



In March 2022, the National Park Service (NPS) asked for your input in developing a Livestock Plan for horse and cattle herds at Theodore Roosevelt National Park (the Park). NPS staff considered the input received during that civic engagement process to further develop and refine the alternatives presented in the plan. Currently, horse management is guided by a 1978 Environmental Assessment (EA), and cattle management is guided by a 1970 Management Plan. This current effort addresses livestock, horses and cattle herds, and considers their role on the park landscape and their impacts on native species and prairie ecosystems. This plan would also align with current laws, regulations, and policies, to ensure balance with natural and cultural resource management priorities, as directed by the NPS Organic Act (54 United States Code 100101).

Three preliminary alternatives are being considered for analysis: Alternative A (No Action Alternative: continued herd management under the 1978 EA and 1970 Management Plan), Alternative B (Action Alternative: expedited reduction of herds to no livestock), and Alternative C (Proposed Action Alternative: phased reduction of herds to no livestock). This newsletter includes more details about the alternatives.

You are invited to submit your comments on the alternatives through January 31, 2023 and join us for a virtual public scoping meeting on January 12, 2023. We invite you to participate in the planning process by submitting comments and ideas for consideration in the Livestock Plan. Throughout the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process, the NPS will offer several opportunities for public input and comment. Thank you for your continued interest in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

*Current phase*



MAR – APR 2022	DEC 2022 - JAN 2023	SPRING 2023	SUMMER 2023	FALL 2023
Pre-NEPA Civic Engagement*	Initiate NEPA / Public Scoping Period*	Formulate Final Alternatives and Prepare EA	Release EA for Public Comment*	NEPA Decision Document

\*Opportunity for public input

# Background

Currently, two livestock herds reside in the Park: there are nine cattle in the North Unit and approximately 200 horses in the South Unit. Both herds have been allowed to occur as nonnative livestock on NPS lands. While past perspectives focused on managing for a historic scene, park priorities are to manage the species, resources, and ecosystems that are native to the landscape of the Park.

## Park Purpose Statement:

Theodore Roosevelt National Park memorializes Theodore Roosevelt and pays tribute to his enduring contribution to the conservation of our nation's resources by preserving and protecting the scenery, native wildlife, and wilderness qualities—the landscape that inspired Roosevelt and still inspires visitors today.

*Livestock at the park include any species of animal that has been selectively bred by humans for domestic and agricultural purposes, including, but not limited to, cattle, sheep, horses, burros, mules, goats, and swine.*



## Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the Livestock Plan is to address livestock, horses and cattle herds, within the Park, under relevant laws, regulations, policies, and park management priorities including the conservation of native species and natural prairie ecosystem functions.

### A Livestock Plan is needed to:

- Address operational commitments to livestock management.
- Address potential impacts of livestock on landscape and natural resources, including native wildlife, native vegetation, and water resources.
- Address potential impacts of livestock on cultural resources, including archeological sites and cultural landscapes.
- Provide resiliency for native ecosystems and species in the face of a changing climate.
- Bring livestock management into compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and policies.



# Description of Preliminary Alternatives

## **Alternative A – No Action Alternative: Continued herd management under the 1978 EA and 1970 Management Plan**

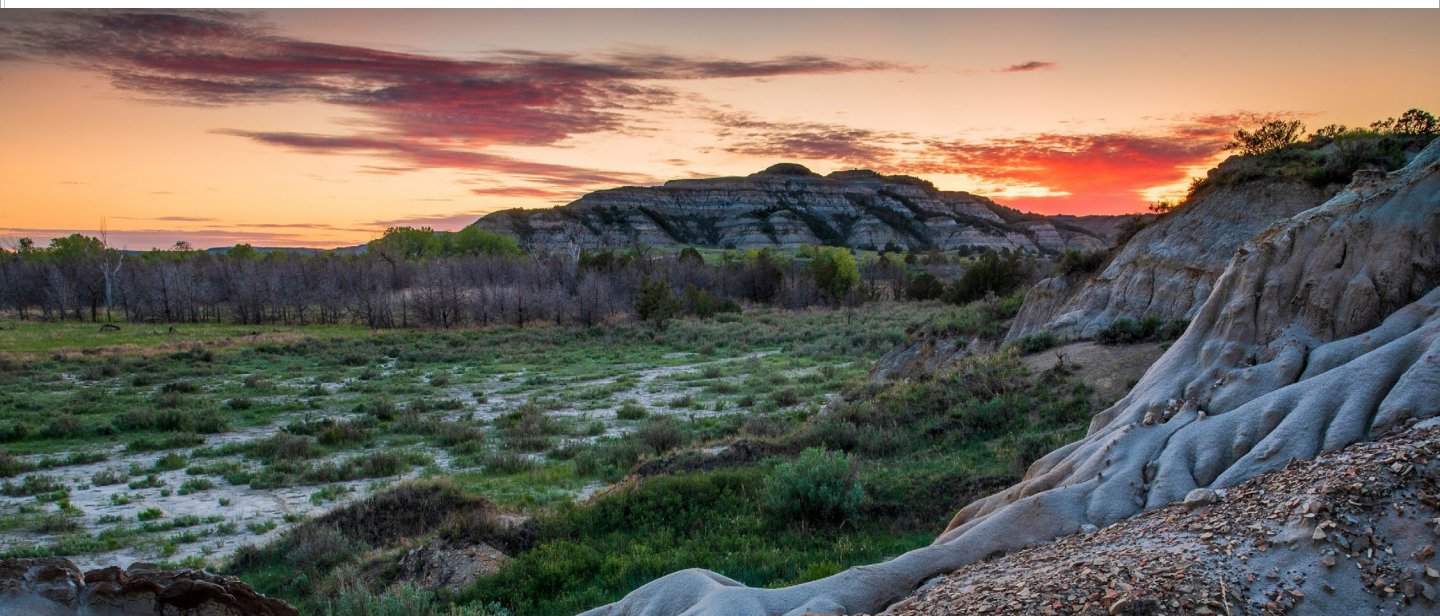
Alternative A enables no new management action. Stewardship would continue under current management plans with a population objective of 35–60 horses and up to 12 cattle. Although the population fluctuates year-to-year, there are approximately 200 horses living in the South Unit currently. Active capture, handling, sale, and removal of excess horses would continue to occur for reduction of the population to meet the management objective. The NPS would continue to use capture and contraceptive techniques to maintain horse numbers at the population objectives defined in the 1978 EA. Cattle would be replenished from external sources, as individuals perish, to maintain numbers at or below 12 animals, as indicated in the 1970 Management Plan.

## **Alternative B – Action Alternative: Expedited Reduction of Herds to No Livestock**

This alternative would require active capturing of horses in the Park with the methods best suited to reducing the population to zero in an expedited fashion. Tribes would be provided the first opportunity to receive horses. After Tribal requests are fulfilled, horses would be transferred to other authorized entities or sold via US General Services Administration (GSA) auction. Cattle would be gathered and donated to other authorized entities or sold via GSA auction. NPS would plan to remove all livestock within 2 years of plan implementation, though logistical, operational, and environmental circumstances may dictate that the effort could take longer.

## **Alternative C – Proposed Action: Phased Reduction of Herds to No Livestock**

This alternative would also require active capture of horses with the methods best suited to reducing the population to zero, but in a phased approach. Tribes would be provided the first opportunity to receive horses; after Tribal requests are fulfilled, they would be sold to the public via GSA auction. Contraceptive techniques would be used to prevent future reproduction. Once a reduced herd size of fully contracepted horses is achieved, these horses would be allowed to remain in the Park to live out their lives. Cattle would be gathered and donated to other authorized entities or sold via GSA auction.



# Public Meeting

The NPS will hold a virtual public scoping meeting on **January 12, 2023**. Attendees can join by computer or phone to learn about the Livestock Plan. You can find information about joining the meeting on the project Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/LP>. Please note that comments can only be accepted through the PEPC website or by U.S. mail and will not be recorded or documented during the virtual meeting.

*The NPS is committed to providing access to the virtual public scoping meeting for all participants. Closed captioning will be available during the public scoping meeting. Further, an audio and video recording of the presentation will be posted online after the meeting. Participants will also have access to live audio during the public scoping meeting via their telephone or computer speakers. An accessible version of the NPS public scoping meeting presentation will also be posted online prior to the meeting. All materials can be found at: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/LP>*

## How to Comment

Public participation is an important element of the planning process, and we welcome your comments, concerns, issues, suggestions, and potential topics for consideration. You are invited to submit comments on the information in this newsletter, the preliminary alternatives, proposed action, and what the EA should address and analyze. Comments that provide relevant and new information with sufficient detail are most useful. Comments that will be considered are those that present information that can be used when developing alternatives, present reasonable alternatives, or present information that can be used when the NPS considers impacts of alternatives.

Comments that cannot be considered include comments for or against an action without any reasoning, comments that only agree or disagree with NPS policy, comments without justification or supporting data, comments that take the form of vague, open-ended questions, and form letters. Comments are not accepted by fax, e-mail or in any other form. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted.

Please share your comments no later than **January 31, 2023**, online through the PEPC website at: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/LP>

Or in writing to:

Superintendent

Theodore Roosevelt National Park

PO Box 7

Medora, ND 58645

*Before individuals include their address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in their comment, they should be aware that their entire comment, including their personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. Individuals may request that the NPS withhold their name and/or address from public disclosure. If individuals wish to do this, they must state this prominently at the beginning of their comment and make such a request by checking the box "keep my contact information private" on the website. The NPS will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law, but individuals should be aware that NPS may still be required to disclose personal identifying information.*

