



Animal Welfare Institute

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February 7, 2025

North Dakota Legislative Council
State Capitol
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: A concurrent resolution (SCR 4006) urging Congress to establish federal protections for the wild horse herd at Theodore Roosevelt National Park

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 testifying today to urge the Committee to support, urging Congress to establish federal protections for the wild horse herd at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. As the only wild horse herd in the state, the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park are a treasured component of the park and of the larger state. North Dakota has a great opportunity to emphasize the value of this herd and encourage recognition of that value by the federal government.

Federal protections have been enacted for other horses managed by the National Park service, notably the Schakleford horses in North Carolina, who were granted protections via federal legislation to ensure their preservation on the Outer Banks (the Shackleford Banks Wild Horses Protection Act, P.L. 105-229).

Beyond granting crucial federal protections, official recognition would elevate the horses' status, likely boosting eco-tourism and attracting more visitors to North Dakota and Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Wildlife watching has a huge economic impact—according to a survey by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, over 250 billion dollars was spent on wildlife watching in 2022.

As the only national park named after an individual, an important aim of Theodore Roosevelt National Park is to preserve the scenery and wildlife that inspired President Roosevelt. Wild horses were an important part of the landscape when Roosevelt spent time in the Badlands, just as they remain important today, valued by so many who come to the park. Undoubtedly, they are an essential aspect of the ecosystem for many of the 740,000 visitors who came to the park in 2023. As Senator Hoeven recently noted, these horses are integral to the visitor experience and history of the region.

The proposed action in SCR 4006 would be a great step forward for the horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, ensuring their legacy for generations to come. I implore the committee to move forward with SCR 4006.

In closing, I wish to thank Senators Boschee, Rummel, and Patten, and Representatives Lefor, Olson, 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