

# A Call for Civility

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Hello and Happy Tuesday to everyone.

Once again, I had other plans for a blog for today, but events from yesterday have caused me to once again redirect our blog.

We received countless emails, PM's and general comments on our page regarding a post by North Dakota Badlands Horse (NDBH) yesterday. The post was filled with statements that had many of us scratching our heads wondering "*Did they **REALLY** just say that – **OUT LOUD!**?*"

Those statements include:

*"Wild or domestic stallions can sometimes become a danger when they no longer respect people."*

*“We wholly believe people have a right to camp without facing danger from wild animals intruding on their space.”*

*“Although we wish Alluvium had behaved himself in order to not have gotten himself removed, he is being well-cared for by park staff. “*

There was even this statement: *“You may hear differing opinions on management of this herd, however, these are our opinions and we are more than happy to offer literature to back our scientific views.”*

Yet, when they were asked for this “literature”, that request was denied, as it was too much for them to share on social media.

We also want to take a moment to remind people that opinions are not facts. By definition:

**O·pin·ion**

/ə'pɪn(ə)n/

*noun*

1.a view or judgment formed about something, not necessarily based on fact or knowledge

It is no secret that there is no love lost between any of the organizations that document the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. I say document intentionally, because by definition, that is all they are doing:

**Doc·u·ment**

*noun*

- 1.a piece of written, printed, or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record.

*verb*

- 1.record (something) in written, photographic, or other form:

That is much different than the following definitions:

## Ac·tiv·ism

/'aktə,vizəm/

*noun*

- 1.the policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change:

## Ad·vo·ca·cy

/'advəkəsē/

*noun*

- 1.public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy:

It is perfectly fine that they choose as an organization to **NOT** be advocates or activists for the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. ***THAT*** is exactly how/why Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates was born. NDBH clearly advocates for Theodore Roosevelt National Park – which is much different than advocating for the wild horses that call the park home.

Their post yesterday did not share any of the local news reports that have been done on Alluvium. Those news reports very clearly contradict what the park is stating about the events that led to Alluvium's capture 2 months ago. Again, the post was filled with their "***opinions***" which we have already concluded are not necessarily facts.

I also should mention that I personally cannot comment on NDBH's Facebook page. I, like many others who disagree with them, have been blocked from commenting on their page. And yes, we have also blocked people from our page. The people we block are people who come to our page to argue and fight with our followers instead of respectfully stating their differing opinions and moving on. Many of you also noticed that your comments that disagreed with their post also seemed to mysteriously disappear. Another normal action for their Facebook page.

So, while I sat and minded my own business yesterday and truthfully, was trying to just take a day off from wild horse advocacy to do things like clean my floors, cook a real dinner and just relax, I received the following email from the Board of Directors from North Dakota Badlands Horse.

Again, our history is long and not pretty. In spite of that, I reached out to them several times over the last two years asking for their help to save this herd. **EVERY SINGLE REQUEST WAS MET WITH A FLAT OUT "NO!"**

I also slept on how to respond to this email or if it was worth responding to it at all. My husband Gary and I have been repeatedly bullied and harassed by NDBH and their followers for **YEARS**. Seriously, to the point of physical threats against us that have been reported to local law enforcement. They have targeted our small business and harassed our customers in the hopes of hurting us not only physically but also financially.

We are done being bullied.

This email is addressed to me personally, but CHWHA also has their own board, and we have all of you who are followers. We feel that this email is to all of you as well. Instead of answering the email to them personally, or in the secret formats that they seem to prefer, we will answer their email here for everyone to see:

(NDBH's email is in **bold**, CHWHA's response is in *italics*)

**The North Dakota Badlands Horse Board of Directors**

**7-15-2024**

**Chris Kman – President of Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocacy**

*Please note: I am the President of Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates (slight discrepancy)*

**Greetings,**

**This is in answer to all the social media posts and emails you have made concerning NDBH and what you consider to be our complacency concerning the wild horses in TRNP.**

**We do appreciate the work you have done to convince the public and elected officials that the horses must stay in the park. However, before all the harassment in the form of emails, form letters, calls, and letters to elected officials all the way to the President, the horses' existence in the park was not threatened. Had you and your followers not continually harassed the park with demands before Dr. McCann was able to create a comprehensive horse management plan, that plan might have been written and in effect. You know as well as we do that Dr. McCann told all of us that taking the process out of the hands of the local park could have disastrous results. It did!**

*Thank you for acknowledging the work of CHWHA and our followers.*

*Disagreeing with the management of the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park is **NOT** harassment. It **IS** our right as tax paying citizens to question our government. Unlike your organization, we do not believe that nodding our head in agreement with the park when their actions contradict what is best for the health of the herd is ever the right action to take.*

*I do not know that Dr. McCann said that. I **DO** know that Dr. McCann's prior position before coming to TRNP included removing feral pigs from a national park. I also know that when I came onboard, park practices of removing all of the young horses, treating mares with a highly controversial drug GonaCon, which by the park and Colorado State Universities (CSU) own admission can cause permanent sterilization, and the fact that we were being left an aging herd, were cause for concern for us that the future of Theodore Roosevelt National Park included wild horses at all.*

*Quite the contrary, we believe the park **DID** have a management plan. A plan I am told Dr. McCann stated clearly in 2016: A plan to bring the herd down to 35-60 horses. A simple Google search will show you that this does **NOT** allow for a genetically viable herd of horses.*

*So yes, the park had their plan. They just let us know on December 12, 2022 what that was: **Total elimination of this herd from the boundaries of the park.***

*What was disastrous is that our ability to amplify our voices and get our state and federal legislators involved thwarted their plans.*

**Our organization has always been willing to work cooperatively with others concerning the park's horses, but we have found it impossible to work with Chasing Horses. When you ask us and others to help, it is always asking us to support your ideas and back it up with money. Our board and other stakeholders have different opinions on what is best for the horses but consensus through cooperative discussion is never welcomed. Instead, we are maligned, discredited, called liars, threatened with lawsuits, and made the focus of frivolous correspondence with the NPS, media people, and a long list of government officeholders.**

*I am sorry that I respectfully disagree with this statement. The longstanding battle between you and **WIND** is clearly documented.*

*I personally asked your organization several times over the last two years to help us save this herd. Every single time you told me no.*

*The first time was in December when the park formally announced their plans. I had no idea what to do, how we could save them, or if it was even possible. The odds were stacked against*

*us for sure. I asked at that time if we could put our differences aside and work together to save this herd. You told me no. I don't recall asking for any money – just help to save this herd.*

*I invited your organization to speak at the rally we hosted in Medora. I also took time to speak to the one board member that attended in the hopes of finding a way to work together. The rally was paid for 100% by CHWHA, so again, I do not recall asking you for money for the rally. I also do not remember you sharing information about the rally with your followers to help bring people to the rally to show overwhelming support for the wild horses of TRNP. Our short lived attempt to work together failed again as your organization could not even commit to sharing a unified message filled with facts to help educate all of our followers.*

*I did ask you in April of 2024, once the park was forced to allow the horses to stay, AND after seeing your organization taking credit for CHWHA's hard work, to help us finish this work for the horses. Help us get federal protection for the herd. Yes, I did ask for money. You have raised money from your followers who mistakenly believe you have been working with us to save this herd. We need about \$40,000 to get state and federal protection for this herd. We asked that you literally put your money where your mouth is and help us make sure we never have to go through what we did these last 2 years.*

*Once again, you said no.*

**Thankfully the people of North Dakota particularly Senator Hoeven showed the National Park Service that the horses are very valuable to North Dakota!**

***THANKFULLY!***

*The people of North Dakota spoke up – raised their voices. Senator Hoeven heard those voices and decided to take action – just as he did once again last week when he got a commitment for a genetically viable herd of horses to remain in the park from the presumptive new Deputy Secretary of the Interior.*

*Those actions have come about because of our advocacy. If the world is quiet on this topic, our legislators think all is well and they will move on with their busy schedules and other agendas.*

**But you are still fighting the park, pushing your way of thinking without any respect for park staff or any other knowledgeable people. How do you expect to be part of the process of creating and carrying out a horse management plan when all you seem to want to do is fight? Where is the science in your point of view concerning birth control, genetics, forage allotment, and keeping all the large ungulates at manageable numbers within a fenced park? Since you seem to know all the answers, we would love to see your detailed management plan.**

We **ABSOLUTELY** are still fighting for these horses. It would be ludicrous to let the momentum we have fall away while we wait and see if the park is going to play nice. History **CLEARLY** shows they will not. You can find this history in Dr. McLaughlin's report in the [research library](#) section of our website.

We are working with our state legislators who agree with us, we **NEVER** want to have the threat of removal of these amazing wild horses happen again. For those of us who have been doing the actual work to save this herd, the last two years have been completely and totally exhausting.

Thank you for giving me such power, but I do not think I have all the answers. **I DO** have a lot of wild horse advocate friends I have made and the knowledge of other wild horse herds that are successfully managed to use as guidelines. No one is asking for the park to reinvent the wheel. What our organization does not know or understand, we seek out actual facts from those who do know.

For example:

Did you know that Assateague Island National Seashore (another national park with wild horses) **DOES NOT** sell their horses. Why? According to their Chief Resource Manager (aka their own Dr. McCann) they do not want their horses "at large". They don't want to see 6-year-old horses from their park going through 3 "forever" homes. I am sure they also do not want things like the debacle of the Legacy Mustang Sanctuary, which NDBH fully supported in 2013, but has remained silent about today as the whereabouts of the 36 wild horses you helped place there are unknown. Sadly, you know as well as we do, more than likely those 36 horses, as you say, have probably "fallen through the cracks". Or to put it truthfully, they ended up in the slaughter pipeline.

Good for Assateague for not wanting the same for their wild horses! CHWHA is simply hoping that TRNP can take a few lessons from their sister park.

Did you know that Assateague also uses PZP **NOT** GonaCon? They also rotate mares **AND** the last time I spoke with them; they were **NOT** using any birth control at all because their plan worked too well, and herd numbers were too low. They also manage the herd for genetic viability.

If it can happen in one national park, there is no reason why that cannot happen in any other.

**Knowing the park does not have sufficient staff and will need knowledgeable volunteers to conduct its horse management, we want to restore a working relationship with TRNP. We urge you to rethink your strategies. You are not the only entity in all of this. Your strategy**

**may just end in more chaos and division. The nonprofits and other stakeholders need to put personal feelings aside and work together with cooperation and civility.**

### **The NDBH Board of Directors**

*Our organization has actually reached out to the park countless times since April 25<sup>th</sup> offering to work with the park, as Senator Hoeven continually states, to help a genetically viable herd of wild horses remain in the park.*

*Since April 25<sup>th</sup>, we have restructured our strategy, and our board has looked at what the future of CHWHA looks like – what goals do we want to work toward?*

*We have decided to work with our state legislators on legislation that will be introduced in the 2025 session.*

*Next will be federal legislation, which will help support the actions we are working on with the State of North Dakota.*

*Lastly, if we can raise enough money, we will be having a feasibility study done for a wild horse sanctuary in Southwestern North Dakota. This will help give a permanent home to Frank Kuntz's Nokota horses. You know, the unique horses that NDBH helped not only remove from the park that are in need of a permanent home, but also the decades long fight your organization has had with Frank and his late brother Leo Kuntz as your organization worked to discredit them as well. A sanctuary would also have been able to provide a home to poor Alluvium who could be running free instead of locked in a pen for 2 months. I do have to also say thank you for the aerial photo showing that there is no roof on the facility. You would know that for sure as money raised by NDBH by your followers paid for the handling facility. A necessity for your organization "strategy" as you worked with the park to sell off over 200 baby horses from 2015-2021.*

*You are right, CHWHA is **NOT** the only entity in all of this. After years of asking for your help to do what is right for these horses, we have learned that we can only control our own actions. We are sorry if our plans contradict yours. While we love Theodore Roosevelt National Park and would and have done anything we can to help support them, our loyalty is to every single one of the 190 wild horses that call the park home that need our voice. NDBH's loyalty clearly is with park management. There lies the dividing line between our organization and yours. It is also why we cannot work together. We will **NOT** shake our heads in agreement just because the park says so and to not make waves or as you state "cause problems". **THOSE** actions from NDBH over the years are what has caused **ALL** of the issues we are facing today.*



**MAYBE**

*Just MAYBE*

*It is time to try something new.*

*Lastly, you seem to want to demand respect from our organization. We are happy to oblige. Please remember that the road to respect is a two-way road. If you want respect from us, please give it to us in return.*

*As we have said many times, we may not agree on how these horses should be managed, but we all love this herd and we always hope that that could be a starting point for us to work together. That door is always open.*

*Two years is a **LONG** Time. Maybe you have forgotten all the events that took place. In January of 2023, Theodore Roosevelt National Park held a Civic Engagement meeting, taking a public stand on their proposed action, that literally ripped the hearts out of everyone who loves these horses. We listened as the TRNP Park staff, **INCLUDING** Dr. McCann, dug their heels in and let us know that there were **NO** circumstances that would allow the horses to stay in the park. Maybe this comment by NDBH President Marylu Weber on a post by [Deb Lee Carson Photography's Facebook page](#) in January of 2023 when the gravity of the situation that the park's stand meant was clear to all of us, will help refresh your memory of what we just went through and why CHWHA is fighting so hard to make sure we **NEVER** have this experience again:*

**Marylu Weber**

I could not agree more, Deb. I feel so very, terribly betrayed! All of us who have spent years, shed tears and blood to help them manage the horses have been completely ignored, disregarded, yes slapped in the face. I used to tell Blake how some new development felt like a kick in the head. This is running over us, smashing our hearts, with an 18-wheeler.

These people have no regard for the people they are hurting. How many of our followers of all the pages look everyday for our posts, live for the stories we share. These horses give some people a reason to get up every day; they are a bright spot in the dark, dreary days of shut-ins; they bring back precious memories for people who can no longer hike or ride.

The horses will suffer greatly if they have to leave the park, but thousands of people will also suffer great loss. Do these people even care? Their smug celebratory attitudes show that they don't!

*Please do let us know when the movement toward cooperation and civility will begin. We will be all too happy to meet you on that road.*

*Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates Board of Directors*

We invite our followers to respectfully add their thoughts to this conversation.

Thank you for your support and to everyone who reached out to us yesterday.

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