

PRESS EDITORIAL

## Don't let the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park disappear

By The Dickinson Press Editorial Board

**T**here can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country." — Theodore Roosevelt

The wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park have been a symbol of the legacy of the wild west for decades. These majestic creatures have roamed the rugged Badlands, inspiring awe in visitors and instilling a sense of wonder and connection to the land. But now, the fate of these horses remains uncertain as the National Park Service considers removing them from the park.

We have reported, published impassioned letters from our community and fielded countless phone calls calling on The Dickinson Press to take a stance.

Today, we are doing so.

We understand some of the concerns raised by the park service. We understand the challenges of preserving and interpreting the horses. We understand that the National Park Service has a limited ability to keep livestock in any park, let alone one that isn't counted among their most visited attractions in the country.

We understand that... but.

The idea of removing these horses is not only a blow to the local economy, but it also goes against the very principles of the Park's namesake, President Theodore Roosevelt. As an advocate for conservation and the protection of America's wild spaces, it is hard to imagine that he would stand idly by while these horses are removed from the land that bears his name.

These horses are not just a tourist attraction, they are a vital part of the park's ecosystem and a symbol of the rugged spirit that defines the West. They are a reminder of the importance of preserving our natural heritage for future generations. The day that horses no longer peer out over the beautiful badlands from atop a butte, is the day that WE as citizens of the Western Edge have failed in our duty.

As area residents, it is our responsibility to speak up and take action to protect these horses and their legacy.

We must make our voices heard and let the National Park Service know that the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park are a treasured part of our community and should be protected for future generations to enjoy.

The public comment period for the livestock management plan ended on January 31st.

North Dakota Rep. Josh Boschee sent a letter to officials at the national park urging, as we did here at The Dickinson Press, for an extension of the deadline for public comments by sixty days to provide opportunity for those who have been busy with the holiday season, which may have diminished public participation in the decision, an opportunity to respond — they declined

As we ponder the fate of the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, we must ask ourselves, do we want to live in a Western Edge that no longer has these majestic creatures roaming the Badlands?

Are we willing to trade our heritage and legacy for the sake of making the park service's duty slightly less difficult?

Imagine a future where the rugged spirit of the west is no longer embodied by these wild horses. Imagine a future where the Badlands are home to millions of prairie dogs, but void of the awe-inspiring sight of galloping wild horses racing across the prairie.

What will you tell your grandchildren and great grandchildren?

That once there were horses that roamed this land, but those days are nothing but a distant memory.

Are we willing to be the generation that lets them disappear?

*"I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us." — Theodore Roosevelt*

## The park, with the HORSES, needs to be protected to maintain a small paradise in a fragile world

By Uta Pruess Germany

Dear Editor, Greetings from Germany! For almost 20 years, I have visited my sister in Fargo. Together, we have visited Theodore Roosevelt National Park multiple times.

As a German, I have learned a lot about American history in Medora, in particular about life on the prairie. I only knew the wide land of the Midwest from movies such as "Dances with Wolves" or "Little house on the Prairie." That people really lived and continue to live this way was something I could not imagine.

The post office in Medora is an impressive example. People came from far away to pick up their mail. Likewise, people in North Dakota traveled much larger distances to go to church than I am accustomed to. For this, people needed HORSES, just like the first settlers that started on the east coast on their way to the west.

The success story of America would not have been possible without HORSES. They were needed much more than us Europeans would know.

HORSES are an integral part of the identity of Medora. I know of no other town or place in the US (and many Americans claim that I have seen more of the US than they have), where national awareness is of the importance as it is here.

I was deeply impressed by every one of the musical performances in the amphitheater. Every time, a part of American history is told. Every time with HORSES.

In Medora, children already learn to be proud to be American. A national awareness that us Germans (at least of my generation) do not know, unfortunately.

Should there be no more HORSES in TRNP, the park will lose its identity. History can no longer be experienced in that case. This would be a massive loss to Medora, to North Dakota, the US and from a German's perspective — the world.

What the HORSES in the park mean to me is infinite. Together with the bison, they are for me the most important living beings for human life on the prairie. Watching them is pure inspiration in an increasingly faster (developed) time.

I can understand Theodore Roosevelt well, who collected many inspirations for his later time as President of the United States, in his love of this part of North Dakota.

## Thank you Dickinson-area residents

By Lizette Miller Boone, N.C.

Dear Editor, I am writing to thank Dickinson-area residents for sharing the true meaning of Christmas with children in

## SHARE YOUR OPINION

The Dickinson Press welcomes letters to the editor. To give readers the best access to the space available, letters are limited to 400 words. Word count is strictly enforced and all letter writers should be sure to include full names, spell out acronyms and refrain from using shorthand. Letters are judged for good taste and material that could be libelous.

All letters sent by both email and physical mail must include your name (no pseudonyms), address and phone number so we may contact you. We reserve the right to edit all material and will not accept form letters or letters addressed to someone other than the editor.

Letters from southwest North Dakota are given first priority. The subject matter of all letters must be relevant to current events. When letters are by more than one writer, the addresses and telephone numbers of each writer must be clearly provided. Letters with more than three signees will not be accepted.

A person may have no more than one letter published within 30 consecutive days of his/her most recent letter.

need this past holiday season.

Generosity throughout contributed to a successful shoebox gift collection season at drop-off locations for the Samaritan's Purse project Operation Christmas Child. Across the U.S., the project collected over 9.3 million shoebox gifts in 2022. Combined with those collected from partnering countries in 2022, the ministry is now sending nearly 10.6 million shoebox gifts to children worldwide.

Through shoeboxes—packed with fun toys, school supplies, and hygiene items—Dickinson-area volunteers brought joy to children in need around the world. Each gift-filled shoebox is a tangible expression of God's love, and it is often the first gift these children have ever received. Through the continued generosity of donors since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 209 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 170 countries and territories. This year, Samaritan's Purse delivered its milestone 200 millionth shoebox, which was packed on a country-wide tour and then hand-delivered to a young girl in Ukraine.

Across ND, shoebox packers often shop for deals on shoebox items throughout the year, and many serve at a deeper level by becoming a year-round volunteer. Information about ways area participants can get involved year-round can also be found at [samaritanspurse.org/occ](http://samaritanspurse.org/occ) or by calling 630-474-9478.

Although local drop-off locations for gifts are closed until Nov. 13 – 20, 2023, anyone can still be a part of this life-changing project by conveniently packing a shoebox gift online in just a few simple clicks at [samaritanspurse.org/buildonline](http://samaritanspurse.org/buildonline).

These simple gifts, packed with love, send a message to children worldwide that they are loved and not forgotten.

## Don't Fall for House Bill 1446

By Dr. Eric Grabowsky Dickinson, North Dakota

Dear Editor, Herein, I do not speak for Dickinson State University (DSU) or the North Dakota University System (NDUS). Tenure can be a delicate subject. It is a politically and financially charged topic. House Bill 1446 is not a legitimate way to begin a substantive conversation in North Dakota on tenure reform. Across the NDUS, tenured faculty assist with transparency and accountability toward the good governance of higher edu-

cation.

For a pilot program, if this bill is the way to go forward for DSU, Bismarck State College (BSC), and eventually the entire NDUS, as Representative Lefor and President Easton have indicated, then why was there no announcement or discussion of the bill at DSU before its legislative submission? How did a number of people learn about HB 1446 not long after it was submitted? I can speak to one major element of these communicative circumstances.

I was "tipped off" about the submission of HB 1446 by a knowledgeable person, which of course led to my sharing information about the bill with various people. Regardless of your view of tenure, please keep in mind that if this bill passes, an accelerated revision of policies and procedures pertaining to tenured faculty will be necessary at DSU and BSC (and at the NDUS level for these two institutions). Along with the obvious controversy of HB 1446 on campus, would it not be helpful for employees to know that such substantial work would be a possibility during 2023?

There are times when only tenured faculty can speak out about problems of management in and for North Dakota's public universities and colleges. Overall, in terms of the expansive scope of HB 1446 (and it being rushed forward as it is for implementation), in my estimation, it won't be good for students or for student enrollment at DSU and BSC. And, considering past problems with enrollment practices at DSU, should there not be more caution when thinking about incentivizing enrollment to such an extent, especially if the incentivization is tied to the job security of tenured faculty?

We seem to get the idea from Representative Lefor and President Easton that apart from something like the initiation of a bar fight in town, it would be almost impossible to terminate someone who is tenured. For faculty at DSU (tenured or not), there is a chain of management that typically goes to a department chair, to a dean, to the provost, and to the president. As a tenured faculty member, I am annually reviewed by my department chair. Part of that process involves establishing a plan for the academic year to follow. That plan should inform the next annual review.

For significant reasons, with specific protections in the mix, it is more difficult to terminate a tenured faculty member. However, it is not as difficult as some people might think. Tenured faculty can be

put on a performance improvement plan, which does open a door for potential termination. And, in financially problematic circumstances, with university system and campus policies and procedures, someone who is tenured can be terminated at a pace.

Representative Lefor has said that he will remove the disparagement aspect of the bill. However, for both administrators and tenured faculty, the bill contains the notion of alignment with the best interest(s) of the institution. Properly understood, such alignment is quite important for administrators and faculty, both proactively and reactively. For those situations in which tenured faculty are ringing the bell about faulty procurement, academic integrity, overall management, or retaliatory behavior, who will grapple with what is in the best interest(s) of the university? Whose approach to those best interest(s) in specific cases, objectively and subjectively, are best aligned with the necessities of transparency and accountability?

It is interesting that the bill would take off the table (for tenured faculty) the normative process of termination review for all faculty (tenured or not). Presently, that process involves a faculty committee. Generally speaking, faculty termination appeal decisions are currently made by the president. One could say that faculty terminations often don't directly get initiated by the university president, even if a president is somehow involved in such considerations. In my view, a reason for this exclusion in HB 1446 is to avoid paper trails of concerns and claims, regardless of the outcomes of appeal committee recommendations and presidential appeal decisions. With no paper trails along these lines, there are fewer problems to talk about at the campus and system levels.

The narrative across North Dakota since about the later part of 2020 has been that President Easton and certain members of his leadership team are doing bold and transformative work at DSU, yet, there are troublemakers getting in their way. As I see the big picture, HB 1446 is Representative Lefor's rescue plan to accomplish what current policies and procedures won't allow President Easton to do, especially with the troublemakers. Again folks, don't fall for House Bill 1446.

To the general public (across the political spectrum): Please oppose HB 1446. Communicate your opposition to HB 1446 to our state government officials. Pass or fail (and it should fail), the atmospherics of this bill put DSU at risk in terms of the recruiting and retention of both students and faculty. Regardless of one's views on this or that campus controversy, without an adequate number of faculty to cover the courses as listed, student enrollment will unfortunately go down.



Photo by Chris Kman / For The Dickinson Press

A band of wild horses race across the beautiful scenes of Theodore Roosevelt National Park in Medora, North Dakota.