

September 29, 2024

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I have just read the News Release announcement by the Theodore Roosevelt National Park of September 27, 2024. This announces the intention to administer GonaCon to all the remaining wild mares in the park, and to remove the fifteen mares who are not responding to GonaCon.

As a wildlife ecologist who has observed and studied horses living freely in the natural world, I am in strong opposition to this plan and warn that it will produce severely harmful effects upon this historic mustang herd. This will be, in effect, the domestication of the "wild" horses and will cripple their ability to naturally adapt and will, in fact, set back the natural adaptations to the TRNP ecosystem that they have realized for centuries -- many generations. This will countermand natural selection and make a mockery of any pretention to actually respect the true nature and worthiness of these wild, free-roaming and naturally adapting and benefiting horses.

GonaCon has serious consequences on mares and wild horse social structures. It affects the hormones, which impede clear mental functioning and sound emotional balance. Its administration thwarts their natural vitality and their ability to harmoniously fill their age-old, ancestral niche. This is a niche that restores vital mutualisms benefiting many native plants and animals and that dates back millions of years upon the North American continent, including right in the region of the park. All this will be terribly hampered by this unnatural and disrespectful imposition upon the horses.

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Sincere and best wishes,

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Wild Horse and Burro Fund / Andean Tapir Fund

Member: IUCN Species Survival Commission

Author and conductor of various studies and their publications

on wild horses and burros and other of their mammalian order: Perissodactyla including especially the Andean Tapir, which, like the horse, is a wonderful gardener of its habitat, a keystone species that restores soils, disperses many intact seeds that go on to germinate, diminishes catastrophic wildfire risk, etc.

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