McLaughlin, 1989). Some have suggested that the TRNP herd is a unique population due to this potential association with the historical Spanish-type horse; however, this assertion has not been substantiated with genetic evidence. A phenotypic evaluation based on physical conformation and coat colors found evidence of crossbreeding in all TRNP horses and the presence of Spanish-type features, but recommended genetic evaluation for further resolution (Sponenberg, 1994).

Previous studies have estimated genetic diversity for the TRNP horses. Seven red blood cell antigen loci were tested in the 1990s to calculate genetic variability measures for the herd. These values were compared over a nine-year period from 1991 to 2000, as well as compared to average values for domestic horse breeds and other feral horse populations. There were decreasing values for expected heterozygosity (H_a) over the sampling period, with the final value falling below the average for both domestic and feral horses $(H_0 = 0.327$, compared to 0.363 and 0.349 for domestic and feral populations, respectively). The report also found a lower effective number of alleles (A_c) than the average for both domestic and feral populations (Cothran, 2000). All reported allele variants were previously described in domestic breeds; no unique alleles were found in the TRNP population (Cothran, 1992). A later analysis of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and 12 short tandem repeat (STR) loci from the present-day TRNP herd was conducted by Ovchinnikov et al. (2018). Values of H_{e} and A_{e} found for the TRNP herd were again lower



than the average for other feral herds and most domestic breeds. Three mtDNA haplotypes were found and fully sequenced, none of which were exact genome matches to any published sequences in GenBank. Two of the mitochondrial genomes belonged to the same haplogroup and were most similar to an American Paint Horse sequence; the other belonged to a second haplogroup and had no close match to published sequences. However, the control region sequences of both haplogroups had matches to a wide variety of breeds with a global distribution. This suggests that at least two different populations or maternal sources contributed to the genetic diversity of the TRNP herd. The STR analysis was inconclusive in determining the ancestry of the park horses and showed TRNP horses as distinct from other breeds (Ovchinnikov et al., 2018).

Genomic approaches can be used to gain insights into population structure, relatedness, and genetic diversity for TRNP horses. The development of a horse reference genome allows for a genomewide analysis, using tens of thousands of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) (Wade et al., 2009). Genome-wide SNPs have been used in many horse breeds to measure genetic diversity, identify regions of diversifying selection, and make inferences about the origins of breeds (Cosgrove et al., 2020; Gurgul et al., 2019; Petersen, Mickelson, Cothran, et al., 2013). Prior studies of domestic breeds and feral herds suggest that population genetics can be a useful tool for investigating breed associations and the potential origins of feral herds such as the horses of TRNP.

Here, we use genome-wide SNP genotypes to examine the relationship of the TRNP horses to established horse breeds. Based on the known history of the herd, we hypothesized that TRNP horses would be most genetically similar to common ranch horses in the USA today (Quarter Horses and American Paint Horses), Shires, or Spanish-type breeds, but that they would primarily appear as a distinct population apart from any one breed. We also hypothesized that confinement and management actions have contributed to recent loss in genetic diversity within the TRNP herd. We found that TRNP horses are distinct from other breeds, likely due to isolation, population bottlenecks occurring as part of herd management, and genetic drift. For similar breeds, we found that these horses are most closely allied with draft breeds, particularly the Shire, which were historically associated with surrounding ranches and documented stallion introductions in the park, but not notably related to Quarter Horses, Paints, or Spanish-type breeds.

METHODS

2.1 | Sample collection

Hair samples were collected during a regularly-scheduled roundup in 2013. From these, we selected samples of 87 horses which had been re-released into the park, including almost all adult mares and reproductive band stallions. In 2017, additional tissue samples were collected as part of management activities via biopsy dart from 12 individuals that had evaded the 2013 capture. With the addition of

these individuals our sample set represented an approximate census of the herd as it was at the end of 2013 (99/107=92.5%). In 2020 we collected an additional 18 tissue samples from young mares born post-roundup by biopsy dart. Our full dataset had 118 samples (91 mares, 27 stallions), including a sample from one more young mare. This includes 85% (94/111) of the adult individuals in the herd as of spring 2022 and represents 98% (177/181) of the herd when including offspring of sampled individuals.

DNA extraction, genotyping, and 2.2 sample selection

Genomic DNA was extracted from hair follicle and tissue samples by the Animal Genetics Laboratory at Texas A&M University using Gentra Puregene Tissue kits (Qiagen) following manufacturer's protocols. Individuals were then genotyped at Neogen Genomics Laboratory (Lincoln, NE) for over 70k SNPs located evenly across the horse genome using the Illumina Equine GGP 70k BeadChip. We combined the resulting genotypes with a dataset of 792 horses from 35 different breeds which had been genotyped using the Illumina Equine GGP 50k BeadChip (Petersen, Mickelson, Rendahl, et al., 2013). Mean sample size for breeds in that dataset was 22.63 individuals (Table A1); to prevent a comparatively large number of TRNP samples from skewing the principal components analysis (PCA), we selected a representative subset of 23 TRNP individuals for our final dataset. Using pedigree data determined by genetic testing and family band association records going back to the 1980s, we identified first degree relatives and excluded the younger individual (i.e., offspring) to reduce bias due to relatedness, which left 32 individuals. We then performed a random selection to reduce the dataset to the final 23 individuals, and manually checked to confirm that this subset contained individuals from both geographic regions within the park.

Data pruning

We performed quality control filtering using SNP & Variation Suite v8.9.0 (SVS) (Golden Helix, Inc., Bozeman, MT, www.goldenhelix.com), with the methods used by Petersen, Mickelson, Cothran, et al. (2013). We first removed markers with call rate ≤0.95, and then samples with call rate ≤0.95. All 23 TRNP samples were above the threshold and were retained. This eliminated any markers which were not included in both the 70k and 50k genotyping arrays. We next removed SNPs with a minor allele frequency (MAF) of 0.05 or less. We mapped the remaining SNPs to EquCab3.0 (www.ncbi.nlm. nih.gov/assembly/GCF_002863925.1/) using SVS and filtered to include only autosomal loci. This resulted in a final set of 815 samples and 38,786 SNPs. We further filtered the dataset for linkage disequilibrium (LD) using a window size of 50 and an increment of 5, with an LD threshold of r^2 = .5. After LD filtering, this second version of the dataset retained 815 samples and 28,505 SNPs.



2.4 | Among-breed relationships

To assess the current relationship of the TRNP horses to other breeds, we conducted a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) on the dataset pruned for MAF and call rate, as per Petersen, Mickelson, Cothran, et al. (2013). We computed the principal components in SVS using an additive model with the option selected to normalize each marker's data by its standard deviation. We then plotted the first three principal components against each other to visualize relationships among individuals of different breeds and the TRNP horses. We also calculated pairwise values of Wright's fixation index ($F_{\rm ST}$) between all breeds and TRNP horses in SVS using the LD pruned dataset.

2.5 | Phylogenetic analysis

We conducted a phylogenetic analysis to depict evolutionary relationships among the populations. We converted the LD pruned dataset to Phylip format using vcf2phylip (Ortiz, 2019). We included all breed samples from the Petersen, Mickelson, Cothran, et al., 2013 dataset along with the same 23 TRNP samples used for the PCA and F_{ST} analyses. All phylogenetic analyses were performed via the CIPRES Science Gateway v3.3 (Miller et al., 2010). We converted the SNP dataset to a FASTA file using NCL converter v2.1, which maintained the original nucleotide information (Lewis, 2003). The final matrix included 815 individuals sampled for 28,501 aligned nucleotides. We aligned the resulting data using ClustalW v2.1 with standard parameters (Thompson et al., 1994), and used RAxML v8.2.12 (Stamatakis, 2014) to construct the phylogeny for these samples, with 1000 bootstrap replicates. Bootstrap values were calculated using a majority rule consensus tree with Consense (Felsenstein 1986-2008). Only bootstrap values of ≥70% are reported. We visualized the resulting phylogeny and edited the appearance of the tree using FigTree v1.4.4 (http://tree.bio.ed. ac.uk/software/figtree/).

2.6 | Bayesian cluster analysis

To estimate ancestral clusters and common heritage, we used the program ADMIXTURE on the LD pruned dataset (Alexander et al., 2009). ADMIXTURE employs model-based ancestry estimation to assign individuals to clusters with similar ancestry based on genotypes. For each individual sample ADMIXTURE returns the proportion of their genome that can be assigned to each ancestral cluster based on allele frequencies. Since there were 36 breeds including the TRNP samples in the dataset, we ran the program for K=1 through K=36, K being the assumed number of ancestral populations. To determine the value of K that created the most accurate model to describe the dataset we followed ADMIXTURE instructions and compared the program's values for cross-validation (CV)

error at each value of *K*, using the default setting of 5-fold CV and selecting the lowest resulting value.

2.7 | Estimates of inbreeding

To assess inbreeding and the effects of historical population management, we conducted two measures of estimating inbreeding levels. We calculated the individual inbreeding coefficient (f) for all 118 TRNP samples and each breed sample in the LD pruned dataset using SVS. Another approach to evaluating inbreeding or relatedness by descent is to identify runs of homozygosity (ROH) within the genome. These homozygous-by-descent (HBD) segments are created when an individual inherits two copies of the same stretch of chromosome from a common ancestor (Ceballos et al., 2018; Peripolli et al., 2016). We used the R package RZooRoH to identify ROHs and model the generational age of common ancestors based on segment length (Bertrand et al., 2019). RZooRoH uses hidden Markov models to relate the length of HBD segments to the age of the segments, as a more recent common ancestor will have had fewer opportunities for recombination of the homozygous segment. To evaluate the state of the TRNP herd we included all 118 TRNP samples, did not prune for LD, and used the RZooRoH default model. We used Vortex10 (Lacy & Pollak, 2021) to calculate the generation time of the TRNP herd using historical records of demographic survival and mortality rates. The resulting generation time of 10.48 years closely matched the 10 years previously reported for feral horses (National Research Council, 2013). We also selected several other breeds with known population history for comparison.

2.8 | TRNP population structure

To examine subpopulation structure within the TRNP herd, we prepared a dataset of all 118 samples pruned by marker call rate ≤0.95, sample call rate ≤0.95, MAF ≤0.05, and autosomes only. We then conducted a PCA of this dataset in SVS as above. We assigned samples to geographic regions based on observational data of spatial use by each family band of horses. The South Unit of the park was partitioned into two geographic regions by an intermittent stream: the categories were "North of Paddock Creek (NoPC)", "South of Paddock Creek (SoPC)", or individuals of mixed parentage resulting from observed dispersal.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Among-breed relationships

The first three principal components from our PCA account for 62.19% of total variation in the dataset. The first principal component (PC1) explains 36.90% of the variance in the dataset. The



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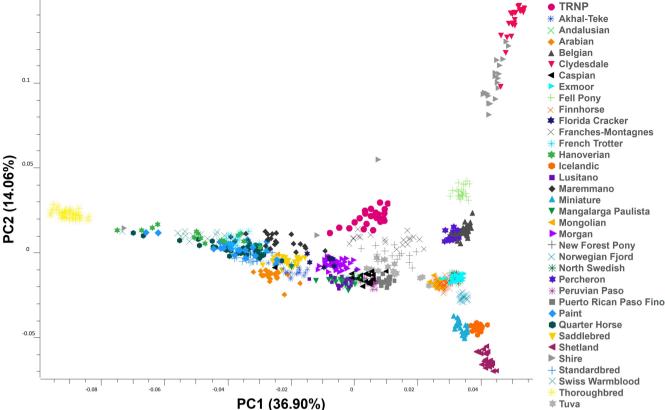


FIGURE 1 Principal components analysis of genetic variation among horse breeds and feral horses from TRNP, showing one plane of the cloud of points (PC1 by PC2). Points represent individuals. PC1 captures 36.90% of the variation in the dataset. PC2 captures 14.06% of the variation. TRNP horses fall into a group in the center of the plot, indicated by pink circles.

second principal component (PC2) explains 14.06% of the variance. with a more gradual decline in explanatory value from PC2 to PC10 (Table A2). On a plot of PC1 by PC2, the breeds follow the pattern described by Petersen, Mickelson, Cothran, et al. (2013). TRNP horses fall near the center of the plot (Figure 1). The TRNP cluster overlaps on PC1 with such breeds as Morgan, Lusitano, Mangalarga Paulista, Andalusian, Franches-Montagnes, New Forest Pony, Peruvian Paso, Tuva, Caspian, and Puerto Rican Paso Fino. On PC2, the TRNP horses are separated from these breeds in the direction of the draft horses such as Shire, Clydesdale, and Fell Pony. When looking at PC3 on the plot of PC1 by PC3 there is more overlap of the TRNP horses with the Tuva, New Forest Pony, and Caspian, as well as with the Akhal-Teke and French Trotter (Figure 2).

Mean pairwise $F_{\rm ST}$ value among breeds was 0.108, with a minimum value of 0.002 between Paint and Quarter Horse and a maximum value of 0.273 between Clydesdale and Mangalarga Paulista (Table A3). F_{ST} values between the TRNP horses and other breeds ranged from 0.104 to 0.217. Breeds with the lowest F_{ST} values in comparison with the TRNP horses were the Tuva (0.104), New Forest Pony (0.107), Quarter Horse (0.108), Paint Horse (0.108), Mongolian horse (0.111), Maremmano (0.115), and the Morgan (0.115). The breeds with the highest values were the Mangalarga Paulista (0.217), Clydesdale (0.213), Exmoor (0.203), Shetland (0.184), and Thoroughbred (0.180).

Phylogenetic results

The results of the maximum likelihood analysis revealed a star phylogeny pattern with short internal branches and long external branches, typical of a lineage which has undergone rapid differentiation (Figure 3). Samples with the same breed assignment were placed mostly into their own respective clades. External nodes had high confidence bootstrap values, but many of the basal branches joining breeds were not well supported (<70% bootstrap values). TRNP horses were found to be monophyletic with strong support (100% bootstrap support) and were placed with moderate support (76.8% bootstrap support) with the Shire, Clydesdale, and Fell Pony, among other draft-type breeds such as the Percheron, Belgian, and Franches-Montagnes. The next nearest branches included the ponytype breeds (e.g., Finnhorse, Miniature, Shetland); this clade had higher support (81% bootstrap support). Spanish-type breeds (e.g., Andalusian, Peruvian Paso, Mangalarga Paulista) comprise a clade that is separate from TRNP horses with moderate support (73.3%).

Bayesian clustering analysis

The lowest CV error returned by ADMIXTURE was observed at K=25 distinct populations, though CV error values of K in the 21–28



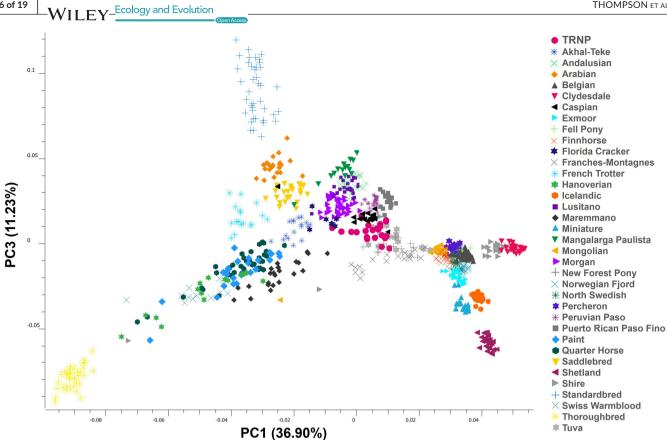


FIGURE 2 Principal components analysis of genetic variation among horse breeds and feral horses from TRNP, showing the same cloud of points from another plane (PC1 by PC3). Points represent individuals. PC3 captures 11.23% of the variation in the dataset. TRNP horses fall into a group in the center of the plot, indicated by pink circles.

range were of similarly low values (Figure A1). At K=25 each TRNP horse was grouped by a majority of their genome into the same cluster with minimal assignment to other clusters (Figure 4). The proportion of TRNP genomes assigned to this cluster ranged from 0.703 to 0.999, with a mean of 0.952. No individuals from other breeds had notable assignment to the TRNP horse cluster. Four TRNP individuals had a proportion of 0.039-0.075 of their genomes assigned to another cluster which included high genome proportions from Quarter Horse, Paint, and Florida Cracker individuals, and a 0.021-0.033 proportion assigned to a cluster including Thoroughbred, Hanoverian, Shire, Quarter Horse, Paint, Swiss Warmblood, and Maremmano individuals. Two TRNP individuals had 0.010-0.031 of their genome assigned to each of three clusters including Andalusian, Lusitano, Percheron, Shire, and Clydesdale individuals. The individuals from other breeds that had the highest proportion of assignment with the TRNP cluster (range 0.032-0.054) were a Swiss Warmblood, Hanoverian, Morgan, Saddlebred, two Paints, Maremmano, Quarter Horse, Puerto Rican Paso Fino, and a New Forest Pony.

In the K=21-28 range of low CV errors the TRNP horses clustered similarly to the K=25 results (Figure A3). From K=20 through K=8 the TRNP horses were still assigned to their own cluster. At K=7, the TRNP horse genomes were assigned by 0.621-0.850 to a cluster that included high proportions for other individuals of many different breeds of draft type, such as Belgian, Percheron,

Franches-Montagnes, and North Swedish Horse (Figure A2). At such a low number of ancestral populations most of the clusters separated into general groups of draft breeds (the Shire and Clydesdale formed their own cluster), pony breeds, Spanish, and Arabian breeds, or warmblood breeds, reflective of PCA and phylogenetic relationships.

At K=28, the TRNP horses were split into two clusters (Figure A4). The division was aligned with the geographical categories assigned to TRNP individuals for population structure analysis. Again, no individual from any other breed had more than a trace assignment to either TRNP cluster, and only three TRNP individuals had genome proportions between 0.0002 and 0.056 assigned to any other clusters (Figure A5).

Estimates of inbreeding

TRNP horses had relatively high values for inbreeding coefficients compared to other breeds. The mean f of TRNP horses was 0.180, while the mean f for all other breeds in the dataset was 0.116 (standard deviation of 0.079). Only seven breeds had a mean f higher than the TRNP horses (Tables A4 and A5).

RZooRoH identified 9195 HBD sequences among the 118 TRNP samples, on all autosomes and in all individuals. The mean



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FIGURE 3 Maximum likelihood tree with bootstrap values for horse breeds, including TRNP horses. Only bootstrap values with confidence of 70% and higher are given. TRNP horses were found to be monophyletic and were placed among draft breeds with 76.8% confidence, diverging from the branch that contains Shires, Clydesdales, and Fell Ponies.

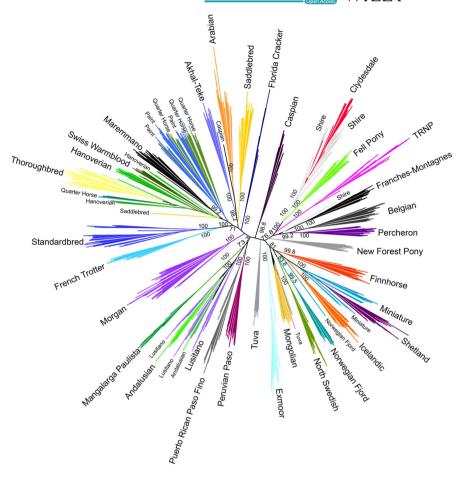
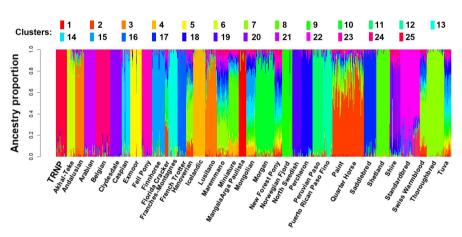


FIGURE 4 Ancestry estimation using ADMIXTURE modeling. The number of ancestral populations (clusters) K=25 was chosen based on ADMIXTURE's CV error calculation. Vertical lines represent individuals, with colors representing the proportion of their genome attributed to each ancestral cluster. The TRNP horses make up their own red cluster (leftmost) with minimal shared ancestry from other clusters.



proportion of the genome covered by HBD segments for TRNP individuals was 0.22 (SD 0.066; range 0.095–0.47; median 0.21; IQR 0.17–0.25) (Figure 5). The highest proportions were in generation classes 4 and 8 (Figures 5 and 6). With a generation time of 10 years this corresponds to common ancestors approximately 40–80 years ago, suggesting bottlenecking or founder events around that timeframe. For comparison, Figure 6 also shows the Clydesdale and Florida Cracker, which have both undergone recent genetic bottlenecks, the Puerto Rican Paso Fino, which experienced a more distant bottleneck during the importation of

Spanish horses to the Americas, and the Quarter Horse, which has multiple sources of recent admixture.

3.5 | TRNP population structure

On the plot of PC1 by PC2 for the 118 TRNP samples, individuals are noticeably sorted by geographic category along PC1 (Figure 7). PC1 captures 12.32% of the genetic variation in the dataset, and PC2 captures 5.27%. The individuals located South of Paddock



FIGURE 5 Proportion of the genome in each homozygosity by descent (HBD) class for all 118 TRNP individuals as estimated by RZooRoH. HBD classes represent inbreeding level based on number of generations removed to common ancestor, where HBD class 2 corresponds with 1 generation to common ancestor, HBD class 4 with 2 generations, etc.

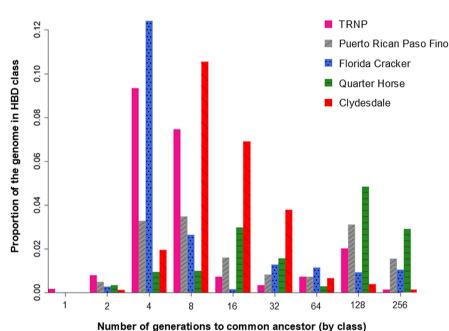


FIGURE 6 Average proportion of the genome in each generation class for all 118 TRNP horses in comparison to four other breeds of known population history, as estimated by RZooRoH. Clydesdale and Florida Cracker have undergone recent bottlenecks, Puerto Rican Paso Fino an older bottleneck, and Quarter Horses have been recently admixed. HBD classes represent inbreeding level based on number of generations removed to common ancestor, with lower generation numbers corresponding to more recent inbreeding. TRNP horses have highest presence of HBD segments in classes 4 and 8 generations ago, which corresponds with the initial population bottleneck from the time of the park's establishment.

Creek (SoPC) are more closely grouped than are individuals North of Paddock Creek (NoPC). Individuals of mixed parentage are between and among the two categories. On PC2, the NoPC points have a wider spread than do the SoPC points.

4 | DISCUSSION

By using multiple approaches to analyze the population genetics of TRNP horses, we identified overall patterns that reflect the history of this herd. These analyses place the TRNP horses well within the diversity seen in modern domestic horses, but do not show a strong signal of relatedness to any one breed, consistent with previous work and the evolutionarily recent development of most horse breeds. Based on park records, it is known that the TRNP herd has had genetic influxes from multiple sources. Admixture between breeds and the recent isolation of horse breeds makes it challenging to determine ancestry in the more distant past. As these breeds have

experienced continued artificial selection for certain characteristics, they differ from horse populations that existed in the late 1800s. Admixture can create new allele combinations and frequencies, contributing to the apparent population differentiation. However, some patterns emerge across these analyses.

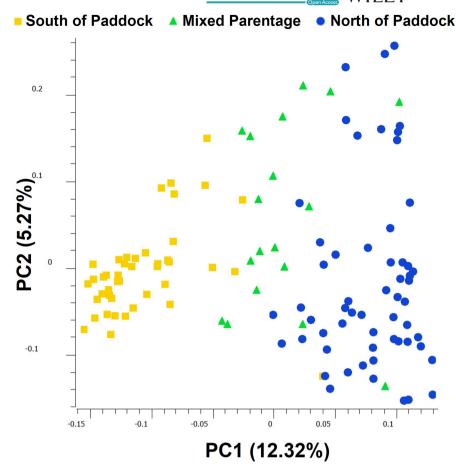
The PCA plot reflects variation in genotypes and identifies unique populations and associations with phenotypic traits for the sampled breeds. Highly specialized breeds can be found as distinct from other breeds due to strong selection pressures and inbreeding, and the plot can also show evidence of admixture between populations (Petersen, Mickelson, Cothran, et al., 2013). The TRNP points are not as tightly clustered together as some of the other breeds, indicating admixture between multiple sources in their recent history (McVean, 2009). Some TRNP points are separated from the center of the cluster, falling toward the Shires and other draft breeds. This separation may reflect the influence of the Shire-Paint stallion introduced to the park in the 1980s. On the PCA plot, the five Spanishtype breeds are all tightly clustered together. The TRNP points align



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FIGURE 7 Principal components analysis of all 118 TRNP samples, with individuals labeled by geographic region within the South Unit of TRNP. The first two principal components explain 12.32% and 5.27% of the genetic variation, respectively. Individuals are generally sorted by geographic category along PC1.



with Spanish-type breeds on PC1 as well as with such breeds as Franches-Montagnes, Morgan, and Tuva, but are separated from them on PC2, potentially indicating some affinity between the herd and these breeds.

The general distribution of domestic breeds in PCA is consistent across multiple reports (Funk et al., 2020; Ovchinnikov et al., 2018). Though direct comparisons cannot be made across separate analyses, there are some interesting similarities between our results and the results of another study of two feral Canadian populations evaluated with the same Petersen, Mickelson, Rendahl, et al. (2013) dataset. A large population of feral horses ("Alberta Foothills") that has ranged in size from 1000 to 1700 individuals and likely experienced continual gene inflow from multiple draft breeds and Quarter Horses/Paints appeared in a generally similar position to the TRNP horses in a PCA plot (Tollett, 2018). A second, isolated feral population of about 500 individuals ("Sable Island") was more tightly clustered on PC1 and PC2 but was noticeably separated from the main cloud of points on PC3 (Tollett, 2018). The TRNP herd, though considerably smaller than the Sable Island herd, does not show such divergence on PC3.

The maximum likelihood tree reflects the pattern seen in the PCA plot, with Thoroughbreds located in one portion of the topology while draft horses and ponies are found on the other side of the tree. The TRNP horses are found to be more similar to draft breeds and particularly the Shires, Clydesdales, and Fell Ponies, supporting the idea that the herd retains influence from the introduced Shire-Paint stallion. If

this influence does come substantially from that individual, the more recent timeframe of his introduction in comparison to the development of most breeds would contribute to the lower value of bootstrap confidence observed. Due to the local popularity of Percheron horses in the late 1800s, though, the genetic contribution of draft breeds may also have been present before his introduction (Crawford, 1931; Huidekoper, 1947; McLaughlin, 1989). However, there is support for separation of the Spanish breeds from the TRNP horses, suggesting that these Spanish breeds have had limited genetic influence on TRNP horses in recent history compared with draft breeds.

During domestication, artificial selection for specialized traits, along with transport and husbandry of horses, resulted in breeds or types within a short evolutionary timeframe. Our analyses indicate that horse breed relationships are reconstructed in a star-like phylogeny, with short internal branches and long external branches, indicating rapid rates of diversification due to strong selection. Because horse breeds successfully interbreed, it is difficult to reconstruct that genetic history with a simple bifurcating phylogeny. This difficulty is reflected in the low nodal support for internal nodes. Recombination, or gene flow between branches, can affect the shape of phylogenetic trees, lengthening the terminal branches (Li et al., 2019; Schierup & Hein, 2000). This pattern is commonly seen within domestic species, such as dogs, cattle and water buffalo, goats, and chickens (Mannen et al., 2020; Quan et al., 2020; Rout et al., 2008; Sun et al., 2020; Vonholdt et al., 2010). Other trees constructed with different data show a similar phylogenetic pattern



for horse breeds (Felkel et al., 2018; Khanshour et al., 2013; Vilà et al., 2001).

Based on the oral history of the herd, we would expect to see some genetic similarity between the TRNP horses and one or all of the Spanish breeds. In the PCA, the TRNP horses are close to Spanish breeds on PC1 but diverge from those breeds on PC2. Relatively high F_{ST} values indicate that there is little recent Spanish contribution to the herd. Further, the maximum likelihood tree and the ADMIXTURE analysis separate the Spanish breeds from the TRNP horses. Based on these observations, it seems that the present-day herd is not closely related to the Spanish breeds. Considering the history of horses in the Americas, though, we cannot rule out previous Spanish influences. However, there were approximately 70 years of few records between the purported import of Spanish type horses into the local area in the 1880s and the 1950s when herd management began, during which local ranchers were known to cross "Indian type" horses with European breeds (McLaughlin, 1989). Thus, any Spanish lineage would most likely have experienced admixture before the founding of the park. Additionally, most horses in the park in the 1950s were branded, suggesting considerable influence of 20th century ranching practices on herd composition.

A common thread across the ADMIXTURE, phylogeny, and PCA results is that TRNP horses are a distinct population in comparison to these domestic horse breeds. Genetic differentiation can be driven by selection, mutation, reduced gene flow, genetic drift, and nonrandom mating. Although the oldest formal breed registries have only existed for approximately 200 years, horses have been under artificial selection during their domestication for at least 4000 years (Orlando, 2020). The TRNP herd has not experienced artificial selection for specific characteristics but has had limited gene flow and a small population size (80-200 individuals) since the 1950s. A few individuals have been introduced over the history of the herd; however, the last intentional introduction as part of a management decision occurred in the 1980s. Genetic differentiation likely resulted from the isolation and repeated bottleneck events experienced by the TRNP herd, resulting in genetic drift. Essentially, the TRNP horses are more similar to each other in allelic combinations than they are to any other horse breeds.

Ovchinnikov et al. (2018) reported low values of genetic variability (observed heterozygosity and allelic diversity) in the TRNP herd compared to both domestic breeds and other feral herds. This is also reflected in inbreeding coefficients from genome-wide analysis of SNPs, with the TRNP horses having higher values of f than most other breeds. The F_{ST} values between TRNP and other breeds were all near or higher than the average among all breeds. F_{st} measures genetic differentiation between populations using allele frequencies and can indicate reduced gene flow between those populations. While the TRNP horses are placed among the draft breeds on the phylogenetic tree, the Shire and Clydesdale also have some of the highest values for inbreeding coefficient, f. In combination with the high mean f of the TRNP population, this resulted in high values of F_{ST} between these breeds, despite some shared ancestry. We know that the TRNP population has been isolated for many years, and the

lack of recent gene flow with other breeds is supported by these high F_{ST} values.

Though F_{ST} values are lower between TRNP and Paint and Quarter Horses than TRNP and any draft breed, other results do not single out these breeds as recent contributors to the park population. Morgan horses are another putative source of TRNP ancestry based on PCA results; Morgan horses are the oldest remaining North American horse breed, originating in the late 1700s and early 1800s for use on farms (Battell, 1894). Perhaps the ranch horses of early western North Dakota were genetically similar to the early work horses of the eastern US and to the early Quarter Horses of Texas, before their differentiation into strictly kept breeds. It is possible that these early work horses contributed to the TRNP population.

The ROH analysis also shows that the TRNP horses have experienced relatively recent inbreeding. The high proportion of HBD segments in the genome due to inheritance from common ancestors four and eight generations ago coincides with the herd's isolation and known bottleneck events. The initial bottleneck occurred 60-70 years ago (6-7 generations) in the 1950s and 60s following the establishment of the park, when the majority of the horses on the land were rounded up and returned to their owners at the same time as the park perimeter was fenced and the remaining population was isolated. A reduction of the TRNP population to 16 individuals, followed by low gene flow into the population, explains the current presence of large chromosome segments inherited from common ancestors. The presence of these HBD segments and a relatively high inbreeding coefficient suggest that the bottlenecks experienced in the recent history of the TRNP herd have affected genetic diversity of the population. In the case of the individual horse with the highest presence of HBD segments (0.47), pedigree records indicate that this individual likely had the same stallion-mare mating in the P2 generation on one side and the P3 generation on the other. Chromosome 1 for this individual appeared almost entirely homozygous.

However, HBD segments are likely overestimated in our dataset, due to the density of SNPs called in the array. Lavanchy and Goudet (2023) demonstrated that SNP density is an important metric in accurately assessing HBD segment presence and recommend using high-density (>11 SNPs/Mb) datasets. While more recent inbreeding and longer HBD segments are easier to estimate, lower SNP density can result in overestimation of small segments. Still, since the TRNP population is small and inbred, some of the unsampled portions of the genome are likely to also be homozygous.

RZooRoH produced HBD class results consistent with the known history of several other breeds, indicating that the TRNP results for HBD classes were likely reasonable. For example, Clydesdales experienced a bottleneck following agricultural mechanization and their use in WWI and WWII during the 1920s-1940s (Hendricks, 1995). RZooRoH assigned a higher proportion of their genome to 8 generations ago, consistent with this timeframe. A more recent and severe reduction in population size occurred with the Florida Cracker with only 31 individuals present

in 1989 (Florida Cracker Horse Association; Conant et al., 2012), which is reflected by the highest HBD level occurring in the four generation class. These breeds and the TRNP horses have a clear signature of inbreeding compared with the Quarter Horse, a breed with very large population size and admixture from multiple sources, but which has only formally existed since 1940. In fact most horse breeds and breed registries were only established within the last few centuries, alongside an increased awareness of heritability (Hendricks, 1995). The HBD classes here extend out to hundreds of generations and thousands of years ago and suggest a level of inbreeding that may be present for the species in general which occurred around domestication events.

As we hypothesized, large scale roundup actions have likely caused genetic bottlenecks in the herd and led to inbreeding, with the initial reduction of herd size at the time of the installation of the perimeter fence likely producing the largest effect. Inbreeding can also be exacerbated by subpopulation differentiation within a population. Smaller subpopulations can experience increased effects of genetic drift and an overall loss of heterozygosity within the population as a whole. Within the TRNP herd there is evidence of some population structure, as seen in the TRNP PCA and the splitting of the TRNP ADMIXTURE cluster at K = 28 (Figure A5). Observational data shows that many of the TRNP horses have a behavioral tendency to inhabit a regular area within the park and disperse to join other family bands that also frequent the same area. Though the Paddock Creek corridor is not a restrictive physical barrier, there seems to be enough site fidelity to contribute to nonrandom mating and the development of genetic population structure. However, there is still frequent gene flow within the population, as evidenced by the mixed parentage individuals, and likely enough gene flow to prevent substantial subpopulation differentiation.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

The use of much larger numbers of markers in a SNP array provided a more in-depth evaluation of this feral population than had previously been possible with limited markers. While the TRNP population continued to group separately from other breeds, consistent with previous work, we did detect genetic relationships where previous work had been inconclusive. The strongest observed similarity is between TRNP horses and some draft breeds, based on phylogeny and ADMIXTURE relationships. In particular, the placement of the TRNP horses on a branch next to Shires, Clydesdales, and Fell Ponies in the maximum likelihood tree indicates that descendants of the introduced Shire-Paint stallion persist in the present-day herd. The inbreeding analyses indicate that the TRNP herd has experienced inbreeding and differentiation from other breeds, likely due to genetic drift, bottleneck events, and limited gene flow. Historical management actions likely exacerbated the inbreeding levels within the population, especially the original population bottleneck and initial removal attempt at the time of the perimeter fence installation in the 1950s.

6 | IMPLICATIONS

If a reproductive herd is to be maintained, approaches to reduce the effect of continued isolation on genetic diversity can be considered. Genetic diversity in a closed population may be increased with introduction of new individuals. Periodic introductions could be used to counter the effects of genetic drift. Depending on long term management objectives, individuals for introduction could be chosen from a more genetically distant population to maximize variation, or from a population with a more similar background. Analysis of additional samples from other feral herds across the country might identify more relationships, potentially suggesting another similar source from which to select animals for introduction.

7 | PERMIT INFORMATION

2020 biopsy samples were collected under research permit number THRO-2020-SCI-0013 and NPS IACUC approval (ND_THRO_McCann_HorseBiopsyDarting_2020.A1).

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Blake E. McCann: Conceptualization (equal); writing – review and editing (equal). Melissa A. Thompson: Formal analysis (lead); writing – original draft (lead); writing – review and editing (equal). Rebecca B. Simmons: Supervision (equal); writing – review and editing (equal). Turk Rhen: Writing – review and editing (equal).

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Genotype data used in this study were submitted to the European Variation Archive (EVA) under accession number PRJEB64774 and will be openly available at https://www.ebi.ac.uk/eva/?eva-study=PRJEB64774 following a 1 year embargo.

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APPENDIX

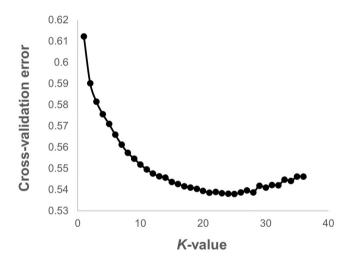


FIGURE A1 Cross-validation error for each value of K, calculated by ADMIXTURE. The most likely value of K was chosen by the lowest error value.



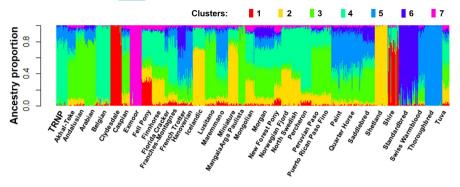


FIGURE A2 Ancestry estimation using ADMIXTURE modeling with the value of K=7, the lowest value of K for which the TRNP horses are primarily assigned to a cluster that includes other breeds. Vertical lines represent individuals, with colors representing the proportion of their genome attributed to each ancestral cluster. The TRNP horses are assigned to a cluster that also includes individuals from many breeds of draft type, including Belgian, Percheron, Franches-Montagnes, North Swedish Horse, Norwegian Fjord, Finnhorse, Mongolian, Tuva, and New Forest Pony. The Shire and Clydesdale make up their own cluster at K=7.

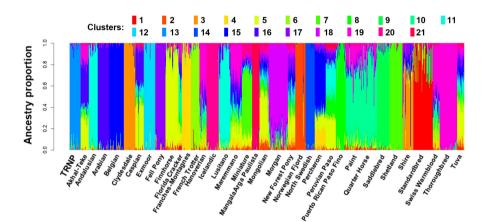


FIGURE A3 Ancestry estimation using ADMIXTURE modeling with the value of K=21. Vertical lines represent individuals, with colors representing the proportion of their genome attributed to each ancestral cluster. At K=21 the CV error is only slightly higher than the lowest value of K=25. At K=21, the TRNP horses are still assigned to their own cluster, which no other individuals share.

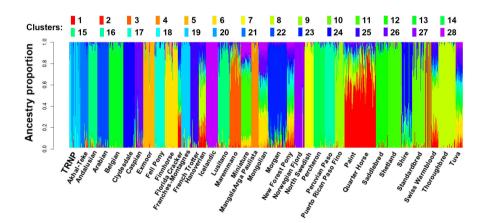


FIGURE A4 Ancestry estimation using ADMIXTURE modeling with the value of K=28. Vertical lines represent individuals, with colors representing the proportion of their genome attributed to each ancestral cluster. At K=28 the CV error is only slightly higher than the lowest value of K=25. At K=28, the TRNP horses are split into two clusters, still unshared with any other breed.



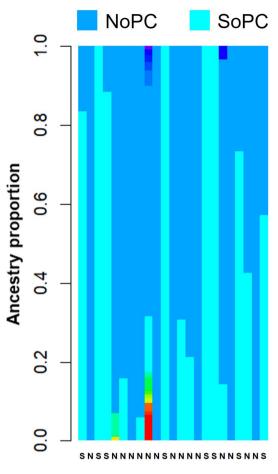


FIGURE A5 Closer detail to highlight the TRNP results from the ADMIXTURE K = 28 model in Figure A4. The TRNP horses are split into two exclusive clusters that correspond with their geographical region (North or South of Paddock Creek) within the park.

TABLE A1 Number of individuals of each domestic breed included in analyses.

i	ncluded in analyses.			
	Breed	# Of individuals		
	Akhal-Teke	17		
	Andalusian	18		
	Arabian	24		
	Belgian	30		
	Clydesdale	24		
	Caspian	17		
	Exmoor	24		
	Fell Pony	21		
	Finnhorse	27		
	Florida Cracker	7		
	Franches-Montagnes	19		
	French Trotter	17		
	Hanoverian	15		
	Icelandic	25		
	Lusitano	24		
	Maremmano	24		
	Miniature	21		
	Mangalarga Paulista	15		
	Mongolian	19		
	Morgan	40		
	New Forest Pony	15		
	Norwegian Fjord	21		
	North Swedish Horse	19		
	Percheron	23		
	Peruvian Paso	21		
	Puerto Rican Paso Fino	20		
	Paint	25		
	Quarter Horse	40		
	Saddlebred	25		
	Shetland	27		
	Shire	23		
	Standardbred	40		
	Swiss Warmblood	14		
	Thoroughbred	36		
	Tuva	15		

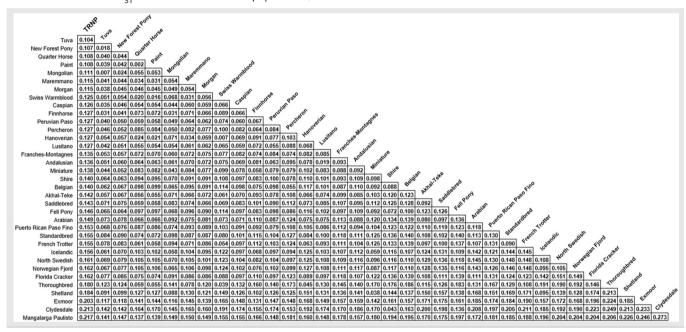


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TABLE A2 First ten principal components from PCA.

Principal component	Percentage of variance explained/eigenvalues
1	36.90
2	14.06
3	11.23
4	10.16
5	8.98
6	8.36
7	7.42
8	7.18
9	6.07
10	5.63

TABLE A3 Pairwise F_{ST} values calculated for 36 populations/breeds.



Note: Rows are sorted by value in comparison to TRNP.

TABLE A4 Mean inbreeding coefficient f by breed, with standard deviation, minimum and maximum values.

	Open Access V V I L L I			
Breed	Mean f	SD	MIN	MAX
Hanoverian	-0.007	0.016	-0.041	0.024
Swiss Warmblood	-0.003	0.025	-0.040	0.064
Paint	0.001	0.023	-0.038	0.061
Quarter Horse	0.005	0.031	-0.039	0.110
Maremmano	0.005	0.022	-0.033	0.044
Thoroughbred	0.046	0.027	-0.021	0.102
Caspian	0.062	0.043	-0.010	0.148
New Forest Pony	0.066	0.024	0.025	0.112
French Trotter	0.068	0.028	0.018	0.127
Mongolian	0.070	0.037	-0.078	0.099
Tuva	0.071	0.044	0.016	0.165
Saddlebred	0.082	0.024	0.032	0.129
Akhal-Teke	0.082	0.038	0.019	0.130
Peruvian Paso	0.088	0.034	0.050	0.149
Morgan	0.096	0.074	0.014	0.302
Lusitano	0.099	0.053	0.013	0.194
Finnhorse	0.106	0.018	0.076	0.166
Franches-Montagnes	0.109	0.047	0.041	0.233
Arabian	0.109	0.060	0.039	0.321
Standardbred	0.117	0.038	0.047	0.206
Andalusian	0.129	0.067	0.050	0.320
Miniature	0.132	0.024	0.096	0.210
Puerto Rican Paso Fino	0.141	0.061	0.035	0.324
Percheron	0.144	0.025	0.105	0.187
Fell Pony	0.155	0.028	0.121	0.228
Icelandic	0.157	0.032	0.125	0.281
Belgian	0.157	0.026	0.098	0.201
Florida Cracker	0.159	0.136	0.003	0.365
TRNP	0.180	0.094	0.018	0.466
Norwegian Fjord	0.184	0.031	0.130	0.257
North Swedish	0.187	0.038	0.120	0.266
Shire	0.194	0.088	-0.040	0.298
Shetland	0.237	0.056	0.158	0.408
Mangalarga Paulista	0.252	0.049	0.170	0.351
Exmoor	0.285	0.086	0.104	0.568
Clydesdale	0.310	0.046	0.189	0.374



TABLE A5 Values of inbreeding coefficient f for all 118 TRNP samples, as well as the number of observed homozygous loci and the number of expected homozygous loci as calculated by SVS.

f	# Markers	# Observed homozygotes	# Expected homozygotes	f	# Markers	# Observed homozygotes	# Expected homozygotes
-0.166	45,793	26,603	29329.30	-0.022	45,785	28,969	29326.44
-0.149	45,685	26,813	29259.76	-0.020	45,761	28,985	29312.11
-0.146	43,455	25,715	27969.38	-0.017	45,794	29,044	29331.60
-0.142	45,796	26,997	29332.39	-0.017	45,803	29,055	29336.75
-0.127	45,803	27,244	29336.49	-0.010	45,785	29,167	29325.38
-0.125	45,795	27,282	29332.16	-0.005	45,790	29,250	29328.92
-0.121	45,766	27,320	29315.20	-0.005	45,796	29,255	29331.91
-0.114	45,785	27,449	29326.62	-0.004	45,785	29,255	29325.62
-0.113	45,795	27,464	29330.87	-0.004	45,796	29,266	29331.33
-0.109	45,603	27,423	29211.23	0.002	45,802	29,362	29336.70
-0.108	45,804	27,562	29337.65	0.002	45,756	29,344	29306.15
-0.107	45,553	27,422	29179.40	0.003	45,774	29,367	29317.91
-0.106	45,790	27,580	29328.29	0.003	45,805	29,394	29338.23
-0.104	45,807	27,622	29339.30	0.003	45,795	29,388	29331.90
-0.103	45,803	27,633	29336.76	0.004	45,788	29,389	29326.76
-0.103	45,801	27,633	29334.89	0.006	42,728	27,637	27549.09
-0.102	45,796	27,648	29332.50	0.006	45,793	29,434	29330.63
-0.099	45,415	27,475	29087.60	0.011	45,709	29,462	29277.63
-0.098	45,791	27,720	29329.38	0.013	45,797	29,550	29333.38
-0.092	45,793	27,821	29330.03	0.018	45,788	29,627	29327.66
-0.090	45,377	27,588	29055.69	0.022	45,795	29,696	29331.84
-0.088	45,804	27,894	29337.46	0.022	45,790	29,692	29327.72
-0.086	45,735	27,885	29294.44	0.024	45,796	29,723	29331.87
-0.077	45,775	28,047	29318.10	0.027	45,783	29,768	29323.68
-0.074	45,791	28,106	29329.28	0.030	45,726	29,790	29290.24
-0.069	45,556	28,051	29176.05	0.031	45,703	29,783	29270.62
-0.066	45,709	28,194	29276.72	0.033	45,804	29,886	29337.59
-0.065	45,776	28,257	29319.24	0.034	45,801	29,902	29335.45
-0.064	45,779	28,264	29321.15	0.036	45,763	29,903	29311.07
-0.063	45,798	28,302	29333.37	0.036	45,797	29,928	29333.48
-0.062	45,805	28,312	29338.16	0.040	45,786	29,984	29325.14

TABLE A5 (Continued)

f	# Markers	# Observed homozygotes	# Expected homozygotes	f	# Markers	# Observed homozygotes	# Expected homozygotes
-0.062	45,794	28,307	29331.18	0.040	45,786	29,992	29327.34
-0.062	45,750	28,284	29302.06	0.042	45,802	30,033	29336.43
-0.060	45,685	28,271	29260.95	0.047	45,802	30,116	29336.88
-0.059	45,743	28,326	29299.18	0.047	45,777	30,101	29320.66
-0.058	45,798	28,385	29334.00	0.066	45,787	30,415	29326.84
-0.057	45,790	28,398	29328.82	0.067	45,798	30,441	29333.57
-0.056	45,796	28,412	29330.90	0.069	45,769	30,447	29315.20
-0.055	45,803	28,438	29337.12	0.069	45,752	30,445	29305.89
-0.053	45,798	28,457	29334.12	0.071	45,792	30,498	29329.68
-0.053	45,801	28,471	29335.68	0.072	45,767	30,490	29312.09
-0.052	43,485	27,019	27835.87	0.072	45,808	30,522	29339.77
-0.049	45,791	28,525	29328.52	0.079	45,802	30,631	29336.04
-0.041	45,765	28,630	29311.84	0.081	45,800	30,668	29334.73
-0.041	45,802	28,665	29336.72	0.083	45,743	30,672	29300.52
-0.041	45,720	28,615	29284.88	0.088	45,791	30,774	29328.69
-0.040	45,741	28,643	29299.15	0.093	45,760	30,847	29309.74
-0.039	45,780	28,688	29323.74	0.100	45,774	30,959	29319.53
-0.036	45,805	28,744	29338.28	0.103	45,798	31,028	29334.24
-0.036	45,804	28,747	29337.14	0.117	45,686	31,177	29262.51
-0.035	45,799	28,755	29334.62	0.123	45,793	31,348	29330.17
-0.034	45,774	28,762	29317.90	0.134	45,742	31,508	29298.07
-0.029	45,802	28,858	29336.19	0.142	45,795	31,663	29331.35
-0.027	45,792	28,890	29328.37	0.186	45,796	32,394	29332.55
-0.026	45,692	28,844	29268.98	0.200	45,792	32,615	29330.60
-0.025	45,312	28,634	29048.60	0.225	45,778	33,026	29320.35
-0.024	45,787	28,928	29327.03	0.232	45,758	33,130	29309.27
-0.024	45,498	28,778	29162.53	0.268	45,785	33,741	29324.82
-0.022	45,787	28,958	29327.23	0.324	45,772	34,642	29317.30



Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates P.O. Box 3562 Dickinson, ND 58602

How much are the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses worth to the local economy of Medora North Dakota?

Theodore Roosevelt National Park had approximately 900,000 visitors to the park in 2023. Please note, this number is expected to increase significantly every year, especially in 2026 with the opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library.

The wild horses are <u>always</u> within the top 3 reasons why people visit the park. That means an average of 300,000 people come to Medora every year just to see the wild horses.

The average visitor spends \$50 for day trippers; \$200 a day for overnighters: making the average \$125/per day/per person

\$125/day times 300,000 visitors = \$37,500,000 per year

\$37,500,000 divided by an average of 200 wild horses in the park = \$187,500 per horse, per year

Take that number times the average life expectancy of around 18-20 years and that brings it to \$3,375,000 – \$3,750,000 per horse in their lifetime! They are a true natural treasure to the state of North Dakota in every sense.

**These numbers do not include visitors that drive across the state of North Dakota on their way to see the horses. Those visitors only increase the amount of money that the horses bring to the total economy in the state of North Dakota.

Erik Molvar Post Office Box 1802 Santa Ynez, CA 93460 February 5, 2025

Testimony on North Dakota Senate Bill 2331

Dear Legislators:

The following is the testimony of Erik Molvar on Senate Bill 2331, relating to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park working group regarding wild horses.

I am a wildlife biologist with peer-reviewed research published on the behavior, ecology, and population dynamics of Alaskan moose. I am also Executive Director of Western Watersheds Project, a nonprofit conservation group working to protect and restore wildlife and watersheds throughout the American West, an organization that has submitted comments on the management and disposition of wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP). Western Watersheds Project focuses on ecological land health, but also has developed organizational expertise on the viability of rare species, and has looked into the role of wild horses in Intermountain West ecosystems (which admittedly are somewhat different from the Great Plains ecosystems of Theodore Roosevelt National Park). Despite having perennial bunchgrasses less tolerant to heavy grazing than the sod-forming grasses of the Great Plains, we have found that wild horses have a lighter ecological impact, animal-for-animal, than domestic cattle and sheep.

Small and isolated populations of animals are at elevated risk of extirpation, both due to stochastic (i.e., random) events such as disease outbreaks or severe weather events, and due to long-term declines driven by the loss of genetic viability. Scientists have established, as a general rule, that a population must be kept above an effective number of breeding animals (N_e) of 100 in order to avoid the steady loss of genetic diversity and the genetic problems (birth defects, inbreeding depression which reduces offspring survival) that accompany inbreeding. The N_e calculation is made based on an equation that weights the total number of a population required to achieve an absolutely equal ratio of males and females actively participating in breeding in a given year, with the understanding that for some species (like wild horses or sage grouse, for example), a few males will do most of the breeding will many females, skewing the sex ratio of breeding animals. In such circumstances, the total population will need to be substantially larger than 100 in order to get the genetic equivalent of 50 males breeding equally with 50 females. For wild horses, I have used the correction factor derived in a study of wild horse breeding on the Pryor Mountain wild horse range in Montana² to determine that the total population of wild horses required to achieve a genetically viable population with $N_e = 100$ is 278 total animals. The present population of wild horses in

¹ Frankham et al., 2014. Genetics in conservation management: Revised recommendations for the 50/500 rules, Red List criteria and population viability analyses. Biol. Conserv. 170: 56-63.

² Singer et al., 2000. A demographic analysis, group dynamics, and genetic effective number in the Pryor wild horse population, 1992-1997. Pp. 73-89 in Ecological Studies of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, 1992-1997. Fort Collins, CO: US Geological Survey.

TRNP at present is substantially smaller than this critical threshold, and the population is isolated from other wild horse herds.

Wild horses in TRNP, like wild horse herds on western lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service farther west, have been subjected to fairly heavy-handed and intensive management by federal agencies. I am aware that the use of chemical birth controls is occurring in TRNP, in particular the chemical operating under the trade name GonaCon, which is designed to induce long-term (or even permanent) sterility in the interest of reducing herbivore population numbers. The effect of subtracting breeding adults permanently from the population is to lose their genetic contribution to future generations of the population, resulting in a long-term reduction in genetic diversity and a trend toward inbreeding. For this reason, the use of GonaCon is disfavored for use as a wild horse birth control method, especially so in small and isolated populations like the one inhabiting TRNP. Where birth control through darting is desired, the use of porcine zona pellucida (PZP) is more widely accepted, as it results in only temporary loss of breeding ability of 18 to 24 months, a reversible outcome that allows darted females to resume breeding, and contributing their genetic complement to the gene pool, once the drug wears off.

Because the TRNP wild horse population is significantly smaller that 278 individuals, it is particularly vulnerable to adverse genetic consequences of subtracting individual animals permanently from the breeding population.

The National Park Service is an agency with limited experience and capability in actively managing wild species, in significant measure due to the fact that they typically allow natural regulation of the wildlife inhabiting their park system. This is a good thing, in the overwhelming majority of situations. But it does not place the agency in the most advantageous position in actively managing a wild horse population, as they are presently attempting to do. Having more voices in the discussion to help inform NPS in its decision-making process could, in this instance, be beneficial.

It may also be true that TRNP might benefit from an expansion in acreage if it is determined that 278 wild horses require a larger land and forage base to thrive while also meeting the NPS legal requirements that direct the agency to manage for healthy, natural ecosystems. If this is the case, land swaps and other measures to expand Park boundaries would benefit not just wild horses, but bison and other species as well, and I hope that the legislature would also be supportive of such solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspectives, and I wish you the best in your deliberations.

Respectfully yours,

Frik Molyar



Senate State and Local Government Committee

SB2331. A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 54-60 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the Theodore Roosevelt national park working group; to provide a report; and to provide an appropriation.

My name is Sandra Hagen Solin - I am the Colorado-based lobbyist for American Wild Horse Conservation (AWHC), the nation's leading wild horse protection organization and operator of the world's largest wild horse fertility program, in Nevada.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB2331 to create a state-led working group to manage the Theodore Roosevelt wild horses.

We have first-hand experience, working closely with Governor Jared Polis and bi-partisan sponsors of this innovative bill approach, in Colorado, where the Colorado Wild Horse Working Group, on which I represent AWHC, recently published an encouraging Year 1 progress report. We would be happy to share this report with committee members.

Backed by \$1.5m of state funding, this collaboration model represents a forward-thinking approach to reducing wild horse roundups and addressing the long-term needs of wild horses that have already been removed from the wild.

Similar to the structure envisioned in North Dakota, the Colorado group is built around core on-range and off-range objectives.

On-range, that means coordination of enhanced and supplemental stewardship of horses in-the-wild, including dedicated funding for full-time fertility control darting.

Specifically, Colorado has pledged \$100,000 of the \$1.5M to assist with fertility vaccines to wild horses in 2025, enabling the US Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services to train eight darters to supplement existing volunteer efforts.

We support the use of proven, scientific, and humane fertility control methods, such as PZP (porcine zona pellucida), in the Theodore Roosevelt wild horse herd and believe this will provide for careful management that can lower birth rates while maintaining the genetic viability of this herd.

By way of illustration, Nevada's Virginia Range, reported a 66% reduction in foal birth rates in 2023 compared to 2022 and a total herd population reduction of 20% over the same period, without the removal of a single wild horse.



Additionally, in Arizona, PZP has been in use since 2019 to manage the Salt River horses and has achieved a below zero population growth rate as of 2021. In Colorado, PZP has been in use in the Spring Creek Basin HMA since 2012, where the wild horse population has been stabilized and no horses have been removed since 2011.

Off-range working group solutions are built around humane, non-lethal alternatives for wild horses taken off-range or held in federal holding facilities, creating partnerships for successful adoptions and quality assurance to support adoption networks.

We believe this model is replicable in North Dakota and we are encouraged by the innovative, multi-stakeholder approach envisaged by SB2331.

We applaud the bill's bipartisan sponsors for coming together to care for and protect the majestic Theodore Roosevelt herd and urge members of the Senate State and Local Government Committee to support the passage of SB2331.

Would be very willing to answer any bill-related questions the Committee may have to ensure the success of a new Wild Horse Working Group for North Dakota.

For the record, AWHC is also in support of concurrent legislation SCR 4006 calling for federal protections for this historic herd which we believe would be complementary legislation to SB2331.

Testimony in Support of SCR4006 January 31, 2025

To the Sixty Ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota:

I write in support of SCR4006, a resolution requesting the legislature to urge the U.S. Congress to devise and impose federal protection for the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. I studied the horses for the National Park Service (NPS) between 1987-1990, compiling a lengthy cultural history of the herd and its management by the NPS.

Federal protection is necessary to ensure that this historic wild horse herd remains in the Little Missouri Badlands, where wild horses have existed since at least the late nineteenth century. The horses embody the history of North Dakota, since they originated from both ranch and Native American herds. Theodore Roosevelt and other open-range ranchers described and wrote about their presence, and the horses have been a unique and popular attraction since the establishment of the national park honoring the twenty-sixth president. They draw both North Dakotans and out of state tourists to the park and the Medora area and are now followed on social media by people around the world.

Despite their popularity and significance, Theodore Roosevelt National Park has sought to eliminate the herd several times during the past sixty years. However, they were kept as a "historic demonstration herd" that evoked Roosevelt and North Dakota's open range ranching era. In 2022, the park announced that Roosevelt's ranching career was no longer part of their mission and began an Environmental Assessment (EA) process to remove the resident horses and longhorn cattle. Because North Dakota state officials and thousands of residents opposed the removal of the horses, Senator Hoeven intervened, and the EA was aborted.

Unfortunately, I have no confidence that the National Park Service will voluntarily retain the horses and manage them to ensure their long-term health and viability. The park has not made a public commitment to keeping the herd forever, and their continuing efforts to sterilize the mares by using Gona Con, an immunosuppressant, suggests that they have simply found a new strategy for eliminating the herd. Put bluntly, I believe that to be their intention.

Only federal protection will secure their future. Please pass this resolution to ensure that the wild horses remain part of North Dakota's history and landscape for coming generations.

Thank you for your consideration,

Irene Castle McLaughlin, Ph.D. Belmont, MA

Testimony in support of SB2331 February 4, 2025

To the Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota:

I write in support of SB 2331, a bill that would add a new section to chapter 54-60 of the North Dakota Century Code to create a "Theodore Roosevelt National Park Wild Horse Working Group" and provide an appropriation of \$50,000 to fund administrative costs for the first two years. During this time, the ten-member group would define their goals and assignments and develop a budget. The proposed working group is modeled after similar advisory partnerships in other states with federally managed wild horse herds.

SB 2331 is a companion piece to SCR 4006, a resolution requesting federal protection for the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Wild horses have been present in the Little Missouri Badlands since at least the late nineteenth century and are a living symbol of North Dakota's ranching history. They are beloved by generations of North Dakotans and a key draw for tourists who visit the park. Because the National Park Service (NPS) continues to seek ways to eliminate the herd despite overwhelming opposition from North Dakota citizens and officials, federal protection is imperative to ensure that the horses remain in the park for future generations.

North Dakota state officials fought to prevent the NPS from removing the wild horse herd between 2022-2024 because the horses and the open range ranching era they represent are meaningful to North Dakotans and important for state tourism. North Dakota must have a voice in their management. The working group will provide a mechanism for diverse North Dakota stakeholders to engage with park staff on issues of wild horse management and provide related support and advice for the mutual benefit of both state and federal interests. When former governor Doug Bergum offered to initiate a federal/state collaboration, NPS officials declined, fearing that it might be abandoned by future state officials. This bill would codify the working group and ensure that the knowledge and interests of North Dakota policy makers, subject experts, and residents are expressed and taken into consideration when the NPS makes decisions about the management of the horses.

It is apparent that the people of North Dakota are deeply invested in ensuring that the horses remain in the badlands. I urge you to vote in support of 2331, so that North Dakotans can play a role in crafting their future.

Thank you for your consideration,

Irene Castle McLaughlin, PhD.

Author, "The History and Status of the Wild Horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park" (1989) and "Badlands Broomtails: The Cultural History of Wild Horses in Western North Dakota" (1991)

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-15

WHEREAS, The Board of County Commissioners have adopted a Land Use Plan which recognizes the importance of energy development, agriculture and stock raising, and tourism as being important to the residents of Billings County; and

WHEREAS, The Board of County Commissioners have, in the past, and now reaffirm the importance to the community, the state, and the Nation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park; and

WHEREAS, The Board of County Commissioners have, in the past, and now reaffirm the importance of horses roaming free in the TRNP; and

WHEREAS, The Board of County Commissioners recognize the efforts of Senator John Hoeven in supporting the continued existence and health viability of the horses in the TRNP and confirm their support of his efforts and the agreements he has supported with the TRNP;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED:

The Board of County Commissioners to support the continued existence of a healthy, genetically viable, herd of horses in the TRNP as being entirely consistent with the values adopted by the County in its land use plans and in its support of tourism generally throughout the County and specifically within the confines of TRNP.

Dated at Medora, ND, this day of	, 2024.
BILLINGS COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA	
By:	_
Attest:	
Marcia Kessel, County Auditor/Treasurer	

RESOLUTION NO. 01-2023

A RESOLUTION URGING THE U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO PRESERVE THE HORSES RESIDING WITHIN THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL PARK AND URGING THE U.S. CONGRESS TO ASSIST WITH PRESERVING THIS HISTORIC HERD.

WHEREAS the National Park Service has stated the Service's intentions to eliminate the horses from Theodore Roosevelt National Park; and

WHEREAS the National Park Service was established by Congress in 1916 through the Organic Act (54 U.S.C. § 100101 et seq.), which provides that the National Park Service "shall... conserve the scenery, natural and historic objects, and wild life [and] provide for the enjoyment of the scenery, natural and historic objects, and wild life in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations;" and

WHEREAS the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park are acknowledged, by the National Park Service among others, as historically and culturally significant to the State of North Dakota and the history of the United States; and

WHEREAS the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park were a significant part of President Theodore Roosevelt's experience in the State of North Dakota, now serving as a living legacy to President Roosevelt, and are important to maintaining the historical setting of his era; and

WHEREAS the late Robert Utley, former Chief Historian for the National Park Service has repeatedly stated that the horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park were an inherently significant resource that fell under Sec. 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966: and

WHEREAS the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park bring tourism to the state and the City of Historic Medora and elimination of the herd poses economic concerns for the local businesses and negatively impacts preservation and appreciation of our state's and community's history; and

WHEREAS the last public comment period for this management planning process in April of 2022 generated 1,774 responses from all 50 states and 58 countries, showing national and international interest in the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HISTORIC MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA:

Section 1. That the findings contained in the Preamble of this Resolution are determined to be true and correct and are hereby adopted.

Section 2. Be It Resolved, that the City of Medora hereby urges the National Park Service to preserve the horses residing within Theodore Roosevelt National Park and urges the U.S. Congress to assist with preserving this historic herd.

Section 3. This Resolution shall be passed finally on the date of its introduction and shall take effect immediately upon its passage and approval by the City Council.

ADOPTED

Todd Comeil, Mayor

ATTEST:

Anna Moe, Medora Auditor

Final Passage: 07-11-2023

RESOLUTION NO. 01-2024

A RESOLUTION URGING THE U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO PRESERVE A GENETICALLY VIABLE HERD OF WILD HORSES RESIDING WITHIN THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL PARK.

WHEREAS, by its Resolution No. 01-2023, the City of Medora urged the National Park Service to preserve the horses residing within Theodore Roosevelt National Park and urged the U.S. Congress to assist with preserving this historic herd; and

WHEREAS, the City of Medora has and now continues to reaffirm the importance to the community of the wild horses residing in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP); and

WHEREAS, the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park bring tourism to the state and the City of Historic Medora and elimination of a genetically viable herd poses economic concerns for the local businesses and negatively impacts preservation and appreciation of our state's and community's history;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HISTORIC MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA:

Section 1. That the findings contained in the Preamble of this Resolution are determined to be true and correct and are hereby adopted.

Section 2. Be It Resolved, that the City of Medora hereby urges the National Park Service to preserve a healthy and genetically viable herd of horses residing within Theodore Roosevelt National Park and urges the U.S. Congress to assist with preserving this historic herd.

Section 3. This Resolution shall be passed finally on the date of its introduction and shall take effect immediately upon its passage and approval by the City Council.

ADOPTED	
• •	
Doug Ellison, Acting Interim Mayor	
ATTEST:	
Ivy Maus, Medora Auditor Final Passage:	

RESOLUTION NO. 02-2024

A RESOLUTION URGING THE U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO SUSPEND THE OCTOBER 2024 HORSE ROUNDUP AND PRESERVE A GENETICALLY VIABLE HERD OF WILD HORSES WITHIN THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL PARK.

WHEREAS, by its Resolution No. 01-2023, the City of Medora urged the National Park Service to preserve the horses residing within Theodore Roosevelt National Park and urged the U.S. Congress to assist with preserving this historic herd; and

WHEREAS, by its Resolution No. 01-2024, the City of Medora urged the National Park Service to preserve a healthy and genetically viable herd of horses residing within Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

WHEREAS, the City of Medora has and now continues to reaffirm the importance to the community of the wild horses residing in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP); and

WHEREAS, the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park bring tourism to the state and the City of Historic Medora and elimination of a genetically viable herd poses economic concerns for the local businesses and negatively impacts preservation and appreciation of our state's and community's history;

WHEREAS, the National Park Service has announced plans to remove horses from the herd and conduct additional fertility control to halt reproduction of the horses; and

WHEREAS, there are significant concerns regarding the genetic viability of the herd, and fertility control would further exacerbate these concerns;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HISTORIC MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA:

Section 1. That the findings contained in the Preamble of this Resolution are determined to be true and correct and are hereby adopted.

Section 2. Be It Resolved, that the City of Medora hereby urges the National Park Service to immediately suspend the October 2024 scheduled horse roundup and halt removals and fertility control until experts fully assess and produce a current report regarding the genetic viability of the herd in order to preserve a healthy and viable herd of horses residing within Theodore Roosevelt National Park for generations to come.

Section 3. This Resolution shall be passed finally on the date of its introduction and shall take effect immediately upon its passage and approval by the City Council.

ADOPTED

Doug Ellison, Acting Interim Mayor

ATTEST:

Ivv Maus, Medora Auditor



HISTORY FOR EVERYONE.

April 5, 2024

Angela Richman, Superintendent Theodore Roosevelt National Park P.O. Box 7 Medora, ND 58645

RE: H4217 Livestock Plan, Theodore Roosevelt National Park

Dear Superintendent Richman,

Thank you for the continued opportunity for consultation regarding the upcoming decision concerning the management of Theodore Roosevelt National Park's (TRNP) horse herd. The TRNP is one of the State Historical Society of North Dakota's oldest and strongest partners. Evidence of this relationship and its importance to the people of North Dakota and our shared history date back to the park's enabling legislation where the Society is mentioned as an approving partner.

Regarding the upcoming decision on managing the feral horse herd, as discussed in previous conversations, the SHSND understands the difficulty of placing the horses within the typical historic property framework. Horses do not fit neatly within traditional property types (building, structure, object, site, and district) as defined in the National Register of Historic Places. However, the feral horse is important to the Native American and Euro-American history and cultural development of the American West. The TRNP has considered the demonstration herd part of its historic preservation responsibilities since the 1978 Feral Horse Reduction Environmental Assessment. Additionally, the National Park Service has policies to consider biological resources as part of cultural landscapes. Therefore, the SHSND reiterates its requests that the TRNP consider the impacts of the plan on biotic cultural resources in accordance with section 5.3.5.2.5 of the National Park Service's document Management Policies 2006, in relation to the horses' impact on cultural landscapes.

Since its inauguration as Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, the park has honored Theodore Roosevelt's ranching and conservation legacies while preserving the historical and natural history of the region. The park's history is inherently intertwined with the natural environment, cultural landscape, and the legacy and history of conservation and ranching in the area. Park conservation cannot be separated from the natural environment or the history of that environment. In his dedication speech for the park on June 4th, 1949, Secretary of the Interior J.A. Krug celebrated then

SHSND director Russell Reid for the Society's cooperation, and then highlighted Roosevelt's background of an interwoven natural environment and ranching activities:

Mingling with the pioneers and building a new settlement on the range gave him an insight into the real functioning of democracy not to be found in books or in lecture halls. Here he stepped down from the isolated peaks of philosophical abstraction. Here he found democracy in all the glory and vigor of its youth — on the roundup, in the hunt, and in his associations with the stockmen. Here he found a wilderness laboratory where he could observe nature in her original design. Here, also, he saw an example of the extravagant waste that for many decades had accompanied the exploitation of our material resources.

Furthermore, during that same dedication ceremony, Newton Drury, Director of the National Park Service stated:

One aspect of this conservation movement has, been the preservation of important scenic, scientific, and historical assets under the administration of the National Park Service. By Act of Congress this Federal Service is enjoined to conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects and wildlife within the areas it administers, and to provide for their enjoyment in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future generations.

Festivities on that day included a pageant honoring all aspects of Roosevelt's life in the region and early interpretation reflected congressional and state intent in dedicating the park to honor the history, nature, and legacy of Theodore Roosevelt's multifaceted life (see attachments).

Mirroring the interwoven relationship between the natural environment and the local ranching community, R.A. "Ike" Ellison, Coordinator, Natural Resources Council noted the close relationship of cooperation between TRNP and local and regional communities in a 1976 letter to the park superintendent:

I was impressed with the amount of cooperation that the Park has established with the private, state and local entities surrounding the units of the Park. You and your staff are to be complimented for the support that you give to the local cultures and communities through your cooperative efforts.

Given the longstanding cooperation between the State and the Park we would like to better understand the TRNP reasoning for reversing its nearly 50-year policy of maintaining the demonstration herd as part of its historic preservation efforts. Within the federal responsibilities for

106 are the identification of historic properties and consultation with stakeholders including the State of North Dakota. These historic efforts by the park are listed below.

Identification of Historic Properties

The first Environmental Assessment discussing the feral horse management, written the same year as the federal legislation changing the name from Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park to Theodore Roosevelt National Park, enabled the preservation of the demonstration herd under the heading Historic Preservation, presumably to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. As recently as 2014, the TRNP Foundation Document discussed the importance of the feral horses to the cultural landscape of the park but did not mention specific landscapes. More recently, the NPS produced a cultural landscape for the Peaceful Valley Ranch, which turned from open range cattle ranching to raising thoroughbred horses. Within the document the park discussed feral horses as part of the park's wildlife rather than as livestock. The authors made no consideration for or against the importance of the herd as a biotic cultural resource. In retrospect and considering the nearly 50-year policy treating the horses under historic preservation, this was an oversight, not an exclusion.

Consultation

The State of North Dakota, through its elected officials, has been in discussions with the National Park Service talking about the importance of the feral horses to the citizens of North Dakota for over 50 years. As early as 1965, the entire North Dakota congressional delegation wrote letters to the park superintendent in support of keeping the horses (McLaughlin 1989). In 1974, Governor Link worked with the NPS to transfer ownership of the horses to the park, ensuring long-term management for the benefit of North Dakotans in perpetuity (see attached letter; Harmon 1986). Additionally, the State of North Dakota passed two pieces of legislation discussing the importance of the TRNP horses to the history of North Dakota. First, in 1993, when the state made the Nakota horse its State Honorary Equine, citing its history as a fundamental characteristic. More recently, in 2023 the legislature passed Senate Concurring Resolution (SCR 4014) imploring the NPS to keep the herd in TRNP, once again citing its historical importance.

The importance of the horses and TRNP to North Dakotans has been noted throughout the decades of cooperation between the park and the state. Given the history of collaboration between the park and the State of North Dakota, we need to work as long-term partners in the management of the horses now and in the future. The nature and history of the park, including the horses, needs to be honored just as we honor the legacy and history of conservation and ranching.

As an advocate for the historical resources for North Dakota and a consultation partner under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the State Historical Society requests that the NPS

continue decades of cooperation with North Dakota's elected officials to honor the commitments made to Governor Link in 1974 and consider the impacts of the horses on the cultural landscapes of TRNP as a biotic cultural resource.

Sincerely,

William D. Peterson, PhD

State Historic Preservation Officer

William & Petro

(North Dakota)

Attachments:(5)

- 1: Photo of Horses at Peaceful Valley Ranch
- 2: July 2, 1974, Letter from Superintendent Lancaster to Governor Link with response
- 3: Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park Dedication Program June 4, 1949
- 4: Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park Brochure
- 5: July 20, 1976, Letter from Natural Resources Coordinator Ellison to Superintendent Lancaster

1: Photo of Horses at Peaceful Valley Ranch (1910)



2: July 2, 1974, Letter from Superintendent Lancaster to Governor Link with response



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park Medora, North Dakota 58645

July 2, 1974



Hon. Arthur Link Governor of North Dakota Bismarck, North Dakota 58501

Dear Governor Link:

We are pleased to inform you that ownership of the wild horses within Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park has finally been resolved. All branded stock, have at this time, been removed by their owners and the issuance of a public notice has not brought forth further claims of ownership.

As we indicated to you some years ago, the animals will now be managed in a manner similiar to other wildlife within the park. We will disturb them as little as possible, leaving nature to take its course. Periodic reductions in herd size will in time be necessary and the introduction of new stallions to prevent inbreeding will be undertaken from time to time.

We wish to thank you for your interest in the horses over the years and hope these animals continue to serve as an attraction and as an incentive for people to visit the North Dakota badlands.

Sincerely yours,

John O. Lancaster Superintendent Mr. John O. Lancaster, Superintendent Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park Medora, North Dakota 58645

Dear Mr. Lancaster:

Thank you for your letter of July 2, 1974, wherein you informed me that the ownership of the wild horses within Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park has been resolved.

Good news!

Best of luck to you in the management of the wild horses from now on. I am certain these horses will continue to serve as an attraction and an incentive for people to visit North Dakota and the North Dakota Badlands.

Sincerely yours,

ARTHUR A. LINK Governor

AAL: mk

3: Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park Dedication June 4, 1949

DEDICATION

JUNE 4, 1949

Theodore Roosevelt

National Memorial Park

Sponsored by the Greater North Dakota Association Fargo, North Dakota

- PROGRAM -

Starting at 11:00 a, m.—Dedication site 5 miles east of Medora on U.S. No. 10.

North Dakota Hymn-Orland Heskin, Bismarck.

Invocation—Rev Felix Andrews, Gladstone, State Chaplain, Disabled American Veterans.

Welcome—R. J. Hughes, Wahpeton, President Greater North Dakota Association

Historical Background—W. L. Gardner, New England, Dedication Chairman.

Introduction of Guests—Governor Fred G. Aandahl, Master of Ceremonies.

Greetings from Canada—Honorable L. F. McIntosh, Minister of Cooperation and Cooperative Development and Municipal Affairs, Province of Saskatchewan.

Prairie States Park—E. E. Krebsbach, Sidney, Montana, representing John W. Bonner, Governor of Montana.

Roosevelt and the Indian—Antelope, son of the famous Sioux chief, Running Antelope, translation by Judge Francis Zahn, interpreter, Standing Rock Reservation.

Roosevelt and the Rancher-T. F. Roberts, Medora.

Roosevelt and the Military—Captain W. C. Holt, U. S. Navy, Minne-apolis:

Roosevelt and the Rough Riders—Sergeant Royal A. Prentice; Tucum-cari, New Mexico.

Message-Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Association.

Introduction-U. S. Senator Milton R. Young by W. L. Gardner.

Remarks-Senator Young.

Presentation Address-Congressman Lemke.

Acceptance and Introduction of Speaker—Director Newton B. Drury, National Park Service.

Dedication Address—Secretary Julius A. Krug, Department of the Interior.

Benediction—Rev. E. I. Hageman, St. John's Lutheran Church, Dickinson.

Star Spangled Banner-Williston Junior Band.

At 10:30 a.m. the United States Air Force will pay tribute to Theodore Roosevelt by a flight of B-29's from the Rapid City, South Dakota, Base of the 28th Bombardment Wing, Colonel A. T. Wilson, Jr., Commanding.

Music-Mandan High School Band-10:00 to 11:00 a. m.

Williston Junior Band—12:30 to 1:15 p. m. Dickinson High School Band—1:15 to 2:00 p. m.

In charge of parking-Williston Riding Club.

-- DEDICATION --

Sponsored by the Greater North Dakota Association:-

R. J. HUGHES, Wahpeton, President. F. A. IRISH, Fargo, Treasurer.
LEROY PEASE, Fargo, Executive Secretary.
M. J. CONNOLLY, Fargo, Assistant Secretary.

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DEDICATION COMMITTEE:

W. L. GARDNER, New England, Chairman

EX-officio members:

GOVERNOR FRED G. AANDAHL
GENERAL HEBER L. EDWARDS, Adjutant General.
SUPERINTENDENT RUSSELL REID, State Historical Society.
SUPERINTENDENT ALLYN F. HANKS and HISTORIAN RAY
H. MATTISON, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park.
EINAR DAHL, Watford City and ORVILLE BURDA, Dickinson,
members with W. L. Gardner of Executive Board.
JAMES B. CONNOLLY, Dickinson, Secretary.

A. U. ANDERSON, Crosby.
L. M. BARNHART, Medora.
ARLEY R. BJELLA, Williston.
A. M. CHRISTENSEN, Minot.
R. L. DUSHINSKE, Devils Lake.
F. E. FITZSIMONDS, Bismarck.
J. R. KENNEDY, Fargo.
N. JAY LEONARD, Grand Forks.
JOHN PAULSON, Fargo.

JOHN PLATH, Bismarck.
M. J. RASCHKO, Dickinson.
FRANK RAY, JR., Dickinson.
JOHN ROUZIE, Bowman.
HOWARD STONE, New Rockford
HUGH THOMPSON, Glendive.
S. W. THOMPSON, Devils Lake.
EARLE F. TUCKER, Bismarck.
F. P. WHITNEY, Dickinson.

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Park Feeding Concession-Eighth District, American Legion.

Before or after the pageant tour, the following entertainment is being offered at Medora:

CHATEAU DE MORES-State Historical Society, open house.

ART EXHIBIT AND ROOSEVELT MUSEUM — Bismarck Branch National League of American Penwomen; Quentin Roosevelt Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution; Mrs. H. J. Wienbergen, Dickinson, State DAR Regent, Coordinator.—Soil Conservation Service Building.

PUPPET SHOW—"Teddy Roosevelt in the Badlands," by Blanche and Roland Harding at the City Hall at 1:00 p. m., 4:00 p. m. and 7:00 p. m.

AIR EXCURSIONS—Sax Aviation Company, Buddy Ranch Field.

RODEO-Badlands Post, American Legion at 4:00 p. m.

HORSEBACK RIDES-Buddy Ranch.

SPECIAL ART EXHIBIT—Rough Riders Hotel.

STREET CONCERT-Dickinson City Band.

DANCE-City Hall at 9:00 p. m.

-- PAGFANT --

The Badlands and Teddy Roosevelt

Written and Directed by (ELWYN A. NELLIS

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A VISIT TO THE ENCHANTED PAST—REALISTIC GLIMPSES INTO THE THRILLING ERAS OF A ROMANTIC AREA — A GLANCE AT THE PEOPLE WHO MADE NATIONAL HISTORY, UNFOLDED IN UNIQUE PAGE-ANTRY AMID THE NATURAL SETTING OF THE NORTH DAKOTA BADLANDS.

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SCENE I—THE INDIANS Sioux village before the coming of the white man. Indians from Standing Rock Reservation. Indian Dances — Mandan Indians, El Zagel Shrine.

SCENE II—LA VERENDRYE First white man to explore what is now North Dakota. Boy Scouts—Glen Ullin.

SCENE III—TRAPPERS A sordid page from history, trappers' annual rendezvous. Community Groups—Sidney, Montana.

SCENE IV—GENERAL A. H. SULLY Punitive expedition against the Indians—a result of the 1862 Minnesota massacre—led Sully's troops across the Badlands. Bismarck Junior Chamber of Commerce.

SCENE V—GENERAL GEORGE A. CUSTER Custer's cavalry in camp en route to the "last stand" in the Little Big Horn. Custer — George Armstrong Custer III, grand nephew of the famous leader, student at State College of Michigan. Sod Busters' Saddle Club—Hettinger County, North Dakota,

SCENE VI—MALTESE CROSS RANCH CABIN Maltese Cross or Chimney Butte Ranch cabin where Roosevelt began his western cattle operations. (Original cabin is now on grounds of State Historical Society, Bismarck). Theodore Roosevelt—Lyle Delaney, Dickinson.

SCENE VII—THE RANCHERS A round-up camp. Music—Watford City Cowboy Band. Western justice, a cattle rustler—Watford City Townspeople. Bismarck Horse Club.

SCENE VIII—COMING OF THE RAILROAD Northern Pacific Railway survey crew. Dickinson State Teachers College Students.

SCENE IX—STAGE COACH Coach established by Marquis de Mores for Medora-Deadwood run. Beach Junior Chamber of Commerce,

SCENE X—THE HOMESTEADER Ranchers resent intrusion into their domain of "nesters." Belfield Community Group

SCENE XI—PEACE—AND THE BIG STICK "Speak softly and carry a big stick."—Theodore Roosevelt at the Minnesota State Fair, September 2, 1901. Kitty Page of Fargo—"Miss North Dakota." Service Personnel—Bismarck Recruiting Stations. Music—Watford City High School Band.

Dedication To

The Citizens of the United States

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It is a privilege to welcome you to the dedication of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park. On this occasion we observe formally the distinction which Congress has given to this North Dakota area by adding it to the outstanding family of national parks, monuments, and historic sites which comprise the National Park System. We hope that these ceremonies will further your understanding of the National Park Service and particularly its obligations in relation to this memorial park.

This section of the Badlands of the Little Missouri now has been set aside to commemorate a great American whose personal experience here helped him to understand the problems of the West in relation to those of the nation as a whole. This park, therefore, is a fitting memorial to Theodore Roosevelt's bold leadership in the movement for the conservation of our natural resources.

One aspect of this conservation movement has been the preservation of important scenic, scientific, and historical assets under the administration of the National Park Service. By Act of Congress this Federal Service is enjoined to conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects and wildlife within the areas it administers, and to provide for their enjoyment in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future generations.

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, like all the units of the National Park Service, now belongs to the citizens of the whole United States, but it is particularly to you, as neighbors and friends, that the National Park Service must look for assistance in the solution of the administrative and other problems that it is expected will be encountered here.

It gives me great pleasure to extend our sincere appreciation to the State Dedication Committee, sponsored by the Greater North Dakota Association, for their generous contribution in arranging and helping to carry out this ceremony.

NEWTON B. DRURY, Director National Park Service

4: Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park Brochure

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK NORTH DAKOTA



THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK

NORTH DAKOTA



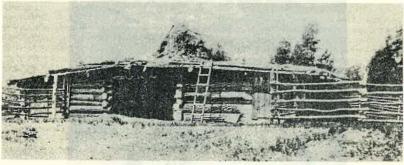
UNITED STATES

Department of the Interior

J. A. Krug, Secretary

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Newton B. Drury, Director



STABLES AT ROOSEVELT'S ELKHORN RANCH

Theodore Roosevelt's enduring contributions to the conservation of our country's natural resources for public benefit are commemorated by this park. The experiences he shared with pioneers on the Dakota frontier enabled him to understand the problems of the West and won him outstanding popularity with its citizens. There, also, he gained firsthand knowledge of the exhaustibility of natural resources and the need for measures to reduce wanton waste occasioned by indiscriminate exploitation of the perishable assets of our public lands for immediate private or sectional gains.

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park was established by Act of Congress, April 25, 1947. Thus, about 27,756 acres* of Federally owned land in the badlands of the Little Missouri in North Dakota were set aside for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the whole nation. The memorial park will give visitors an opportunity to examine closely historic spots, geology, wildlife, and flora which are a part of this setting that has been particularly distinguished because of its historical association with Theodore Roosevelt, the twenty-sixth president of our nation.

* Subsequent legislation has increased area to approximately 58.000 acres.

HISTORY

No other president of the United States has been so closely associated with the Dakotas as was Theodore Roosevelt when he shared the pioneer life of the Trans-Mississippi West-His activity here began in September 1883, when he came to the Little Missouri region to hunt buffalo. Guided by Joe Ferris, Roosevelt displayed much physical emergy in persisting in the difficult hunt until he shot a bison. He also arranged to enter into the cattle business. The contract whereby he became owner of the Maltese Cross brand was dated St. Paul, September 27, 1883. By it, Sylvanne Ferris and A. W. Merrifield were to run cattle for him on their Chimney Butte Ranch, about 7 miles south of Medora.

Personal tragedy was partly responsible for the extension of Roosevelt's ranching operations. Both his mother and wife suddenly passed away in February 1884, when he was a youth of 25, serving his third term in the New York Assembly. Thereafter he abandoned his political pursuits temporarily. Ranching in the desolate, wild beauty of the badlands afforded him the opportunity to realize his boyhood dreams of living the free life of pioneer hunters, sleeping under the stars, observing the wild animals in their native haunts, and dealing with pioneers and sharing their experiences in the opening of a new settlement. On returning to the badlands in June 1884 and finding that his herds had well withstood the winter, Roosevelt sought out a location for a ranch of his own. The land was not yet surveyed and so, like most of his fellow ranchers, he had little opportunity to make legal record of his property, and no records have been found to show that he ever acquired a title to the area. This was a site some 35 miles north of Medora. Here, in a clump of cottonwoods on the bank of the Little Missouri, he developed his home ranche It was located on an alluvial plain looking out over the Little Missouri River on the east and hemmed in on the other sides by a range of bluffs typical of the badlands. The ranch was called the Elkhorn because of a pair of locked antlers found nearby.

Here in the fall and winter of 1884-1885 was constructed a cabin of hown logs, made from the cottonwoods in the grove where it was situated. During 1885 other buildings were erected, including stables and corralse His ranch buildings were possibly typical of those of other home ranches, but his cabin probably afforded more conforts than did most homes on the range, A huge fireplace, private room, small bookshelf, and rocking chair offered the young statesman, turned rancher, op-portunities for writing and reading, a pleasure which he did not neglect even when on the hunt, the roundup, or enforceing law. Much of his Life of Thomas Hart Benton and some other articles were written while at the Elkhorn. More important for the sake of his literary achievements. however, were the experiences and observations which he later utilized when writing The Winning of the West.

Theodore Roosevelt also was interested in the actual operations of ranching. He participated not only in the supervision of his own ranch but in the hard work of the roundup. He thus gained firsthand knowledge of the work and play of the cowboys as well as the ranch owners. He boasted no great ability as a rider or a roper or even as a hunter, but he displayed his ability at leadership in successfully organizing a local stockmen's association. His fellow ranchers showed their confidence in him by electing him president of the Little Missouri River Stock Association and by having him represent them at meetings of the Montana Stockgrowers' Association, with which they were affiliated.

When Theodore Roosevelt first came to the badlands, the region was largely haryond the pale of the law, that is, except for "gun-law." But he helped demonstrate the practicability, even then, of using the regular courts. At much personal effort, he overtook three thieves who stole his boat and brought them to justice before the regular courts and collected fees for his service as "Deputy Sheriff." As orator on a 4th of July program at the new town of Dickinson in 1886, he boldly told the pioneer settlers about their duties and obligations as citizens as well as of their privileges under our republic.

Roosevelt lost considerable sums through his Dakota ranching venture, but he appears never to have regretted this, and most writers feel that the experience thus gained remarded him for the loss, His knowledge of people of the West, as a result of sharing their life, helped him understand their problems and won him popularity among them. The famous military organization, the "Rough Riders," was an outgrowth of Roosevelt's experience in the badlands. The fame resulting from its exploits during the Spanish-American Barwas Important in his rise to the governorship of New York, the vice-presidency, and later the presidency of the United States.

In the West he also gained knowledge of the exhaustibility of natural resources and the importance of their conservation. During his presidency, he made important contributions to the inauguration of conservation programs to protect from selfish and wasteful exploitation natural resources which should be conserved in the interest of the general welfare. In the book, Roosevelt in the Badlands. Hermann Hagedorn has given a full and interesting account of this chapter of the future President's life. He has pointed out Roosevelt's own appreciation for the intangible returns from his Dakota experiences. It was an idyllic life he led and shared with hunters, ranchers, comboys, and pioneers, whose virtues he adored and whose faults he forgave. Here, as he said, "the romance of my life began."

The lure of profits attributed to the open range cattle industry attracted several notable characters. Of all Roosevelt's contemporaries there, the best known and most colorful was the Marquis de Mores. Financial means at his disposal enabled him to launch several industrial ventures. His slaughter-house at Medora and his scheme for direct marketing of meats to the city table failed for a number of reasons, in Medora, which he founded early in 1883, are several structures beside the smokestack of his packing plant which date back to the Marquist promotion of the region. Most interesting is his country home or "chateau" which he maintained for his family. It is now a state historic site. where visitors can see the furnishings used by the Frenchman. Here Roosevelt paid occasional social calls and enjoyed discussions about horsemanship with the Marquis. The fact that they had misunderstandings is a matter of record, but the differences appear to have been exaggerated. The fact that either was dishonorable is contradicted by the same sources.



THEODORE ROOSEVELT

This photograph, made about 1883, when Roosevelt first visited the badlands, is one of several which show the young statesman posing in unusual attire of the hunter and cowboy which he fancied. On that frontier the buckskin tunic had not yet been entirely discarded and newcomers who desired them went some distance to a ranch where those expertly made by a Mrs. Maddox were obtainable.

GEOLOGY

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Fark is an area of great scenic appeal. The flatness of the plains to the east is broken by the conical hills, flat-topped buttes, and table lands along the Little Missouri River. The sands, shales, and clays are gray, blue, buff, and yellow, interspersed with these pastel shades are black coal beds and thin red and brown bands of iron-stained sand and clay. The red baked shales add brilliance to the scene. Processes of erosion have caused these shades to mingle and blend with one color predominating at one place and a different color at another place close by.

The origin of the surface rocks, known to geologists as the Fort Union formation, goes back many millions of years to the dawn of the Genozoic era. Streams originating in the newly uplifted Rocky Mountains flowed eastward and deposited their load of sediments in broad lagoons, lakes, and deltas. The rock thus produced is found over a large part of western North Dakota and eastern Montana. Climatic conditions were such that a luxurious vegetation flourished.

The accumulation of forest debris in the lagoons and swamps often attained considerable thickness, and when later covered by sediments, was converted into coal. The type of coal found in the park is the soft variety known as lignite.

There are several beds of coal varying in thickness from about an inch to
over seven feet. There is also considerable variation in purity and texture. Some
beds appear to be of fair quality, but most
of them are thin and interlaid with bands

TYPICAL BAOLANDS SCENE
Near Park Headquarters at Rhantse Valley Ranch
Peaceful

Grant Photo





PIAZZA OF THE ELKHORN RANCH

of sand and clay, When exposed to the air, the coal slakes and breaks into small fragments. Lignite coal has a coarse, woody texture, and in much of it the outlines of leaves and flattened branches can be readily seen.

Many trees in isolated sections were buried in place by mud and were left in a standing position. Mineral-laden waters percolating and seeping through the woody structure converted it into stone and produced what is commonly known as petrified wood. Later, erosional processes carried away the covering of clays, sands, and shales, and exposed the trunks of the trees, some erect and in place, converted to solid rock. Some of the trees were veritable forest giants, exceeding 10 feet in diameter. Numbers of these still exist in place but most, of course, fell and have been broken into fragments.

Much of the area is overlaid by a hard, reddish, brick-like rock known lo-cally as "scoria." It is abundant in the park and surrounding country. The origin of the scoria is an interesting segment of earth history. It is believed the exposed coal beds became ignited by either lightning or prairie fires, or possibly by spontaneous combustion. The heat generated by the burning coal baked the overlying clay into a natural brick. This, of course, was more resistant to erosion than the surrounding clays and shales and offered protection against the beating rains. Many buttes and spires are capped by masses of this red, brick-like material which adds to the scenic qualities of the park.

TREES AND FLORERS

There are many groves of cottonwoods along moist river bottoms. There are three species of juniper as well as cedar and ash. Sage-brush is abundant. shrubs are aromatic sumac, chokecherry, buck-brush, wild plum, dogwood, buffaloberry, rabbit-brush, wild rose, juneberry, and current. Yucca and pear cactus are found in numerous places.

Wild flowers are abundant in the spring and early summer. Some varieties persist throughout the summer and fail months. The more common flowers are the pasque flower, gumbo lily, wild sweet pea, larkspur, arnica, cow parsnip, sunflower, mountain bluebell, goldenrod, wild aster, hairbell, and prairie phlox.

WILDLIFE.

The area encompassed by Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park tells the progress of wild game from abundance to scarcity or even elimination of some species. Here, the rich grasslands, wooded gulches, and wind-swept ridges once furnished abundant food for thousands of bison, mountain sheep, elk, mule and white-tail deer, grizzly bear, wolf, and antelops. Within the past 75 years, the bear, buffalo, mountain sheep, and elk have passed from the scene. Today, deer are the only large mammals found in the park.

Smaller animals are found in abundance. Among the more common are porcupines, chipmunks, prairie-dogs, coyotes, badgers, beaver, wildcats, cottontails and jack-rabbits. Bullsnakes, blue racers and rattlesnakes are found in the area.

The park is rich in bird life, Hawks, eagles, owls, woodpeckers, flickers, sparrows, meadow larks, swallows, buntings, wrens, orioles, and other common species are frequently observed.

ADMINISTRATION - LOCATION

Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park is a part of the National Park System and is administered by the National Park Service. It is under the immediate supervision of a superintendent. Communications should be addressed to Medora North Dakota

Park Headquarters is located at Peaceful Valley Ranch 6 miles from Medora, N.D. over a surfaced road which joins U. S. Highway 10, 6 miles east of the town. Medora is on the main line of the Northern Pacific Railroad. This is the only railroad with direct connections to Medora. The nearest transcontinental air fields are located at Bismarck, N. D., and Niles City, Mont.

The most popular means of transportation is by automobile. U. S. Highway 10 is suggested for east-west travelers. U. S. Highway 85, the nearest north-south highway, intersects Route 10, 18 miles east of Medora. Secondary roads may be impassable after prolonged rains. Visitors should inquire locally concerning road conditions at such times.

Nearly all of the park is accessible to horseback or hiking parties. Visitors will find this a pleasant way to enjoy the

PUBLIC SERVICES TO VISITORS

There are no overnight accommodations in the park. Visitors must arrange for lodging and meals in nearby cities and villages.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

The basic rules and regulations governing National Park Service areas apply to Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, These rules and regulations are in force for the primary purpose of preserving the area in as near a natural condition as possible. In order that future generations may enjoy it as much as those of our con time, visitors are requested to assist the administration by observing the following regulations

(1) Be careful with fire. Build fires only in designated places. Do not throw burning tobacco from moving vehicles or horseback. Be sure all fires are extinguished before leaving them.

(2) The area is a wildlife sanctuary. Visitors are requested to refrain from molesting wildlife in any manner. The feeding of animals is prohibited. Remember, they can take care of themselves better if not pampered by human beings.

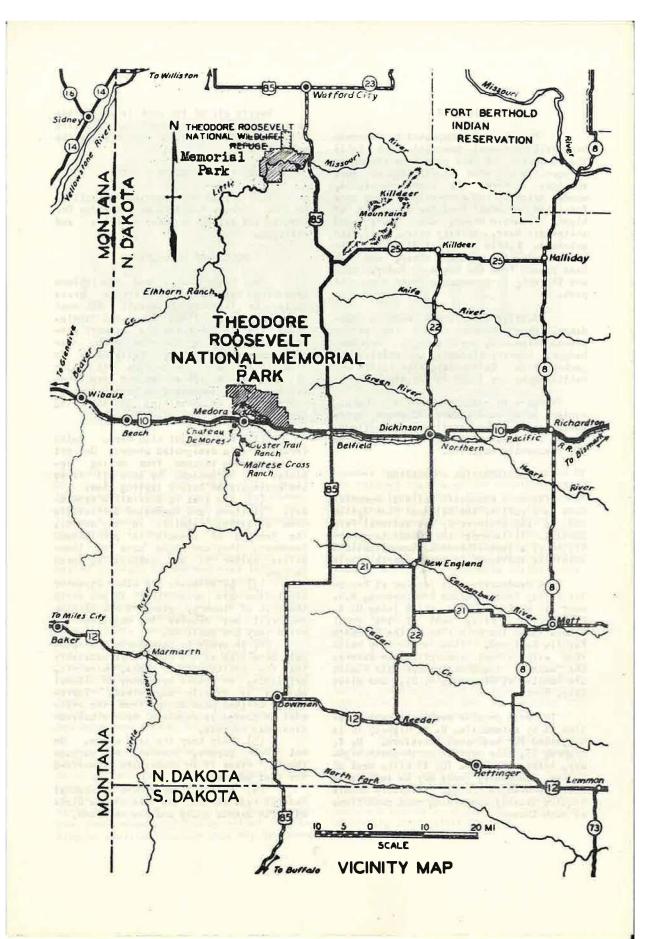
(3) Wildflowers and other types of vegetation are protected. If you strip the area of flowers, visitors who follow you will not receive the enjoyment to which they are entitled.

(4) In order to perpetuate the natural condition of the park it is necessary that the collection of rocks, minerals, artifacts, or other specimens of natural objects be closely supervised. Therefore, written permission from the official in charge is required before collections can be made.

(5) Help keep the area clean. Do not throw papers, rubbish, or garbage about. Place it in containers specified for that purpose.

(6) When not superseded by special

Federal regulations, the laws of the State of North Dakota apply and are enforced.



5: July 20, 1976, Letter from Natural Resources Coordinator Ellison to Superintendent Lancaster

1-12-15 July 20, 1976 Mr. John O. Lancaster, Superintendent Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park Medora, North Dakata 58649 Dear John: I just had to take a minute to write you after reviewing your plan for the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park that was circulated under OMB A-95 agreement with State Planning. I was impressed with the amount of cooperation that the Park has established with the private, state and local entities surrounding the units of the Park. You and your staff are to be complimented for the support that you give to the local cultures and communities through your cooperative efforts. I realize your responsibilities lie within the Park in the preservation of the historical natural values, but I feel you have exemplified the kind of cooperative relationship with the people who live in the area, and this should be recognized. Keep up the good work, John. Sincerely yours, R. A. "Ike" Ellison, Coordinator Natural Resources Council RAE:pb JUL 2 0 1976

COLORADO WILD HORSE WORKING GROUP (CWHWG) CHARTER - FINAL October 25, 2023

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Colorado Wild Horse Working Group was created by Senate Bill 23-275 to make recommendations on humane, non-lethal alternatives for wild and feral equines¹ that are taken off range in Colorado. Senate Bill 23-275 also allows the Colorado Department of Agriculture to provide state-level support for the existing work of local non-profit groups in delivering immunocontraceptives through darting and to support on-range stewardship of rangelands and wild horses.

Due to the interconnected nature of these efforts and the scope and scale of subsequent off-range care and adoption needed, the Wild Horse Working Group may make recommendations regarding other wild horse management topics, including fertility control, to the Colorado Department of Agriculture for implementation under SB 23-275.

The Wild Horse Working Group is a recommending body only. While its recommendations are expected to be highly influential in on- and off-range wild horse management in Colorado, the Working Group has no authority to bind or obligate the State or any Working Group members.

MEMBERSHIP

Senate Bill 23-275 identified the diverse stakeholders and interests to be represented in the Working Group. Members were appointed by the Governor, the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, the Colorado State Director of the Bureau of Land Management, the Southern Ute Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the US Forest Service Regional Forester. Each Working Group member may designate one alternate to attend meetings and participate in discussions and decision points if the member is unable to attend.

STAKEHOLDER SEAT	WORKING GROUP MEMBER	ALTERNATE
Colorado Governor's Office	Nicole Rosmarino	
Colorado Department of Natural Resources	Tim Brass	
Colorado Department of Agriculture	Les Owen	
Colorado Tourism Office	Andrew Grossman	
State Land Board	Abe Medina	William Woolsten
House Majority Leader's Designee	Rep. Barbara McLachlan	
House Minority Leader's Designee	Rep. Mike Lynch	Sen. Perry Will
Wild Horse Advocate #1	Tessa Archibald	
Wild Horse Advocate #2	Sandra Solin	
West Slope Resident	Tracy Scott	
Nonprofit Environmental Conservation Org.	Elise Lowe-Vaughn	
Rancher #1	Donald Broom	
Rancher #2	Callie Scritch0ield	
Local On Range BLM Partner #1	Stella Trueblood	
Local On Range BLM Partner #2	Cindy Wright	Aletha Dove
Local On Range BLM Partner #3	Kathy DeGonia	Cindy Day

¹ This term is intended to be inclusive of members of a species of the genus equus that is free-roaming and is historically associated with Colorado and the western US. "Wild horse" includes wild, free-roaming horses and burros as defined under the federal Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act and any other feral horses, burros, and mules.

COLORADO WILD HORSE WORKING GROUP (CWHWG) CHARTER - FINAL October 25, 2023

STAKEHOLDER SEAT	WORKING GROUP MEMBER	ALTERNATE
Local On Range BLM Partner #4	Judy Cady	George Brauneis
Local On Range BLM Partner #5	TJ Holmes	
US Forest Service	Dwayne Rice	
Bureau of Land Management	Alan Bittner	
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe	David Stoner	
Department of Corrections	Mitch Karstens	Kayla Shock
Southern Ute Tribe	Jason Mietchen	Tom Arthur

WORKING GROUP MEMBER COMMITMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The Colorado Wild Horse Working Group was established to work collaboratively to develop recommendations to improve wild horse management in Colorado. In order to deliver on this charge, Working Group members will hold themselves and one another to the following commitments and expectations.

- Attend all Working Group meetings; if unable to attend, ensure that designated alternate is informed and prepared to engage fully in the discussion and in any decision points.
- Share opinions, experiences, and ideas with honesty, respect, and kindness; be hard on problems but easy on people.
- Be open to new ideas and perspectives; acknowledging and understanding others' views can occur without acceptance or agreement with them.
- Commit to and participate in shared learning; the better the group understands, the better prepared it will be to find new solutions.
- Recognize that disagreement is part of the collaborative process and is important for healthy and thoughtful decision making; disagree without being disagreeable.
- Be forthcoming with concerns and counter-perspectives; the group cannot address issues it has not heard.
- Speak for yourself and those you may represent; do not presume to know what anyone else thinks, wants, or knows.
- Refrain from characterizing other Working Group members' positions, ideas, or perspectives
 outside of meetings; refrain from speaking on behalf of the Working Group or appearing to
 do so.
- Make every effort to avoid surprises; notify the Working Group of any upcoming statements, actions, or decision by you or your entity that may relate to the work of the Working Group.
- Commit to consensus building; work hard to find ways to bring others on board with proposals and be forthcoming with what it would take for you to support a proposal.

COLORADO WILD HORSE WORKING GROUP (CWHWG) CHARTER - FINAL October 25, 2023

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Colorado Wild Horse Working Group welcomes civil and constructive public comment. The Working Group anticipates that public comment will enhance members' understanding of issues and inform their decision making. Written public comment may be provided at any time at CDA wildhorseprogram@state.co.us. The facilitation team will combine written comments into a single document and provide that document to Working Group members on a monthly basis. If requested by the Working Group, the facilitation team may also provide a monthly high-level summary of written comments.

Every full Working Group meeting will include 30 minutes for verbal public comment. Commenters must sign up prior to speaking. Each comment will be limited to 2 minutes. First-time commenters will have the opportunity to speak before individuals who have commented at previous meetings. The Working Group will hear as many comments as possible during the identified 30-minute window. Personal attacks, name calling, and profanity will not be tolerated and will result in a commenter's time concluding prematurely. All threats, verbal or written, will be referred to local law enforcement.

DECISION MAKING

In order to honor the interests and contributions of all stakeholders, the Working Group will strive to achieve consensus in all its decisions. Consensus means that all Working Group members can live with a decision, even if it is not their preferred outcome. Coming to a consensus decision requires that all Working Group members commit to creative problem solving and to revising and refining ideas to create as much opportunity for agreement and support as possible. Consensus is a high bar for decision making and will result from considerable deliberation and problem solving by Working Group members. Consensus decisions are expected to be the most impactful as they will reflect the greatest amount of agreement and the best work of committed stakeholders in wild horse management in Colorado.

Consensus also means that Working Group members will not block, fight, or disparage agreements during or outside Working Group meetings. If all Working Group members cannot commit to this, consensus has not been achieved. In the event that consensus cannot be achieved, the Working Group may make final decisions through majoritarian voting. A proposal will "pass" and be part of Working Group recommendations when supported by a two-thirds majority of Working Group members (or designated alternates) present during the meeting. If the Working Group resorts to voting, the primary considerations for majority support and minority opposition will be clearly articulated in meeting summaries, recommendation documents, and final reports submitted to the Colorado Legislature.

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATION TEAM

It is the role of the facilitator to ensure a safe and constructive collaboration environment during all meetings. The facilitator will develop agendas based on the ideas and preferences of the Working Group. The facilitator will enforce the Working Group commitments and expectations outlined above in a respectful, neutral, and even manner. It is not the job of the facilitator to advance or support any individual position, idea, or outcome. It is the job of the facilitator to ensure that all

COLORADO WILD HORSE WORKING GROUP (CWHWG) CHARTER - FINAL October 25, 2023

member voices are heard and treated with respect. The facilitator will also ensure that all public commenters and their perspectives are heard and treated with respect.

The rest of the facilitation team supports the Working Group by assisting with meeting planning and preparation and documentation. The facilitation team will provide members with a draft summary within a week of each meeting. Meeting summaries will capture key discussion themes, decisions, action items, and next steps. Except for presentations or stated official positions of an agency or organization, summaries will not attribute comments to individual members. Working Group members will provide any suggestions for change to a draft summary within a week of receiving it. Members will refrain from editing the contributions of others as captured in draft summaries and proposing content to be added to summaries that was not shared during the meeting. Working Group members and alternates will not share draft documents outside of the Working Group membership. Final documents are public information and may be shared widely.

Birth Order ID	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
199909	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	G,F	G,F	n/a	G	G*
200001	G	F	F	F	G,F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G,F	n/a	G	n/a	G
200010	G	F	F	F	G,F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200107	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	F	n/a	G, F	G,F	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	n/a	G
200108	G	n/a	n/a	F	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G*
200113	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	n/a	G,F	G,F	n/a	G	G*
200123	G, F	F	F	n/a	G,F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200221	G	F	F	F	G,F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	F	G	n/a	G
200326	F	F	F	n/a	F	F	F	F	F	n/a	F	G	G,F	n/a	G	G*
200404	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	G,F	n/a	n/a	F	F	F	G,F	G,F	F	G	F	G
200405	G, F	F	n/a	F	G	F	n/a	F	n/a	F	G,F	G,F	G	n/a	n/a	G
200406	G	F	n/a	F	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200409	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200417	F	F	F	F	n/a	F	F	F	F	F	G,F	G,F	n/a	G	n/a	G
200510	G, F	n/a	F	F	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200515	G, F	n/a	F	F	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200519	G	n/a	F	F	G, F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200521	G	F	F	n/a	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G,F	n/a	G	n/a	G
200601	n/a	n/a	F	F	F	F	n/a	F	F	F	G,F	G,F	n/a	G	G	G*
200603	G	F	F	F	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	n/a	G
200606	n/a	n/a	F	F	F	n/a	F	n/a	F	F	n/a	G,F	G	n/a	G	G*
200608	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	G, F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200613	n/a	n/a	F	F	F	n/a	F	F	F	F	F	G,F	G,F	n/a	G	G*
200614	F	F	F	F	F	n/a	F	F	F	F	G	G,F	n/a	G	F	G*
200615	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200618	G	F	F	F	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G,F	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	G
200619	F	F	n/a	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	G,F	G,F	G	n/a	G
200620	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	G,F	G,F	F	G,F	n/a	G, F
200701	G, F	n/a	F	n/a	G, F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200706	F	F	F	F	F	n/a	F	F	F	F	F	G,F	G	F	G	G*
200707	G	F	n/a	F	G, F	F	n/a	F	n/a	n/a	G,F	F	G	n/a	n/a	G
200709	F	F	F	F	n/a	F	F	F	F	F	F	G,F	G,F	n/a	G	G*
200710	G	F	F	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200713	G	F	n/a	F	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200714	n/a	n/a	n/a	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	G,F	G,F	n/a	G	G*
200715	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G, F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
200718	F	F	n/a	F	n/a	n/a	F	F	F	n/a	G,F	G,F	n/a	G	n/a	G
200719	n/a	n/a	F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	F	n/a	G	G	n/a	G,F	G*
200940	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G, F	F	F	n/a	G,F	F	G	F	G	G*
200941	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	F	F	F	G,F	F	G,F	n/a	G	G*
201001	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G, F	F	n/a	F	G,F	n/a	G,F	n/a	G	G, F*

201013	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G, F	F	F	F	G,F	n/a	G,F	F	G,F	G*
201015	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	n/a	F	n/a	G,F	F	G	F	G	G, F*
201021	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	n/a	G
201033	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G*
201035	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201036	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G, F	G,F	F	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201101	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201105	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	n/a	n/a	G,F	F	G,F	n/a	G,F	G*
201106	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G, F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G,F	F	G
201117	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G, F	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201310	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G,F	F	G	n/a	G
201341	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	F	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201342	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	n/a	n/a	G,F	F	G	n/a	n/a	G
201343	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	F	F	F	F	G,F	F	G,F	G, F*
201345	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201349	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	n/a	n/a	G,F	F	n/a	G	n/a	G
201404	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	F	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201405	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201407	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	n/a	F	G	F	G	G	G*
201408	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	F	G	n/a	G
201409	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	F	n/a	G	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	G
201410	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	n/a	F	G,F	F	G	F	G	G, F*
201411	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	n/a	n/a	n/a	G,F	n/a	G	n/a	G
201412	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G,F	F	G	n/a	G
201415	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201416	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201417	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	n/a	G,F	F	G,F	n/a	n/a	G
201418	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
201420	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G,F	F	n/a	G,F	F	G	n/a	n/a	G
201423	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	F	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	G
201427	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	F	n/a	G,F	n/a	G	n/a	F	G
201432	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	F	n/a	G,F	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	G
201437	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	F	G,F	F	G	n/a	n/a	G
201610	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	F	G	G,F	F	G	G*						
201644	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G,F	G,F	n/a	G,F	G*						
201702	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	F	G,F	G,F	n/a	G	G, F*						
201713	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	G	G*						
201807	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	G,F	G*						
201917	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	G	G*						
201921	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	G	G*						
201923	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	G	G*						
201925	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	G	n/a	G	G*						
201926	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	G	n/a	G	n/a	G						

| 201931 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G | G* |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 201933 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G,F | G* |
| 202001 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G | G* |
| 202004 | n/a | G | G | G, F* |
| 202005 | n/a | G | G,F | n/a | G |
| 202006 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G |
| 202007 | n/a | G | G | G,F | G* |
| 202009 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G |
| 202012 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G |
| 202013 | n/a | G | G | F | G* |
| 202014 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G |
| 202016 | n/a | G | G,F | G | G* |
| 202017 | n/a | G | G,F | G | n/a |
| 202018 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G |
| 202021 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202022 | n/a | G | G,F | G | G* |
| 202023 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G |
| 202024 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G |
| 202027 | n/a | G | G,F | G* |
| 202033 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G |
| 202034 | n/a | G | n/a | G |
| 202035 | n/a | G | G | F | G |
| 202036 | n/a | G,F | G | G* |
| 202040 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G, F |
| 202041 | n/a | G | G | n/a | G |
| 202042 | n/a | G | G,F | G* |
| 202101 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202102 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202109 | n/a | G | G,F | G |
| 202112 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202115 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202117 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202122 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202123 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202124 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202125 | n/a | G | G | G* |
| 202202 | n/a | G | G |
| 202204 | n/a | G | G |
| 202205 | n/a | G | G |
| 202214 | n/a | G | G |
| 202215 | n/a | G | G |
| 202302 | n/a | G |
| 202303 | n/a | G |

| 202304 | n/a | G* |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 202307 | n/a | G |
| 202308 | n/a | G |
| 202309 | n/a | G |
| 202310 | n/a | G |
| 202313 | n/a | G |
| 202315 | n/a | G |
| 202317 | n/a | G* |
| 202401 | n/a |
| 202404 | n/a |
| 202405 | n/a |
| 202408 | n/a |



Governor Doug Burgum



January 30, 2023

Angie Richman Superintendent Theodore Roosevelt National Park P.O. Box 7 Medora, ND 58645

RE: National Park Service Livestock Plan for Horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park

Dear Superintendent Richman,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comment on the alternatives developed by the National Park Service (NPS) for management of the horse and cattle herds at Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP), North Dakota's top tourism destination.

Over 500 years ago, European colonists introduced horses to the North American mainland. Horses have been a common sight on our landscape since long before North Dakota became a state in 1889.

As the NPS has noted, wild horses were already established in the North Dakota Badlands when President Truman signed the bill creating Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park in 1947 and when it received official national park status in 1978. For decades upon decades, these horses have coexisted peacefully with the national park and, in the process, have become a hugely popular attraction and an indelible symbol of the untamed character of the Badlands.

While there is no data linking TRNP visitation directly to the horses, one needs only to look at the outpouring of passionate comments and personal stories being shared with the NPS, elected representatives and local, state and national media outlets to understand that these wild horses are a major tourist attraction treasured by hundreds of thousands of visitors and social media followers from near and far.

Removing these horses from the park, or reducing the herd size to a level that fails to support genetic diversity and longevity, would strike a blow not only to park visitation but also to the economic vitality of Medora, nearby communities including Dickinson, and our entire state. Data compiled for our state Tourism Division shows TRNP was the top point of interest for travelers in our state last year, accounting for 770,000 trips – more than half of those being visitors from out of state. In Billings County, home to Medora and the South Unit, visitor spending totaled more than \$16 million in 2021.

We understand that management of feral horses is a constant challenge for the NPS and other U.S. lands, with more than 82,000 wild horses and burros nationwide according to the Bureau of Land Management. On your website, you have acknowledged that "Horses are ingrained in our nation's history, representing the old West, freedom, and beauty in many people's minds," but added that "The presence of feral horses in several park units is a challenge because they exhaust the park's natural resources with overgrazing, degradation of natural water sources, and out-competing native wildlife as their populations grow and grow." Your efforts to manage these herds and protect our beautiful national parks are deeply appreciated. We would offer to meet face-to-face with the National Park Service to explore opportunities for collaboration to help address these challenges at TRNP, as we recognize that the park is often underfunded despite trillions of dollars in federal spending.

We believe the wild horses in TRNP are worthy of your best management efforts, not only because of their positive impact on the park experience and tourism economy but also because of the deep connection they create to the park's namesake. Theodore Roosevelt recorded his observation of wild horses during his ranching days in the Badlands in the 1880s, writing, "In a great many – indeed, in most – localities there are wild horses to be found, which, although invariably of domestic descent, being either themselves runaways from some ranch or Indian outfit, or else claiming such for their sires and dams, yet are quite as wild as the antelope on whose domain they have intruded."

Roosevelt also famously stated: "I have always said I would not have been President had it not been for my experience in North Dakota. It was here that the romance of my life began." To this day, the wild horses in TRNP continue to evoke that sense of romanticism, adding to the ruggedness and otherworldly intrigue of the Badlands.

The NPS has said the park's mission is to preserve Roosevelt's conservation legacy and not his ranching legacy, yet the two cannot and should not be separated. Roosevelt famously said, "Conservation means development as much as it does protection." Ranching is development, and ranchers continue to play a vital role in conservation and the protection of our natural resources in North Dakota. To preserve one side of Roosevelt's conservation philosophy while dismissing the other is a disservice to his legacy and misses a golden opportunity to teach current and future generations about his critical role in the modern conservation movement – which will be prominently featured at the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum under development in Medora.

With less than 200 horses at TRNP, and given the vast resources of the federal government and vast size of the 46,000-acre South Unit, we have every confidence the NPS can find a way to manage the wild horses in a manner and herd size that supports genetic diversity and protects the environmental integrity and capacity of the park for current and future generations of visitors. The State of North Dakota stands ready to meet to discuss collaboration to assist in this effort. Thank you for your consideration.

With gratitude,

Doug Burgym

Governor of North Dakota





SCR Bill No. 4014

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee February 8, 2023

TESTIMONY OF

Sara Otte Coleman, Director Tourism and Marketing Division ND Department of Commerce

Good morning, Chairman Patten and members of the committee, I am Sara Otte Coleman, Director of the Tourism and Marketing Division for the North Dakota Department of Commerce. I am here today in support of SCR 4014 which urges the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the National Park Service to reconsider its proposed plan to eliminate livestock in Theodore Roosevelt National Park and develop a management plan that allows the wild horse to remain in the south unit as they have since the park opened.

Theodore Roosevelt National Park is a top location for leisure travelers visiting North Dakota. The park has seen an average of 700,000 visitors over the last 5 years. Our research has shown that visiting a national or state park is the top motivator of marketable trips to North Dakota. We love to tout the uncrowded adventure visitors can enjoy in all three units of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Based on the outpouring of comments our office has received, we believe park visitors highly value seeing the horses as part of their park experience.

The iconic wild horses found in Theodore Roosevelt National Park make this experience unique. No other national park in our region can offer this experience. Watchable wildlife motivates travel and the opportunity to see horses, bison, elk, mule deer, pronghorn and prairie dogs cohabitating within a preserved natural landscape is one of the joys of visiting Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The horses really set us apart from other national parks in the region.

These horses capture the attention of the media and influencers. In 2022, the Wild Horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park have been featured in 194 articles reaching 501 million. These stories have an advertising equivalency of \$4.6 million.

Sara Broers, travel writer, CEO of Travel with Sara, and Co-owner of the Midwest Travel Network says, "The wild horses are the magic of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and what makes the park unique. North Dakota, Medora, and the park will miss out on thousands of visitors each year without them. If the national park system wants to keep Theodore Roosevelt National Park alive and thriving the horses need to be a part of it."

- #1 on Midwest Living's list for photo ops in TRNP is Wild Horses: "Perhaps the most magical part of Theodore Roosevelt National Park is the free-roaming horses, found only in the South Unit." https://www.midwestliving.com/travel/north-dakota/9-cant-miss-photo-ops-theodore-roosevelt-national-park/
- Quirky Travel Guy, Scott Shetler: "The Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horse are among
 the biggest attractions for tourism in this famed North Dakota park."
 https://quirkytravelguy.com/roosevelt-national-park-animals-wildlife-horses/

- The Greatest Road Trip: "Theodore Roosevelt National Park is one of the few parks that is home to wild horses, another easy-to-spot species, offering a glimpse of what early visitors to America's wildest areas might have seen when horses roamed across the entire western half of the country."
 - http://www.thegreatestroadtrip.com/theodore-roosevelt-national-park
- Made #4 on the top 10 list for 10 Traveling Feet https://10travelingfeet.com/10-great-things-to-do-in-theodore-roosevelt-national-park-south-unit/
- According to Wandering Rose Travels, "The most interesting sightings at Theodore Roosevelt were wild horses."
 - https://www.wanderingrosetravels.com/destinations/united-states/five-reasons-visit-theodore-roosevelt-national-park/

Tourism is key to growing North Dakota's economy. Visitors to Billings County spent \$16 million in 2021. The opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library will create new visitors to the area and the Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Horses have been present in the park since its founding. Generations of travelers have visited the park and have enjoyed free roaming bands of horses. Removal of the horses eliminate a feature of the park guests are accustomed to seeing and a much-loved species of the North Dakota badlands. Many of the comments our office has been receiving are from visitors who frequently make return trips to the park to view the horses and have been coming for many years.

Thank you for your focus on this important issue.

Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4006

Introduced by

Senators Boschee, Patten, Rummel

Representatives Lefor, J. Olson, Steiner

1 A concurrent resolution urging Congress to establish federal protections for the wild horse herd 2 at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. 3 WHEREAS, Theodore Roosevelt was an American statesman, conservationist, historian, 4 and writer, who served as the twenty-sixth President of the United States; and 5 WHEREAS, in 1978, Theodore Roosevelt National Park became the only national park 6 named directly for a single person; and 7 WHEREAS, the wild horse herd, which was present during Theodore Roosevelt's era and 8 contributes to the historical setting and the culture of North Dakota, should be preserved as part 9 of our state's history; and 10 WHEREAS, the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park bring tourism and 11 economic benefits to the state; and 12 WHEREAS, there are significant concerns regarding the management of the wild horse 13 herd by Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the long-term health and preservation of the 14 herd: 15 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF NORTH DAKOTA, THE 16 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN: 17 That the Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly urges Congress to enact legislation establishing 18 federal protections for the wild horse herd of Theodore Roosevelt National Park to ensure the 19 long-term health and preservation of the herd for generations to come; and 20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State forward copies of this resolution 21 to the Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the National Park Service, the Superintendent of 22 the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, the House Subcommittee on Public Lands and 23 Environmental Regulation, the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks, and to each member 24 of the North Dakota Congressional Delegation.





Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates's post



Brenda Ready

After fighting for two years, Theodore Roosevelt National Park decided to let the wild horses stay in the park with a proper management plan, and being transparent with Advocates and their followers, and visitors of the park.

AGAIN! The Park has pulled the wool over our eyes with removing the older mares who are resistant to GonaCon...

Shame all all of you involved!

We travel from Nebraska two or three times a YEAR to spend time with these beautiful creatures. NOT ANYMORE! We are tired of paying your entry fees just to be slapped in the face!

I hope you feel better knowing people will not come...

#BOYCOTTING

#boycottheodorerooseveltnationalpark #shameonevilpeople #fightingforthespiritofthebadlands

2h Like Reply Message Hide

1 1





Theodore Roosevelt National Park 💝





Nikola Olson

I visited Theodore Roosevelt NP back in June. The horses ARE the reason I came! My third trip for that same reason. Will I have a 4th?

17h Like Reply

12:58









Park 🌣 · Follow

3d · 🕙



Linda Redman

BOYCOTT THIS PARK UNTIL THEY STOP TRYING TO WIPE OUT THE STATE'S ONLY WILD HORSE HERD!!!!!!!11

19h Like Reply

6 👛



Theodore Roosevelt National

Park 👲

23h · 🕙



Preston Scott

Please reconsider your plans to roundup all wild horses and many bisons. A lot can happen whilst rounding up via helicopter. Animals die routinely in every roundup. And please don't remove any horses- especially don't hive them to reservations: they breed and sell horses to slaughter every season! Please don't make the herd infertile- if they are eradicated in a few years your park will have significantly less visitors! Sincerely

11h Like Reply



Theodore Roosevelt National

Park 🔮

23h · 🕙

Like Reply





With the dark plans (and the underhanded way you have handled informing the public) for the wild horses that reside in TRNP, you could make it FEE-FREE DAY every day and I still would not support you!!

22h Like Reply





Kathy Lee

Maggie Flynn amen

22h Like Reply

Greg Linn

We have been here for 4.nights and love this place. Sadly we're moving on today and we are not done exploring the park. That means we're leaving some explorations for our next visit. Yes we're talking about having to return here someday. The beauty of this place is amazing. Until next time TRNP!

Like Reply





Sue Sefscik

Greg Linn Don't return until they keep their promise not to zero out the wild horses!



Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates P.O. Box 3562 Dickinson, ND 58602

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 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.

In support of SB 2331

As a contributor to several organizations dedicated to saving America's wild horse herds, I am writing in support of the above legislation. I am a lifelong supporter of keeping the herds healthy and wild and I believe it is an obligation of our federal government to ensure these animals are protected from rival interests attempting to annihilate them.

•Currently, these horses in Theodore Roosevelt's National Park have no protection.

TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed from their homeland at any time.

•In addition, wild horses are a boost to the economy of North Dakota.

These horses are a major draw for tourists, bringing visitors to Medora as well as surrounding areas. Their removal could and almost certainly would be a financial detriment to local businesses and jobs.

• Public support for these horses is overwhelming.

North Dakotans and Americans across the country are in favor of these horses being protected. **SB 2331** will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

•A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

February 6, 2025

Dear Legislators:

I am writing in support of SB 2331 to create a working group to collaborate with Theodore Roosevelt National Park on managing the wild horses.

As the state is most knowledgable about the wild horses at the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, this group would be more effective in helping the park and the horses. This group would also be able to address situations and pivot more quickly if needed.

Even though I'm based on the east coast, protecting our wild horses has always been important to me and I hope this legislation passes to continue to protect them.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Best, Karen L Jennifer DeVillez 567 Squaw Apple Rd. Durango, CO 81301

To whom it concerns,

I am listing the below points in SUPPORT of federal protections for the wild horse herd at Theodore Roosevel National Park.

• These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

• They Have No Federal Protection

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time. They deserve better.

Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could <u>negatively</u> impact local businesses and jobs.

Public Support Is Overwhelming

North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, **prevent** removals, and provide long-term oversight.

Sincerely, Jennifer I am writing this in reference to SB 2331 – This bill proposes forming a state working group to collaborate with Theodore Roosevelt National Park on managing the wild horses

I do not live in the general nor specific area of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park. I live in the state of South Carolina, 1659 miles away from the park. I am as avid about this proposal as supporters nearby.

Why? We have an inherent duty as the stewards of our lands and the animals who occupy them to provide these horses with their needed living conditions, appropriate forage and opportunity to continue their blood lines.

As their natural habitats continue to shrink and be compromised by our desire to expand our presence into their habitats, these horses need our protection

Therefore a group comprised of state and Theodore Roosevelt National park members must be formed to dedicate themselves to the proper well-being of the current and future wild horse herd members.

Sincerely, Rachel OBrien Landrum, SC I support forming a state working group to collaborate with Theodore Roosevelt National Park on managing the wild horses. Wild horses mitigate climate change that we are imposing on the planet. All efforts must be made to protect this necessary species.

I am writing in support of SB 2331 which calls for the formation of a working group to collaborate with the park and interest groups to ensure the long term management and protection of the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Bringing together state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties with the purpose of humane, science based conservation of this historic herd would prevent removals. Please, make round ups and removals a thing of the past by passing SB 2331.

Testimony IN SUPPORT of SB 2331

Please DO PASS SB 2331 to establish a Working Group that will work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to humanely manage the wild horses that live within the boundaries of the national park.

Wild horses are icons of the West and our heritage. Teddy Roosevelt valued and moved to preserve them and so should we. They are a living tribute to Teddy Roosevelt. Currently they've no federal protection under the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burros Act, as they are in the national park. They've been removed, received contraception to the point of infertility in some cases, been separated, some have received unsafe tracking collars. It's up to you now to conserve them. I am hoping it is not too late. Americans of all generations should be able to observe and cherish them for generations to come. The working group could come up with a plan to guarantee that for the future.

Tragically, the wild horses in TRNP are being extinguished by the Park and Forest Service. The horses are aggressively shotted with GonaCon contraception, it's less beneficial to the horses than PZP and GC is not designed or labelled for as frequent use as the Park is shotting. This aggressive shotting of mares is leading to permanent infertility/sterility. Some stallions are being shotted with it, which is not an intended use. This repeated shotting with Gonacon is leading to sterility, which will extinguish the genes of the herd. The Park Service is 'managing' it to extinctions. Teddy Roosevelt would be outraged and appalled. Please do not let the genes of the TRNP wild horses be extinguished on your watch. Move to establish this working group to conserve them.

The Wild Horses bring tourists to ND. They boost the ND economy. The TRNP wild horses bring \$37,500,000 in value to the local economy of Medora ND EACH YEAR. The horses are always one of the top 3 reasons why people visit TRNP. It is one of the reasons that I am planning a trip to ND. The number of visitors is expected to increase with the opening of the of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library. These horses are beloved by millions. Please move to conserve them by establishing this working group. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Mary Butiste-Jones

Attorney at Law

Volunteer for Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocacy

Testimony in support of SB2331 February 4, 2025

To the Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota:

I write in support of SB 2331, a bill that would add a new section to chapter 54-60 of the North Dakota Century Code to create a "Theodore Roosevelt National Park Wild Horse Working Group" and provide an appropriation of \$50,000 to fund administrative costs for the first two years. During this time, the ten-member group would define their goals and assignments and develop a budget. The proposed working group is modeled after similar advisory partnerships in other states with federally managed wild horse herds.

SB 2331 is a companion piece to SCR 4006, a resolution requesting federal protection for the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Wild horses have been present in the Little Missouri Badlands since at least the late nineteenth century and are a living symbol of North Dakota's ranching history. The horses are beloved by generations of North Dakotans, draw thousands of tourists to the park annually, and are followed by many more people on social media.

The National Park Service (NPS) formerly considered the horses to be an "historic demonstration herd" that aided their interpretation of Theodore Roosevelt's ranching experiences during the open range era. However, in 2022 they announced that they no longer considered ranching history part of their mission and began an Environmental Assessment (EA) process to eliminate both the wild horses and the longhorn cattle in the park. When North Dakota state officials and thousands of residents opposed the removal of the horses, Senator Hoeven intervened, and the EA was aborted during the spring of 2024.

However, the NPS has not publicly committed to maintaining the horses forever and to managing the herd to promote their health and survival. Park staff have long been ambivalent about the horses and have sought ways to remove them in the past. Unfortunately, since the EA process was abandoned, they seem to have found a way to quietly "work around" keeping the herd by sterilizing the mares with Gona Con, an immunosuppressant. I believe their intention is to sterilize the herd and let the horses die in the park without reproducing.

Federal protection is the only way to ensure that the horses remain in the park for future generations. And North Dakota must have a voice in their management. North Dakota state officials fought to prevent the NPS from removing the wild horse herd between 2022-2024 because the horses and the open range ranching era they represent are meaningful to North Dakotans and important for state tourism.

The working group will provide a mechanism for diverse North Dakota stakeholders to engage with park staff on issues of wild horse management and provide related support and advice for the mutual benefit of both state and federal interests. When former governor Doug Bergum

offered to initiate a federal/state collaboration, NPS officials declined, fearing that it might be abandoned by future state officials. This bill would codify the working group and ensure that the knowledge and interests of North Dakota policy makers, subject experts, and residents are expressed and taken into consideration when the NPS makes decisions about the management of the horses.

It is apparent that the people of North Dakota are deeply invested in ensuring that the horses remain in the badlands. I urge you to vote in support of 2331, so that North Dakotans can play a role in crafting their future.

Thank you for your consideration,

Irene Castle McLaughlin, PhD.

Author, "The History and Status of the Wild Horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park" (1989) and "Badlands Broomtails: The Cultural History of Wild Horses in Western North Dakota" (1991)

Christina DeGaglia testimony in support of SB2331

A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

I am in support of SB2331. Any help to protect our heritage and TRNP horses. They cannot speak, so we must advocate for them.

Erik Molvar Post Office Box 1802 Santa Ynez, CA 93460 February 5, 2025

Testimony on North Dakota Senate Bill 2331

Dear Legislators:

The following is the testimony of Erik Molvar on Senate Bill 2331, relating to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park working group regarding wild horses.

I am a wildlife biologist with peer-reviewed research published on the behavior, ecology, and population dynamics of Alaskan moose. I am also Executive Director of Western Watersheds Project, a nonprofit conservation group working to protect and restore wildlife and watersheds throughout the American West, an organization that has submitted comments on the management and disposition of wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP). Western Watersheds Project focuses on ecological land health, but also has developed organizational expertise on the viability of rare species, and has looked into the role of wild horses in Intermountain West ecosystems (which admittedly are somewhat different from the Great Plains ecosystems of Theodore Roosevelt National Park). Despite having perennial bunchgrasses less tolerant to heavy grazing than the sod-forming grasses of the Great Plains, we have found that wild horses have a lighter ecological impact, animal-for-animal, than domestic cattle and sheep.

Small and isolated populations of animals are at elevated risk of extirpation, both due to stochastic (i.e., random) events such as disease outbreaks or severe weather events, and due to long-term declines driven by the loss of genetic viability. Scientists have established, as a general rule, that a population must be kept above an effective number of breeding animals (N_e) of 100 in order to avoid the steady loss of genetic diversity and the genetic problems (birth defects, inbreeding depression which reduces offspring survival) that accompany inbreeding. The N_e calculation is made based on an equation that weights the total number of a population required to achieve an absolutely equal ratio of males and females actively participating in breeding in a given year, with the understanding that for some species (like wild horses or sage grouse, for example), a few males will do most of the breeding will many females, skewing the sex ratio of breeding animals. In such circumstances, the total population will need to be substantially larger than 100 in order to get the genetic equivalent of 50 males breeding equally with 50 females. For wild horses, I have used the correction factor derived in a study of wild horse breeding on the Pryor Mountain wild horse range in Montana² to determine that the total population of wild horses required to achieve a genetically viable population with $N_e = 100$ is 278 total animals. The present population of wild horses in

¹ Frankham et al., 2014. Genetics in conservation management: Revised recommendations for the 50/500 rules, Red List criteria and population viability analyses. Biol. Conserv. 170: 56-63.

² Singer et al., 2000. A demographic analysis, group dynamics, and genetic effective number in the Pryor wild horse population, 1992-1997. Pp. 73-89 in Ecological Studies of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, 1992-1997. Fort Collins, CO: US Geological Survey.

TRNP at present is substantially smaller than this critical threshold, and the population is isolated from other wild horse herds.

Wild horses in TRNP, like wild horse herds on western lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service farther west, have been subjected to fairly heavy-handed and intensive management by federal agencies. I am aware that the use of chemical birth controls is occurring in TRNP, in particular the chemical operating under the trade name GonaCon, which is designed to induce long-term (or even permanent) sterility in the interest of reducing herbivore population numbers. The effect of subtracting breeding adults permanently from the population is to lose their genetic contribution to future generations of the population, resulting in a long-term reduction in genetic diversity and a trend toward inbreeding. For this reason, the use of GonaCon is disfavored for use as a wild horse birth control method, especially so in small and isolated populations like the one inhabiting TRNP. Where birth control through darting is desired, the use of porcine zona pellucida (PZP) is more widely accepted, as it results in only temporary loss of breeding ability of 18 to 24 months, a reversible outcome that allows darted females to resume breeding, and contributing their genetic complement to the gene pool, once the drug wears off.

Because the TRNP wild horse population is significantly smaller that 278 individuals, it is particularly vulnerable to adverse genetic consequences of subtracting individual animals permanently from the breeding population.

The National Park Service is an agency with limited experience and capability in actively managing wild species, in significant measure due to the fact that they typically allow natural regulation of the wildlife inhabiting their park system. This is a good thing, in the overwhelming majority of situations. But it does not place the agency in the most advantageous position in actively managing a wild horse population, as they are presently attempting to do. Having more voices in the discussion to help inform NPS in its decision-making process could, in this instance, be beneficial.

It may also be true that TRNP might benefit from an expansion in acreage if it is determined that 278 wild horses require a larger land and forage base to thrive while also meeting the NPS legal requirements that direct the agency to manage for healthy, natural ecosystems. If this is the case, land swaps and other measures to expand Park boundaries would benefit not just wild horses, but bison and other species as well, and I hope that the legislature would also be supportive of such solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspectives, and I wish you the best in your deliberations.

Respectfully yours,

Frik Molyar

February 5, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing today in support of SCR 4006. The wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) are not protected by the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, so they deserve this protection to ensure their future and livelihood. At the same time, these horses are beloved by locals and visitors alike. They are a draw for tourists to the park and the surrounding areas and are worthy of protection for their contribution to the area. As such, there is overwhelming support for their protection, so it makes sense to pass this legislation.

In conjunction, it is important also to pass SB 2331 so there is a North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group to promote humane wild horse conservation in TRNP. With this in place, this should be a positive experience for both the wild horses and the people who live and visit the area.

Sincerely, Marybeth Diss

Please support Bill SB 2331!

Our wild horses are a part of important history in TRNP and are important to our tourism industry. We need to treat them with respect and care for them in a loving manner. Please support Bill SB 2331 so that we can create a working group with the TRNP to help achieve these goals.

Thank you!

Stephanie Manesis 359 8th Avenue South Fargo, ND 58103 701-429-8626

Please support Bill SB 2331!

Our wild horses are a part of important history in TRNP and are good for our tourism industry. We need to treat them with respect and have a cohesive plan on how protect them in the future. Please support Bill SB 2331 so that we can create a working group with the TRNP to help achieve these goals.

Thank you!

Bess Manesis 3609 Polk Street South Fargo, ND 58104 701-388-2994



Dear Committee Members,

We strongly support SB 2331 and recommend a "**Do Pass with Amendment.**" We are Wild Lands Wild Horses, a nonprofit organization located in New Jersey, and the creators

of the upcoming documentary on the historic horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. For over a decade, we have extensively documented this herd, witnessing firsthand how deeply they are woven into North Dakota's history. Their presence not only enriches the state's heritage but also draws visitors, ourselves included—back time and time again.

SB 2331's working group can assist North Dakota's constituents in providing a much-needed voice in preserving the future of the historical herd of horses in Theodore Roosvelt National Park.

However, we ask you to amend the following section:

Section 22G: One representative of any nonprofit group located in the state which is established to protect the horses in the Theodore Roosevelt national park, appointed by the governor;

To the following:

Section 22G: One representative from nonprofit groups located in the state which are established to protect the horses in the Theodore Roosevelt national park, appointed by the governor;

As written, the bill limits representation to a single ND group, which risks narrowing the advisory group's perspectives. Research and discussions with other welfare organizations, legislators, and animal welfare lawyers consistently highlight the need for at least two groups to ensure balanced oversight. Notably, the Colorado bill that served as a model for this legislation included multiple organizations, setting a precedent and emphasizing the importance of diverse representation.

We encourage you to consider including representatives from more than one nonprofit in this working group. Each group has different strengths, different skills and different ideas when it comes to this herd. More minds working collaboratively on behalf of the horses can only be advantageous to the animals and to the goals of the group. North Dakota has the opportunity to lead the nation as an example of what wild horse management can aspire to be - humane and effective, and inclusive of all stakeholders.

Thank you for your time, Dana Zarrello, Chelsea Halat, Jamie Baldanza & Deb Lee Carson TESTIMONY FOR THE NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATURE IN SUPPORT OF FEDERAL PROTECTIONS FOR THE WILD HORSES OF THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL PARK

SCR 4006 urges the protection of the Iconic Wild Horses of North Dakota who are not only unique genetically, but who through their very presence, dynamically boost the Economy of North Dakota by drawing Tourists and Wildlife Photographers from all over this Country, as well as Internationally to the Park in pursuit of the Visual American Masterpiece of these Magnificent Horses galloping across the Park's Breathtaking Landscape!

SB 2331 is a Bill to Establish a State led Networking Group who are to Assure Responsible Long Term Management of the Wild Horses in the Park, as Modeled on a similar Initiative that is already in practice in Colorado. This Working Group is being organized to unite Advocates, Experts, and Enthusiasts into a collaborative whose objective would be to assure Responsible Management of the Wild Horses in the Park while Safeguarding their Welfare and WellBeing.

Janice Cashell 181 Wood Creek Road Bethlehem, Ct 06751 (203) 558-7779 jcashel1@earthlink.net Dear Chair and Committee members,

My name is Melissa (Missy) Sivigny, and I am an advocate and supporter of the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. I am from Minnesota. I'm asking that you vote to support the bill Senate Bill 2331. This bill would create the formation of a working group that would work the Theodore Roosevelt National Park to help manage the wild horses. The resolution before you is asking our federal legislators to help get federal protection for this herd since they are not protected under the Wild and Free Roaming Burro Act.

I wholeheartedly support this bill. The park has consistently expressed that they lack sufficient resources to manage all aspects effectively. Establishing a working group to assist them presents an excellent opportunity to enable the park to collaborate with other knowledgeable stakeholders. And allow the transparency the public needs to repair their trust in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

When considering the financial aspect, the average visitor spends \$50 for day trips and \$200 for overnight stays, leading to an overall average of \$125 per person per day. With approximately 300,000 visitors, this totals \$37,500,000 annually. Dividing this amount by an estimated 200 wild horses in the park results in \$187,500 per horse each year. Multiplying that by the average lifespan of 18 to 20 years gives a lifetime value of \$3,375,000 to \$3,750,000 per horse. These horses do truly support the park and the town for the future.

I own two horses that were once wild in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. My husband and I frequently visit the park, primarily to see these magnificent animals. The presence of the horses makes this park truly special. While living in Minnesota, we have two local options to view bison. The horses attract many visitors, and mismanagement leading to their extinction or removal would harm both the park and the town of Medora. It's easy to plan a family vacation to explore other National and State parks, especially those near larger cities with more accommodations, where you can also see other species like bison. I hope that everyone sees the true treasure that the horses are to Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Thank you for your time and proposed support of this bill.

Missy

February 7, 2025

Dear Legislators,

I urge you to pass SB 2331 and SCR 4006. These are very important for the horses in the Teddy Roosevelt National Park. When I think of Teddy Roosevelt, I picture him astride his horse out west gazing at unspoiled land. He loved to hunt and camp and spend long weeks out in wilderness. SB 2331 will help in this effort, because it will follow success in Colorado by bringing diverse stakeholders across North Dakota to work together to help manage the herds of horses. North Dakotans want a healthy herd of horses who are happy and living as close to their natural methods as possible otherwise what is the point?? Having a group of, by and for North Dakotans is the best solution to provide excellent management for the horses. They know best what ND needs. SCR 4006 asks federal legislators to help secure federal protection for this herd. Think of the great tourist attractions that this herd will bring to ND! Just like how people flock to Yellowstone to see bison, they will also make a grand upswing to North Dakota to see this historic horse herd. We want these beautiful animals to be happy and healthy.

Thank you for your time Sincerely,

Carol Baumeister

February 5, 2025

Cathy Weeks 52 Silver Spur Rd W Cairo, NY 12413

RE: SB 2331

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Cathy Weeks and I am in support of Senate Bill 2331 and would like to respectfully ask you to please vote in favor of this bill.

This bill would create the formation of a working group that would work with the Theodore Roosevelt National Park to help manage the wild horses. The working group could consist of stakeholders such as horse advocates, legislators, tourism, town of Medora, indigenous population etc and would work with the park offering their insight, knowledge, help and more. For example sharing the knowledge of the use of Gona Con and the danger of permanent mare sterilization. Since 2009 the park has aggressively been using the use of Gona Con and it should not be used for fertility treatment. People of the working group could help share this kind of information for the protection of the herd and show proof with documentation and make recommendations. I can only hope and pray that, as a group, the members would look into more scientific options/solutions for keeping a viable herd, such as PZP which has been used and proven to be effective and much safer. The park has been removing, year after year, the younger horses which leaves a very aging population and compromises maintaining a viable herd. Again, as a group they would work to find the best solution for keeping the diversity and genetic viability of this historical herd. They can discuss priorities for the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horse herd and maybe a proper management plan. By working together there would be no worry about the park trying to eradicate the horses from Park boundaries or very likely slowly help them die off by treating with Gona Gon when there are other options.

I live in New York and have been driving out each summer for the last couple of years to spend time with the wild horses and enjoy the wide open spaces. I met my first wild horses at the age of 63, but have dreamed of them since I was a little girl growing up on the streets of Astoria, New York City. I come to Theodore Roosevelt National Park for the wild horses.....not the buffalo, which can be found in so many other parks. The wild horses are the draw for me, and the hills, mountains, and buttes in your park present a stunning background for them. Where else can you spot wild horses amongst buffalo?

Also, I hope you will consider the impact this herd has on your local economy. Chasing Wild Horses focuses on this wild horse herd and carries merchandise showcasing the beauty of Theodore Roosevelt National Park along with the horses and other wildlife. While here visiting the horses, folks such as I spend time in your local restaurants, motels and businesses.

Please, let's protect these wild horses for future generations and allow everyone an opportunity to view and spend time with these majestic and magical beings. Please vote in favor and pass this very important, and much needed bill which will aid the park in helping maintain a viable herd.

I thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity to have my thoughts heard and for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Cathy Weeks



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 Roosevelet 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.

Fernando Guerra

Director of Law and Policy

American Wild Horse Conservation

Abbey Benesh Law and Policy Manager American Wild Horse Conservation



February 6, 2025

Testimony in Support of SB 2331 with Amendment to Section G

My name is Allison Bowling, and I am the Co-Founder of Red Feather Equine Sanctuary in North Carolina. I am testifying today in strong support of SB 2331, which seeks to establish a working group

dedicated to the protection and management of the historic wild horse population within Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Ensuring their future requires thoughtful, collaborative, and well-structured oversight, which this bill seeks to provide.

However, while SB 2331 is a significant step forward, I urge the committee to adopt an amendment to Section G, which currently designates a single representative from "any nonprofit group" within the state. While the inclusion of nonprofit expertise is essential, restricting this representation to a single organization risks limiting the breadth of knowledge, experience, and perspectives necessary for comprehensive equine management.

To enhance the bill's effectiveness and inclusivity, I respectfully request that Section G be amended to appoint a representative from a **separately established nonprofit working alliance** rather than a single nonprofit entity. North Dakota is home to multiple equine welfare nonprofits, each bringing distinct expertise in conservation, rescue, equine health, and sustainable management practices. Establishing a nonprofit working alliance will:

- 1. **Foster Collaboration** Encouraging diverse nonprofit organizations to work together will lead to more holistic, balanced, and effective advocacy for the horses.
- 2. **Ensure Inclusivity** No single nonprofit can fully represent the varied issues and approaches within equine welfare. A coalition of voices ensures that all stakeholders have a seat at the table.
- 3. **Strengthen Long-Term Sustainability** A collaborative alliance will create a framework for ongoing dialogue, research, and policy recommendations beyond the immediate legislative process.

The Theodore Roosevelt National Park horses are a cherished and irreplaceable part of North Dakota's history and landscape. Their future must be guided by expertise, cooperation, and a structure that allows for diverse perspectives in decision-making. By amending Section G to designate a nonprofit working alliance as the appointed representative, we can ensure that this bill serves its intended purpose in a way that is fair, effective, and sustainable for years to come.

I appreciate the committee's time and thoughtful consideration of this amendment. I urge you to support SB 2331 with this crucial revision to ensure the best possible outcome for these iconic horses.

Respectfully,

Allison Bowling Red Feather Equine Sanctuary www.redfeatherfarmnc.org

Dear North Dakota Legislature:

Thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony in support of the wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. I am a lifelong "horsewoman" and have a deep fondness fir and appreciation of equines. Below please the rationale for my support of this important piece of legislation:

- These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt: They symbolize former
 President Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West.
 Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land
 preservation.
- They Have No Federal Protection: Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time. We must not let this happen.
- Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy: These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.
- **Public Support Is Overwhelming**: North Dakotans and people across the country such as myself want these horses protected.
- A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Most sincerely,

Danielle A Spitz

Kamuela, Hawaii

Modeled after Colorados success, SB 2331 will promote humane wild horse conservation and create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

These horses are a living tribute to Theodore Roosevelt. They symbolize Roosevelts conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the parks namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNPs horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

Public support is overwhelming. North Dakotans and people across the country want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

I strongly support SB 2331 which calls for the formation of a state-led working group to collaborate with the park and interest groups to ensure the long-term management and protection of the wild horses. AWHC led the effort to pass legislation in Colorado creating a successful model for state participation in wild horse protection. In North Dakota, this model would help ensure the wild horses remain a treasured part of North Dakota's landscape.

For the following reasons, please pass this important legislation:

These Horses Are a Living Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

They symbolize Roosevelt's conservation legacy and the untamed spirit of the American West. Protecting them honors the park's namesake and his contributions to public land preservation.

They Have No Federal Protection

Unlike other wild horse herds, TRNP's horses are not covered under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Without protection, they can be removed at any time.

Wild Horses Boost North Dakota's Economy

These horses are a major tourism draw, bringing visitors to Medora and surrounding areas. Their removal could negatively impact local businesses and jobs.

Public Support Is Overwhelming

North Dakotans and people across the country like me want these horses protected. SCR 4006 will encourage the U.S. Congress to recognize and act on this broad support by passing federal legislation that ensures the TRNP wild horses are protected.

 A North Dakota Wild Horse Working Group will promote humane wild horse conservation.

Modeled after Colorado's success, SB 2331 will create a North Dakota wild horse working group that would unite state officials, advocates, experts, and interested parties to ensure collaborative, humane, science-based conservation of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park wild horses, prevent removals, and provide long-term oversight.

"Defenders of the short-sighted men who in their greed and selfishness will, if permitted, rob our country of half its charm by their reckless extermination of all useful and beautiful wild things sometimes seek to champion them by saying the 'the game belongs to the people.' So it does; and not merely to the people now alive, but to the unborn people. The 'greatest good for the greatest number' applies to the number within the womb of time, compared to which those now alive form but an insignificant fraction. Our duty to the whole, including the unborn generations, bids us restrain an unprincipled present-day minority from wasting the heritage of these unborn generations. The movement for the conservation of wild life and the larger movement for the conservation of all our natural resources are essentially democratic in spirit, purpose, and method."

-Theodore Roosevelt

Please pass this bill to help protect the magnificent wild horses in Theadore Roosevelt National Park. They need your protection to remain safe and a genetically viable herd for we the people now and the future.

Thank You for your time, Sarah in Ohio To whom it may concern,

Please help pass this bill and protect the wild horses of Theadore Roosevelt National Park, it is my belief that they are not safe from those within the park system and that the park needs to be held accountable for their actions. The wild horses need protection and help remaining genetically viable.

Thank you,

Darlene in Ohio

To whom it may concern,

Please pass this bill to help protect the wild horses in Theadore Rosevelt National Park.

Thank you,

Carrie in Ohio

Please pass legislation to protect the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The public overwhelming wants these precious animals to live their natural lives.

Please stop animal cruelty.

TO: NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATURE-69TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

RE: TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SENATE BILL 2331

2/7/2025

Madam Chair Roers and committee members,

Greetings, my name is Travis Bateman and I reside in McKenzie County. I am here today to speak in favor of Senate Bill 2331.

The ongoing missteps, federal government over step and dismissal of the citizens and their requests for lawful transparency, information, communication, and continual rotation of staff that are not fully engaged or in tune with the issue of our wild horses in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) is why I rise in support of the ongoing efforts to save, preserve, and allow for the continued existence of the wild horses in TRNP.

Over the last few years specifically, the TRNP and the National Park Service has made it abundantly clear that they intend to destroy, eradicate, and otherwise cause the intentional extinction of the Nakota horse that is unique and specific to our state and the TRNP.

Doing so goes against everything that North Dakota stands for in terms of Theodore Roosevelt and his legacy here. It goes against everything right and proper period. To say that these horses are a nuisance or cause damage to the lands is a ridiculous statement. If that is the case, then the bison need to be eradicated to and we all know that won't happen. Nor should it, I just use that to make a statement and dismiss the excuse that the horses are harmful at all.

The wild horses of the TRNP are one of the primary, if not THE primary attractant for people to visit Medora, the TRNP, Watford City, and essentially all of western North Dakota. Removal or eradication of our wild horses would have a dominoe effect on tourism and everything beneficial to the local economies that come with those that visit our state.

A working group of FULLY invested parties is a must but so is the pause of any further interference or harmful interactions with the horses until decisions are made. The NPS has been dishonest in recent times and cannot be trusted by anyone and they most

assuredly need to earn that trust back and mend the fences that they have all but destroyed by their choices and actions when it comes to the topic of our wild horses. They have not been good neighbors, they have not been good stewards of our state's resources within the TRNP boundaries and they need to shape up. They may be federal, they may have a different mandate that is beyond the true control of anyone in North Dakota, but I think it would be in the best interests of the TRNP that they begin repairing all that has been damaged and soon.

Thank you for your time and please give a Do Pass to SB2331.

Respectfully,

7ravis 7. Bateman

Travis F. Bateman Watford City, North Dakota

- 2



Senate State and Local Government Committee

SB2331. A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 54-60 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the Theodore Roosevelt national park working group; to provide a report; and to provide an appropriation.

My name is Sandra Hagen Solin - I am the Colorado-based lobbyist for American Wild Horse Conservation (AWHC), the nation's leading wild horse protection organization and operator of the world's largest wild horse fertility program, in Nevada.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB2331 to create a state-led working group to manage the Theodore Roosevelt wild horses.

We have first-hand experience, working closely with Governor Jared Polis and bi-partisan sponsors of this innovative bill approach, in Colorado, where the Colorado Wild Horse Working Group, on which I represent AWHC, recently published an encouraging Year 1 progress report. We would be happy to share this report with committee members.

Backed by \$1.5m of state funding, this collaboration model represents a forward-thinking approach to reducing wild horse roundups and addressing the long-term needs of wild horses that have already been removed from the wild.

Similar to the structure envisioned in North Dakota, the Colorado group is built around core on-range and off-range objectives.

On-range, that means coordination of enhanced and supplemental stewardship of horses in-the-wild, including dedicated funding for full-time fertility control darting.

Specifically, Colorado has pledged \$100,000 of the \$1.5M to assist with fertility vaccines to wild horses in 2025, enabling the US Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services to train eight darters to supplement existing volunteer efforts.

We support the use of proven, scientific, and humane fertility control methods, such as PZP (porcine zona pellucida), in the Theodore Roosevelt wild horse herd and believe this will provide for careful management that can lower birth rates while maintaining the genetic viability of this herd.

By way of illustration, Nevada's Virginia Range, reported a 66% reduction in foal birth rates in 2023 compared to 2022 and a total herd population reduction of 20% over the same period, without the removal of a single wild horse.



Additionally, in Arizona, PZP has been in use since 2019 to manage the Salt River horses and has achieved a below zero population growth rate as of 2021. In Colorado, PZP has been in use in the Spring Creek Basin HMA since 2012, where the wild horse population has been stabilized and no horses have been removed since 2011.

Off-range working group solutions are built around humane, non-lethal alternatives for wild horses taken off-range or held in federal holding facilities, creating partnerships for successful adoptions and quality assurance to support adoption networks.

We believe this model is replicable in North Dakota and we are encouraged by the innovative, multi-stakeholder approach envisaged by SB2331.

We applaud the bill's bipartisan sponsors for coming together to care for and protect the majestic Theodore Roosevelt herd and urge members of the Senate State and Local Government Committee to support the passage of SB2331.

Would be very willing to answer any bill-related questions the Committee may have to ensure the success of a new Wild Horse Working Group for North Dakota.

For the record, AWHC is also in support of concurrent legislation SCR 4006 calling for federal protections for this historic herd which we believe would be complementary legislation to SB2331.

February 6, 2025

Senate State and Local Government Committee North Dakota State Legislature 600 E Boulevard Ave Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: SB 2331

Dear Chair Roers and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 2331, legislation that seeks to establish a collaborative working group for the preservation of wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. In 2023, I worked on the creation of similar legislation in Colorado to establish a wild horse management working group, Senate Bill 23-275, and I can attest to the benefits that are gained through this collaborative approach. I believe the state of North Dakota can also succeed in preserving the iconic horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and enhance tourism by establishing a working group. I have been glad to support Chris Kman and Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates on this effort for North Dakota.

Although the federal government manages the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, the state of North Dakota has a clear interest in conserving these animals and should have a role in their management to ensure they remain in Theodore Roosevelt National Park for the benefit of the state's tourism, history, and local economies. The wild horses are a living link to the region's history and a vital contributor to the state and local economy that attracts visitors to the Park from across the nation. Undoubtedly, these horses are cherished by the people of the state of North Dakota and admirers nationwide.

SB 2331, along with related resolution SCR 4006, recognizes the importance of preserving the herd while also responding to concerns regarding current management practices that could threaten the long-term sustainability of this population. The state has demonstrated a willingness to aid in the management of the horses by making offers of assistance to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, but the response from the Park has been limited, further demonstrating the need for a new approach. Without proactive legislative intervention, these horses may face an uncertain future to the determinant of the state and local community.

The bill provides a much-needed structured, collaborative solution that balances the interests of stakeholders and respects federal, state, and local interests. The working group created by SB 2331 would foster cooperation among stakeholders, including representatives from state and federal agencies, tribal interests, agriculture, universities, and local communities. The working group would boost tourism and develop science-based management strategies to achieve the goal of preserving these iconic horses within Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

SB 2331 provides a much-needed solution to address the ongoing concerns surrounding the management of these horses and has become necessary to ensure the horses remain a permanent feature of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park for future generations.

I respectfully ask you to adopt this bill, and I thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Bice
202-460-4289
holly@bicepolicygroup.com
www.bicepolicygroup.com

Dear Committee: I fully support and please "DO PASS" on SCR 4006 and SB 2331

Talking about Horses and how important it can be protect them. In legal terms, in the United States in 1971 the Congress, unanimously and signed into a law by President Nixon, approved the Wild and Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Why? The Spirit of the Parliament was to thanks and protect the horses and burros since they play a key role for stablis the country as It was exemples, help the west to establish, to build the train lines, protect and help the army in belican terms. etc. (Same in canada, special the canadian horse -little iron- play a key role here, and most of them die)

In United States, as far as I know, a group of person thought that they could make money from this so to prevent overpopulation and "starvation" it was decided to remove horses from the wild and ship them out of the country because by law it was illegal to kill them inside the United States., they

the country because by law it was illegal to kill them inside the United States., they have been removed without thinking on age, or if females were pregnant or not, etc they have been remove to questionals places, then shipped to Canada, or Mexico to die. The law to protect them end up being separate families, terrified babies with the mothers, castration and I've watched videos and you can ear how the cry which it is a sound that I never hear before in horses. In Canada is not even better, the Province of Alberta gets from far the gold medal of poor management behing British Columbia and better no say more because the bad management it is same or worst than United States.

How they have been removed? Using helicopers and that practice bring a lots of injuries especial for youngers horses or moms trying to protect them--same management applies to burros but, as I know, the don't run so the helicopers are worst wih them-- lost of mutilations- very sad. Which institution? I think it's BLM in United State and in Canada, the Province itself.

Canadian law allows to transport the -Horses from United States and Canadafor extended hours without food or water up to, I believe up to 28 hours, regularly shipped to Japan, or some places in Europe where they are killed, so the animals travel from US as live meat, no food no water, until they land in japan to be killed, and like I said no matter age, pregnant or not, with illness or not. so from the canadian site, it's free money, free meat, but like I said most of them are shipped. The ones who has been shipped to Mexico I haven't study that area even if I speak spanish but I believe that Mexico kill them, process the meat and sell them to europe to companies like nestle -> PURINA to make dog food, and from the buyer site, the company does not said anything because the meat it is not processed by them so they don't need to declare where is coming from.

Dear committee, I try to not work or research the slaughter business for a health of mind. It is very bad for those poor animals from where they were (wildness) and how they end and the process to get

Dear committee, I try to not work or research the slaughter business for a health of mind. It is very bad for those poor animals from where they were (wildness) and how they end and the process to get from one point to another.

I hope this minimum approach about the wild horses gives you an idea of how important it is and I don't want to extend more but also horses brings a lot of benefit in terms of wildlife (flora and fauna) to keep them alive. it is a miss underanding because as humans we managed by law all the species -big mammals- of the planet except horses so please Do Pass

I'm testifying "IN SUPPORT" for BOTH SCR 4006 AND SB 2331.

Sincerely,

Alicia

Chair and Committee Members, My name is Maria Dennis.

I am here today to ask that you vote in favour of Senate Bill 2331. This bill would create the formation of a working group that would work with Theodore Roosevelt National Park to help manage the wild horses. The resolution before you is asking your federal legislators to help get federal protection for this herd since they are not protected under the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act.

I live in the UK, and the horses that you are privileged to have on your lands matter deeply to me. They represent something that is the most vital and devastating issue facing humanity – our depletion of the natural world and the degradation of the wild.

I am compelled to bring the horses voices to you, as gentle creatures they whisper, but this does not disguise the power of their voice. They have a birthright, as all creatures of Earth do, to live a life of well-being, and this is as important to them as ours is to us. Human privileging silences them, we drown out their whispers in our clamour to control and dominate Nature. These horses right to and desire for well-being is equal to ours, and if you asked them directly, this is what they would say. They live rich lives, with deep family and friendship bonds, they suffer psychologically from separation, and from adverse events and trauma, much like we do. This is scientifically 'proven' not mere romanticism. I follow and support the work of organisations in the US that are advocating for and supporting the wild horses. I find it devastating to know how terribly the horses suffer in roundups and knowing what I do about the rich family life of these horses, the stress and trauma these cause from the physical pressure, but the grief and distress from the breaking up of their families and extended social groups.

Knowing they are protected, is so desperately important to me, and I am sure many others like me, because it offers hope in a time when there is so much exploitation, so much neglect of our fellow creatures, that there are people that will listen, and will step up to be the type of custodians, guardians and protectors that the wild needs. This is a plea from their heart to yours.

You can tell the heart of a person by the way they treat other animals – you can tell the heart of humanity by the way they treat other animals.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of my testimony.

SB 2331

I want to state that I'm in favor of a working group. People coming together to come up with solutions for the Horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park is vital.

Thank you, Diane Tutas

Madrid, February 6th, 2025

To the kind attention of North Dakota Members of the State and Local Government Committee.

Dear Committee,

I am writing to you to ask a "DO PASS" on SB 2331: it will come before your committee this week. SB 2331 calls for the State of North Dakota to put together a wild horse working group that would help Theodore Roosevelt National Park manage the wild horses who call the park home. On Thursday 5th, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee heard SCR 4006, a resolution asking for the federal protection of North Dakota's only wild horse herd, a treasure of America's heritage. SCR 4006 is expected to get a "DO PASS" from the committee.

SB 2331 is equally important. Senator John H. Hoeven remains committed to secure the future of wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. When the time comes for him to secure federal legislation for the herd, the nomination of this working group will be requested: the one Theodore Roosevelt National Park must work with as decisions regarding the management of this herd are taken. This will ensure the priorities of the State of North Dakota to be considered as part of the wild horse management planning process, as they should be. Federal protection will also give this working group the necessary power.

It is well documented that North Dakota, including the City of Historic Medora and Billings County, considers a priority that this loved herd of wild horses remains in the TRNP. It belongs to the Park and to North Dakota. The best way to ensure that is through federal protection. Please let me underline the critical role this working group will play for this purpose.

From around the world we love to visit it and 'meet' the horses, of course respecting their privacy! In Europe, we have been following with deep concern the sort of these legendary horses, full of innocence, family love, courage and dignity. The Theodore Roosevelt National Park, joining what must be considered a US Bureau of Land Management eradication plan of American Wild Horses and Burros from US Public Lands, has been carrying on, for the last three years, a plan to eliminate the TRNP herd or bring it down to a number that is not viable for the health and genetic diversity of this herd. This working group would be key to provide a much-needed oversight to the BLM/TRNP management. It's the right time for it!

The dedicated work of Senator John H. Hoeven includes securing a commitment from Secretary of Interior Dough Burgum to work with his office to ensure that the TRNP Wild Horses will live in the land they belong to. In a KX News interview then ND Governor Dough Burgum said he was looking closely at the working group in Colorado as a possible innovative solution for wild horse management. Both of them share the human values, the love for horses and for US Public Lands that will ensure the freedom, respect and protection America's Wildlife deserves.

European Equestrian Federations and Horse Institutions join me in this letter, as American Wild Horses (and Burros!) are always in our hearts. Please help save them!

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

Giuliana Venerosi Pescolori

Giuliana Venerosi Pesciolini

Henri Dunant, 23 - 3 F - 28036 Madrid (Spain) - giuliana.vp@leschaussonsdelabelle.com



North Dakota Senate

STATE CAPITOL 600 EAST BOULEVARD BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Senator Josh Boschee

District 44 736 Elm Street North, Apt. 8 Fargo, ND 58102-3859 jboschee@ndlegis.gov COMMITTEES: Education Workforce Development

SB 2331 Testimony - Senate State and Local Government Committee - February 7, 2025

Chair Roers and Members of the Senate State and Local Government Committee,

SB 2331 is the result of the work of many people throughout the state working in collaboration with former Governor Burgum, Senator Hoeven and others to make sure the wild horses who currently call Theodore Roosevelt National Park home can continue to do so for generations to come. The horses are truly a natural resource of our state, which is why two years ago Governor Burgum offered state support to help the Park manage the herd. To date, the Park does not seem interested in engaging the state as a partner. Hence the legislation in front of you.

The goal of creating a working group is to provide our Congressional delegation with an entity to direct the Park to consult with before taking certain actions with the horses. This would be done through Federal legislation, likely led by Senator Hoeven and modeled off what was done with the Colorado Wild Horse Management working group and the Federal Bureau of Land Management.

Last legislative session, Governor Burgum and Senator Hoeven invited the majority and minority leaders, as well as the Attorney General, to join them in a conversation with the National Park Service Director and the Theodore Roosvelt National Park Superintendent. In that conversation, Governor Burgum offered North Dakota resources to partner with the Park in managing the horses. We all recognized that not only does the herd play an important role for tourism, but these horses are a natural treasure that have lineages to Sitting Bull and some of the original settlers of Dakota Territory.

With Governor Burgum confirmed as the Secretary of Interior, now is the time for us to establish the working group so he and Senator Hoeven can do what they need on the Federal side of things to ensure the Park is engaging and consulting with North Dakotans on how the horses are managed. This provides the opportunity to strengthen a collaborative relationship between our state and the Federal government to manage our state's natural resources in a way that benefits all Americans. Establishing this working group will ensure that the relationship will continue beyond Burgum's tenure as Interior Secretary.

Before I invite proponents of the legislation up, I have a couple suggested amendments for the committee to consider, Madam Chair.

Proposed Amendments

- Page 1, line 19 strike the "." and replace with ", unless the health or safety of a horse is compromised."
- Page 2, line 27 strike \$50,000 and replace with \$49,5000

I hope you'll provide SB 2331 your support and I'm happy to stand for any questions or comments you may have.

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to urge you to pass SB 2331.

I have visited Theodore Roosevelt National Parks many times. I am committed to making sure that the wild horses be treated humanely and are well-managed.

A working group, made up of committed stakeholders that care for the survival of the only wild horses in the state of North Dakota would be an amazing legacy.

Federal protection for the TRNP wild horses should be of upmost priority for the herds survival.

To see the horses roam the park is an unforgettable experience and most be preserved for future generations to experience and enjoy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Caroline Christie

SB2331

Chairman Committee Members. My name is Frank Kuntz from Linton, ND and I am here to testify in support of SB2331.

My late brother, Leo Kuntz, and I have been working 45+ years to try to get the TRNP to manage the wild horses the right way. The TRNP has done a lot of thoughtless things to our horses in our park. But having the goal of a non-producing horse herd will be the ultimate death of these horses.

The wild horses in TRNP need to be protected from the Park's total mismanagement 'policies'. Right now they are managing the horses to their death.

Here's a little history of TRNP's mismanagement of the wild horses.

At one time the horses in TRNP were classified as a historic resource; later the TRNP changed that to a historical representation which meant if it looked like a horse it belonged there. Now TRNP has classified the horses as livestock, and livestock in TRNP have a totally different management plan ... no livestock in a national park at all.

In the late 70's and early 80's they introduced domestic studs into TRNP and then had to use helicopters and outriders to eliminate the dominant native stallions so the introduced studs would have a chance to get mares. The parks first round-up killed around 18 horses.

In 2009, the TRNP started a gonacon test program on the horses. This park was chosen, as was Blake McCann, to use the TRNP horses as guinea pigs; to try to find a one-shot method to sterilize the wild horses. If we want a genetically viable herd in TRNP, the use of gonacon needs to stop NOW!

Why is a national park killing off a wonderful tourist attraction? Tourism is a large industry world wide. There are so many people in the world that love the west, of which Medora and the Badlands are a part.

The wild horses in the TRNP are a part of that history as are the Native Americans, Theodore Roosevelt, the Marquis DeMores, the HT Ranch in Amidon which was one of the largest horse operations in the nation with 4000-7000 head of horses. The HT ranch bought 62 mares from DeMores, of which Heidokoper wrote in his journals they were an interesting lot, many of the mares showing scars from the Battle of the Big Horn. TR wrote about seeing many wild horses as well. If the TRNP wants to classify the wild horses as a non-native animal, then they should be able to scientifically prove the horses died out here on this continent. If not, the horses need to be classified as a native species. They have always been here!

I want to thank Chasing Horses for their hard work to bring worldwide attention to the horses.

Thank you, Senator Hoeven and Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum for all your support. And please, committee members, vote in favor to help save this living history.

I stand for questions.

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

State and Local Government Committee

Room JW216, State Capitol

SB 2331 2/7/2025

Relating to the Theodore Roosevelt national park working group; to provide a report; and to provide an appropriation.

Members Present: Chairman Roers; Vice Chair Castaneda; Senators: Barta, Braunberger, Lee and Walen.

10:55 a.m. Chair Roers called the meeting to order.

Discussion Topics:

Committee Action

10:57 a.m. Senator Braunberger moved Amendment #25.0598.03001.

10:57 a.m. Senator Walen seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Kristin Roers	Υ
Senator Jose L. Castaneda	Υ
Senator Jeff Barta	Υ
Senator Ryan Braunberger	Υ
Senator Judy Lee	Υ
Senator Chuck Walen	Υ

Motion Passed 6-0-0

10:59 a.m. Senator Lee moved a Do Not Pass as amended.

10:59 a.m. Senator Barta seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Kristin Roers	Υ
Senator Jose L. Castaneda	Υ
Senator Jeff Barta	Υ
Senator Ryan Braunberger	N
Senator Judy Lee	Υ
Senator Chuck Walen	N

Motion Passed 4-2-0

Senator Barta will carry the bill.

11:05 a.m. Chair Roers closed the hearing.

Susan Helbling, Committee Clerk

25.0598.03001 Title.04000 Adopted by the State and Local Government Committee February 7, 2025

Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

2-7.25 Alm 1063

SENATE BILL NO. 2331

Introduced by

Senators Boschee, Rummel, Kessel

Representatives Lefor, Steiner

- 1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 54-60 of the North Dakota
- 2 Century Code, relating to the Theodore Roosevelt national park working group; to provide a
- 3 report; and to provide an appropriation.

governor;

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

- 5 **SECTION 1.** A new section to chapter 54-60 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:
- 7 Theodore Roosevelt national park working group Executive committee Duties -
- 8 Report.

15

- 1. The Theodore Roosevelt national park working group must be chaired by a member of
 the legislative assembly and consists of:
- a. One member of the senate and one member of the house of representatives,
 representing different political parties, appointed by the chairman of legislative
 management;
- b. One representative of the parks and recreation department, appointed by the
- 16 <u>c.</u> One representative from an entity that represents commerce or tourism in the
 17 Medora community;
- 18 <u>d.</u> One representative of the division of tourism, appointed by the governor;
- 19 <u>e. The agriculture commissioner, or the commissioner's designee;</u>

Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly



1		<u>f.</u>	One representative from the North Dakota university system with an academic or
2			research background in equine studies, appointed by the governor;
3		g.	One representative of any nonprofit group located in the state which is
4			established to protect the horses in the Theodore Roosevelt national park,
5			appointed by the governor;
6		<u>h.</u>	One representative of the national park service, appointed by the national park
7			service; and
8		<u>i.</u>	One representative of the Indian affairs commission, appointed by the governor.
9	<u>2.</u>	<u>The</u>	working group shall:
10		<u>a.</u>	In cooperation with the national park service and the United States government,
11			provide recommendations for managing the population of wild horses in the
12			Theodore Roosevelt national park to remain above two hundred horses;
13		<u>b.</u>	Identify and offer opportunities to support and maintain the wild horses within the
14			Theodore Roosevelt national park;
15		<u>C.</u>	Promote the wild horses to benefit tourism and to make recommendations to the
16			department;
17		<u>d.</u>	Assist the department in carrying out activities to educate the public;
18		<u>e.</u>	Meet quarterly; and
19		<u>f.</u>	Provide, by July first of each year, a report to the legislative management which
20			includes the working group's detailed plan to implement the requirements of this
21			section.
22	<u>3.</u>	<u>The</u>	working group may make recommendations for management activities, including
23		<u>birth</u>	control, removals, and permanent placement of horses after removal. All
24		man	agement activities must be humane and nonlethal, unless the health or safety of a
25		hors	se is compromised.
26	<u>4.</u>	The working group may enter an agreement with the national park service to	
27		implement this section.	
28	<u>5.</u>	Upon recommendation from the working group, the state may enter an agreement with	
29		a pr	ivate entity to address any issues related to the wild horses in the Theodore
30		Roo	sevelt national park.

1 SECTION 2. APPROPRIATION - DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - THEODORE

- 2 ROOSEVELT NATIONAL PARK WORKING GROUP. There is appropriated out of any moneys
- 3 in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of
- 4 \$50,000\$49,500, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the department of commerce
- 5 for the purpose of administering the Theodore Roosevelt national park working group, for the
- 6 biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027.

Module ID: s_stcomrep_22_009 Carrier: Barta Insert LC: 25.0598.03001 Title: 04000

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE SB 2331

State and Local Government Committee (Sen. Roers, Chairman) recommends AMENDMENTS (25.0598.03001) and when so amended, recommends DO NOT PASS (4 YEAS, 2 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2331 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.