



Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is developing a Livestock Management Plan (LMP) to manage cattle and horse herds at Theodore Roosevelt National Park (the Park). Currently, horse management is conducted under a 1978 Environmental Assessment, and longhorn cattle management is conducted in accordance with a 1970 Management Plan. The purpose of the planning effort is to provide a long-term management plan that considers the role of longhorn cattle and horses on the Park landscape and their impact on native species.

The LMP would determine appropriate management actions for horse and longhorn cattle herds based on current scientific information and sound ecosystem management. The range of feasible alternatives would be informed by best management practices regarding herd health, animal well-being, and population management goals in addition to lessons learned from similar situations in other parks. The NPS will analyze the potential impacts of LMP implementation on natural and cultural resources as well as visitor use and experience.

This newsletter includes information about the preliminary concepts being considered. The NPS is initiating a 30-day comment period from **March 16, 2022, to April 15, 2022**, and will be hosting a virtual public meeting on **March 30, 2022**. We invite you to participate in the planning process by submitting ideas for consideration in the LMP and identifying areas of concern. Thank you for your interest in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Sincerely,

Angela Richman, Acting Superintendent,
Theodore Roosevelt National Park

Virtual Public Meeting

Wednesday, March 30th, 2022

6:00 - 7:30 pm MST

Please register for the meeting in advance at:

- https://empire.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Xm0AeNRoQ5G2-9NAwDEC5Q

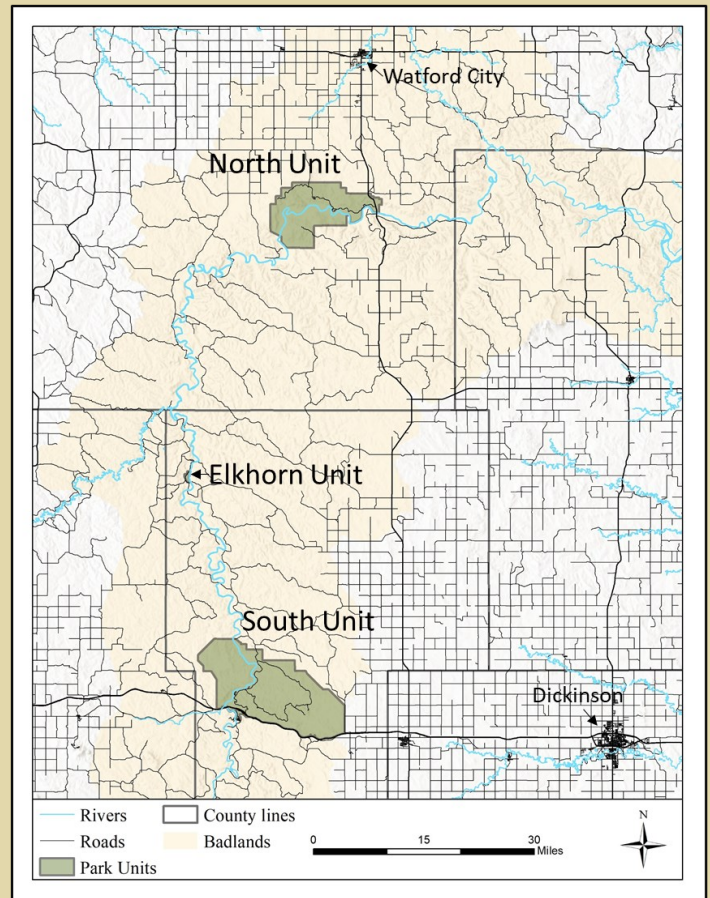
Audio only access is available; please check the registration page

Background

The Park hosts two herds of livestock which represent Theodore Roosevelt's experiences here during the open-range ranching era. Horses may be viewed in the Park's South Unit, while longhorn steer may be viewed in the North Unit.

Horses are efficient breeders, and the Park has utilized various tools to maintain manageable herd numbers. Historically, the Park has conducted roundups to herd horses into handling facilities where they are sold at public auction. In addition to roundups, the Park has attempted other methods to manage the horse population, including contraceptives. Controlling population numbers provides viewing opportunities but minimizes impacts to the larger park ecosystem.

Longhorn cattle management is an ongoing effort for the Park. The original herd of six longhorn steer established in 1967 has been continually supplemented with additional steer to a current herd size of nine.



What is a Livestock Management Plan?

NPS is proposing to develop and implement a LMP to guide future management of horse and longhorn cattle within the Park. The purpose of the proposed action is to:

- Provide a long-range management plan that considers the role of longhorn cattle and horses as historic exhibits;
- Define best management practices for both herds in the context of maintaining a historic scene (36 CFR 2.6) while reducing potential for impacts on natural resources;
- Balance livestock management with Park responsibilities to manage natural and cultural resources (54 USC 100101; the NPS Organic Act); and
- Address public interest related to livestock management in the Park.



Example horse band that can be seen in the South Unit of the Park

Goals of the Livestock Management Plan

- Determine appropriate management of horse and longhorn cattle herds based on updated scientific information, ecosystem management (or protection of natural resources), and best management practices regarding herd health and animal well-being.
- Determine the desired visitor experience concerning livestock herds.
- Define a path for stakeholder interaction to respond to public concerns related to horse and cattle management.
- Bring the sale of livestock into compliance with current NPS and GSA property management policy.
- Understand and minimize impacts of livestock on other Park natural resources (e.g., elk, bison, and vegetation).
- Balance the financial commitment to livestock management with overall Park management priorities.
- Mitigate emerging disease (*Mycoplasma bovis*) risk to bison from interaction with the Park's longhorn cattle herd and trespass cattle entering NPS lands from adjacent ranching operations.



Horses, seen in the South Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park

Longhorn cattle, seen in the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park



Draft Preliminary Alternatives

The alternatives below are draft concepts, and the purpose of the public meeting on March 30 is to receive input to refine viable alternatives for consideration by the NPS. It is expected that the alternatives below will evolve as a result of public input, which will then be thoroughly evaluated through the development of the Plan.

Draft Alternative A – No Action

Stewardship would continue under current Management Plans; population objective of 35 – 60 horses and up to 12 longhorn steers. Would require ongoing capture, handling, and sale of excess horses, along with contraception of some segment of the horse herd.

Draft Alternative B – Reduction of Herds Over Time to No Livestock

Would require gathering and sale of young horses (≤ 3 years of age), fertility control of remaining animals, and release of most horses to live out their lives in the Park. Longhorn steer would be allowed to live out their lives in the Park.

Draft Alternative C – Non-Reproductive Herds at South Unit and North Unit

Would require gathering and sale of young horses (≤ 3 years of age), fertility control of remaining animals, and release of most horses to live out their lives in the Park. A subset of 15 – 30 non-reproductive horses would be placed in a new pasture in the South Unit for visitor viewing and maintained at determined numbers over time by introduction of new non-reproductive animals. Longhorn steer would be placed in a new pasture in the North Unit, separate from bison, and maintained at 5 – 15 animals by introduction of additional non-reproductive animals over time.

Draft Alternative D – Non-Reproductive Herds at South Unit and Elkhorn Unit

Same as Alternative C, except that longhorn steer would be placed in a new pasture at the Elkhorn Unit and maintained at 5 – 15 animals by introduction of additional non-reproductive animals over time.

Draft Alternative E – Reproductive Herds of Horses and Cattle

Would require gathering and sale of some young horses (≤ 3 years of age), fertility control of a subset of the herd, maintaining a representative group of reproductive horses, and release to the South Unit of the Park. Horse numbers would be maintained at 30 – 70 animals through reproduction and introduction of new reproductive animals. Longhorn cattle would be placed in a new pasture in the North Unit, separate from bison, and maintained at 15 – 40 animals by introduction of additional reproductive animals over time. A genetic management plan would be developed for both species.

Draft Alternative F – Non-Reproductive Herd of Horses and Removal of Cattle

Would require gathering and sale of young horses (≤ 3 years of age), fertility control of remaining animals, and release of most horses at large in the South Unit of the Park. Horse numbers would be maintained at 30 – 70 animals over time by introduction of additional non-reproductive animals. Longhorn steer would be removed from Park lands.

Public Meeting Registration

NPS will hold the March 30 virtual public meeting via the Zoom online platform. During the virtual public meeting, attendees can join by computer or phone to learn about the Livestock Management Plan. The meeting will start with a brief presentation by NPS staff followed by a Q&A session with a panel of NPS staff and subject matter experts. It should be noted that comments can only be accepted through our Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website (see below) and will not be recorded or documented during the presentation.

To ensure the meeting can be productive and secure, registration is required whether you will be joining online or by phone.

We recommend that members of the public log into the Zoom meeting platform 5 minutes prior to the beginning of the presentation to ensure they can connect. If using the phone-only option, participants will be able to listen to, but not view the presentation. Instructions will be given regarding how participants can ask questions during the meeting.

*Interested members of the public not familiar with the Zoom platform should view the Zoom video tutorials (<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-video-tutorials>) prior to the public meeting. If you have technical difficulties registering or joining the meeting on March 30th, please email THRO_Education@nps.gov.

Public Meeting Instructions

Instructions for Attending the Virtual Public Meeting:

1. Please pre-register using the link provided below.

https://empsi.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Xm0AeNRoQ5G2-9NAwDEC5Q

2. After registration, participants will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

For Participants Joining by Phone:

1. Register for the meeting (see above). On the day of the meeting, call in using one of the toll-free phone numbers listed below. You will be prompted to enter your Meeting ID. Enter your Webinar ID from your confirmation email and press the # key.

2. You will then be prompted: "Enter your Password followed by #. Otherwise just press #." Enter the Passcode from your confirmation email and press the # key.

3. You will be directly joined to the meeting. If it has not started, you will be on hold until the meeting begins.

Call-in Numbers (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 720 707 2699 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 646 558 8656 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799

NPS is committed to providing access to the virtual public meeting for all participants. Closed captioning will be available during the public meeting. Further, a full audio and video recording and transcript of the public meeting will be posted online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/LMP> after the meeting. Participants will also have access to live audio during the public meeting via their telephone or computer speakers. An accessible version of the NPS public meeting presentation will also be posted online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/LMP> prior to the meeting.

Timeframe and How to Comment

Following the close of the comment period, NPS will develop a set of alternatives for analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NPS anticipates a draft NEPA document to be available to the public by Spring of 2023. Additional public engagement will occur during the NEPA process.

Public participation is an important element of the planning process, and we welcome your ideas, concerns, issues, suggestions, and potential topics for consideration. Please share your comments no later than **Friday, April 15, 2022** online through the Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/LMP>

How to Comment:

Comments that provide relevant and new information with sufficient detail are most useful. Substantive comments do one or more of the following:

- Present information that can be used to develop alternatives
- Present information that can be used when the NPS considers impacts of alternatives
- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in an existing report

Comments that are not substantive and cannot be considered include:

- Comments for or against an action without any reasoning (such as “I don’t like ____” without rationale)
- Comments that only agree or disagree with NPS policy
- Comments without justification or supporting data (such as “allow more horses”)
- Comments that take the form of vague, open-ended questions
- Form letters – we do not accept form letters through the public comment process

If you wish to receive future updates on this project, please send an email to THRO_Education@nps.gov and include your email address. Public comments will not be accepted at this email address. The mailing list will be used solely to communicate information related to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park Livestock Management Plan.

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.

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