



In April of 2024, we all breathed a sigh of relief when Theodore Roosevelt National Park announced that they were **FINALLY** abandoning their Livestock EA process! Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates (CHWHA) **KNEW** this did not mean that the horses were safe – so we kept fighting for the continued freedom and safety of these historic wild horses!

On September 27, 2024, Theodore Roosevelt National Park showed their hand! In a press release we were informed that they will be rounding up ALL of the horses, hand injecting all of the mares with GonaCon and permanently removing up to 15 mares who are not responding to GonaCon along with their offspring.

Here is what you need to know about this proposed action:

- 1/4 of this herd is 15-25 years old and 1/2 of the herd is over the age of 10. There are hard losses that will be coming naturally to this herd in the coming years. The park is aware of this and is amplifying the demise of this herd with the use of GonaCon.
- At the beginning of 2024, there were 195 wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. In 2024, we have had 8 births and 5 deaths. That means that we have had a **TOTAL** growth of 3 horses thus far in 2024. How does the addition of 3 wild horses give us any chance at having a genetically viable herd, especially when ½ of the herd is over the age of 10?
- The park wants to not only get rid of any horses that GonaCon is NOT working on, but their offspring will also be removed. This can mean the removal of older mares that are 15-20 years old. We asked the park to try PZP on these mares instead of removing older mares that will be hard to find a home for and they told us “NO”. Wild horses in our National Parks are **NOT** protected under the Wild Horse & Burro Act. The park does **NOT** vet buyers or follow up on the sale of these horses. We have no guarantee that horses rounded up and sold will **NOT** end up going to slaughter.
- The park plans to hand inject all of the mares with GonaCon. They **KNOW** that this gives them the best chance for longer term if not permanent sterility. This fun fact did NOT make it into the peer reviewed paper on GonaCon, but Dr. Dan Baker, one of Colorado State University's head researchers in the TRNP experiment talked in detail about this in our Horse Talk on 5/28/2023: <https://youtu.be/kdLHvgVmluw?si=SxJgjLP2op5P665Q>
- Senator Hoeven added language into the Interior Department's Appropriations Bill strongly urging the park to allow the horses to stay. He stated that while Congress could not dictate that the park keep the horses, he did say that Congress could withhold funds needed to round up or remove the horses. Now, it seems as though the Park has found a way around that by inappropriately using funds under the guise of a necessary bison roundup in an attempt to be compliant with Senator Hoeven's statement. The park has stated that they are doing this round up at this time because it is financially beneficial to piggyback on the use of helicopters for the bison roundup. In a sleight of hand, they are allocating funds on paper to a bison roundup and not being truthful about their ongoing plans to eliminate the wild horses from the park. The park is rounding up bison in the **NORTH UNIT**. The horses are in the **SOUTH UNIT**.

- In our meeting with acting Park Superintendent Nancy Finley and Dr. Blake McCann, every time we asked for mares to be taken off GonaCon, we were flat out told that it is not going to happen. This would be counterproductive to what they are trying to do to control the number of horses in the park, Superintendent Finley stated.
- In the meeting, Dr. McCann stated clearly that they have no intention of taking ANY mares off GonaCon. This coupled with their intent to remove up to 15 mares that are not impacted by GonaCon will leave us with a nonreproductive herd.
- Superintendent Finley stated in the meeting that these actions were better than saying “no horses” – right?
- Tracking collars will be put on some of the horses to monitor the land use of the horses. This is being done by the USGS.
- According to the park, 200 wild horses on just under 50,000 acres of public land is too many.
- 6 months after the park abandoned the EA, they still cannot tell the public what their target number of horses is.
- What does the public get out of this proposed action? According to Dr. Blake McCann: we are getting the park’s re-engagement with the public, a commitment from them to collect data, and an understanding of the land use of the horses.
- According to Dr. McCann: We have reduced the herd by up to 70 horses in the past under the 1978 EA and the impact analysis has not changed. In simple terms: we did it before and we will do it again.
- According to the park they do not need to follow any NEPA laws or get public input because this is simply an “operational aspect” of livestock management.
- The park is well aware that CHWHA is working with our state legislators to have legislation introduced in the 2025 session to help protect this herd. This is why the park refused our request to wait until Spring to analyze the data they collect this fall before they take any additional action on this herd.
- The park stated that they are exploring the possibility of using IUD’s in mares. This too is a highly controversial procedure that is cause for concern.
- The public will NOT be allowed to view the roundup.

Our meeting with Superintendent Finley ended with her letting us know that it is important that we start trusting the park. We let her know that actions like this make it hard to have ANY trust and that any trust they gained back in our last meeting just took 10 steps backward with the public.

Superintendent Finley also stated that the park is:

**“Trying to get to a place where we have enough dialog where you know what we are doing and even if you sometimes don’t agree with it, you understand why we are doing it enough that you might be able to tolerate what we are doing.”**

CHWHA will **NOT** “tolerate” anything that jeopardizes the health and longevity of this historic wild horse herd.

CHWHA has formally requested help from our North Dakota State and Federal Legislators to stop this round up and the actions associated with it.

CHWHA requests that a **MINIMUM** of 2 dozen mares be **IMMEDIATELY** taken off GonaCon so that we can see 1 – IF they return to fertility and 2 – so that this herd can continue to thrive for generations to come.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.chwha.org](http://www.chwha.org)