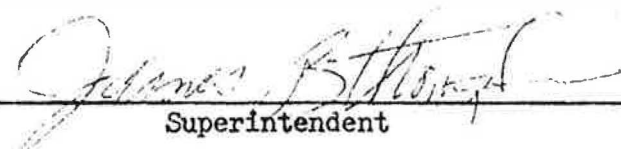


WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT PLAN
(A supplement to the Resources Management plan)

THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL MEMORIAL PARK



Superintendent

DATE 6/23/70

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WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT PLAN

History

Wild horses have long been present in the Badlands. Theodore Roosevelt wrote in "Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail", "In a great many--indeed, in most-- localities there are wild horses to be found, which, although invariably of domestic descent, being either themselves runaways from some ranch or Indian outfit, or else claiming such for their sires and dams, yet are quite as wild as these wild horses whenever possible, and they are but little more difficult to break than the so-called "tame" animals. But the wild stallions are, whenever possible, shot; both because of their propensity for driving off the ranch mares, and because their incurable viciousness makes them always unsafe companions for other horses still more than for men."

Ranchmen continued to capture wild horses nearly to the present time. Some were said to make their living trapping and selling wild horses. One of these was Mr. Gorham who lived on Government Creek about a mile northeast of the park boundary. Several wild horse traps were located in the park. One was located near where the scenic loop road now crosses the Jones-Jules Creek divide.

Management Background

The last large horse roundup was held in the south unit in 1952 after the park was fenced. About 60-70 horses were caught but some escaped. Most of the present horses are thought to be descendents of two mares that escaped from the Barnhart ranch,

and a white stud of unknown ancestry. These three have all been caught and removed from the park. All of the remaining horses were probably born within the park except three. These three are geldings owned by Tom Tescher that escaped as yearlings in 1952 or 1953.

The majority of the local residents would like to see the wild horses remain in the park. The attempted removal of the remaining horses in 1964 and 1965 resulted in considerable unfavorable publicity, and public suspicion of NPS motive persists to the present.

Herd Status

In the spring of 1970 the horses were in two herds. One, controlled by a black stud with a white patch on one side, ranged in Paddock Creek. This herd had two mares with colts and several young horses. The other herd had three mares with two colts and several young horses. This herd is bossed by an iron grey stud that has kept this herd together near Goins dogtown for the past three years. In addition, there are several small groups or pairs of young studs that usually range in the same general areas as the herds. The total population in October of 1969 was 26; with the spring colts the spring 1970 population is 30 horses if no winter losses occurred. This also includes the three geldings.

The badlands is a hazardous area to raise colts. Five colts have been found dead in the past four years. Two of these had fallen in deep washes and could not get out. The cause of death was not determined for the other three. Only five colts have been raised in the past five years. Many of the horses are small with

crooked legs which is probably a result of inbreeding.

Management Goals

1. Ownership

Determine whether it is necessary or desirable under state law to obtain title to the horses.

2. Population

Allow the horses to increase to approximately forty head. This is enough so they should split into several herds. This should result in more mixing and decrease the inbreeding which has occurred in the past. Several herds will also improve the visitors chances of seeing the wild horses. This number is small enough so no range damage should result.

2. Inbreeding problem

Release at least one new stud to add some new blood in the herd. The new stud should be released in the fall of 1970 or spring of 1971. Remove one or several old studs by shooting as necessary when the new stud is released. Old studs cannot be tamed and if caught are sold for pet food. They are worth about \$20 which is much less than the cost of catching them.

4. Elimination of branded stock

Cooperate with Tom Tescher in catching the three geldings. They are now nearly 20 years old and even if they cannot be caught they will probably die of old age in the next several years.

Long Range Goals

For successful management, counts will be made and records kept of such things as annual increase, winter losses, herd compositions

and areas used.

At the present rate of increase it will take a minimum of five years and more likely ten before the horses reach forty head. Removal of surplus animals will be necessary when forty head is reached. These should be removed live if possible in the following priority.

1. Call for bids for the removal of a specified number of animals.

A contract will then be issued to the successful bidder, with necessary restrictions such as no use of airplanes, etc.

2. Removal by National Park Service personnel with the use of a tranquilizer gun. Past tranquilizers have not been very successful with horses, but new ones now being tested are reported to be much better. Horses caught will be disposed of in accordance with government regulations.

3. Removal by National Park Service personnel by baiting or trapping. One of the best possibilities of trapping would be at water holes such as wild horse spring.

4. Shooting surplus animals will be used as a last resort.

Increases and Losses in Horse Herd

<u>Date</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Unknown</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Summer 1965	+2	2			two colts born in Park.
Dec. 1965	-6	4	2		two colts above plus old grey stud, two branded mares and 3-year old grey stud.
Feb. 1966	-1	1			caught in Mossers N. of Park.
Summer 1966	+2	2			two colts black with white blazed faces born in park.
Aug. 1966	-1	1			3-4 year old stud caught at Lindbos east of Park.
June 1967	-2			2	two colts found dead 1 at Goins dog town 1 at Jule Creek.
July 1968	+1			1	sorrel colt born in park.
Sept. 1968	-1			1	Black colt found dead at wild horse spring.
July 1969	-1			1	No new colts seen this summer. One found dead south of Paddock Creek.
Apr. 1970	+4			4	Two new colts on Goins dog town. Two new colts on lower Paddock Creek.