



Categorical Exclusion Documentation Form (CE Form)

Project: Apply Contraceptive to Limit Horse Demonstration Herd Reproduction

PEPC Project Number: 96920

Description of Action (Project Description):

Theodore Roosevelt National Park proposes contraception of all female feral horses (>8 months of age) with GonaCon™ Equine immuno-contraceptive, to reduce foaling rates and minimize the number of animals that must be captured and sold annually for management of herd size on a limited landscape within a perimeter fence. Field operations are planned to occur during August 2020 - December 2021.

Currently, most reproductive age female horses in the park have been contracepted as part of research to determine GonaCon™ Equine vaccine efficacy, and study results indicate that the vaccine is an effective tool for controlling reproduction in a captive population (Baker et al. 2013, 2018). Initial and booster doses (2ml each) of the vaccine will be administered remotely by syringe dart, which provides approximately two years of effective contraception, before animals return to fertility (McCann et al. In prep.). Vaccine effects will be temporary and will provide management latitude as the park explores development of an updated comprehensive management plan.

USDA has advised that vaccinated animals may be transferred out of the park (e.g., through GSA auction to private citizens) as part of annual herd management operations without animal or human health concerns. Therefore, this action will not preclude physical removal of animals in the future.

References:

Baker D, Powers J, Oehler M, Ransom J, Gionfriddo J, Nett T. 2013. Field evaluation of the immunocontraceptive GonaCon-B in free-ranging horses (*Equus caballus*) at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. *J Zoo Wildl Med* 44: S147.

Baker, D. L., J. G. Powers, J. I. Ransom, B. E. McCann, M. W. Oehler, J. E. Bruemmer, N. L. Galloway, D. C. Eckery, and Terry M. Nett. 2018. Reimmunization increases contraceptive effectiveness of gonadotropin-releasing hormone vaccine (GonaCon-Equine) in free-ranging horses (*Equus caballus*): limitations and side effects. *PLoS ONE* 13(7): e0201570. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0201570>.

McCann, B. E., D. L. Baker, J. G. Powers, et al. Delivery of GonaCon™ Equine contraceptive to feral horses using prototype syringe-darts.

Project Locations:

Location

County:	Billings	State:	ND
District:	NDAL	Section:	

There are no required mitigations identified.

CE Citation: E.3 Removal of park resident individuals of non-threatened/endangered species which pose a danger to visitors, threaten park resources or become a nuisance in areas surrounding a park, when such removal is included in an approved resource management plan.

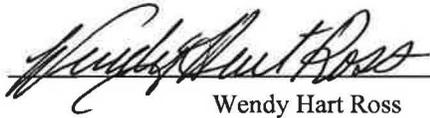
CE Justification:

Though the CE specifically cites "removal of park resident individuals", versus contraception, the proposed action will prevent additional genesis of resident animals that would have to be removed to protect park resources from overgrazing. Therefore, the action is proactively addressing the same intent. Guidance for this CE states that the RMP should be "interpreted broadly". Additionally, the stipulations cited in Section B further ensure that the Proposed Action will have no potential for adverse impacts to natural or cultural resources, or the visitor experience. The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 43 CFR §1508.4. This CE is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having significant effects on the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR §1508.4 apply.

Decision: I find that the action fits within the categorical exclusion above. Therefore, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No extraordinary circumstances apply.

Signature

Superintendent:


Wendy Hart Ross

Date:



Extraordinary Circumstances:

If implemented, would the proposal...	Yes/No	Notes
A. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?	No	The proposed action will not have any adverse effects on public health and safety. THRO staff will be conducting maintenance activities using approved best management practices to ensure public health and safety.
B. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?	No	There will be no significant impacts to any of the above resources. No new disturbance is authorized under this CE. Please see stipulations above regarding precautions to ensure adverse impacts to resources are avoided.
C. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA section 102(2)(E))?	No	This project's CE authority [see NPS NEPA Handbook / Chapter 3 / 3.2, 3.3] allows for routine, on-going and cyclical maintenance activities. There are no predicted adverse environmental effects from the Proposed Action.
D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?	No	The activities proposed in this CE are long-standing, common, and routine practices within the boundaries of THRO. The THRO IDT of resource specialists have reviewed the Proposed Action and determined there are no high uncertain, potentially significant, unique, or unknown risks.
E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?	No	The activities proposed in this CE are authorized under the CE category E3 and are categorically excluded because they have no potential for significant impacts to the natural or cultural environment; they are not unique and will not set a precedent for action.
F. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?	No	The IDT determined that the project would not result in cumulative significant adverse impacts when added to relevant past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions in the area. The IDT reviewed the project and incorporated stipulations into the project design to further minimize any potential for adverse impacts to natural or cultural resources and to avoid off-site impacts that could contribute to cumulative adverse impacts from other projects in the area.
G. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by either the bureau or office?	No	No historic properties will be affected.
H. Have significant impacts on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?	No	The Proposed Action will not have any significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, nor will the action have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.
I. Violate a federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?	No	The Proposed Action does not violate any Federal, State, local, or tribal laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The Proposed Action conforms to the NPS Organic Act (16 U.S.C. 1 2 3, and

		4) policies for management of public lands in areas of jurisdiction and complies with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
J. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898)?	No	Not applicable.
K. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 130007)?	No	Not applicable.
L. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?	No	The Proposed Action will not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native species known to occur in the area or promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species as per the stipulations listed above.