

Draft
**The 2011 Recommendations Report
of the Equine Trailways Subcommittee**

for

**The Michigan Snowmobile and Trails
Advisory Council**

June 2011

Equine Trailways Subcommittee Members and Area of Representation:

Ms. Sandra Batie, Chair, Central Lower Peninsula
Ms. Rebecca Thompson Behm (*Resigned January 2011*), State Tourism
Ms. Jane Carmichael, Upper Peninsula
Mr. Mike Foote, Southwest Lower Peninsula
Ms. Jan Herrick (House), Southeast Lower Peninsula
Mr. Dick Kleinhardt (Senate), Northern Lower Peninsula

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Preface: Recommendation of the ETS to the MSTAC

In 2010, the Michigan Legislature passed and Governor Jennifer Granholm signed Michigan Public Act No. 45 and No. 46 of 2010, popularly known as the Right to Ride Act (Act), which amended Part 721 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, MCL 324.72101.

In passing the Act, the legislature found that:

[A] statewide system of trails, trailways, and pack and saddle trailways will provide for public enjoyment, health, and fitness; encourage constructive leisure-time activities; protect open space, cultural and historical resources, and habitat for wildlife and plants; enhance the local and state economies ... and preserve corridors for possible future use for other public purposes. Therefore, the planning, acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of trails, trailways, and pack and saddle trailways are in the best interest of the state and are declared to be a public purpose. MCL 324.72102.

The Act codified an Executive Order, which had created the Michigan Snowmobile and Trail Advisory Council (MSTAC) to advise the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Governor on the creation, development, operation, and maintenance of motorized and nonmotorized trails for multiple users throughout the state, and ordered that the trails should be linked wherever possible and advisable.

The Act also created the Equine Trailways Subcommittee (ETS), a subcommittee of MSTAC, which consists of a member from each of five defined regions of the state and a member representing Michigan's tourism industry. Under the Act, the ETS is charged with the following duties:

- Prepare and submit to the MSTAC a Recommended Plan for a statewide network of pack and saddle trailways.
- This Plan shall include:
 - All pack and saddle trailways on state owned land that have previously been open for use by pack and saddle animals and that the ETS determines are appropriate for pack and saddle trailways, and
 - All additional state lands that the ETS determines would be appropriate for pack and saddle animals and would contribute to a statewide network of pack and saddle trailways.

Members of the ETS were appointed in June 2010 by Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment Director Rebecca Humphries. They held their first meeting September 20, 2011, and have met periodically since then. Rebecca Behm, representing Michigan's tourism industry, resigned in January 2011 and has not been replaced as of yet, leaving the ETS short one member. Information regarding the ETS, including minutes and meeting schedules can be found at http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-39002_56382_56889---,00.html.

During the ETS's first year:

- It conducted an Equine Trails Survey (Survey) of equine recreationalists throughout the state to help the ETS determine the preferences and needs of trail users.
- In concert with the DNR and the Michigan Horse Council (MHC), the ETS has begun to inventory and map existing trailways throughout Michigan to help plan a statewide network of pack and saddle trailways.
- It has begun to network with horse groups to facilitate communication between horse users regarding existing and proposed trailways, to inform equine trail users about "Adopt-a-Trail" opportunities in their areas, and to promote cooperation and minimize conflict with other trailways users.
- It has worked to create communication between equine trail users and the DNR to help create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation between the DNR and the equine community, to gain an understanding of the DNR's responsibilities under the Pittman-Robertson (PR) and Dingell-Johnson (DJ) Acts, and to facilitate the creation of the statewide network of trailways.
- It has researched trail use plans and programs on public lands in other states to help it create recommendations which will lead to:
 - Opening more lands for pack and saddle use.
 - Minimizing impact on the environment and conflict with other motorized and nonmotorized users.
 - Enhancing and promoting the image of Michigan as a prime destination for equine recreationalists to enjoy their sport and, thereby, contribute to the development of the Michigan economy.

Equine access concerns at the Pigeon River Country State Forest (PRCSF) were a major catalyst for passage of the Act. Because of this history, and because similar equine issues are found elsewhere in Michigan, the ETS spent considerable time addressing PRCSF issues. At the request of the ETS, two meetings were held regarding equine issues in the PRCSF. The first meeting was held March 9, 2011, and was attended by DNR Director Rodney Stokes and many DNR managers; a representative of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); and three ETS members. The DNR and USFWS concerns regarding equine access to the PRCSF were identified and discussed. Director Stokes concluded the meeting by stating that the DNR would develop a new plan for equine access to the PRCSF.

The PRCSF equine access plan was developed by the DNR and presented at a second meeting on June 12 and 13, 2011, which was attended by representatives of the Pigeon River Advisory Council, two ETS members, DNR managers, and a representative of the USFWS.

The ETS members wholeheartedly thank all those who have helped us through this first year and with preparing this 2011 Recommendation Report, including, but not limited to staff of the:

Department of Natural Resources who have worked tirelessly to inform ETS of issues, legislation, legal constraints, and opportunities for reaching our goal of a statewide network of pack and saddle trails.

- Rodney A. Stokes, Director
- Mindy Koch, Deputy Director, Resource Management
- Lynne M. Boyd, Chief, Forest Management Division (FMD)
- James Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, FMD
- Scott Whitcomb, PRCSF Unit Manager, FMD
- Annamarie Bauer, Trails Planning Specialist, FMD
- Andrea N. Turner, Administrative Assistant, FMD
- Paul Curtis, Park Management Plan Administrator, Recreation Division
- Dan Eichinger, Assistant to the Chief, Wildlife Division (WD)
- Earl Flegler, Public Lands Specialist, WD
- Steve Beyer, Federal Aid Coordinator, WD
- Jason Urbach, Student Intern, FMD

United States Department of Agriculture

- Les Russell, District Ranger, Huron-Manistee National Forest

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

- Jim Hodgson, Chief, Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration
- Jon Parker, Fish & Wildlife Biologist

Pigeon River Country Advisory Council, Alpena

- Peter Gustafson
- Kerry Mase

Michigan Horse Council and its trails subcommittee who have supported ETS with volunteers, funds for compiling the results of the survey, and who entered the survey data in Excel making analysis possible.

Michigan State University

- Sarah Nichols, Associate Professor of Community, Agriculture, Recreation & Resource Studies and Geography, who analyzed and summarized survey data for the ETS Recommendation Report with assistance from her students.

The ETS hereby submits its 2011 Recommendation Report to the MSTAC, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Act. Because the Report will be made available for public comment for the next 60 days, the Report is being presented to the MSTAC as a draft. However, since the recommendations were presented, discussed and approved at several ETS public meetings, it is not anticipated that recommendations will change in substance in the final report.

The ETS will continue to meet with the MSTAC during the period when the Recommendations Report is under MSTAC review to keep MSTAC informed of its progress toward its purpose under the Act, to continue to update and refine its mapping of existing trailways and recommendations for a statewide network of trailways, and to assist MSTAC in developing its recommendation to the DNR and to Governor Rick Snyder regarding the development of the statewide network of pack and saddle trailways.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sandra S. Batie, Chairperson
Michigan Equine Trailways Subcommittee
June 2011

DRAFT

Executive Summary of Recommendations

The Equine Trailways Subcommittee (ETS) has established four long-term goals, consistent with the Ride to Ride Act (Act), which provide guidance for ETS recommendations and which, collectively, define the ETS' long-term mission. The four goals and accompanying recommendations are listed below, along with the related recommendations. In addition, the ETS recommendations for research for equine trail recreation and the 2011-2012 ETS agenda are included.

1. Goal #1

Identify and promote a statewide network of high quality pack and saddle trailways and related facilities/businesses in such a manner that Michigan becomes widely known as a state that both welcomes and promotes saddle and pack equine recreation.

- R-1. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) should work in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA), the ETS, the Michigan Horse Council (MHC), other equine trail associations and users groups, other Michigan governmental units (e.g. counties), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA-FS) to:
 - Identify, compile, and publish (as an interim step) by June 2012, currently available information on equestrian trails, campgrounds, and services.
 - Identify what other services which should be compiled for the local and visiting equestrian such as farriers, veterinarians, hay and grain sales, tack stores, fair grounds, boarding stables, riding and/or horse for lease or rent stables.
 - Identify, improve, update, expand, publish, and communicate¹ the inventory (with related updated and accurate electronic maps) of equine related trailways, facilities, services, and private businesses on a regular and scheduled basis. The intent would be to provide a real and/or a virtual guidebook that includes GPS-compatible information. Updates and additions to an inventory of pack and saddle trailways and related facilities should occur on a regular basis.
 - Once the interim inventory is available, the DNR, working in collaboration with the ETS, should identify possible connectors and opportunities to share trails to create a better network of existing equine trails so that these connectors are reflected in the ETS June 2013 report or earlier.
 - The DNR should develop a memorandum of understanding with USDA-FS to facilitate cooperation with respect to the creation of a pack and saddle trailways network, and to implement related recommendations in this report.
- R-2. There should no cumulative net-loss of designated equine trail opportunities (e.g. trails, trailways, and campgrounds) on state lands from the 2011-2012 status quo. All existing state lands' equine trails, trailways, and campgrounds should be maintained and kept open. If the DNR is unable to keep these trails, trailways and campgrounds available

¹ For example, the DNR and the ETS could request an equine resources button on the Select Michigan website similar to that found in Tennessee (www.picktnproducts.com.)

for equine trail recreation in the future, the trails, trailways and campgrounds should either be offered for lease to recognized equine riding associations or other governmental units such as counties, and/or the DNR should provide replacement opportunities that provide similar equine trail recreation opportunities in close proximity to the closed equine trails, trailways or campgrounds.

- R-3. In 2011-2012, the ETS will work with the DNR and others to continue to identify where equine trails can be expanded and/or improved as part of a statewide trailways network. This identification will include specific attention to regional distribution of a pack and saddle trailways network.
- R-4. In those state lands where equine trail use has historically occurred and where now the DNR has decided that such equine recreation was either never permitted and/or now needed to be curtailed (e.g. due to PR or DJ issues), the ETS recommends that the DNR either reopen the lands for equine recreation or develop similar equine trail opportunities in close proximity to the closed trails, campgrounds or trailheads.
- R-5. The ETS recommends that the DNR should, when substituting one equine trail or campground to compensate for the prohibition of equine use of another equine trail or campground, consult with the ETS and other equine trail users to identify what attributes would be the most valued by equestrians on the substitute equine recreational trail. The ETS further recommends that the substituted trail should be located and developed so as to provide as high a quality riding and packing experience as possible in close proximity to the “lost” equine recreation trail or campground.
- R-6. The ETS recommends that the DNR, in collaboration with the ETS, the MSTAC, and the USFWS, should, in cases where there are not other ways to accommodate equine trail recreation within or nearby a wildlife management area (WMA), investigate the possibility of implementing a permit-to-use state lands that have been purchased and managed with federal PR or DJ Funds. The ETS recommends that this permit, should it be implemented, be similar to the New Mexico GAIN permitting system for all nonmotorized users of the WMA of interest.
- R-7. The ETS recommends that the DNR pursue implementation of the DNR PRCSF Equine Access Plan (Plan) and that the DNR keep in close communication with the ETS as to any changes in the Plan as it is vetted with the USFWS and other stakeholders (e.g. The Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (PRCAC)). The ETS further recommends that this Plan be pursued with urgency such that improved access to equine trails and Elk Hill camping is available by May 1, 2012, and that significant progress be made on the design, location, and funding of the proposed modern campground facility by May 1, 2012.
- R-8. The ETS recommends that there be more miles of equine recreation trails associated with each of the state park’s equine campgrounds, preferably a minimum of 20 miles per park. Where such expansion of trail plans have been already prepared in collaboration with the DNR by local riding associations, such as is the case at Sleepy Hollow State Park, the ETS recommends expediting the development of these trails so that they can be available for equine use by May 1, 2012.
- R-9. The ETS recommends that the DNR continue to partner with equine riding, packing, and driving associations and other agencies and businesses, to stretch the available

financial and labor resources so as better implement the ETS equine campground and trail recommendations.

- R-10. The ETS recommends that equine users participate in the DNR “Adopt-a Trail” program as a way to assist in the maintenance of equine trails.
- R-11. The ETS recommends that, in the UP, DNR collaborate with the USDA-FS to add more campground facilities and associated looped equine trails which have unique identifying “confidence” and directional markers.
- R-12. The ETS recommends that the DNR investigate, in collaboration with the USDA-FS, the ETS, and equine riding associations, the feasibility of providing a Cross-The-UP (east-west) destination equine trail with equine campgrounds every 22 to 25 miles as part of a state trailways network.
- R-13. The ETS recommends that the DNR work with the ETS and other equine trail recreation associations to plan for and ultimately fund two modern equestrian facilities that include equine camping and access to electricity, showers, flush toilets, running water stands, and related camping amenities. The ETS recommends that one such facility be located in the southern region of the state; the other should be in either the northern portion of the Lower Peninsula (e.g., the PRCSF) or in the Upper Peninsula.
- R-14. In 2011-2012, the ETS will work with the DNR and others to continue to identify where equine campgrounds can be reopened, expanded and how they can be improved as part of a pack and saddle statewide trailways network, and will provide specific recommendations in the ETS 2012 annual report.
- R-15. The ETS in collaboration with the DNR will develop, in 2011-2012, a promotion and marketing strategy that includes the development of equine user-friendly materials about existing equine recreational opportunities.

2. Goal #2

Establish effective collaborations and partnerships to identify, develop, and maintain a generous set of safe, financially sustainable and ecologically sound equine trail recreational opportunities on public and leased private lands spatially distributed across the state.

- R-16. The ETS recommends that the DNR work in concert with the ETS and riding and packing associations to develop and publish criteria for “good” to “excellent” ratings for trails, trailways, and campgrounds. Furthermore, the ETS recommends that these criteria be used to rank and prioritize where maintenance, repair, relocation, and/or restoration are desirable so that all equine trails, trailways and campgrounds are maintained at “good” or “excellent” ratings.
 - These criteria should include the equine issues of proper brushing, signs, grading, stream and lake watering, and stream crossings. Signs should not only clearly and uniquely mark equine trails as to direction, but also should inform equine users of agency rules and regulations (such as not washing horses in streams), as well as provide emergency locator information and emergency telephone contacts. In

equine campground kiosks, nearest emergency first aid care for both humans and equines should be listed.

- As part of this process, and as part of the DNR proposed Equine Access to the PRCSF Plan, the ETS recommends that the DNR invite Dr. Gene Woods, Clemson University Professor Emeritus, and author of *Recreational Horse Trails in Rural and Wildlife Areas: Design, Construction and Maintenance* (Woods, 2007) to Michigan in the Fall of 2011 to give a seminar on this topic, and assist in identifying these criteria.
 - The design criteria for rails-to-trails deserves particular attention since many of these trails are shared or involve the placement of parallel trails for different users close to one another.
 - The DNR, in collaboration with the equine recreation community, should secure adequate funding and volunteer assistance on an annual basis to implement this recommendation.
- R-17. The ETS recommends that the number of equine accessible trails and equine campgrounds available on public lands (state, county, and local) should be expanded by a minimum of 15 percent by 2022, from a base inventory established by the ETS in collaboration with the DNR in the 2011-2012 ETS report.
 - R-18. The ETS recommends that, should the Port Oneida plans ultimately include equine trails within the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore, the DNR should explore the possibility of connecting trails to state-owned lands and existing or potential equine trails.
 - R-19. The ETS recommends that in 2011-2012, the DNR, in collaboration with the ETS and other riding and packing associations, county and township leaders, and the private sector, identify opportunities for providing more equine trail recreation and work to make them a reality. Particular attention should be given to the Southern Lower Peninsula, including the possibility of a destination MSTTS trail south of Clare.
 - R-20. The ETS recommends that during 2011-2012, a structured process be developed - that includes equine trail users - to identify what comprises a generous set of safe equine trail recreational opportunities. This structured process could be developed by the ETS in collaboration with the MSTAC, the DNR, and riding and packing associations. As part of this structured process.
 - Equine trail users, in collaboration with local land managers, should identify possible connectors between existing trails and Trailways, as well as additional riding and camping opportunities. Particular attention should be paid to the Southern Lower Peninsula.
 - The DNR, in collaboration with the ETS and riding and packing associations, should better communicate the process by which trails can be nominated by citizens. The form for such nominations can be found at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/TrailDevelopment_250781_7.pdf. Or it can be obtained from a local state land/unit manager.

- This process of equine recreation trail nomination will be reviewed by the ETS in 2011-2012, and recommendations for improvements in the process will be part of the 2012 annual report.
 - The ETS, equine trail users, and the DNR should work with local units of government and private landowners to secure equine trail easements that make such additional riding and camping opportunities possible.
 - The ETS, equine trail users, and the DNR should identify where there can be more equine use of rails-to-trails and strive to remove barriers to such use. Immediate attention should be focused on the 41 miles of Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee (CIS) rails-to-trails.
 - The ETS and the DNR, in collaboration with riding and packing associations, should periodically survey equine trail users as to their needs, shifts in use, perceived, economic and environmental impacts, and rider and packer satisfaction as to existing trail, trailways, and campground management and opportunities.
- R-21. The ETS will investigate, in 2011-2012, in collaboration with the MSTAC and the DNR, possible inclusion of equine trail users' preferences regarding timber harvesting practices and contracts, including the possibility of providing forested buffers along equine trails that transect clear cut or Jack Pine areas.
 - R-22. The ETS will, as part of its work in 2011-2012 and in collaboration with the MSATC, investigate how best to include the interests of equine and other trail users in the forest management decisions of where, when, and how to harvest timber.
 - R-23. The ETS recommends that the ETS, the DNR, and the Michigan Trails Riders Association (MTRA), work together to develop a long range plan for the Michigan Shore-to-Shore (MSTS) Trail, also known as the Michigan Riding and Hiking Trail, that reroutes the trail away from vehicular-paved-road traffic that protects viewscapes and that maintains, protects, and improves the MSTS Trail and group trail campgrounds. The ETS further recommends that the long-range MSTS Trail plan be developed and implemented on a mutually agreed to schedule.
 - R-24. The ETS recommends that the ETS, DNR, and MTRA formally collaborate on the future management of the Goose Creek Trail Campground with respect to equine use. The ETS offers its assistance to the DNR to resolve any issues that are involved in that management. The ETS also recommends that more directional-marked looped equine trails be provided near the Goose Creek Trail Campground.
 - R-25. The ETS will work with the DNR, MSTAC, and equine riding associations to identify and obtain sustainable sources of funding, including endowments, for equine trail recreation as outlined in this and subsequent ETS reports.
 - R-26. The ETS recommends continued use of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) for support of the nonmotorized trail objectives of the ETS and the MSTAC.

- R-27. ETS will work with the DNR and the MHC to compile and publish a list of grants of and grant criteria for the funding of the development and maintenance of equine trails and facilities.

3. Goal #3

Develop an informed group of equine trail users who share a common interest with the DNR, with other land managers and other trail users in assuring the availability of and access to high quality pack and saddle trailways and related facilities.

- R-28. The ETS recommends that in order to improve the understanding of DNR land managers of the preferences of equine users, there be a designated equine representative(s) consulted on equine issues. The ETS will work with the DNR to establish a process by which such a consulting equine representative is identified, and will provide a list about the type of equine issues about which consultation would add value. An equine user representative, along with the ETS, can also help to assure that equine trail users have an effective voice in articulating goals and objectives that guide state land management.
- R-29. The ETS recommends that all equine restrictions related to the mission of the DNR be explained in writing in a transparent and accountable way so that the typical equine user can understand the legal and/or scientific basis of such restrictions.
- R-30. The ETS, in 2011-2013, will work with the DNR, riding and packing associations, and the MSTAC to develop an improved communication strategy and communication network which will provide timely and accurate information on equine trail recreation issues. This communication will include identifying the process by which to recommend new trails, report trail damage and litter, as well as illegal activities.
- R-31. The ETS will work with riding associations and the DNR to establish a “Riding and Packing” Code of Good Conduct and distribute it widely. This effort will include encouragement of equine user seminars on “Leave No Trace” camping and riding/packing by various equine riding associations.
- R-32. The ETS recommends that the DNR work to assure that all DNR employees understand that equine users are deserving of the same respect giving other state land users, and that a welcoming and equine-friendly attitude should be the norm.
- R-33. The ETS will work in collaboration with equine riding associations, to assure that equine users understand and respect the mission and responsibilities of the DNR as well as the need of the DNR to balance many uses of the state lands. Specific attention will be given to the implications to equine use that accompany the state’s acceptance of PR and the DJ funds.

4. Goal #4

Develop partnerships and collaborations with the DNR, with other land managers, and with other trail users for support of, expansion of, and maintenance of Michigan trails and related facilities as well as minimization of user conflicts and illegal use.

- R-34. The ETS will work, in 2011-2012, with the MSTAC and the DNR to develop a process and communication strategy to address recreation trail user conflicts through “better messaging, better messages, and better messengers” so as to defuse current and potential user conflicts wherever possible.
- R-35. The ETS recommends that the DNR accurately record all complaints of trail user harassment and that equine riding associations provide education to their members on how to deal with harassment, including physical attacks, when such is encountered on the trail.
- R-36. The ETS recommends that when equine trail user volunteers have been mainly or entirely responsible for the development and maintenance of equine trails and campgrounds, there should be a presumption of priority of use for the equine trail users when there is a serious conflict with nonequine trail users. If despite such a presumption the equine facilities and trails are nevertheless “given” to another trail user, then compensation should be paid for past contributions by the new user group or by the DNR to the equine trail user volunteers.
- R-37. The ETS recommends strict enforcement of DNR rules and regulations. Such rules and regulations need to be effectively communicated to recreation trail users through communication networks and trail signs. In addition,
 - There needs to be clear communication of how observed illegal activities should be reported (such as a 1-800 toll free number for reporting illegal activities).
 - The DNR should communicate to equine trail users what legal and safe steps can be taken by an individual to record and report such illegal activities (e.g. cell phone photo of a license plate).
- R-38. The ETS recommends that the DNR should expand the use of conservation officer patrols to increase enforcement of the agency rules and regulations with particular attention to those priority violations that have significant negative impacts on natural resources such as wetlands, streams, and lakes or on other user groups.
- R-39. The ETS recommends that the DNR investigate whether the size of the enforcement penalties are set at a significant level such that they are a deterrent to illegal activities.
- R-40. The ETS recommends that the equine riding community should convey their desire to prosecuting attorneys and judges, as well as to the legislature, to have strict enforcement of equine related all agency rules and regulations.
- R-41. The ETS recommends that the DNR explore partnerships with mounted units of law enforcement agencies as well as the potential to use civilian volunteers to expand the DNR equine recreation trail and campground patrol and enforcement resources. This partnership can address, in addition to enforcement for resource protection and equine trail riding compliance, the inclusion of mounted units at trail riding events for public relations and education.

5. Research Agenda: Equine Trail Recreation

- R-42. The ETS recommends that, in 2011-2012, and as included in the proposed DNR Equine Access Plan for the PRCFS, the DNR pay for University research to assess the

equine trail user (equine and rider/packer) impacts on wildlife, particularly elk. This research should include an existing literature review.

- R-43. The ETS recommends that the DNR work with the ETS and the MSTAC in collaboration with other stakeholders to develop and prioritize a list of, and secure funding for, researchable topics that would improve the management of equine trail recreation and reduce conflicts with other state land users. This research listing and prioritization should be updated annually, and should include monitoring and evaluation research associated with equine trail recreation.
- R-44. The ETS recommends that University research be funded for a demand analysis the placement of a modern campground with running water, showers, concrete pads, and flush toilets. This analysis should include potential impacts on tourism revenue and on local businesses. It is assumed that the researchers will investigate other states' experiences as part of their research.

6. ETS 2011-2012 Agenda

- R-45. The ETS will work with the DNR and riding associations such as the MHC, in 2011-2012, in preparing a grant request and seeking adequate funding for the ETS to commission professional assistance to finalize this June 2011 ETS Recommendations Report, and to assist in preparation of the ETS June 2012 Report.
 - This grant request will focus on preparation of a complete recommendation for a statewide pack and saddle trailways.
 - This grant request will include a request for funds to prepare and publish maps and GPS locators of existing equine trail recreational trails and facilities, as well as funds for surveys addressing other equine trail recreational concerns.
 - This grant request will include the preparation of a guidebook and video for trail and campground codes-of-good conduct designed for equine trail recreationist education.
- R-46. The ETS will address the issues associated with equine trail packing and camping, as well as carriage driving, carriage trailways, and related equine facilities in the 2011-2012 report.

I. The Equine Trailways Subcommittee: History and Tasks

The preface to this 2011 Recommendations Report (Report) details the basis of the ETS authority, what is its assignment, and how it proceeds. The Act states that the recommendations should address:

- All trailways on state owned land previously open for pack and saddle animals that the ETS thinks are still appropriate for such use.
- Additional state lands that ETS determines would be appropriate.
- Advice on development and use of pack and saddle network.
- Advice on matters related to promotion of the equine industry.
- Advice on funding to conduct trailways reviews detailed in the Act, provide for reopening of previous closed trailways, preservation of existing trailways, and development of new trailways.

All these issues are addressed in this Report.

The ETS had its first meeting on September 20, 2010, and used many of its earlier meetings to become knowledgeable about existing equine trails, trailways, and campground inventories, state equine issues, and state and federal agency roles, rules and regulations. The ETS and others who assisted the ETS volunteered numerous hours and provided materials and funds to prepare this report on time.

There is a need to provide a 60 day period for public comments with respect to these recommendations. For these reasons, the Report is being presented to the MSTAC on July 22, 2011, as a draft to be finalized at a later date. However, since the recommendations were presented, discussed, and approved at several ETS public meetings, it is not anticipated that this recommendations will change in substance in the final report.

Despite a short time frame and insufficient subcommittee funding, the ETS has learned much and is confident that these recommendations are well informed.

A. The Size and Scope of Equine Trail Recreation on Michigan State Lands

Michigan is fortunate to have many beautiful equine recreational opportunities. A list of the DNR state equestrian campsites and trails can be found at:

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10365_16839_54521---,00.html .

In just the State Parks and Recreation Areas, for example, there are 204.1 miles of equestrian (EQ) trails. This total is comprised of 39.4 miles of equine trails at 4 linear state parks, and 164.7 miles of equine trails at 13 state parks and recreation areas. In addition, there are seven

state parks with EQ campgrounds providing a total of 191 equine campsites. The average number of miles of equine trails per state park is 12 miles, but range from a low of four miles on the Hart-Montegue Linear State Park to 25 miles at Fort Custer State Park², 18 miles at Brighton Recreation Areas, and 17 miles at Pontiac Lake Recreation Area. In addition, the DNR also manages approximately 3.78 million acres of state forest land, which has 322 miles of trails and 457 campsites developed specifically for equine use.

The ETS is certain that the equine community is appreciative of these equine recreation opportunities. However, the recommendations in this report reflect that the ETS wants to assure - not only that these opportunities do not decline in number, miles, or quality - but also that they increase overtime, as well as being better geographically distributed.

B. The Economic Impact of Equine Trail Recreation in Michigan

Unlike other recreational sports of Michigan, the sport of equine trail riding has little to no scientific information compiled on its economic impacts. Michigan's most recent equine impact study was in 2007, conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture, the Michigan Field Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, available here: http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Michigan/Publications/Michigan_Rotational_Surveys/equine07/equine.pdf. This Michigan study focuses on the equine industry as it affects the entire state, inclusive to all various types of equine related sports and events, not just trail riding.

Limited information has been found compiled from other states or nationally. The website http://www.elcr.org/index_resc_A.php provides a limited list of economic impact studies, as does a Google search using "economic impact of equine riding." While the ETS did not have time to do a literature search or thoroughly review these studies, some comparative economic examples are:

- In the 2006 Michigan study (Wolf, et. al.), it is shown that 17,300 of 155,000 equines in the state at that time were used as trail animals, and an additional 57,500 were used for recreation and pleasure.
- The same Michigan study estimated that a minimum annual total economic impact of the equine industry in the state was \$1.069 billion.
- In a 2005 national study, the American Horse Council estimated that there was \$32 billion generated from equine recreational uses of 3.9 million horses (www.HorseCouncil.org).
- In a 2001 study (Beattie et. al., 2001) Arizona pleasure equine owners spent, annually, an estimated \$500 to \$600 million on the care and maintenance of pleasure horses and related infrastructure (including the annualized cost of horse, tack, equipment, land and facilities ownership). The combined indirect and induced (ripple) effect of these expenditures contributed another \$444 to \$504 million annually to the Arizona economy.
- In a 2008 University of Kentucky spatial analysis of equine trail riding (Pagoulatos et. al., 2008) the average trail rider spent \$105 one way to ride each ride. The overnight trail riders spent on average of \$29 per night on accommodations. Fuel, ice, grocery, and

² After the Fort Custer State Park trails are separated, there will be 14 miles of equestrian trails.

restaurant expenses would be additional expenditures. Also omitted from the study were the costs of maintaining, feeding, housing, and shoeing the equines. Trailer equipment and licenses are not included in these estimates.

Of the 57,500 equines identified in the Michigan study as being used for pleasure and trail riding, 23 percent were ridden in Michigan's state and county parks, or state recreation areas, 14 percent in state or national forests, 6 percent in wildlife management areas, 36 percent on public roads, and 6 percent on private land. Note that 41 percent of the horses counted of the 57,500 were not ridden. These equines may be retired or used as breeding or companion animals. Thus, by adding 59 percent of the pleasure horses who were ridden (counted to be 33,630) to the 17,300 designated trail horses, there were approximately 50,930 equines inventoried as part of the Michigan study (or 33 percent of the total number of equines in the state) who were used for trail riding.

The total annual economic impact estimated from Michigan equines was estimated, in this study, to be a minimum of \$1.069 billion. One third of that amount can be ascribed to recreational uses by using the 33 percent total determined above; this figure implies that approximately \$351 million per year (or approximately \$368 million in 2010 dollars) is spent by equestrian trail riders on their sport annually. Sampling frames are difficult to acquire for equine owners, thus it is probable that the 2007 estimate is a minimum estimate.

Appendix A delineates the economic impact of horses in Michigan based on the study that was conducted by the 2006 Michigan State University (Wolf, et. al, 2006). Appendix A also provides a list of ancillary business and industries supported by the horse industry. Since equines, unlike bicycles, off-road vehicles (ORV) or snowmobiles, must be fed and given vet care whether ridden or not, the demand for these businesses and industries continue throughout the year.

C. Why the ETS Now?

It is informative to speculate as to why this concern with equine trail use is occurring now. After all, horses and pack animals have been used in Michigan since the beginning of the state's history. Evidence suggests that the types and intensity of outdoor recreation on Michigan's state lands have changed considerably over the last several decades - changing the context for the conservation of natural resources. Three major changes have been (1) the declining national interest in hunting and fishing (as reflected in the declining purchases of licenses) at the same time there have been (2) increased trends in most motorized and nonmotorized recreational activities (Decker, Jacobson, Organ, 2011). For example, deer hunting licenses in Michigan have declined from 742 thousand in 1991 to 697.5 thousand in 2010³. While snowmobile licenses have decreased from 263 thousand in 2000 to 164 thousand in 2011, ORV licenses have increased from 185.2 thousand in 2004 to 199.7 thousand in 2010 (Personal Communication, Jim Radabaugh, Forest Management Division, DNR, July 13, 2011). Also, (3) there has been fragmentation of formerly large land holdings into small parcels with accompanying increased population in retiree or second homes in the northern lower peninsula - and accompanying increased demands to use public lands for recreational purposes.

These recreational uses include not just equine trail riding and packing, but such sports as mountain biking, ORV/all terrain vehicle (ATV) use, snowmobiling, hiking, geo-caching, berry

³ See Trends in Fishing and Hunting 1991-2006: a focus on fishing and hunting by species (<http://library.fws.gov/Pubs/nat-survey2006-trends-fishing-hunting-1991-2006-focus-on-species.pdf>).

picking, orienteering, and mushroom hunting. Many of these recreational sports have been facilitated by technological changes in equipment that make them more accessible and enjoyable.

With these changes, however, user conflicts become almost inevitable - in part because there are more users doing different things with different criteria for a positive recreational experience on the same lands, and, in part, because the technological changes have made it possible to travel faster and farther from paved roads. For example, at one time, bicycle use would have been seen only on paved roads, but now, competitive bike riding enthusiasts can reach speeds exceeding 25 miles an hour. A bicycle slowly pedaling down a trail does not pose the same potential for a conflict of use, as does one hurdling down a trail at top speed, going airborne at bumps. The same can be true of equine trail recreation, where some equine sports such as endurance competition also involve rapid movement down the trail.

In addition, there are increasing societal desires, embedded in legislation, to protect and restore endangered species and their habitats. Such protection can curtail historic recreational uses on certain lands. Furthermore, improved scientific understanding of the impacts of various recreational uses on wildlife, fish, and their habitats, has meant some practices that were once thought fun and harmless - such as allowing horses to be washed in a trout stream - are now recognized as having potentially significant negative impacts on ecosystems. Recreational users differ in how accepting they are of these ecological objectives, leading to more disputes (Decker, Jacobson, Organ, 2011). Thus, there are increased expectations from a variety of interests as to the use of state lands. The result is that the DNR has to balance multiple interests and multiple criteria (e.g. funding sources, deed restrictions, resource protection, and sustainability) when managing state lands.

Meanwhile land management agencies such as the DNR remain reliant on fish and game funds, but they have a declining hunter and fisher constituency. While securing nongame and nonfish funding sources is recognized as important to many of these managers, it presents challenges to these agencies. Yet, these agencies need such funds to be responsive and accountable to larger and more diverse constituencies, so that this nontraditional constituency will in turn support the agencies in the political arena (Decker, Jacobson, Organ, 2011).

At the same time, many of the mechanisms for addressing recreational concerns and resolving land management conflicts within land management agencies remain focused mainly on fish and wildlife concerns. This focus is exacerbated by inflexible funding sources as well as serious reductions in state general funds (Textbox 1).

It appears that such is the case, for example, with equine trail uses in some WMA, such as state game areas (SGA). Because of the source of land management funds for some SGA, equine uses are prohibited if they interfere with or divert funds from wildlife and fish purposes. In many such cases, however, equine use within the WMAs would be allowed if there were nonfish, nongame funds available, and if there were no significant negative impact on fish and wildlife or hunting and fishing. As Steve Beyer, DNR Federal Aid Coordinator, stated with respect to the curtailing of equine uses in Michigan's Lost Nation SGA (Malcheff, 2011):

“The problem we have as an agency is we have no way to administer that [equine] use, we have no way to monitor that use, we have no way to enforce that use, we have no way to do the studies to make sure it is not getting out of hand.”

Inadequate funding for the DNR to meet its legislated mission can result in a breakdown of communication with the public, and, in too many cases, can also dissipate the trust of the DNR by equine recreationists. Unfortunately, such lack of trust appears to be the case with some (but certainly not all) equine trail users. The ETS surveyed 858 equine trail users in 2011, as well as 11 riding and trail horse breed associations (Appendix B). Some Equine Trail Survey respondents concluded that the DNR was biased against horses, that there needed to be better local DNR relationships, that DNR attitudes needed to change, or that attitudes seemed to vary depending on which DNR representative was involved.

It is the hope of the ETS that, with the implementation of recommendations within this report, trust can become widespread, partnerships of equine users with the DNR and others will become commonplace, and that the ETS can help identify changes in agency practices and mechanisms that result in improved equine trail opportunities and reduced multi-user conflicts. Similarly, it is hoped that the DNR can better communicate to the equine community what is expected of and desired from them as good stewards of state lands.

Textbox 1. Reductions in the State Funding of the DNR

The ETS recognizes that the DNR is seriously underfunded with respect to meeting all the purposes of Michigan legislation pertaining to the management of state lands and meeting public recreational demands. The DNR has lost 70 percent of its general funds since 2001. Michigan's state and park system is the only park system in the nation that receives no general fund support and must rely on its customers (i.e. users) to cover all operational costs. Almost no state tax revenue is spent to support wildlife or fisheries management. Funds available for fire fighting and enforcement of laws have declined by 58 percent since 2001. In addition, the total number of DNR employees has declined from 1,649 full time positions in June 2001, to 1,283 full time positions in June 2011, without a corresponding decrease in responsibilities. Nonmotorized trails have been drastically under-funded, with only \$242,000 from general fund tax dollars allocated per year to manage the state forest campgrounds, pathways, and equine and hiking trails. Hopefully in the future, the Michigan Recreation Passport Program will be able to direct more funds toward Forest Recreation support.

Sources: Department of Natural Resource's Sharon Schafer, Chief, Department Finance Office, June 8, 2011, and Lynne M. Boyd, Chief, Forest Management Division, June 23, 2011

II. Goals of the ETS

In 2010, the Michigan Legislature passed and Governor Jennifer Granholm signed Michigan Public Act No. 45 and No. 46 of 2010, popularly known as the Right to Ride Act (Act), which amended Part 721 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.72101 (Appendix C).

The ETS established four long-term goals which provide guidance for ETS recommendations, and which collectively define the ETS' long-term mission. These goals also provide a vision about equine use of state and other Michigan lands. The four goals are consistent with the Act, and they are:

- Identify and promote a statewide network of high quality pack and saddle trailways and related facilities/ businesses in such a manner that Michigan becomes widely known as a state that both welcomes and promotes saddle and pack equine recreation.
- Establish effective collaborations and partnerships to Identify, develop, and maintain a generous set of safe, financially sustainable, and ecologically sound equine trail opportunities on public and leased private lands spatially distributed across the state.
- Develop an informed group of equine trail users who share a common interest with the DNR, with other land managers, and trail users in assuring the availability of and access to high quality pack and saddle trailways and related facilities.
- Develop partnerships and collaborations with the DNR, with other land managers, and other trail users for support of, expansion of, and maintenance of Michigan equine trails and related facilities as well as minimization of user conflicts and illegal use.

III. ETS 2011 Recommendations Pertaining to Four Goals

The ETS identified several recommendations for each of the four goals. As the ETS continues its work in 2011-2012, it is anticipated that the list will be further refined.

In writing these recommendations, the ETS recognizes that Michigan legislation provides that:

- Access to state forest land by equines is allowed unless restricted.
- Access by equines on state park system or state game areas is prohibited unless authorized.
- Access on other land managed by the DNR is allowed according to specific authorization or restrictions applied to the land.

In addition, the ETS understands that there are certain sources of funds such as the PR and DJ Funds that come with restrictions on use of state lands purchased and managed with these funds (Textbox 2.)

The Act was passed, in part, because of changes in access of equines to some state managed lands, in particular the PRCSF, but also in some state game areas and state recreation areas. Some restrictions of equine access involved enforcing DNR rules and regulations that had always prohibited equine use; others are related to increased intensity and frequency of equine use that was perceived to interfere with hunting and fishing purposes on state lands purchased or managed with PR and DJ funds. Both of these types of restrictions were mainly due to perceived conflicts with the state's use of PR and DJ funds.

The ETS spent considerable time becoming knowledgeable about what were the implications of the states' acceptance of PR and DJ funds. The concerns about equine use center around possible diversion of these fish and game funds to nonfish and nongame purposes (e.g. for an equine campground), inappropriate intensity and frequency of equine use that was perceived to interfere with the purposes of the fish and game funds, and/or the lack of adequate state enforcement to assure that there was not inappropriate intensity and frequency of equine use.

Diversion of PR or DJ funds to equine trail uses, or allow equine uses that interfere with the primary purpose of the funds (e.g. fishing and hunting) can result in the state losing all such PR and DJ funds. The amount of such funds at risk is significant. In the fiscal year 2010, Michigan received \$24.5 million in such funds.

In addition to restrictions on equine use of state lands associated with PR and DJ funds, various restrictions can be placed on the use of state lands, depending on how the land was acquired and what agreements were made. For example, property obtained as a gift or through a will might contain clear deed restrictions on how the state may use the lands.

Textbox 2. The Pittman-Roberson Wildlife Restoration Programs and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Funds

Hunting and fishing industries, as well as recreational shooters, hunters, boaters, and anglers help to fund conservation programs through the DJ and PR Programs.

During 2011, more than \$749 million in federal excise tax revenues generated by sportsmen and women will be allotted to state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies through the PR and DJ Programs. Program funds come from excise taxes paid by manufacturers, producers, and importers on sporting firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing equipment and tackle, and electric outboard motors. Recreational boaters also contribute to the program through fuel taxes on motorboats and small engines.

The PR Program apportionment for 2011 nationally totals more than \$384 million, of which more than \$79 million is for hunter education and safety programs. Fish and wildlife agencies use these funds to manage wildlife populations, conduct habitat research, acquire wildlife habitat, enhance wildlife habitat, and public hunting access, carry out surveys and inventories, administer hunter education programs, and construct and maintain shooting and archery ranges.

The DJ Program apportionment for 2011 totals nearly \$365 million, of which nearly \$55 million is for recreational boating access facilities. The USFWS's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program reimburses up to 75 percent of the cost of each eligible project, while state fish and wildlife agencies contribute a minimum of 25 percent, generally using hunting and fishing license revenues as the required non-Federal match. Sport Fish Restoration funds come from excise taxes and import duties on sport fishing equipment, motorboat and small engine fuels, and pleasure boats. Fish and Wildlife agencies use the funds to pay for stocking sport fish; acquiring and improving sport fish habitat; providing aquatic resource education opportunities; conducting fisheries research; maintaining public fishing access, administering the aquatic resource education program, and constructing boat ramps, fishing piers, and other facilities for recreational boating access.

Michigan receives many of these funds; in fiscal year 2010, the state obtained \$10.5 million of PR funds; \$2.3 million of hunter education funds, and \$11.7 million of DJ funds - totaling \$24.5 million.

Source: USFWS and the legislative analysis of the Pack and Saddle Trailways on State Land House Bill 4684 (<http://www.legislative.mi.gov>). For more information, visit the USFWS's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program website at <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/>

Most of the ETS recommendations listed below will require additional funding or reallocation of funds, many such funds will be provided by the DNR. While the ETS recognizes the DNR financial constraints, the ETS hopes that the DNR will obtain adequate funds over time to implement these recommendations. Most equine associations, as evidenced by their past contributions, are willing to provide volunteer labor and materials as well. Furthermore, the majority of our Survey respondents (74.1 percent) are also willing to pay user fees in support of

equine trails and facilities, although the amount of funds raised by such fees would need to be supplemented by other funds to meet the recommendations below (Appendix B).

On the other hand, it is also clear to the ETS that the Act reflected the legislature's desire for the DNR and others to be as permissive as possible with respect to equine trail recreational use - given these state and federal funding sources and legislative constraints.

The ETS hopes that, over time, the Michigan legislature also will assist in allocating more funds to equine trail recreational purposes. These funds can be thought of, in most cases, as investments - since more equine trail recreation by both Michigan and non-Michigan citizens will generate tourism and recreational dollars, businesses, and jobs. As Michigan reinvents itself away from its history of an economy which is dependent on manufacturing and the exploitation of natural resources, toward a more service oriented economy that is able to capitalize on recreation, tourism, and agriculture, the ETS strongly believes that the equine trail user will continue to play an important and productive role.

A. Goal #1

Identify and promote a statewide network of high quality pack and saddle trailways and related facilities/ businesses in such a manner that Michigan establishes an excellent reputation as a state that both welcomes and promotes saddle and pack recreation.

There are many components to this goal such as defining the characteristics of high quality trails, establishing an inventory of current equine trails and facilities, making recommendations for a statewide trailways network, and identifying what is needed to establish an excellent state reputation with respect to equine trail recreation.

1. Definition of a High Quality Trail

The definition of a high quality equestrian riding trail will differ depending on the intended equine use. The definition for most persons in this user group tends to be an off-the-paved vehicular-roads that take the horse and rider through the woods, over hill and dale, and returns to the starting point via a loop system; shorter loops for less experienced, less fit, or time constrained users, and longer distances for others. A different definition would emerge for someone training his or her horse for an endurance competition, this horse-rider combo may desire trails with endurance challenges such as steep hills and trails that can be ridden at faster speeds without encountering other users, and more frequent watering sites. A rider participating in a hunt event, a mounted-orienteeing rider, a ride and tie competitive rider, or a field trail rider will desire other trail characteristics. Equestrian carriage drivers have different trail definitions based on their specific spatial needs. Those who pack with equines will have different needs as well. Still generalizations are possible. Textbox 3 lists some of these desirable characteristics of a trail for the recreational equestrian. Also, there are excellent guidebooks on high quality trail characteristics and campground design such as the one provided by the USDA Forest Service (Hancock, et. al, 2007) or Gene Wood's (Wood, 2007) guide to the construction of trails that harmonize with the surrounding ecosystem and landscape values. In addition, there are references such as Poe (2005) that give guidance as to how horses react to trail situations.

Textbox 3. Characteristics of a High Quality Equestrian Trail

The equine animal is the original **ATV** and can step over downed logs, work around obstacles, and cross berms, boardwalks and bridges. It is not necessary, nor often times desirable for the horse and rider to have a perfectly groomed trail. However, the average recreational rider would tend to seek the following characteristics in an excellent, high quality trail:

- Easily accessible and well marked with signs (including emergency numbers and location indicators)
- Adequate parking for hauling rig and space to unload and tack up or harness
- Away from motorized traffic
- Adequate length of trail (the definition of adequate length varies among users but some trail horses can average up to 6 to 7 miles an hour); some being destination to destination trails, but most having loops that return to initial starting area
- Potable water for human and horse (Note: A trail horse can drink as much as 20 gallons of water a day on a hot day.)
- Adequate spatial needs:
 - Height minimum 10 feet of clearance
 - Width minimum of 4 feet of clearance, wider for carriage travel
- Firm level footing without:
 - Wet organics (swamp, bog, mud)
 - Rock-hard, slick surfaces, or excessive large rocks
 - Buried or surface hazards such as wires, farm implements, sharp objects, protruding potential impaling objects
 - Steep trails following the fall line
 - Erosion
- Attractive features:
 - Loops of various length and difficulty
 - Hills – scenic views, challenging climbs and descents, tread on single elevation that circles the hill top for best views and erosion control
 - Water features - parallel and/or crossing a river or stream, circling a lake, beach lake frontage
 - Relatively level trail for carriage usage
 - Adequate shade, mostly forested
 - Quiet solitude
 - Overnight camping
- In general, single tracks are preferred for trails that are exclusive to nonmotorized users, but 2 tracks (e.g., forest management roads, work roads, and the various definitions and derivations

thereof) are preferred when there are multiple nonmotorized users in order to have safe passing, for more rapid riding, and for side by side riding - including the ponying (i.e. leading) of a pack animal or a horse ridden by a young child, as well as for carriage use.

In a 2008 University of Kentucky study (Pagoulatos, 2007), the researchers concluded that there were seven key desired amenities that influenced the desirability of the trail for riding: 1) looped trails, 2) trail length at least 15 miles, 3) availability of water along the trails, 4) trails being well marked, 5) existence of open views, 6) opportunities to camp along the trail, and 7) a full service camp facility at the trail head. A full service campsite includes water facilities and electricity access.

2. Inventory and Mapping Recommendations

In pursuing this first goal, the ETS found that there was no complete repository of statewide equestrian amenities such as trail and campground maps, or inventories of facilities such as trailheads, riding stables, and campgrounds. There is one trail guidebook that has been a valuable resource for equine trail users for years, John Faitel's *Horseman's Guide to Michigan Trails*, (Faitel, 2001) this book is now both out of date and out of print. Thus, there is no inventory that provides a complete baseline as to what attractive equine trail recreation opportunities are already available. While the DNR has parts of this inventory for the various types of state lands available for equine use, this inventory is greatly in need of updating as to current situations to assure that the listed phone numbers are functional and answered by knowledgeable individuals, and to provide the type of information desired by the equine trail user (e.g. size and number of campground spots). The current DNR website is not easy to navigate, and the difficulties multiply when a user is trying to isolate equine related information.

The riding associations have not provided a complete inventory either, in contrast to what appears to be the case with other trail user groups such as snowmobile and ATV/ORV users. The information available to the other user groups are due, in part, to the motorized vehicle license fee revenues generated that are used to fund such inventory and mapping for the motorized users. Also, the US Code Title 23 considers bicycles as transportation <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/sec217.htm>. Therefore, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has used transportation funds to develop excellent bicycle maps by state region. These maps include nonpaved, nonmotorized trails - some of which are used by equine trail users. No such fund exists for inventorying or mapping equine trails and facilities.

While there is no single set of uniform equine trail and facilities maps, there are individual trail and campground maps of various scale, quality, and accuracy available from the DNR and at the different riding locations, as well as from different riding and packing associations. These maps are usually pertinent for a single riding trail, or set of trails, in a small-defined region. Some of these maps and related driving directions to campgrounds or trailheads are available via an internet search; however many are dated and do not include GPS coordinates nor do they list other features the modern user prefers. The ETS did not find any GPS compatible topo map chips that detail Michigan's equestrian and nonmotorized trails.

The ETS did not find any written or electronic inventory of private businesses that provide services for equine trail users. However, the DNR has recently started compiling inventories of equine facilities on state lands and is working with the National Park Service to improve the inventory for the long-term objectives of the DNR equine facilities and trail plan. The DNR recognizes that there may be opportunities for state equine facilities and trails which connect to

other public/private equine recreation facilities. The DNR and MHC are both updating their separate databases on such equine trail riding opportunities.

The need for improvement of this situation is reflected in the following recommendation:

- **R-1. The DNR should work in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA), the ETS, the MHC, other equine trail associations, other users groups, other Michigan governmental units (e.g. counties), and the USDA-FS to:**
 - **Identify, compile, and publish (as an interim step) by June 2012, currently available information on equestrian trails, campgrounds and services.**
 - **Identify what other services which should be compiled for the local and visiting equestrian such as farriers, veterinarians, hay and grain sales, tack stores, fair grounds, boarding stables, riding and/or horse for lease or rent stables.**
 - **Identify, improve, update, expand, publish, and communicate⁴ the inventory (with related updated and accurate electronic maps) of equine related trailways, facilities, services, and private businesses on a regular and scheduled basis. The intent would be to provide a real and/or a virtual guidebook that includes GPS-compatible information. Updates and additions to an inventory of pack and saddle trailways and related facilities should occur on a regular basis.**
 - **Once the interim inventory is available, the DNR, working in collaboration with the ETS, should identify possible connectors and opportunities to share trails to create a better network of existing equine trails so that these connectors are reflected in the ETS June 2013 report or earlier.**
 - **The DNR should develop a memorandum of understanding with USDA-FS to facilitate cooperation with respect to the creation of a pack and saddle trailways network and to implement related recommendations in this report.**

3. Statewide Trail Network-General Recommendations

The ETS determined, early in its deliberations, that it would not be prepared to provide a map of proposed statewide network of pack and saddle trailways in time for this June 2011 Report. However, in the short nine months since the ETS first met, the ETS has garnered considerable information which it can use to recommend improvements to the existing trails network. In our Equine Trail Surveys, there are a number of comments pertaining to perceived losses of opportunities to horseback ride and camp. Comments include: there have been too many closures, riding in the state has lost its appeal, or that it is a shame that the equine trail users have to keep fighting to hold on to what have been historically used trails and campgrounds.

One specific example relates to the loss of trails and the loss of an unofficial campground termed Pine Point in the White River area of Manistee National Forest - in order to provide

⁴ For example, the DNR and the ETS could request an equine resources button on the Select Michigan website similar to that found in Tennessee (www.picktnproducts.com.)

protection for the habitat of an endangered species, the Karner Blue Butterfly (http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370_12145_12204-33007--,00.html#HCP). This Karner Blue Butterfly habitat is also found in the Huron National Forest and is oak/pine savannas/barrens. Equine Trail Survey respondents who mentioned this issue appeared to be supportive of the protection of the endangered species habitat, but wanted to be able to trail ride somewhere close by. As one respondent asked, "Isn't there a way we can have the butterfly and ride too?" This respondent was asking if a "win-lose" situation (e.g. butterfly habitat wins, equine trail losses) could be addressed in such a manner as to create a "win-win" (e.g. both butterfly habitat and equine trail recreation is available in the region). Not all "win-lose" situations can be changed to "win-win", but some can.

- **R-2. There should no cumulative net-loss of designated equine trail recreational opportunities (e.g. trails, trailways, and campgrounds) on state lands from the 2011-2012 status quo. All existing state lands' equine trails, trailways, and campgrounds should be maintained and kept open. If the DNR is unable to keep these trails, trailways, and campgrounds available for equine trail recreation in the future, the trails, trailways, and campgrounds should either be offered for lease to recognized equine riding associations or other governmental units such as counties and/or the DNR should provide replacement opportunities that provide similar equine trail recreation opportunities in close proximity to the closed equine trails, trailways, or campgrounds.**

In addition, survey respondents - individuals and riding associations - identified many possible places to reopen, expand, or improve trails (Appendix B). Identifying the actual location and potential of these suggestions will be part of the 2011-2012 ETS tasks, since there was inadequate time to investigate these suggestions for this report. However, two suggestions that deserve special attention in the next year's activities include the possibility of developing a Cross-the-UP east to west trail, and a similar east to west trail across the Southern Lower Peninsula south of Clare. Examples of other trail related suggestions from the Equine Trail Survey are found in Textbox 4.

Textbox 4. Examples of Trail-related Suggestions from Surveys

- "Mecosta trails need to be reopened by Outback Lodge."
- "More connecting trails needed in Wexford and Missaukee Counties."
- "More trails in Lapeer Country."
- "Reopen and remark trails in the Luther, Michigan area."
- "Open the trails at the dunes north of Warren Dunes by Bridgeman."
- "Fix the Polly Ann Trail."
- "Reopen the trails at Ogemaw City."
- "Add trails around Gladwin."
- "Waverly State Recreation Area in Macomb County has 900 acres yet is closed to horses."
- "Make the trails loop at the Bay deNoc Grand Island trail head in Rapid River."
- "Connect Pontiac Lake to Highland Recreation Areas under M59."
- "Pine Martin Run could expand to the other side of County Road 440."
- "Connect Ionia State Recreation Area with Sleepy Hollow State Park."
- "Connect Waterloo Recreation Area to Pinckney Recreation Area."
- "More looped and directional marked trails near Hopkins Creek Trail Campground"

Other trail related survey suggestions included such issues as improved trail maintenance, better marking of trails, better emergency aid signs, separation of uses, larger and more day use and staging areas, and making trail riding safer by avoiding paved roads.

- **R-3. In 2011-2012, the ETS will work with the DNR and others to continue to identify where equine trails can be expanded and/or improved as part of a statewide trailways network. This identification will include specific attention to regional distribution of a pack and saddle trailways network.**

4. Opening State Lands for Equine Use

It is clear to the ETS that saddle and pack trail riding/packing use has been taken place historically in SGAs and other state WMAs where riding has never been permitted by the DNR. This conclusion became evident following the MNR reviews - as required by the Act - of Lapeer SGA, Gladwin Field Trial area, and the Lost Nation SGA areas as well as the Blueberry Ridge Pathway. (The DNR reviews can be found at: http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10365_16839_54521---,00.html.)

Still, and as reflected in the Equine Trail Survey responses, many equestrians felt the loss of what seemed to be a reasonable use of state lands. The ETS encourages the DNR to seek to mitigate losses of access to state lands that have been used in the past for equine trail recreation, regardless of the reason for these losses.

The ETS, in discussion with the DNR, has learned that, in some cases, accommodations can be made for equine use in SGAs where trails, that have been historically used by equestrians (whether or not prohibited by the DNR), are now closed. For example, in the 5,000 acre Gladwin Field Trail Area, equine trail recreational use is not permitted by the DNR, in part because of potential conflict of use with other users (dog field trails) and in part because the Gladwin Field Trail Areas was purchased with PR and DJ federal funds. These funds may be imperiled by certain equine uses or by using the funds for equine trails or facility construction or maintenance. In their review of the Gladwin Field Trail Area, the DNR has noted that nearby the nearby Gladwin State Forest there are 220,000 acres (as well as acreage in Section 3 in the Gladwin Field Trial Area) that are available for riding opportunities.

- **R-4. In those state lands, where equine trail use has historically occurred, and where now the DNR has decided that such equine recreation was either never permitted and/or now needed to be curtailed (e.g. due to PR or DJ issues), the ETS recommends that the DNR either reopen the lands for equine recreation or develop similar equine trail recreation opportunities in close proximity to the closed trails, campgrounds, or trailheads.**

Also, some respondents in our Equine Trail surveys felt that, in some cases, when the DNR provided replacement riding for lost equine trail recreation opportunities, such replacement was not as desirable as what was lost. This situation appears to be the case, for example, with the replacement of Thunder Valley Equestrian (TVE) Trail in the UP for the Blueberry Ridge Pathway (BRP) (Textbox 5.) Also, some riders in Fort Custer State Park felt that the recent agreement as to the separation of trails for the use of mountain biking and equine trail recreation resulted in the equestrians having shorter and less desirable trails than before.

While the ETS is certain that UP equestrians do not want to seem ungrateful for the provision of the TVE trail, the UP riders contacted still mourn the loss of the riding at the BRP. The reasons have to do with a differing viewscape and solitude between the two trails, and the substitution of a trail TVE trail that is not perceived to be as high quality as what was lost on the BRP. For example, the TVE trail is in a cutover stand of trees whereas the BRP has big timber. The TVE trail is flat, has poor, rough, uneven footing, is a shorter trail, and has fewer places to canter than the BRP.. The TVE trail offers a smaller parking area. Posts meant to keep motorized vehicles off the trail are set too high and hit at the stirrup level for most riders, that means the riders need to remove their feet from the stirrups. This move can startle a horse that may then hit the upright posts and/or jump so as to unseat an inexperienced rider. The road to the TVE trail is rough and therefore is a jarring experience for the truck, trailer, and horse. One summary comment about the substitution of the TVE trail for the BRP reflects a sense of loss: "I feel it is a shame to let the Ridge sit there all spring, summer, and fall, not being used. This is a beautiful area that is being used just a few months of the year and being enjoyed by only a few people.... [T]his is not wise use of our land."

The ETS applauds a substitution of a new trail if there can be no legal way to accommodate equines in the current location, or if equine use imperils PR or DJ funds, or if the substitution is superior to the current trail. Thus,

- **R-5. The ETS recommends that the DNR should, when substituting one equine trail or campground to compensate for the prohibition of equine use of another equine trail or campground, consult with the ETS and other equine trail users to identify what attributes would be the most valued by equestrians on the substitute equine recreational trail. The ETS further recommends that the substituted trail should be located and developed so as to provide as high a quality riding and packing experience as possible in close proximity to the "lost" equine trail or campground.**

5. The Special Case of Fish and Game Funds

As discussed earlier, in some of the SGAs decisions as well as the PRCSF discussed below, the source of the funds for purchasing and managing the land becomes a constraint to permitting equine trail recreation or constructing trails and equine facilities.

However, in discussions with the USFWS and the DNR, the ETS learned that the funding restrictions do not prohibit equine trail recreation on lands purchased with state game and fish funding *per se*, but, rather, these funds cannot be used for nonhunting and nonfishing uses. **Any** allowance of nonhunting and fishing uses with these funds may impair the main purposes of such funds - that is, the provision of hunting and fishing recreation and restoration. Thus, these fish and wildlife funds cannot be used for the development and maintenance of equine facilities such as equine campgrounds nor trails not related to hunting and fishing.

Representative of the USFWS told the ETS that they were also concerned with the intensity and frequency of equine use of any WMAs - such as Michigan's SGAs or the PRCSF - and wanted to be certain that the USFWS reserved the right to prohibit or restrict horse use when they determined that such use was interfering with hunting and fishing purposes. It was clear that they wanted to be certain that the state had enforceable and enforced rules and regulations that minimized the possibility of significant negative impacts on fish and wildlife and/or on hunting and fishing. Specifically, the PR legislation makes clear that no proposed activity can significantly interfere with the feeding, breeding, and sheltering of wildlife or the legal recreational hunting of that wildlife.

Respondents of our Equine Trail Surveys indicated equine trail users also hunted (60 percent) and/or fished (55 percent), and therefore should have a direct appreciation of these PR purposes (Appendix B). The ETS and a vast majority of the equine trail users support game, nongame, fish, and wildlife restoration and protection, most also recognize the importance of the not imperiling the resources the state has to pursue these goals. And, while some equine trail users may disagree as to exactly when equine uses are incompatible with fishing and hunting purposes, at least one observer (Wood, undated) believes the burden of proof for demonstrating compatibility is on the equine use proponents.

The ETS has been provided with a report entitled “*Models for Equine Based Use of State Fish and Wildlife Lands*” (Models) (Higgs, 2009). This report examines three state policies for equine-based use of state game lands. These three models are from New Jersey, New Mexico, and Pennsylvania.

A quote from the Models report summarizes these three models:

“In New Jersey, horsemen have the opportunity to purchase specific horseback riding permits and ride on designated [Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)]. In Pennsylvania, horsemen...are allowed to use designated routes on game lands. These routes can be expanded by permit, approval of which is contingent upon a credible maintenance plan to be carried out by the applicant organization. In New Mexico, horse riders...may purchase a permit that allows access to many WMAs under certain limitations and conditions. [page 2].”

New Jersey’s permit is for equine users; New Mexico is for all people who want to access these WMAs for any purposes other than hunting or fishing. It is instructive to note the language in the policy of New Mexico regarding the intent of their permits (as summarized in the Models report):

“[T]o encourage and promote wildlife-associated recreation in New Mexico and to provide for public participation in the use of available natural resources in a manner that will benefit the general public in its enjoyment of public assets and the state and its political subdivision in increased economic development”

The ETS would like to see Michigan also encourage and promote equine use participation where appropriate in WMAs. We also believe that, in a time when hunting and fishing licenses continue to decline, such encouragement and promotion is in the best long-term interests of the state and the DNR.

In New Jersey, equine trail users purchase \$25 permits for a year of access. New Jersey sells about 700 of these permits per year. While initially there was some conflict with hunters, the management agency responded, not by curtailing all equine use, but by excluding equine use during the most popular hunting dates. The agency also restricts from some high erosion prone areas. The New Jersey permit information is available at <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/wmareqs.htm#horseback>.

While the Models report does not state clearly how the revenues raised by the permit sales is used, the ETS presumes it is used only for equine purposes. The state can thereby guarantee there is no diversion of fish and game funds for equine trail use. (Some states also have legislation that prohibits diversion of the equine trail recreational permit funds to nonequine purposes.)

The ETS believes both the New Jersey and the New Mexico permit system is a good model for the state of Michigan to adopt with respect to lands purchased with fish and game funds in those few situations where there is no other way to accommodate equine trail recreation within or nearby the WMAs. It is worth repeating that the majority of our Equine Trail Survey respondents (74.1 percent) were willing to pay user fees in support of equine trails and facilities, if they are guaranteed that the funds collected will be used for equine trail recreational purposes.

- **R-6. The ETS recommends that the DNR, in and in collaboration with the ETS, the MSTAC, and the USFWS, should, in cases where there are not other ways to accommodate equine trail recreation within or nearby a WMA, investigate the possibility of implementing a permit-to-use state lands that have been purchased and managed with federal PR or DJ Funds. The ETS recommends that this permit, should it be implemented, be similar to the New Mexico GAIN permitting system for all nonmotorized users of the WMA of interest.**

6. The Pigeon River Country State Forest Recommendations

Equine access concerns at the PRCSF were a major catalyst for the passage of the Act. Because of this history, and because similar equine issues are found elsewhere, the ETS spent considerable time addressing these PRCSF issues. At the request of the ETS, two meetings were held with the DNR and the USFWS about the equine issues in the PRCSF. The first was on March 9, 2011; at the table were three ETS members (Sandra Batie, Mike Foote, and Dick Kleinhardt). The DNR Director, Rodney Stokes was present as well as many DNR managers; Jon Parker and John Hodgson of the USFWS were present by phone. The concerns of the DNR and of the USFWS about equine access in the PRCSF were identified and discussed at this meeting. Director Stokes concluded the meeting by stating that DNR would develop a new plan for equine access for the PRCSF.

This DNR PRCSF Equine Access Plan was developed and presented at a subsequent meeting on June 12 and 13, 2011. At the table were Sandra Batie and Dick Kleinhardt for the ETS; Kerry Mase, a member of both the Alpena County Horsemen's Club and the Pigeon River Advisory Committee; Peter Gustafson for the Pigeon River Advisory Committee; and Scott Whitcomb, the PRC Unit Manager. Jim Hodgson of the USFWS was present by phone on the second day of this two-day meeting. The DNR presented a plan that proposes:

- The DNR will invite Dr. Wood (retired Clemson professor) to advise the DNR on such issues as building sustainable trails, water crossings, and rerouting existing trails where needed where needed.
- Trail expansion will be accomplished by identifying more equine looped trails which are selected with consideration of riding enjoyment and safety concerns.
- Unique trail signs and confidence markers will be provided (with the help of volunteers).
- Improvements will be made to the MSTS Trail (in consultation with the MTRA).

- Equine trails will be rerouted when necessary to avoid steep slopes and areas that present erosion problems.
- Improvements will be made to the Elk Hill campground. It will be redesigned to allow for larger rigs while protecting the surrounding natural resources.
- A water horse watering facility will be created that enables the DNR to close access to watering of horses in the Pigeon River at the Elk Hill Campground.
- A reservation system will be established that enables equine trail users to reserve specific sites.
- Three “dispersed campsites” will be reopened, and there will be an evaluation - on the same schedule as that of the Concept of Management for the PRC - as to whether equine access to these campsites should be continued, whether more “dispersed campsites” should be added, or whether other changes are needed.
- A communication plan will be prepared and implemented so as to provide information to equine users about equestrian opportunities in the PRCSF.
- A more aggressive enforcement program will be implemented which tickets illegal use.
- A “leave no trace” commitment from equine users will be obtained that minimizes negative equine impacts on the PRCSF resources.
- A research project will be designed, in consultation with the ETS, other equine recreationalists, and researchers and funds will be allocated for the study of the impacts of equine recreation on wildlife.
- In consultation with the ETS and other equine trail users, the DNR will design and construct a new campground facility in one of several potential areas near the PRCSF. One possible area would be the DNR “Legrand property”, a recently “Trust fund” acquired property north of the PRCSF and near the north branch of the Michigan Shore to Shore trail. The DNR has indicated that they are committed to the construction of a new facility and, if adequate funds can be found, this campground would include modern facilities such as showers, concrete pads, flush toilets and running water. The new campground facility would not lead to the closing of the Elk Hill Campground. The new facility would be located on state lands not acquired with game and fish funds, would have access to the MSTs Trail, and would have wildlife viewing opportunities (e.g. elk).

The ETS met in a public meeting to discuss this DNR proposed PRCSF Equine Access Plan on June 12 and 13, 2011. The ETS recognized that this proposal was developed in such a way that it could increase the probability that the proposal would meet with approval by the USFWS and to address the USFWS concerns about intensity and frequency of equine use in the PRCSF. It was also understood that if any of the proposals were to be judged by the USFWS to be in conflict with the federal law and regulations governing the funds allocated to the state, then the DNR would work with the USFWS to resolve the USFWS objections by modifying the proposed plan. The ETS also recognized that other stakeholders must react to this DNR proposal.

The ETS, at its' June 16, 2011, public meeting unanimously voted to express our strong support of the general direction and components provided in the DNR Equine Access to the PRCSF Proposal. Therefore,

- **R-7. The ETS recommends that the DNR pursue implementation of the DNR PRCSF Equine Access Plan and that the DNR keep in close communication with the ETS as to any changes in the Plan as it is vetted with the USFWS and other stakeholders (e.g. The PRC Advisory Council). The ETS further recommends that this Plan be pursued with urgency such that improved access to equine trails and Elk Hill camping is available by May 1, 2012, and that significant progress be made on the design, location, and funding of the proposed modern campground facility by May 1, 2012.**

7. Campground Recommendations

The map of the residence of the Survey respondents (Appendix B) indicates that the majority of the respondents rode in the Southern Lower Peninsula region.

All state forests are located north of an East West latitude line drawn through Clare, Michigan; thus, all 12 state forest equestrian campgrounds are north of Clare. State forests are available for equine use unless otherwise restricted.

However, all state parks and recreation areas with designated equine trails are south of Clare. Michigan is fortunate to have 17 state parks, linear parks, and recreation areas that permit equine trail recreation, although the riding in the equestrian friendly state parks tends to involve only a few miles each. The average number of miles in all seventeen state parks is 12 miles per park, although the range is from 18 miles to 4 miles. Seven of these state parks provide equine campgrounds with a total of 191 equestrian campsites; there are two equine campgrounds in the Allegan SGA which allow equine camping and are managed by the Allegan County Parks, plus Silver Creek Campground which is a county park also managed by Allegan County (http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10365_16839_54521---,00.html.)

As mentioned earlier, in the 2008 University of Kentucky study (Pagoulatos, 2008), researchers concluded that trail lengths of at least 15 miles and a full service camp facility at the trail head (that included water facilities and electricity access) were two key desired amenities that influenced the desirability of trails for equine riding. Also in the University of Kentucky study, the most important factor explaining an equine trail user's likelihood to make a repeat visit to a site was "distance in miles from their residence." Because of this relationship, the researchers concluded "*the primary policy recommendation for the creation of new trails involves locating them close to where the most trail riders are originating, in this case, the urban areas around Lexington, KY, Louisville, KY, and Cincinnati, OH*" [p.33].

- **R-8. The ETS recommends that there be more miles of equine trails associated with each of the state park's equine campgrounds, preferably a minimum of 20 miles per park. Where such expansion of trail plans have been already prepared in collaboration with the DNR by local riding associations, such as is the case at Sleepy Hollow State Park, the ETS recommends expediting the development of these trails so that they can be available for equine use by May 1, 2012.**

Many of the state campgrounds have benefited from the help of volunteers. For example, in many of the 17 campgrounds along the MSTs Trail, the MTRA has paid for the campground

well and other campground materials such as picket posts and gravel. Along the eighteen sections of Shore-to Shore Trail, the MTRA has provided boardwalk lumber and poles, gravel, pea-stone and geotech material for wet spots, and has volunteered the labor and equipment to prepare and maintain camping sites, place picket posts, remove downed or diseased trees, prepare stream and lake watering areas to minimize erosion, and similar activities. The MTRA also maintains the trail markers, corner posts and signs along the trail for the entire system. For an example of the typical size of these expenditures, in 2011 (March 1-June 24, 2011), the MTRA spent \$8,119 for trail and campground repair and maintenance. Other groups such as the Backcountry Horsemen Association of Michigan have assisted with labor contributions.

Indeed, sometimes it appears that it is only the volunteer organizations which are the source of major campground improvements. For example, the Brighton Trail Riders Association noted that it took the Association 12 years to save enough money to provide a well at the Brighton campground, and they are now saving to be able to bring in electricity.

The DNR does provide an “Adopt-a-Trail” program where volunteers can officially adopt a trail and assist in its maintenance. While the law states that the DNR will provide a sign crediting which association or group as adopted a trail, lack of DNR funds sometimes means others must pay for any signs. A link to the legislation related to the program is found at [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(3yzgp145ufsrsgg4t04ib3m\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getobject&objectname=mcl-324-72105a&query=on&highlight=adopt%20AND%20a%20AND%20trail](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(3yzgp145ufsrsgg4t04ib3m))/mileg.aspx?page=getobject&objectname=mcl-324-72105a&query=on&highlight=adopt%20AND%20a%20AND%20trail). In addition, volunteers are almost always welcome to participate in such DNR activities as stream restoration, improvement of endangered species habitat, and similar activities on state-owned lands.

- **R-9. The ETS recommends that the DNR continue to partner with equine riding, packing, and driving associations and other agencies and businesses, to stretch the available financial and labor resources so as better implement the ETS campground and trail recommendations.**
- **R-10. The ETS recommends that equine users participate in the DNR “Adopt-a Trail” program as a way to assist in the maintenance of equine trails.**

Most equine trail users are pleased to have state park campgrounds as well as other campgrounds for equine use, although most also appear to prefer equine only campgrounds. However, one particular concern is that all these state campgrounds are in the Lower Peninsula - probably, appropriately so, since that is where most of the population resides. Still, the Upper Peninsula (UP) has no state equine campgrounds, although the Hiawatha National Forest provides three multi-user campgrounds (i.e., Oakwood, Bay de Noc Island, and Pine Martin). This scarcity of official equine campground opportunities may account for the lower percentages of UP survey respondents who camp overnight (76 percent) with their equines as compared to Lower Peninsula Equine Trail Survey respondents (84 - 88 percent), (Appendix B). Furthermore, while the National Forests are open to equine use (unless specifically prohibited) - providing miles and miles of trails in the UP’s Ottawa and Hiawatha Forests - some UP riders in our survey worried about getting lost on unmarked trails.

In the University of Kentucky study (Pagoulatos, 2008), the researchers found the average surveyed trail rider to be a woman approximately 46 years old. Probably, the average Michigan equine user is also a woman, but the ETS survey did not ask for that information. Assuming that there are many situations of women riding, packing, and/or camping alone, or only in the company of other women and children, the ETS presumes that safety from becoming lost, crime

or harassment may be of greater concern than if trail riding were male-dominated. It may be, therefore, that women are more reluctant to camp outside an organized public campground than are men. However, this assumption is worthy of more research.

In any case, it is clear from our Equine Trail Surveys and discussions that UP riders would like more campgrounds, particularly equine only campgrounds, as well as more and better marked looped trails. At least one survey respondent also envisioned a northern version of the MSTs Trail; that is an east to west trail across the UP with equine campgrounds located approximately every 22-26 miles.

- **R-11. The ETS recommends that, in the UP, DNR collaborate with the USDA-FS to add more campground facilities and associated looped equine trails which have unique identifying “confidence” and directional markers.**
- **R-12. The ETS recommends that the DNR investigate, in collaboration with the USDA-FS, the ETS, and equine riding associations, the feasibility of providing a Cross-The-UP (east-west) destination equine trail with equine campgrounds every 22 to 25 miles as part of a state trailways network.**

What Michigan does not have, and many other states do, is a modern equine campground. Just one example of the possibilities is the Natchez Trace State Park in Tennessee. In addition to many amenities such as cabins and conference centers, the Natchez Trace Park has a Wrangler Camp with 63 sites - all with 50 amp hookups, concrete pads, and picnic tables. The Wrangler Camp is a large bathhouse and a covered pavilion. The park has access to miles of trail, all of which leave from the camp. There is a horse stable which provides horses for rent and offers guided horseback rides. The Equestrian Center also provides horse boarding. Equine trail users can thus avail themselves of nearby attractions and planned programs. Presumably, this park has a large number of user-days in the Wrangler Camp and attendant impacts on local communities' businesses.

In our Equine Trail Survey, many respondents mentioned that they would like to have a few equine campgrounds with electric hookups, showers, flush toilets, and picnic tables. One reason is that electrical hookups allow equine campers to use their air-conditioners without need of portable generators (which can easily disturb the peace of a campground, use fuel, and emit fumes). It is the assumption of the ETS that when many Equine Trail Survey respondents noted that they prefer to leave the state to ride because other states are more “welcoming,” one of the components of being “welcoming” is this “catering to the equine customer” as reflected in such “equine friendly states” modern equine campgrounds.

- **R-13. The ETS recommends that the DNR work with the ETS and other equine trail recreation associations to plan for and ultimately fund two modern equestrian facilities that include equine camping, and access to electricity, showers, flush toilets, running water stands, and related camping amenities. The ETS recommends that one such facility be located in the southern region of the state; the other should be in either the northern portion of the Lower Peninsula (e.g., the PRCSF) or in the Upper Peninsula.**

The Equine Trail Survey results also indicated an interest in adding to and/or improving existing campground facilities (Appendix B). Several respondents identified specific locations for campgrounds such as at Fort Custer State Park, Proud Lake Recreation Area, Sleepy Hollow State Park, near Clare, Gladwin, Wolverine, and the Mackinac Bridge, as well as in the UP.

Improvements were suggested for existing campgrounds including at Brighton Recreation Area, Pinckney Recreation Area, Pontiac Lake Recreation Area, Yankee Springs Recreation Area, and Highland State Park.

There was also concern about the potential redesign of the Goose Creek Trail Campground as well as the closures of public access to other campgrounds (e.g. Johnson's Crossing) on the Shore-to-Shore Trail. Other recommendations included the provision of some individual corrals as well as hitching posts outside of toilets in campgrounds. Many respondents mentioned the desire for running water in lieu of hand pumps for filling RVs, as well as the ease of operation; some asked that mounting blocks and handicap mounting ramps be provided as well.

- **R-14. In 2011-2012, the ETS will work with the DNR and others to continue to identify where equine campgrounds can be reopened, expanded and how they can be improved as part of a statewide pack and saddle trailways network, and will provide specific recommendations in the ETS 2012 annual report.**

8. Establishing an Excellent Equine-friendly Reputation

The ETS was handicapped in working on an overall tourism and promotion strategy because the ETS representative of the state's tourism industry, Rebecca Behm, resigned for personal reasons in January 2011. A replacement was not made in time for the preparation of this Report. However, some ETS work was accomplished in concert with the MHC and the DNR concerning the preparation of an accurate inventory of maps, trailheads and campgrounds, and making them available to equine trail users via hard copy, GPS map chips, and the internet. Once the new ETS member representing the tourism industry is appointed, the ETS will develop a promotion and marketing strategy in collaboration with the DNR; the possibility of this activity being part of the Pure Michigan campaign will be investigated.

- **R-15. The ETS in collaboration with the DNR will develop, in 2011-2012, a promotion and marketing strategy that includes the development of equine user-friendly materials about existing equine recreational opportunities.**

B. Goal # 2

Establish effective collaborations and partnerships to identify, develop, and maintain a generous set of safe, financially sustainable, and ecologically sound recreational opportunities on public and leased private lands spatially distributed across the state.

In pursuit of this goal #2,

- **R-16. The ETS recommends that the DNR work in concert with the ETS and riding and packing associations to develop and publish criteria for "good" to "excellent" ratings for trails, trailways, and campgrounds. Furthermore, the ETS recommends that these criteria be used to rank and prioritize where maintenance, repair, relocation, and/or restoration are desirable so that all equine trails, trailways, and campgrounds are maintained at "good" or "excellent" ratings.**
 - **These criteria should include the equine issues of proper brushing, signs, grading, stream and lake watering, and stream crossings. Signs should not only clearly and uniquely mark equine trails as to direction, but also should inform equine users of agency rules and regulations (such as not washing**

horses in streams), as well as provide emergency locator information and emergency telephone contacts. In equine campground kiosks, nearest emergency first aid care for both humans and equines should be listed.

- **As part of this process, and as part of the DNR proposed Equine Access to the PRCSF Plan, the ETS recommends that the DNR invite Dr. Gene Woods, Clemson University Professor Emeritus and author of *Recreational Horse Trails in Rural and Wildlife Areas: Design, Construction and Maintenance* (Woods, 2007) to Michigan in the Fall of 2011 to give a seminar on this topic and assist in identifying these criteria.**
- **The design criteria for rails-to-trails deserves particular attention since many of these trails are shared or involve the placement of parallel trails for different users close to one another.**
- **The DNR, in collaboration with the equine recreation community, should secure adequate funding and volunteer assistance on an annual basis to implement this recommendation.**

While maintenance and repair of existing equine riding trails and facilities should be a high priority, there is also a need for a long-range plan for expanding riding, packing, and driving opportunities. The earlier mentioned 2007 equine survey conducted by the USDA and NASS reported 155,000 horses in the state, which represented an increase of 25,000 from the previous survey in 1996. Such growth in the equine population, including trail riding and packing equines, is expected to continue. Thus,

- **R-17. The ETS recommends that the number of equine accessible trails and equine campgrounds available on public lands (state, county, and local) should be expanded by a minimum of 15 percent by 2022, from a base inventory established by the ETS in collaboration with the DNR in the 2011-2012 ETS report.**

1. Enhanced Equine Trail Opportunities in the Southern Lower Peninsula

As discussed earlier, the Equine Trail Survey results indicate that the respondents not only desire safe equine trail recreational opportunities throughout the state, they particularly desire them close enough to their homes to allow for easy, low-cost access. For example, in response to question #9 on the Survey, large majorities of respondents rode the most in the region where they reside (Appendix B). Such convenient riding and packing saves time and fuel, as well as supports local businesses. It also distributes equine related pressure on natural resources. That is, such distributed use reduces the possibility that any one area will have such intense equine use that natural resources could be damaged.

There are no state forests (where equine use is permitted unless specifically prohibited) south of Clare, and thus increased equine trail recreation opportunities will occur either through expansion in Southern Lower Peninsula state parks, state recreation areas, SGAs, or will occur on private or nonstate-owned lands, such as county-owned lands. While it is important to recognize that there are places and uses where equine trail recreation is not appropriate, the ETS sees the need for significant expansion of equine trail recreation opportunities, particularly in the Southern Lower Peninsula.

An excellent example of what is possible is that of Silver Creek County Park and contiguous Allegan SGA. The Allegan Country Equestrian Trail System is a 60-mile system that has three equine campgrounds - Pine Point, Ely Lake, and Silver Creek. All three of these facilities offer day ride parking and overnight equestrian camping opportunities for either a seasonal fee (\$25) or a daily riding trail fee (\$5/horse) and camping fee (\$12 site/night, plus \$3 horse/night). Allegan County proudly includes these recreational opportunities in its Official County Guide to Allegan County as a reason to come ride, camp, and frequent local businesses. These equine trail recreational opportunities were made possible by a visionary response to the possibility by Sara Schaefer, Southwestern Lower Peninsula Regional Supervisor, Wildlife Division, recognition that the earlier unmanaged uses these lands were untenable and unsustainable, an active volunteer riding association (Friends of the Allegan County Equine Trails System (FACETS)), and assistance of state officials, county and business leaders (Textbox 6).

Textbox 6. Silver Creek Park and Campground History

Excerpted from:
By JIM HAYDEN

The Holland Sentinel

Posted Jun 01, 2010 @ 05:30 AM

<http://www.hollandsentinel.com/feature/x1621120846/Two-Holland-women-first-to-hit-equestrian-trails>

Judy Achterhof and Laura Canaan saddled up their horses at Silver Creek Park and Campground in Hamilton and galloped down the sandy trail. The two Holland women were the first to hit the newly dedicated trail system in Allegan County on May 21. "You can ride your horse and never take the same trail twice," said Achterhof. The trails are safe — no cars or all-terrain vehicles to worry about like on the roads — well maintained and marked, she said. "And it's just beautiful out here," said Canaan.

The new trail system — one in Hamilton and two in the Allegan State Game Area — took six years and hundreds of volunteer hours to get into shape. Riding in the game area has been allowed since the early 1960s, but no designated areas were established. A group of hunters, riders, biologists and state officials decided a designated trail system was the best way to protect sensitive areas and allow riders in the game area. The state did not have the resources to do this, so Allegan County stepped in to keep the trails open.

"This is a very important activity for Allegan County," said Kevin Ricco, director of the Allegan County Parks, Recreation and Tourism. "We draw a lot of people from the surrounding areas and the surrounding states to Allegan County." Using Silver Creek only, Ricco estimated park users brought at least \$500,000 into the county, including money spent at restaurants, gas stations and convenience stores...."This is a monumental time in the history of Allegan County," said Bruce Culver, chairman of the Allegan County Road Commission. "This opens up recreational opportunities for the people of southern Michigan." Volunteers from Friends of the Allegan County Equine Trail System cleared and marked the trails, said FACETS President Robert Kaarlie.

Another nonstate lands example is found within the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore. The possibility of a single-track trail system for hikers and equestrians throughout the Port Oneida area and extending into the Miller Hill and Good Harbor area is currently under discussion. Should this potential be realized, locating a trail linking the Port Oneida area to state owned or managed lands (or even the MSTS Trail in Empire) is worthy of investigation.

- **R-18. The ETS recommends that, should the Port Oneida plans ultimately include equine trails within the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore, the DNR should explore the possibility of connecting trails to state-owned lands and existing or potential equine trails.**

Still other illustrative examples of land management/use partnerships can be found in riding association agreements with private landowners or nonstate entities. For example, the MTRA has several special use agreements where the MSTs Trail crosses private or other nonstate lands. Similarly, the Waterloo Hunt Club works closely with landowners, even providing an annual landowners' picnic as a thank you.

- **R-19. The ETS recommends that, in 2011-2012, the DNR, in collaboration with the ETS and other riding and packing associations, county and township leaders, and the private sector, identify opportunities for providing more equine trail recreation and work to make them a reality. Particular attention should be given to the Southern Lower Peninsula, including the possibility of a destination MSTs trail south of Clare.**

In addition, the ETS believes that there needs to be a wider conversation about what comprises a generous set of safe equine trail recreational opportunities. Thus,

- **R-20. The ETS recommends that, during 2011-2012, a structured process be developed - that includes equine trail users - to identify what comprises a generous set of safe equine trail recreational opportunities. This structured process could be developed in by the ETS in collaboration with the MSTAC, the DNR, and riding and packing associations. As part of this structured process,**
 - **Equine trail users, in collaboration with local land managers, should identify possible connectors between existing trails and trailways as well as additional riding and camping opportunities. Particular attention should be paid to the Southern Lower Peninsula.**
 - **The DNR, in collaboration with the ETS and riding and packing associations, should better communicate the process by which trails can be nominated by citizens. The form for such nominations can be found at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/TrailDevelopment_250781_7.pdf. Or it can be obtained from a local state land/unit manager⁴.**
 - **This process of equine recreation trail nomination will be reviewed by the ETS in 2011-2012, and recommendations for improvements in the process will be part of the 2012 annual report.**
 - **The ETS, equine trail users, and the DNR should work with local units of government and private landowners to secure equine trail easements that make such additional riding and camping opportunities possible.**
 - **The ETS, equine trail users, and the DNR should identify where there can be more equine use of rails- to-trails and strive to remove barriers to such use. Immediate attention should be focused on the 41 miles of Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee (CIS) rails-to-trails.**

- **The ETS and the DNR, in collaboration with riding and packing associations, should periodically survey equine trail users as to their needs, shifts in use, perceived, economic and environmental impacts, and rider and packer satisfaction as to existing trail, trailways, and campground management and opportunities.**

2. Forest Management Practices

One of the many uses of state lands is the harvesting of timber and in some cases, the replanting with Jack Pine for Kirtland Warbler habitat. The ETS believes that most equine trail users find riding or packing through either a clearcut or through long distances in stands of Jack Pine less desirable than riding or packing in conifer and hardwood forests. Often the clear cutting process means that heavy harvest equipment is using the same trails or two-tracks used

⁴ Currently, the person advocating for the trail needs to add details to the proposal, secure permissions for land use and generate the information required on the form, and submit the form to the local land manager. When complete and entered into the database, a field review will occur with all divisions commenting on the proposal, and then is removed by the Recreation and Trails Section for staff review, Division Chief review, and which then is sent to State Trails Coordinator for review. Currently, an approved trail proposal does not convey or imply DNR funding availability or priority for funding its construction.

by equine trail recreationists. This use can either pose a safety hazard if the equine encounters huge lumbering and noisy harvesting equipment, or can result in a trail or two-track that is of lesser quality for equine trail recreation (e.g. deep sand, no markers, rough uneven footing) than was there before.

While not every instance of timber harvesting having impact on equine trail recreation can be avoided, the ETS plans to investigate in 2011-2012 how equine trail recreational preferences can be best reconciled within best forest management practices (BMPs) and harvesting specifications. In addition, the ETS plans to investigate how equine trail recreational preferences can be reflected in forest harvest contracts as well as the possibility of providing forested buffers along equine trails when such trails transect clear cut or Jack Pine areas. Some particular concerns involve maintaining high quality equine trails near existing equine campgrounds as well as on the MSTS Trail.

- **R-21. The ETS will investigate, in 2011-2012, in collaboration with the MSTAC and the DNR, possible inclusion of equine trail users' preferences regarding timber harvesting practices and contracts, including the possibility of providing forested buffers along equine trails that transect clear cut or Jack Pine areas.**

The ETS understands that selection of where, when, and how to harvest timber is a long, and legislated process involving forest certification and sustainable forestry management principles. The ETS understands that equine trail users need to be part of this process long before announcements of pre-harvest forest management unit open houses or before red blaze marks appear on trees near their favorite trail.

- **R-22. The ETS will, as part of its work in 2011-2012 and in collaboration with the MSATC, investigate how best to include the interests of equine and other trail users in the forest management decisions of where, when, and how to harvest timber.**

3. The Michigan Shore-to-Shore Trail - A State Treasure

The state of Michigan has a unique, historic, and valuable resource: The MSTS Trail, which is the envy of many states. This MSTS Trail was born of a proposal by equine riders (eventually named the Michigan Trail Riders Association) in the early 1960s. The proposal became a reality - not only through the hard work of equine trail users - but also with the support of The Conservation Department (now the DNR) and the USFWS. The MSTS Trail was dedicated by Governor George Romney in 1964. The east-west section of the trail is approximately 240 miles long, stretching from Empire on Lake Michigan to Oscoda on Lake Huron. There are 10 equine campgrounds placed along the trail, approximately every 25 miles. It is the longest continuous trail in the Lower Peninsula. The trail also has two spurs, north to Mullet Lake and south to Cadillac, providing eight more equine campgrounds (Ritter, 1996). Together the MSTS Trail provides over 500 miles of multi-day destination riding (or packing); half of these miles are on state lands.

The MTRA, in collaboration with the DNR and other riding associations, maintains the trails and campgrounds. The MTRA provides five long distance organized rides per year on the MSTS Trail. These rides are attended by numerous riders from Michigan, as well as from various states and Canada. The STS is clearly a destination trail and can be found advertised in national trail riding magazines such as *The Trail Blazer* and *Horse and Rider*. Indeed, the July 2011 edition of *Horse and Rider* - featuring the best equine trail ride in each of the 50 states - selected the MTRA fall Color Ride for its Michigan choice (<http://www.equisearch.com/magazines/horse-and-rider>).

The MSTS Trail - open to all nonmotorized uses - is a heritage from past visionaries for the continued enjoyment by future generations. It is rich in history and provides something that is rarely found elsewhere - a beautiful, continuous, well marked trail which many perceive as the ultimate state nonmotorized trail treasure. In the opinion of the ETS, it is worthy of more protection from encroaching uses such as oil and gas facilities, clear cutting, and loss of historic campgrounds and equally historic trails, and should be considered an integral part of a statewide trailways network. There are areas of the MSTS Trail that unfortunately include vehicular road riding; a particularly long stretch is found between the camps of Mud Lake and Shecks, just south of Traverse City. In addition, the areas around the campgrounds of Goose Creek and 4 Mile equine campgrounds and adjacent trails have significant acreage of clearcutting and/or the Jack Pine planting for Kirtland Warbler habitat.

At present, there appears to be a possibility that the current, historic Goose Creek Campground will be redesigned to allow for improved management. Current but tentative discussions involve relocating the group trail camp while keeping the current routing of the Shore to Shore. It is clear that many of the survey respondents think of the Goose Creek Trail Campground as a "jewel" of the MSTS Trail. As one survey respondent mentioned, this camp allows the whole family to enjoy equine and other nonmotorized recreations such as canoeing, fishing, tubing, hiking, and biking – all from one camp location. This respondent rides horses, while other family members fish, hike, and canoe on the beautiful Manistee River. On the other hand, it may well be that the Campground is so popular that it is being used by so many users in such an unmanaged way, that improved management is desirable for its long term protection.

- **R-23. The ETS recommends that the ETS, the DNR, and the Michigan Trails Riders Association (MTRA), work together to develop a long range plan for the Michigan Shore-to-Shore (MSTS) Trail, also known as the Michigan Riding and Hiking Trail, that reroutes the trail away from vehicular-paved-road traffic that protects viewscapes, and that maintains, protects, and improves the MSTS Trail and group trail**

campgrounds. The ETS further recommends that the long-range MSTs Trail plan be developed and implemented on a mutually agreed to schedule.

- **R-24. The ETS recommends that the ETS, DNR, and MTRA formally collaborate on the future management of the Goose Creek Trail Campground with respect to equine use. The ETS offers its assistance to the DNR to resolve any issues that are involved in that management. The ETS also recommends that more directional-marked looped equine trails be provided near the Goose Creek Trail Campground.**

4. Sustainable Financing

In addition, as discussed earlier, there is a serious need make the development and maintenance of equine trail recreational opportunities financially sustainable without solely relying on user fees. The ETS will explore such mechanisms next year, including the possibility that equine trail users provide some funding. However, the amount of funds raised by user fees, even if implemented, will not be adequate to implement all of the recommendations or even maintain existing equine trails and campgrounds. Thus, there needs to be identification of more state funding sources such as the Michigan Recreation Passport revenues or grants from the MNRTF, as well as creative public-public (e.g. county-state) or public-private partnerships. In addition, the equine recreational community should work to establish permanent endowments for specific equine trails and campground. An ideal candidate for such an endowment would be the Michigan Shore to Shore trail.

In the past, DNR resources have been stretched through the use of volunteers, and the Michigan riding and packing associations have a long history of contributing labor and materials. The recently passed volunteer law (Public Act No. 65 of 2011, Part 721 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, MCL 324.503) which protects volunteers from lawsuits and allows the use of DNR equipment (at the discretion of the DNR) should make the use of volunteers more commonplace.

- **R-25. The ETS will work with the DNR, MSTAC, and equine riding associations to identify and obtain sustainable sources of funding, including endowments, for equine trail recreation as outlined in this and subsequent ETS reports.**
- **R-26. The ETS recommends continued use of the MNRTF for support of the nonmotorized trail objectives of the ETS and the MSTAC.**
- **R-27. ETS will work with DNR and MHC to compile and publish a list of grants and grant criteria for the funding of the development and maintenance of equine trails and facilities.**

C. Goal #3

Develop an informed group of equine trail users who share a common interest with the DNR, with other land managers and other trail users in assuring the availability of and access to high quality pack and saddle trailways and related facilities.

The ETS has found that in many discussions about trail design with nonequine users, there is little knowledge of existing research as to the behavior of horses. For example, equines are prey animals and thus can be easily upset when other trail users are physically higher than they

are - as has been proposed on some multi-use rails-to-trails. Similarly, there is need for more appreciation in trails, day use areas, trailheads, and campgrounds planning of the preferences of equine users.

- **R-28. The ETS recommends that in order to improve the understanding of DNR land managers of the preferences of equine users, there be a designated equine representative(s) consulted on equine issues. The ETS will work with the DNR to establish a process by which such a consulting equine representative is identified and will provide a list about the type of equine issues about which consultation would add value. An equine user representative, along with the ETS, can also help to assure that equine trail users have an effective voice in articulating goals and objectives that guide state land management.**

Also, throughout the last year, the ETS was provided USFWS trip reports and DNR reviews of equine use on state-owned lands. In these materials, there are references regarding the impacts of horses on wildlife or fish, without accompanying citations to equine-wildlife research or to recognized authorities on such impacts. The Act now requires that “any [equine] restrictions related to the mission of the department [DNR] shall be supported to the greatest extent practicable, by a written science-based rationale that is supported with documentation that is made available to the public.”

- **R-29. The ETS recommends that all equine restrictions related to the mission of the DNR be explained in writing in a transparent and accountable way so that the typical equine user can understand the legal and/or scientific basis of such restrictions.**

Currently, communication between and within equine user groups is fragmented, and all too frequently, based on inaccurate information. Because of the ease of internet communication, inaccurate information or inflammatory rhetoric can become “viral” and result in unnecessary and unproductive conflict between user groups. The DNR can be unsure of where to direct corrections of fact or new information - leaving posting to established DNR e-mail lists as their best option. This posting may not effectively reach the intended audience. In the opinion of the ETS, these communication systems are not working well.

The Act clearly specifies a public process be followed when there are proposed closures of DNR managed equine recreational facilities or trails. While the existence of that process could be better communicated, its existence should help with communication of rationale for closures. However, there remains a need for a broader and more effective communication strategy. For example, in investigating the PRCSF situation, the ETS learned that many equine trail users incorrectly thought that the entire PRCSF was closed to riding. Such was not the case. Not only did the lack of adequate communication undermine trust of the DNR, the misunderstanding meant that equine use of the PRCSF appears to have declined to such an extent that it has contributed to the decline or demise of nearby businesses.

Communication difficulties can include minor but important issues, such as where to report trail or facility damage, littering, or illegal activities. Apparently, one way to report such concerns is to call the “DNR Report All Poaching Hotline” at 1-800-292-7800, or any nearest DNR office. The lack of clarity in phoning a “poaching” phone number to report damage to an equine trail is another example of where communication could be improved.

- **R-30. The ETS, in 2011-2013, will work with the DNR, riding and packing associations, and the MSTAC to develop an improved communication strategy and communication**

networks which will provide timely and accurate information on equine trail recreation issues. This communication will include identifying the process by which to recommend new trails, report trail damage and litter as well as illegal activities.

At the same time, the ETS is aware that there are equine users who do not follow guidelines of good trail etiquette, who are not evidencing enough concern for protection of natural resources, and who are not practicing good camping practices such as “Leave no Trace” camping.

- **R-31. The ETS will work with riding associations and the DNR to establish a “Riding and Packing” Code of Good Conduct and distribute it widely. This effort will include encouragement of equine user seminars on “Leave No Trace” camping and riding/packing by various equine riding associations.**

The ETS found, in its’ discussions with others and from the surveys, that the relationship of equine trail users with employees of the DNR is mixed. As mentioned earlier in this report, some equine associations and individual equine users felt the some DNR employees or even the entire agency was biased against horses or disrespectful of equine recreation or equine trail users as legitimate state land users.

On the other hand, at the request of Director Stokes, the MHC contacted various equestrian groups that interact on a regular basis with the DNR and compiled a list of some of the most long standing and positive interactions of the equine community with the DNR (Appendix D).

Despite these positive interactions, there appears to be much that remains to be accomplished if there is to be a widespread culture of mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation between DNR and equine trail users, and assurance that all DNR employees view equine trail users as legitimate state land users.

- **R-32. The ETS recommends that the DNR work to assure that all DNR employees understand that equine users are deserving of the same respect giving other state land users ,and that a welcoming and equine-friendly attitude should be the norm.**
- **R-33. The ETS will work in collaboration with equine riding associations to assure that equine users understand and respect the mission and responsibilities of the DNR as well as the need of the DNR to balance many uses of the state lands. Specific attention will to be given to the implications to equine use that accompany the state’s acceptance of PR and DJ funds.**

D. Goal #4

Develop partnerships and collaborations with the DNR, with other land managers, and with other trail users for support of, expansion of, and maintenance of Michigan trails and related facilities as well as minimization of user conflicts and illegal use.

Currently user conflicts about trail recreation can escalate to serious win-lose confrontations that result in the DNR having to make decisions about reallocations of access to state lands and in the process, determining who gains and who loses - virtually assuring dissatisfaction of those who lose. While some of this confrontation may be unavoidable, the ETS believes there are ways to reduce such situations. It would be ideal if the various user groups could resolve most of their conflicts without the involvement of the DNR.

One specific approach can best be termed “better messaging, better messages, and better messengers.” With the term “better messaging” the ETS means more effective communication, with “better messages” the ETS means specific and accurate responses about current concerns which are targeted to reach the intended recipients, and by “better messengers” the ETS means messages need to be supplied by those trusted by the intended recipients of the message.

For example, there are different concepts held by different trail users as to what comprises a high quality trail. Indeed, the different concepts about what comprises an excellent mountain bike trail versus what comprises an excellent equine trail, has led to conflicts in the past. In some cases, such as Fort Custer State Park, the DNR solution has been separation of equine recreation trails from mountain bike trails. It is possible that there would be more tolerance of each type of user by the other, if it were better understood what the differing characteristics of excellent trails are as perceived by various users. Improved understanding could result in more compromises so that trails can be successfully shared with different user groups. Ideally, these discussions should take place between the users long before a full-blown conflict arises.

Also, there are numerous situations where an internet message from a passionate trail user is posted with the intent of catalyzing action by like-minded individuals in opposition to another user-group’s activities. All too often these messages are inflammatory, incomplete or inaccurate. In some cases, the messages appear to be fabricated in a deliberate disregard the facts of the situation. There is no easy way for another recreation trail user to find out what are the facts and reality of the situation. Even if the DNR posts some clarification, there will be many users who distrust the information. That is, the DNR is not always viewed as the trusted messenger.

- **R-34. The ETS will work, in 2011-2012, with the MSTAC and the DNR to develop a process and communication strategy to address recreation trail user conflicts through “better messaging, better messages, and better messengers” so as to defuse current and potential user conflicts wherever possible.**

No matter how well such a process is developed, however, some trail use conflicts will arise. The ETS has some suggestions about how the DNR might handle these conflicts when they involve equine trail users. These suggestions include that:

- Accurate and complete information should be kept by the DNR of complaints, including who made the complaint.
- Single, individual complaints should not be given as much attention by the DNR - less they involve a clear and dangerous situation - as compared to a consistent pattern of (nonorchestrated) complaints.
- Accusations that one type of use is always the source of a certain type of problem (e.g. noise or erosion) should be investigated and the accusation should not merely be accepted because of an individual’s statement.
- Where individual trail users are engaged in illegal activities, the individuals should be ticketed for such illegal activity; entire user groups should not be precluded from trail recreation in a specific location because of a few individuals’ activities.
- The DNR should establish rules and regulations that penalize those users who harass other users on state lands.

- Harassment complaints should be recorded and investigated.

Therefore,

- **R-35. The ETS recommends that the DNR accurately record all complaints of trail user harassment and that equine riding associations provide education to their members on how to deal with harassment, including physical attacks, when such is encountered on the trail.**

The ETS has noted that there does not appear to be any “costs” associated with making complaints, thus there are no disincentives to making complaints if a user believes it will provide an advantage for them to do so. Over the next year, the ETS intends to investigate, in concert with the MSTAC, a variety of ways of managing user conflicts. These conflicts could include requiring user groups to have mediation about their disputes, depriving both groups of trail access until there is a mutually agreed outcome, sharing trails by designated uses on certain days, seasonal closures, special event closures, or closure for certain trail conditions. Other ideas include the provision of special gates for equine trails - as Arizona does - so as to allow use by only nonmotorized uses.

In addition, the equine trails and association survey results show that many equine trail users believe their volunteer hard work and material contributions are not always appropriately recognized. Specifically trails and campgrounds that were developed and maintained by equestrians are sometimes “lost” to new users without any compensation to the associations for the time and material. As one riding association wrote:

“One of the biggest problems with equestrian trails is that horse people established many many miles of trails throughout the state long before mountain bikes and motorized trail users came on the scene. As those users entered the trails, the equestrians accepted them. However, those users soon decide that horses were in the way and demanded that horses be banned from the same trails that horsemen had built. Now, horses are not allowed in areas they created, and others use the outhouses, wells, trails, bridges, and staging areas that horsemen built.

- **R-36. The ETS recommends that when equine trail user volunteers have been mainly or entirely responsible for the development and maintenance of equine trails and campgrounds, there should be a presumption of priority of use for the equine trail users when there is a serious conflict with nonequine trail users. If despite such a presumption, the equine facilities and trails are nevertheless “given” to another trail user then compensation should be paid for past contributions by the new user group or by the DNR to the equine trail user volunteers.**

A major source of conflict stems from illegal or prohibited activities by individuals of different recreation trail user groups. Thus,

- **R-37. The ETS recommends strict enforcement of DNR rules and regulations. Such rules and regulations need to be effectively communicated to recreation trail users through communication networks and trail signs. In addition,**

- **There needs to be clear communication of how observed illegal activities should be reported, such as a toll free number (1-800) for reporting illegal activities.**
- **The DNR should communicate to equine trail users what legal and safe steps can be taken by an individual to record and report such illegal activities (e.g. cell phone photo of a license plate).**
- **R-38. The ETS recommends that the DNR should expand the use of conservation officer patrols to increase enforcement of the agency rules and regulations with particular attention to those priority violations that have significant negative impacts on natural resources such as wetlands, streams, and lakes or on other user groups.**
- **R-39. The ETS recommends that the DNR investigate whether the size of the enforcement penalties are set at a significant level such that they are a deterrent to illegal activities.**
- **R- 40. The ETS recommends that the equine riding community should convey their desire to prosecuting attorneys and judges, as well as to the legislature, to have strict enforcement of all related agency rules and regulations.**

In some areas, the mounted division of law enforcement agencies provides patrol capabilities for parks (Textbox 7). However, most of the parks that are patrolled by mounted units are typically city and county parks. It is possible that patrols could be provided for other parks, but most mounted units are stretched fairly thin to provide regular patrols. The coordination of providing this type of coverage is also a challenge with the various groups involved. However, there are cases where it may be possible to ask for mounted units to assist the DNR conservation officers for a period of time to establish to all user groups that DNR rules and regulations are being vigorously enforced, even is such an intensity of enforcement cannot be maintained constantly.

- **R-41. The ETS recommends that the DNR explore partnerships with mounted units of law enforcement agencies as well as the potential to use civilian volunteers to expand the DNR equine recreation trail and campground patrol and enforcement resources. This partnership can address, in addition to enforcement for resource protection and equine trail riding compliance, the inclusion of mounted units at trail riding events for public relations and education.**

Textbox 7. Mounted Units of Law Enforcement Agencies

The mounted units of the law enforcement agencies of Michigan serve a vital function to their communities. Their primary roles are to provide auxiliary support during local events for crowd control, traffic control, parades, and even some search and rescue activities. In some instances, neighboring counties have traveled to help (President Obama's visit to Kalamazoo) with mounted duties. About 25 percent of the counties in the state of Michigan have a mounted unit that is usually associated with their local Sheriff's office. The Wayne County Sheriff Mounted Unit boasts that they are the last remaining full time unit left in the state. The city of Detroit has its own mounted unit.

In almost all instances, these units are made up of volunteers that have purchased their equipment and uniforms with their own money. Just this expense alone can run into a couple thousand dollars. In the

units that do not have their own horses (only a few units have their own horses), the volunteer officers must also supply their own horses, saddles, tack, and a truck and trailer to haul their horses and equipment. In addition to all of this, the officers must also help train, condition, desensitize and care for their four legged partners.

The officers perform out of the goodness of their hearts and pocketbooks to give back to the community at little or no cost to the taxpayers. In this day and age of diminishing resources (both money and personnel) and increasing demands, the mounted units play a vital role in serving their communities. What better public relations than a smiling officer on top of a beautiful horse that draws kids and parents in to talk to the police and “pet the horse!”

IV. Research on Equine Trail Recreation

It became apparent to the ETS that there is research needed to resolve disputes and to better manage equine trail recreation. That is, with respect to equine trail and campground issues, there appears to be too much time speculating and not enough time gathering data and empirical evidence with which to address the issues. The ETS believes that better data will result in better dialogue, which will result in better decisions.

Some research topics in need of attention include:

- The impact of equine trail recreation on wildlife, fish and on hunting and fishing pursuits (including comparisons to hunting and fishing impacts).
- The use of wing dams and other ways of protecting fish and fish habitat where equines cross or drink from streams.
- The spread of invasive species from hay or equine manure.
- The factors that make for positive land manager-equine trail user experiences and relationships.
- The demand for equine trail recreational opportunities (equine trails, staging areas, trailheads, and campgrounds) in Michigan by location and type of experience, including the amenities most desired by equine users, with attention as to whether preferences differ by gender.
- The economic impact of equine trail recreation in Michigan.
- The extent and type of trail user conflicts.

This is not an exhaustive list, and the ETS intends to continue to identify research topics pertinent to the ETS mission.

- **R-42. The ETS recommends that, in 2011-2012, and as included in the proposed DNR Equine Access Plan for the PRCFS, the DNR pay for University research to assess the equine trail user (equine and rider/packer) impacts on wildlife, particularly elk. This research should include an existing literature review.**
- **R-43. The ETS recommends that the DNR work with the ETS and the MSTAC in collaboration with other stakeholders, to develop and prioritize a list of, and secure funding for, researchable topics that would improve the management of equine trail recreation and reduce conflicts with other state land users. This research listing and**

prioritization should be updated annually and should include monitoring and evaluation research associated with equine trail recreation.

In addition, there is need for evaluation and monitoring of various equine trail recreation issues overtime. For example, there could be monitoring of the use of distributed camping in the PRCSF to determine if such use should be curtailed or expanded.

Also, there are important investment questions found in the ETS recommendations in this report that should be included in the list of research needs. An important one, for example, is where to locate a modern equine campground facility with respect to use.

- **R-44. The ETS recommends that University research be funded for a demand analysis with regard to the placement of a modern campground with running water, showers, concrete pads, and flush toilets. This analysis should include potential impacts on tourism revenue and on local businesses. It is assumed that the researchers will investigate other states' experiences as part of their research.**

V. ETS 2011-2012 Agenda

Throughout this report, the ETS has assigned itself tasks for the coming work year. It is anticipated that the ETS will issue annual reports at the end of June. However, it is obvious to the ETS that working only through the volunteer efforts of ETS members is inadequate to complete the tasks as provided by the Act. Not only does more work need to be done to finalize the recommendations on a statewide trails network, there is significant work remaining to assure adequate inventories of the status quo equine trail recreational opportunities are available. There is also need to publish and/or place on internet sites, the location and characteristics of existing trails, trail maps, and trail campground facilities, as well as promote their existence within and without the state. Thus,

- **R-45. The ETS will work with the DNR and riding associations such as the MHC, in 2011-2012, in preparing a grant request and seeking adequate funding for the ETS to commission professional assistance to finalize this June 2011 ETS Recommendations Report, and to assist in preparation of the ETS June 2012 Report.**
 - **This grant request will focus on preparation of a complete recommendation for a statewide pack and saddle trailways.**
 - **This grant request will include a request for funds to prepare and publish maps and GPS locators of existing equine trail recreational trails and facilities as well as funds for surveys addressing other equine trail recreational concerns.**
 - **This grant request will include the preparation of a guidebook and video for trail and campground codes-of-good conduct designed for equine trail recreationist education.**

The short time period for the preparation of this report meant that the interests of those in using equines for pack animals on state-owned lands and those interested in carriage driving were not given attention.

- **R-46. The ETS will address the issues associated with equine trail packing and camping as well as carriage driving, carriage trailways, and related equine facilities in the 2011-2012 report.**

In addition, there are many potential partners for the development of a pack and saddle trailways system (e.g. the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance). The ETS plans to be in contact with many of these organizations in 2011-2012 to better understand common interests.

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Appendix A. Economic Impact of the Horses in Michigan, 2006

Source: Wolf, et. al, 2006.

Numbers:

- 155,000** - number of horses in Michigan
- 17%** - growth in numbers since 1991
- 10,000** - number of owners transporting horses to and from Michigan state parks and forests
- 5,600,000 miles** - distance covered by these owners
- 35,000** - equine operations in Michigan
- \$4,350,000,000** - value of equine, land, facilities and fences
- \$460,000,000** - annual expenses, excluding labor, in 2006
- \$25,000,000** - wages and benefits in 2006
- \$150,000,000** - annual income from equine operations in 2006
- \$1,069,000,000** - minimum annual economic impact
- 79,900** - equine activity participants, over 18; **19,500** - participants 18 and under

Other:

- \$40,400,000** - paid annually in Michigan property taxes
- \$342,300,000** - value of trucks and trailers used in Michigan equine operations (95% U.S. made)
- \$17,200,000** - feed inventory (again primarily U.S. – Michigan produced)

Inventory by use of Michigan equine:

Breeding	21,000
Competition	19,400 (users of US produced trucks, trailers, plus miles)
Work	12,600
Racing	5,700 (generates \$2,000,000,000 impact within itself)
Trail Riding	17,300
Recreation/Pleasure	57,500) these two overlap
Idle	21,500
Total Inventory	155,000

Ancillary Businesses/Industries Supported By:

- Western/English Clothing & Boot Stores; Horse Equipment and Supply Retailers
- Horse Trailer Sales and Repair
- Farm Equipment Sales and Service
- Veterinarians
- Construction Companies (barns, stables, and arenas)

College Scholarships

Riding Instructors

Farmers - and other feed suppliers including Mills and Feed Stores;

Taxes: Income, Property, Sales, Gaming, and Fuel

Fuel Sales: Gas, Diesel, and Propane

Hotels, Motels, and Restaurants

Equestrian Expositions

National Forests and Parks: Permits and Camping Fees

States Parks and Recreational Areas: Permits, Camping Fees, Volunteer Labor

County Parks: Permits, Camping Fees, Volunteer Labor

Fencing Suppliers and Installers

Shows and Horse Sports and Facilities

Mounted Law Enforcement

Farm, Equipment, Livestock and Liability Insurance; Business Services (accounting, tax, insurance, etc.)

County Fairgrounds, Facilities, and Local Fairs

Race Tracks: Pari-Mutuel and County Fair

Equine Transport Services

Youth Programs: K-12, 4-H, Extension

Farriers (horse shoers) and Blacksmiths

Therapeutic (physically and mentally challenged) Riding Programs

Tourism (Michigan horse shows and trail riding facilities bring horse-owning people from other state into Michigan)

Equine Publications (at least three totally equine publications produced in Michigan, with wide distribution throughout the mid-west)

University Research and Extension Programs, through Michigan State University primarily

Appendix B. Survey Design, Implementation and Results

1. Survey Design and Implementation

In preparing this 2011 Recommendations Report, the ETS determined that a survey of Michigan trail using equine trail user would be of assistance in determining the needs and wants of Michigan equine trail users. The ETS determined to meet its tasks under the Act, it needed information about reopening previously open equine trails which have since been closed , improving existing equine trails, the needs and wants of equine trail users for new and/or improved equine campgrounds, and recommendations regarding the statewide pack and saddle trailways network.

The surveys for equine riders and riding associations were initially designed by Chairperson Sandra S. Batie, and then modified at an ETS public meeting. Questions were designed to gain information regarding the type of riding which respondents favored, their preferences for improvements in specific equine trails and/or Michigan equine trails in general, improvements and/or increased numbers of Michigan equine campgrounds, and possible use of bridle tags as a source of revenue for equine trails and campgrounds. The survey of riders/packers and responses in provided later in this appendix.

Surveys were handed out to equine riders/packers at the annual Michigan Horse Expo in Lansing, at meetings of various riding organizations and trail equine breed associations, at equine tack sales, and at events where equine trail users congregated. The ETS members also contacted riding associations in the geographical areas that they represented and sent them information about ETS and its mission, copies of the surveys, and requests for the association and their members to respond to the surveys. (Textbox B-1.)

Many equine trail users chose to mail in their survey to a post office box provided the ETS. The surveys cannot be considered scientific given the manner in which it was distributed, but the ETS does believe it represents the opinions and preferences of the most active equine trail users.

A total number of 858 useable surveys were returned by the end of May 2011. Volunteers from the MHC tabulated the answers in Excel format. The MHC donated \$1,000 to the ETS to hire Dr. Sarah Nichols, Associate Professor of Community, Agriculture, Recreation, & Resource Studies, and Geography, Michigan State University, to organize and interpret the data and comments of survey respondents. The analysis would not have been possible without this funding.

The results of the surveys have been important in helping ETS formulate its recommendations to the MSTAC. Survey results reflected a wide range of equine needs and interests and from a broad geographical area of Michigan. (Section 3 – Map.)

Textbox B-1. Riding and Trail Horse Breed Associations Participating in the Survey

Back Country Horsemen of Michigan - Pigeon River and Beyond

Brighton Trail Riders Association

Fort Custer Horse Friends Association

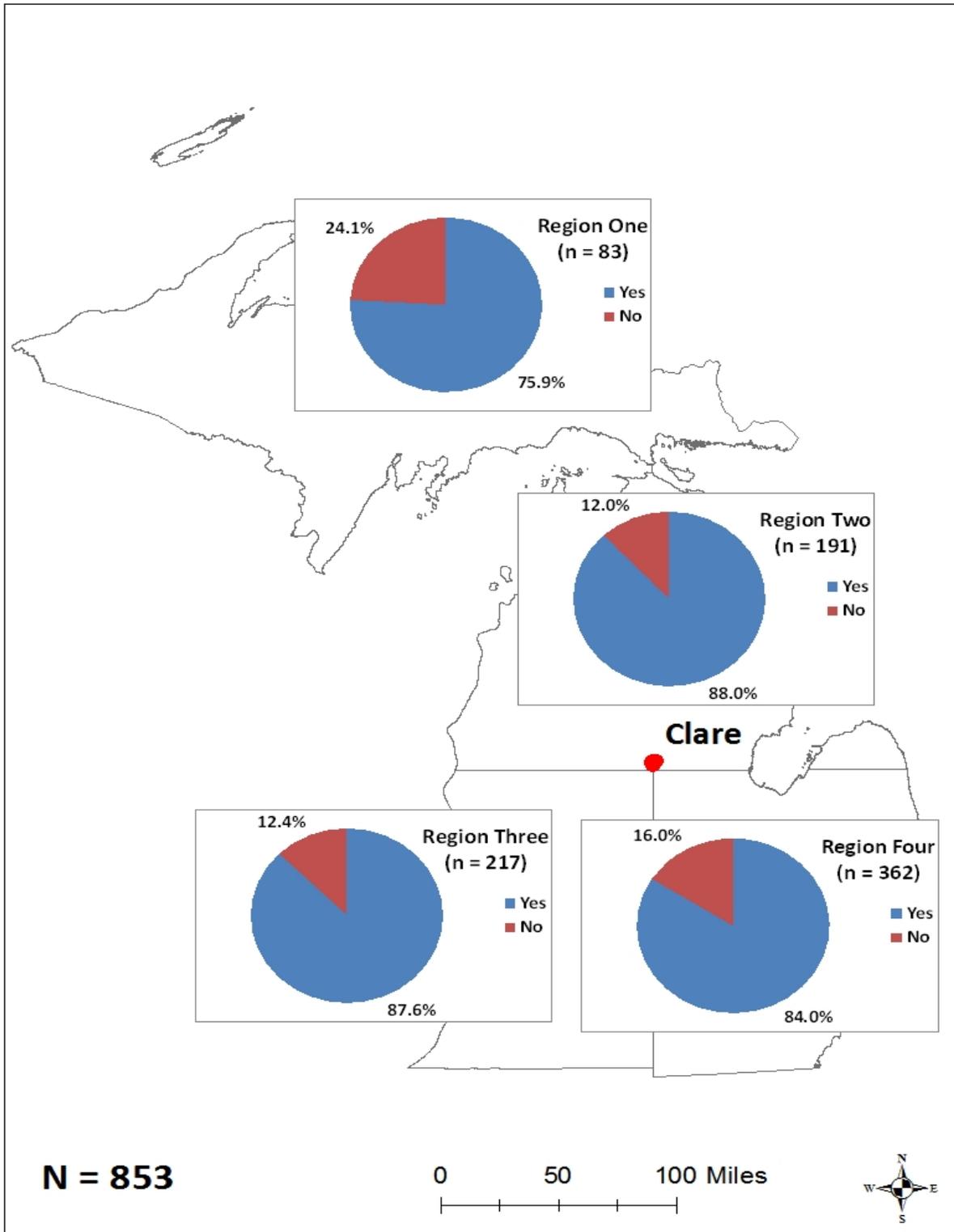
Marquette County Horse Club
 Metamora Hunt
 Michigan Fox Trotters Association
 Michigan Rocky Mountain Horse Club
 Michigan Trail Riders Association
 Pontiac Lakes Horseman's Association
 Sleepy Hollow Trail Riders Association
 Shore-to-Shore Trail Ride, Inc
 Yankee Springs Trail Riders Association (by individual members as a group)
 Walking Horse Association
 Waterloo Hunt Club, Inc.

2. Survey Results by Question with Charts

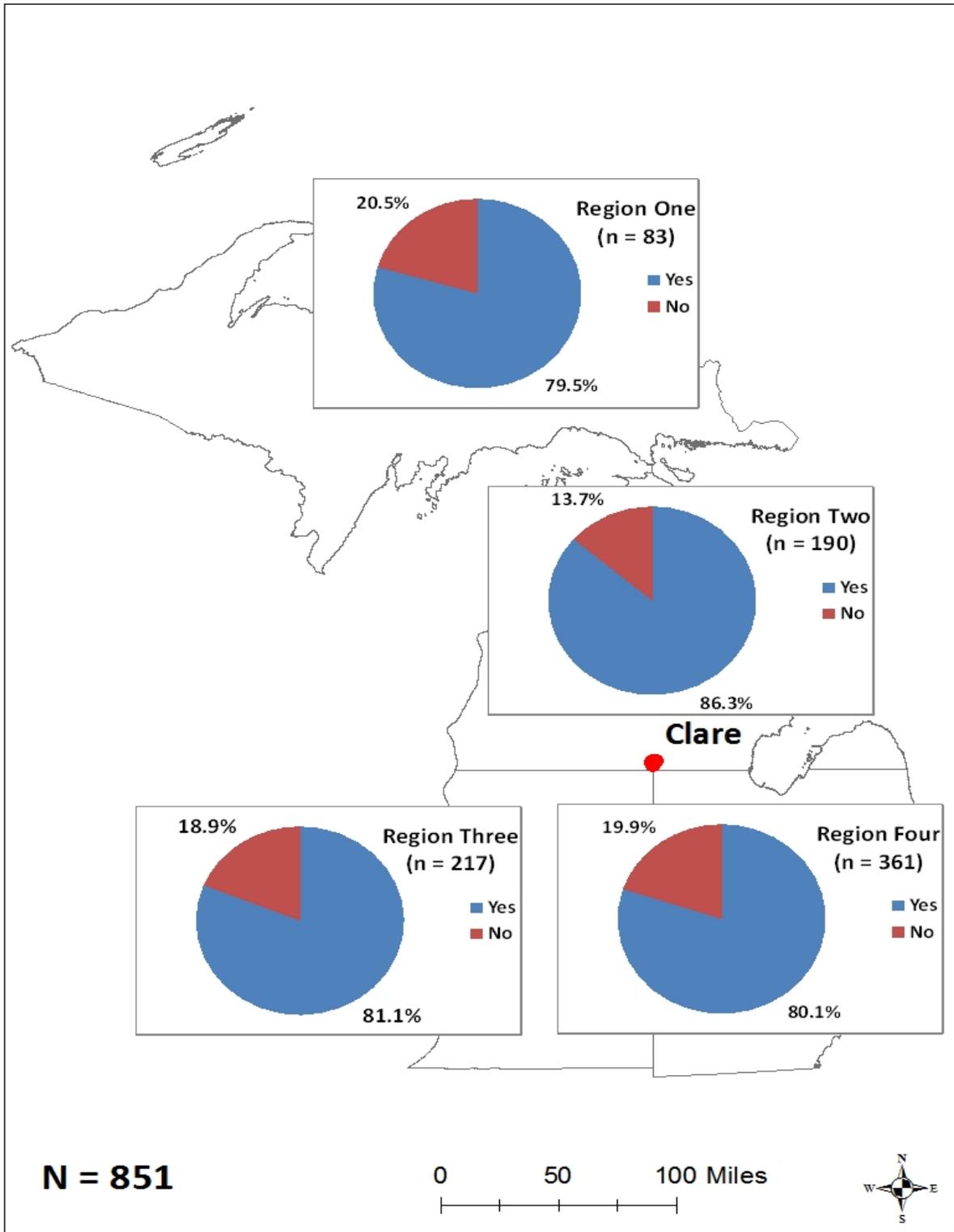
1. Are you or have you been (within the last three years) a trail rider or do you pack with pack animals?

	Response	N	Valid %
Region One (n = 83)	Yes	83	100.0
	No	0	0.0
	Missing	0	-
Region Two (n = 192)	Yes	185	96.4
	No	7	3.6
	Missing	0	-
Region Three (n = 218)	Yes	211	96.8
	No	7	3.2
	Missing	0	-
Region Four (n = 364)	Yes	353	97.0
	No	11	3.0
	Missing	1	-

Do you camp overnight with horses, mules, and/or other riding or pack animals?



Does anyone in your family also ride or pack?



How many times or days per year do you trail ride or pack?

	Times	Days
--	-------	------

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Region One	2	300	59.2	-	-	-
Region Two	1	1000	45.8	21	365	148.1
Region Three	1	365	32.2	25	104	56.3
Region Four	1	1000	41.5	26	80	44.0

In most cases respondents listed times rather than days, n's for days are all low.

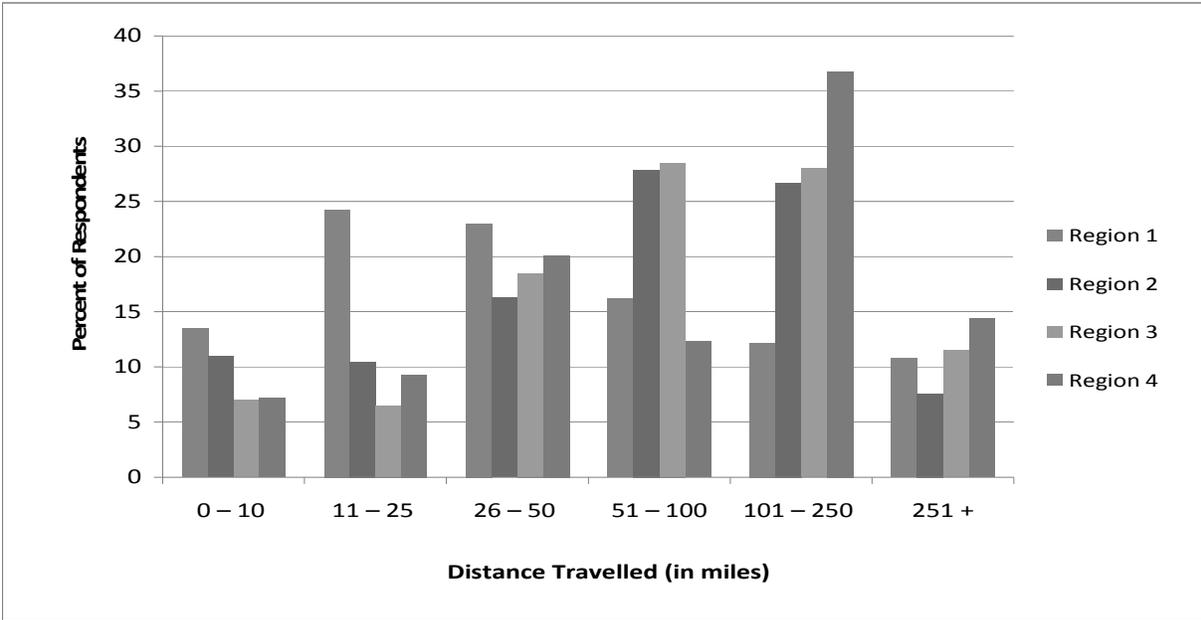
What is your zip code? (reported by region, n = 866)

Response	N	Valid %
One	83	9.6
Two	192	22.2
Three	218	25.2
Four	365	42.1
Out of state	8	0.9
Missing	11	-

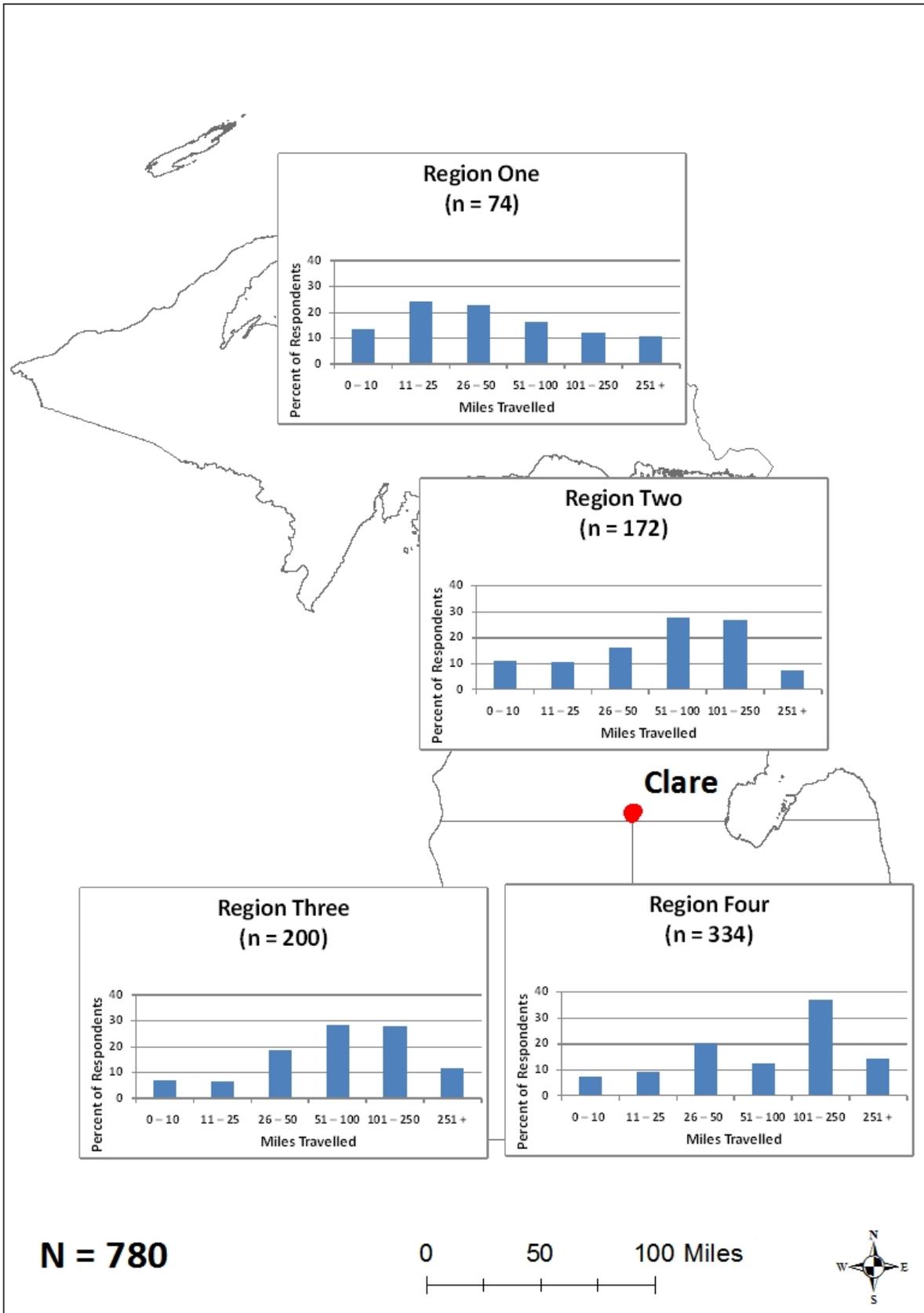


a. In 2010, how many miles from your home was the FARTHEST Michigan trail that you rode or packed on?

FARTHEST: Minimum = 0 miles, Maximum = 500 miles, Mean = 124.4 miles (n = 798)

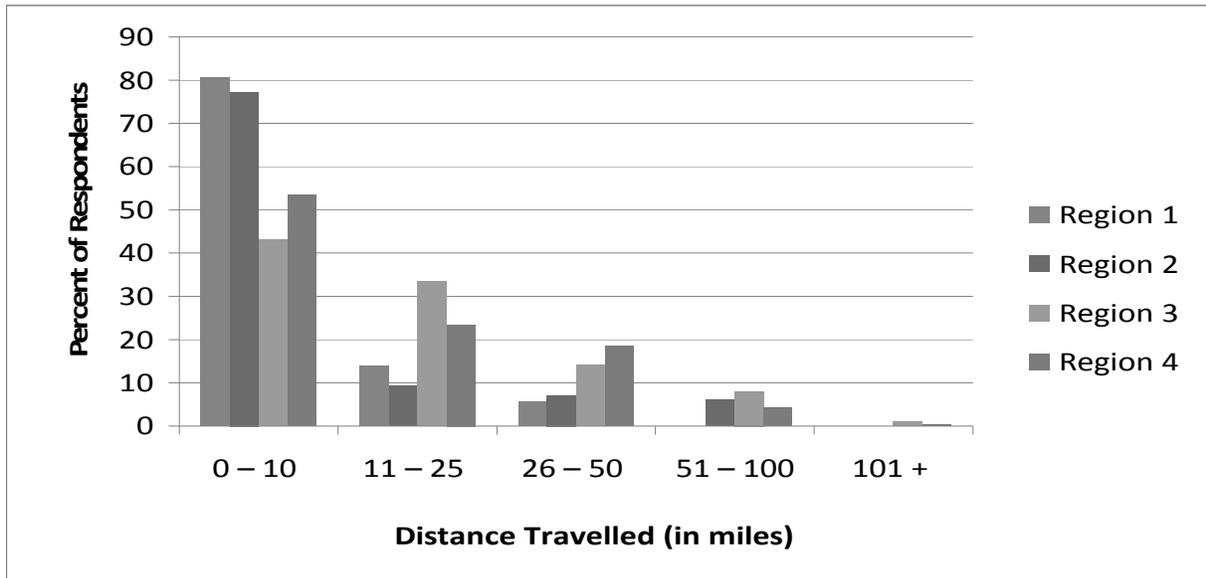


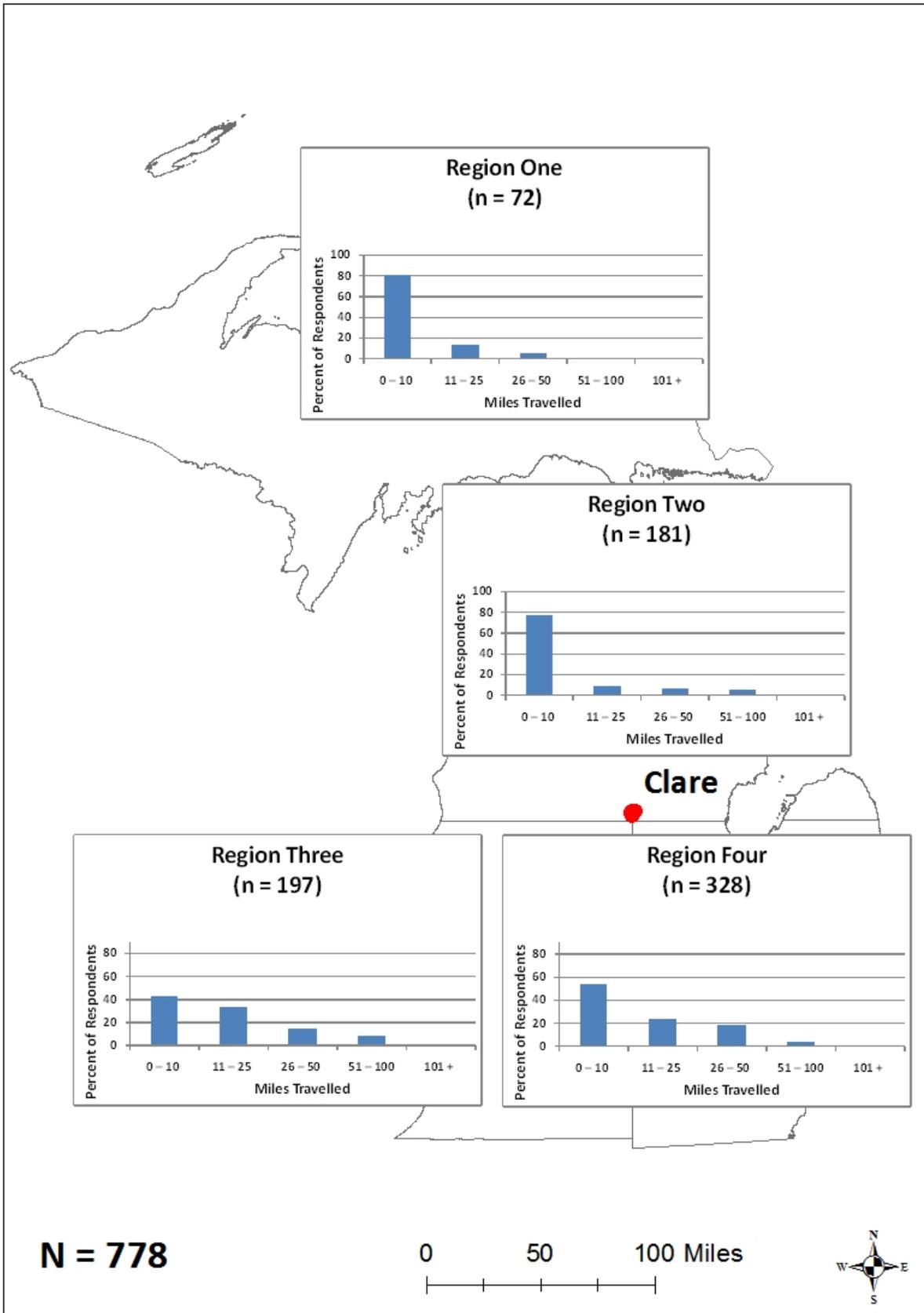
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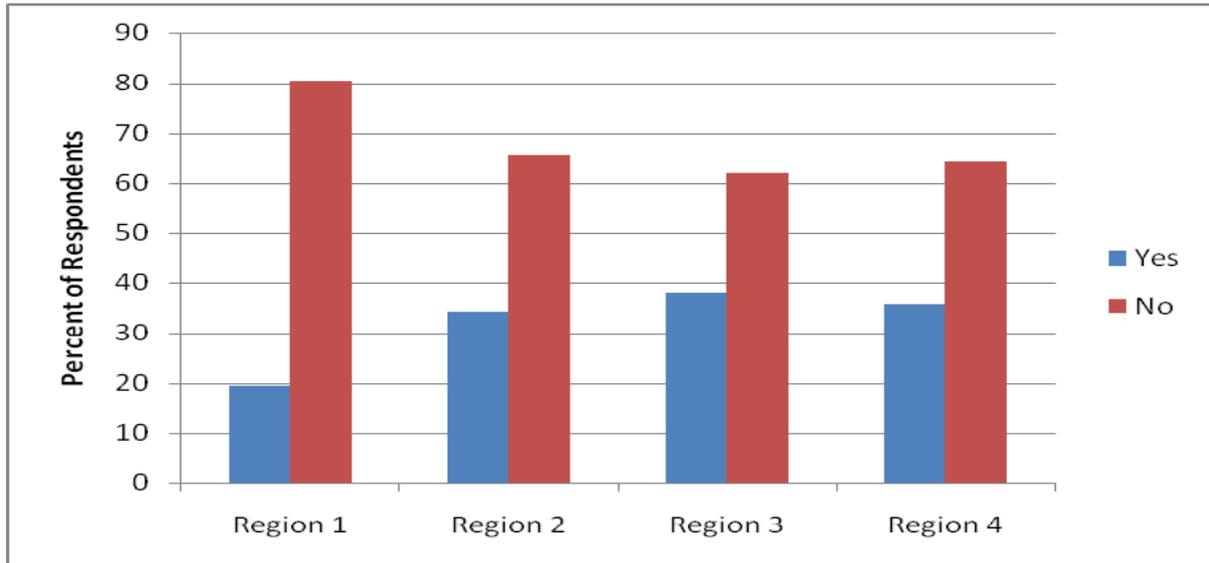
6b. In 2010, how many miles from your home was the CLOSEST Michigan trail that you rode or packed on?

CLOSEST: Mimum = 0 miles, Maximum = 450 miles, Man = 17.4 miles (n = 792)

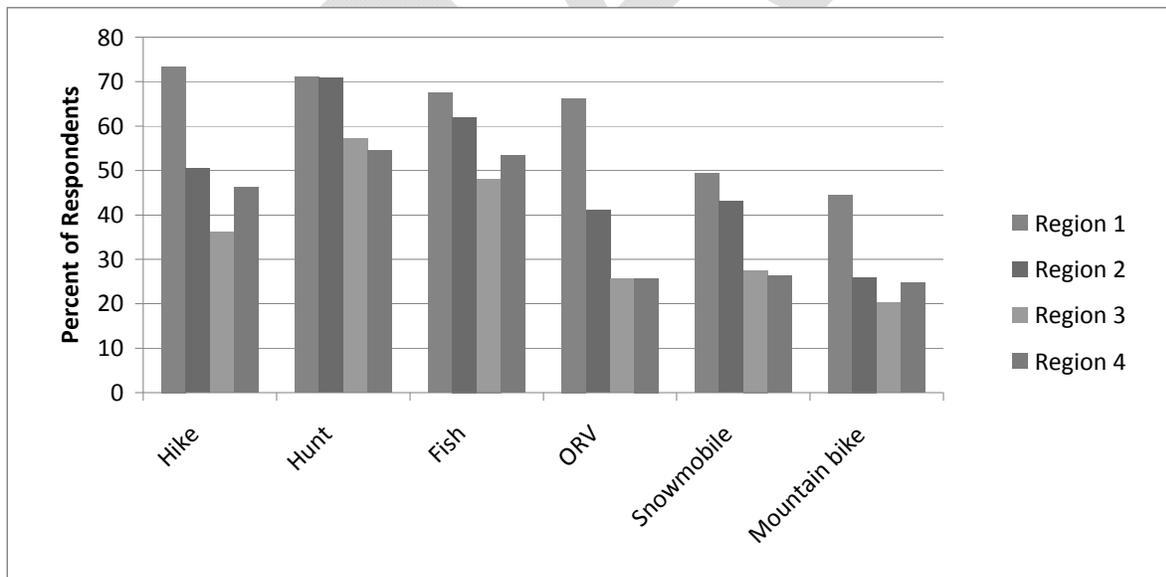




Are there enough accessible trails and horse facilities such as campgrounds close to your home for your riding or packing needs?



Do you or does someone in your family also ride mountain bikes, ride ORVs, ride snowmobiles, hunt, fish or hike? (Check all that apply.)



In the Michigan map below, please select the number (only one) that represents the region in which you ride the most often? Which do you travel to ride in most often?

Ride the most:

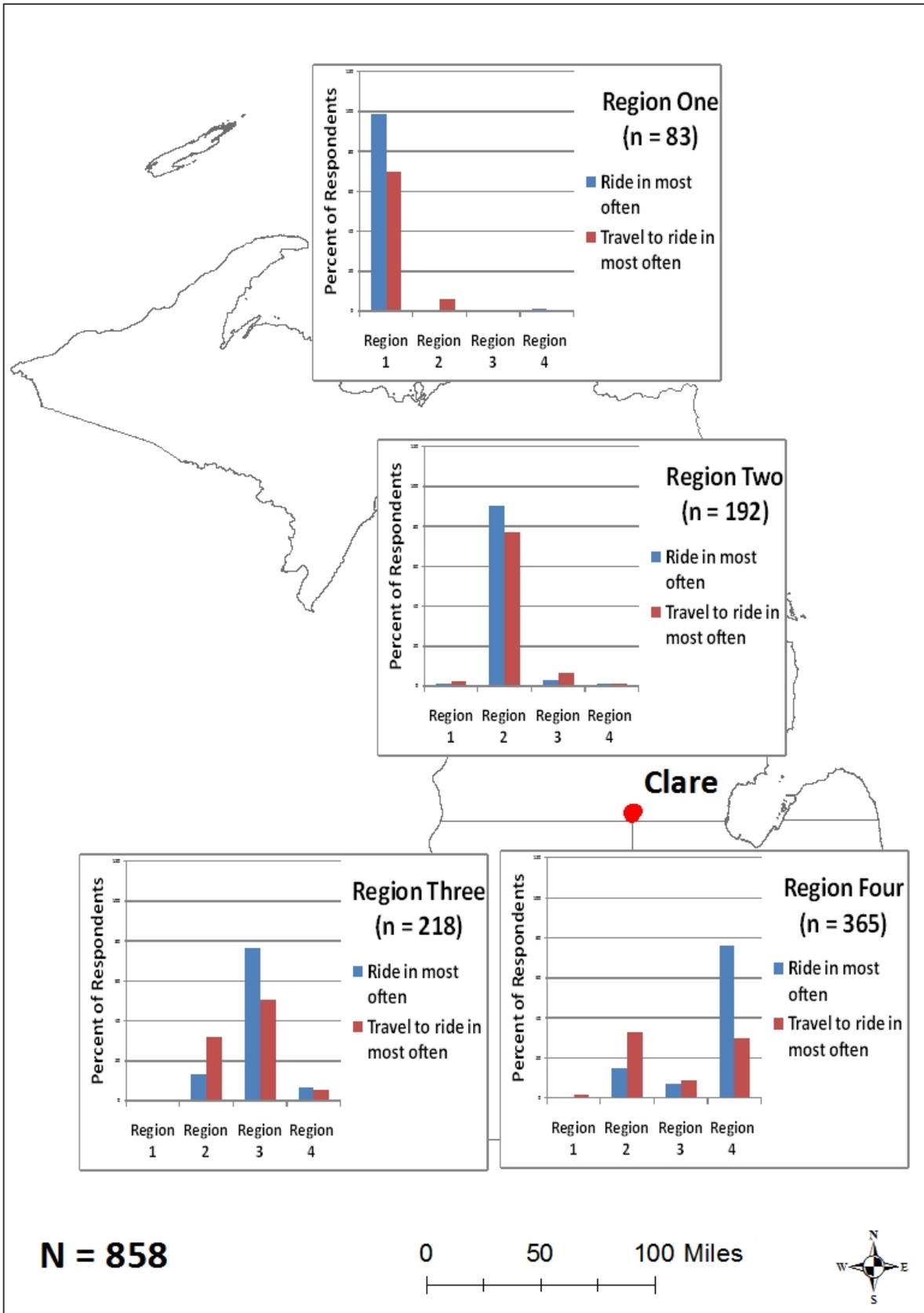
Response	Region One (n = 83)		Region Two (n = 192)		Region Three (n = 218)		Region Four (n = 365)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region 1	82	98.8	2	1.0	1	0.5	2	0.5
Region 2	0	0.0	173	90.1	29	13.3	54	14.8
Region 3	0	0.0	6	3.1	166	76.1	25	6.8
Region 4	1	1.2	2	1.0	14	6.4	277	75.9

A few respondents indicated more than one region, percentages are based on the full n therefore may not equal 100.

Travel to ride in most:

Response	Region One (n = 83)		Region Two (n = 192)		Region Three (n = 218)		Region Four (n = 365)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Region 1	58	70.0	4	2.0	0	0.0	5	1.4
Region 2	5	6.0	148	77.1	69	31.7	119	32.6
Region 3	0	0.0	12	6.3	110	50.5	32	8.8
Region 4	0	0.0	2	1.0	11	5.0	109	29.9

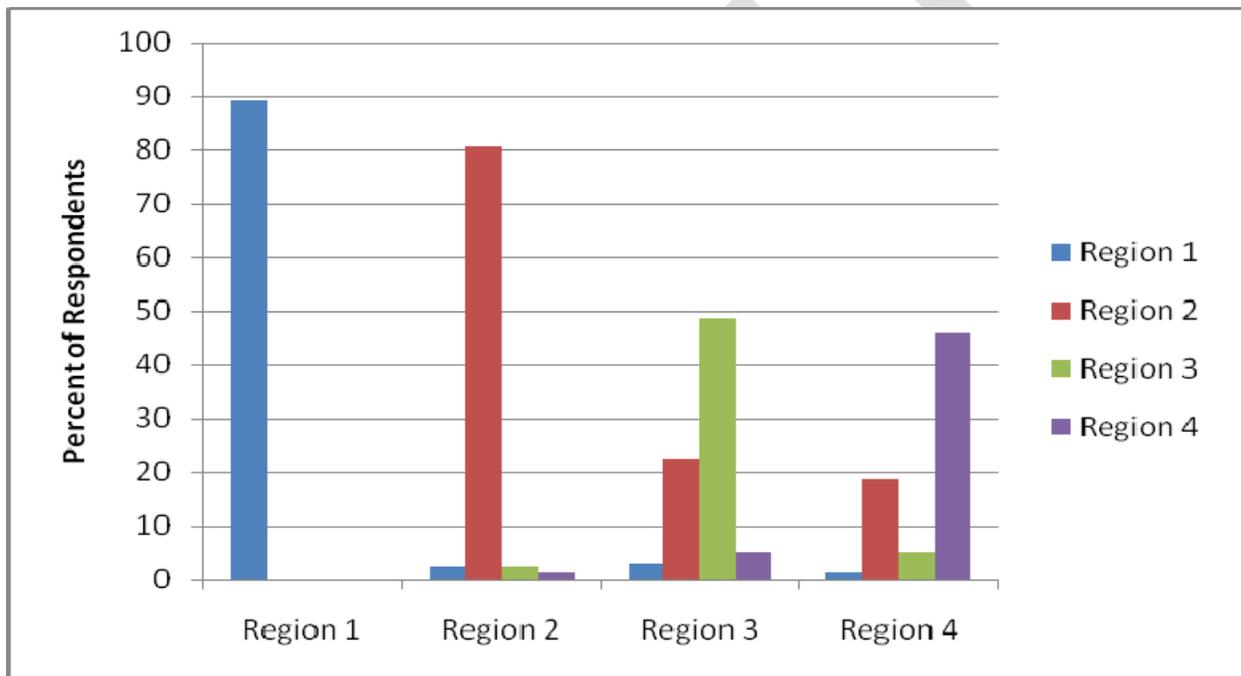
A few respondents indicated more than one region, others did not respond, percentages are based on the full n therefore may not equal 100.



a. Do you see opportunities for improvement (including expansion, additional access, and reopening of previously closed trails) of the existing trails and riding facilities (such as campgrounds)?

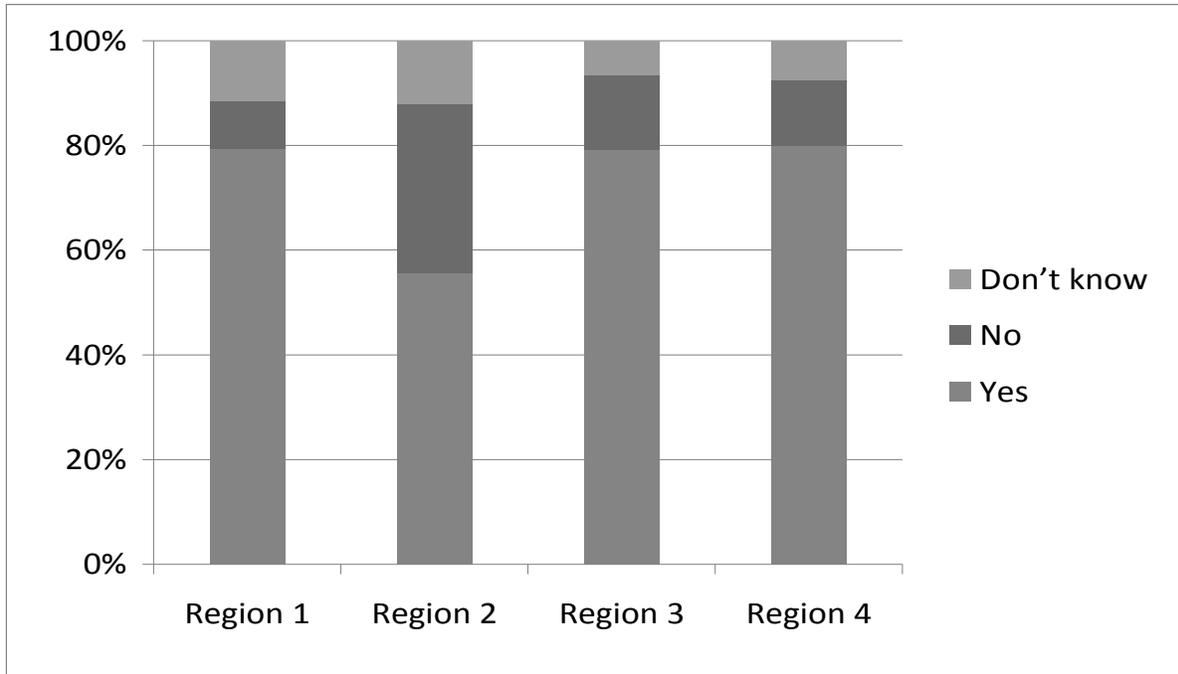
	Response	N	Valid %
Region One (n = 71)	Yes	69	97.2
	No	1	1.4
	Don't know	1	1.4
	Missing	12	-
Region Two (n = 175)	Yes	156	89.1
	No	7	4.0
	Don't know	12	6.9
	Missing	17	-
Region Three (n = 181)	Yes	158	87.3
	No	7	3.9
	Don't know	16	8.8
	Missing	37	-
Region Four (n = 304)	Yes	269	88.5
	No	8	2.6
	Don't know	27	8.9
	Missing	61	-

b. If yes, use the Michigan map below and please select the number of one region where you would MOST like to see equine trail and facility improvements.



A few respondents indicated more than one region, others did not respond, percentages are based on the full n therefore may not equal 100.

2. Would you support some type of required fee for riding if you were certain the funds collected would be legislatively dedicated to such things as the maintenance, development and/or reopening of equine trails and related facilities such as campgrounds and parking



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4. Comments to Survey Questions #10

Note the comments section need editing for spelling

10 a. Do you see opportunities for improvement (including expansion, additional access, and reopening of previously closed trails) of the existing trails and riding facilities (such as campgrounds)?

a. By Type of Comment	Count
Better access (Allegan)	1
Better access (Goose Creek River Crossing)	1
Better access (White River)	1
Keep existing areas open	4
Lower camping fees	1
More camping facilities (nonspecific)	59
More camping (Fort Custer)	10
More camping (Wolverine)	1
More / improved access points	4
More / improved day use areas	1
More / improved electric	15
More / improved hitching posts	1
More / improved parking	15
More / improved showers	7
More / improved toilets	13
More / improved trail markings / signage	10
More / improved trail maintenance	37
More / improved water	16
More / improved facilities (Shore to Shore)	1
More / improved facilities (Ottawa Forest)	1
More / improved facilities (Vanderbilt)	1
More / improved facilities (Yankee Springs)	1
More / improved information about trails	2
More / improved marketing to out-of-state riders	2
More / improved recognition of equine trails as part of tourism industry	4
More / improved relationship / cooperation with DNR	1
More state land open to equine use	3
More trails (nonspecific)	101
More looping trails	3
More horse-only trails	1

More multi-use trails (w/bikers, hikers, snowmobilers, etc.)	7
More trails on rail trail system	5
More trails (Elk Hill)	1
More trails (Lapeer)	2
More trails (Porcupine)	1
More trails (St. Clair)	2
More trails (Thumb area)	1
More trails (UP)	2
More trails (Waterloo)	12
More trails (Wexford & Missaukee counties)	2
Open closed national forest campgrounds to equine users	1
Open hunting areas to riders in off season	6
Open lost nat	3
Open north-south trail system	2
Open pig river	11
Pigeon River, reopen Pigeon River	23
Reopen closed campgrounds	10
Reopen closed trails	68
Reopen closed trails (Pines Point)	2
Stop logging along trails	1
Stop opening horse trails to other user groups	3
<i>Other Places Mentioned but with no Specific Comment.</i>	
Bay de noc / Rapid River	1
Northern Spur of the trail to mackinaw	1
Pines Point	1
PRC Trails	2
Proud Lake	1
Sleepy Hollow Campground	1
South Branch	3

b. By comment (#10) by group

Alpena

- 3 More overnight camping grounds
- 4 Keep existing areas open

Back Country

- 1 Would like to see Lost Nat. Hillsdale Co opened to Lmt. Horseback trail riding
- 2 Pigeon River
- 3 Lost Nat. should be open also
- 4 Ft. Mackinaw needs to be open, South Branch had some trails closed
- 5 Need access to public land from farms & home & campgrounds
- 7 Expansion & reopen trails
- 8 Newbie & amazed how little MI advertises camps & trails they do have in order to draw riders from other states
- 9 The DNRs unlawful closure of Piston and other areas is a symbol of bias by DNR against horses. Horses are and always have been integral part of our unique heritage. There is no evidence that horses cause any damage to the area. All horses that PR money is in jeopardy has no legal foundation it is just a smoke screen to cover over the bias by DNR against horses.
- 10 Pigeon River
- 12 Pigeon River
- 13 No supportable logical reasoning for closures
- 14 Trail and out camps available/Pigeon River
- 15 Game and reserves open for backup, share off-season
- 16 Reopen closed trail, better maintenance of existing sites
- 17 Pigeon River
- 18 Other states are more accommodating than MI
- 19 Reopen closed trails increased participation in trail riding
- 20 Pigeon River
- 21 Reopen closed trails and campgrounds
- 22 Two-tracks should be open for use
- 24 Pigeon River
- 27 Pigeon River
- 28 Pigeon River
- 29 No campgrounds in Clare or Gladwin county; forgotten the disabled riders.
- 30 Pigeon River

Brighton Riders

- 2 More trails, electric campsites, other states can do that why not MI
- 4 Maintain Facilities
- 5 More cooperation from DNR to use equipment, better local DNR relationships
- 8 Improve existing facilities
- 9 Better campgrounds more activities
- 10 PRC trails, sleepy hollow campground
- 12 More improved campsites at Brighton rec area
- 13 Develop a continuing trail system in the southern part of MI
- 14 Electric in campgrounds and reopen closed trails

- 15 More horse camps need overall group to speak for us
- 16 Water and toilets in more horse camp sites

Cadillac Tack Sale A

- 2 Too many closures / lost appeal
- 4 Better marked trails
- 6 Open pig river
- 8 Open campgrounds back up
- 9 Longer trails, more miles
- 11 Open closed campgrounds
- 12 Open pig river
- 15 If trails are there and maintained by MTRA why close them
- 17 Need more trails in north to grow much lacking equines
- 18 Some ORV and bike trails can be used for horses
- 21 More places for pack animals and wagons
- 22 We are just as important as other sports/hobbies
- 23 Open pig river
- 27 More info on trail more campgrounds
- 28 Pig river should be open to camping
- 29 Open closed campgrounds
- 30 Closed campgrounds do not make money
- 31 Closed campgrounds do not make money
- 32 Open manton trail to Cadillac
- 34 More designated trails for horses
- 40 Many riders come from out of state to ride
- 41 We would like to see a trail thru Buckley and hook up to the Manistee river trails
- 42 Closed campgrounds do not make money
- 43 Trails closed to horses where opened by horse people
- 45 Marini, Manistee go further from flat to hill
- 46 More horse friendly areas
- 48 More opportunities around Vander belt area
- 49 We need volunteers to build camps
- 50 Cheaper camping
- 53 Mecosta trails need to be opened by outback lodge
- 55 Clear brush from 2 tracks on state land
- 61 We need actual trails, not roads to ride on

Cadillac Tack Sale B

- 13 Like to see on comp close to monitor ATV's
- 14 More connecting trails Wexford & Missawkee counties
- 16 More connecting trails Wexford & Missawkee counties
- 18 New camps on state land
- 19 Stop opening up areas to motorized vehicles. Listen to trail riding groups.
- 22 Better access to rigs
- 24 Open more trails
- 27 Excess to rail trail
- 28 Always maintenance needed
- 31 Pigeon River
- 33 Pigeon River

Fort Custer

- 1 Fort Custer needs an equestrian trail head and camp ground
- 2 Open Pigeon River to horses, Fort Custer needs campground
- 3 Campground at Fort Custer, more miles on rail trails (Kal-Haven)
- 4 Horse camp and trail head for trailers at Fort Custer
- 5 Do not know
- 6 Expand width of trail and more sandy 2 tracks
- 7 Reopen Elk Hill and satellite camp sites, need camp at Fort Custer
- 9 Camp in Fort Custer

Horse Expo A

- 3 More state trails in Pigeon River area. More trails in Lapeer County.
- 4 Water available
- 8 More trail and camping access for equestrians will bring more tourist dollars
- 13 More open trails
- 15 Pines Point, they are closing equestrian trails for butterflies. We all need to stop closing trails
- 16 There's not enough trails
- 17 State hunting areas in off season
- 18 Open state recreation areas such as Holly
- 21 More sites and longer trips
- 24 Many state land areas have enough land for equestrian trails but the state does not allow them.
- 29 Use of rail areas
- 31 Map trails, make loops for day rides
- 33 Marked trails, electricity
- 34 More access
- 36 We need the same facilities as offered to other campers. Tired of being treated badly.
- 37 If mountain bikers would share the trails
- 38 Fill in washed out areas
- 39 Fort Custer recreation area needs a campground for equestrians
- 40 Running
- 41 Open rails to trails paths to horses again
- 43 Reopen Pigeon, expand equestrian campgrounds and trails like Florida has
- 44 Reopen trails in Pigeon River area, take better care of campgrounds
- 46 Need more trails
- 48 Reopen and remark trails in the Luther Michigan area
- 49 Open campgrounds back up

Horse Expo B

- 4 More trails that connect the different regions
- 6 More horse friendly trails
- 7 Keep trails open
- 11 Access to showers would encourage camping
- 13 Water to fill our RV's with and more overnight camping
- 16 Open old trails and mark them better
- 17 Expansion
- 22 More trail markings

- 29 Electric
- 30 More the better
- 31 Popular trail camps often full
- 32 Keep trails open
- 33 The trails need cleaning
- 35 Could be more trails in existing parks
- 36 Improve existing day use areas. More campgrounds. More in the north of Grayling and trail separation
- 38 Better marked trails
- 39 Plenty of land and vegetation to use
- 41 Access to trails open closed trails
- 43 Need more area
- 44 More areas for riding
- 45 Campgrounds
- 46 More of them to dangerous on the road

Horse Expo C

- 1 State land that is currently not open
- 2 Not any trail except rail to trail in st clair
- 5 Michigan horse camps need electric and water hookup. We have to go out of state for better riding.
- 6 In other states there are electric hookup and covered stall. Also the staff are happy to see us.
- 9 Some campgrounds do not have water
- 10 More trails
- 13 More every day trail options
- 14 More places to ride
- 18 Electricity would be great
- 20 Would like to reserve sites at more campgrounds
- 22 I would like to see more places to ride
- 29 Work for the forest service at Hungerford Lake, we expand trails every year
- 32 Horse people need to be more vocal and involved in providing and expanding horse/mule friendly
- 35 Some state parks only use 50% for rider on older trails are wearing deep ruts
- 38 Would like to see more
- 40 We need more riding areas and camping spots
- 43 Pines point area
- 44 Erosion, trash clean-up, reopening
- 46 More trails close to Lansing area
- 47 Campgrounds
- 50 Additional access needed at White River, Pigeon River and Allegan State Game Area. DNR closing trails and campground at White River, please check out.
- 51 Waterloo is creating new horse trails with the help of Waterloo Trail Riders Association and trying to connect to state areas nearby.

Horse Expo D

- 1 Washtenaw County Greenways to horse access
- 5 Reopen closed trails on state lands
- 6 White River Rec. Area give us back areas recently closed
- 7 Yankee springs more camping area, Ft. Custer needs overnight camping

- 8 Repair old trails
- 10 Areas spruce up and more area
- 11 Cleaning and trimming trail
- 12 Cleaning and trimming trail
- 17 Open old access, improve campgrounds
- 19 Reopen closed areas, open state area
- 20 Maintenance of current trails
- 24 Keep ones we have, expand where possible
- 25 Ortonville more camping area and water pumps
- 33 Elk hill back the way it was
- 34 Horse back riding if very popular and limited trails are often very busy
- 35 Open rail trails to horses, open 2 tracks closed to cars in game areas to horses
- 38 Every year more and more close
- 39 Expansion and more camping
- 45 Rail to Trail

Horse Expo E

- 1 Less restrictions at South Branch Trails. Most trails have been closed.
- 4 Re-establish horse trails changed over to bikes
- 6 Improvement is also needed after winter
- 8 Would like to see Pigeon River reopened to horses
- 15 At Proud Lake
- 16 We would like to get camping at Proud Lake
- 17 More riding room at Pigeon River
- 24 The paths could be wider and unpaved
- 25 Open more state land for horse riders, especially in St. Clare county
- 26 Pigeon River
- 28 Trimming low branches, increase fire pits / campfire sites, increased monitoring by Parks and Recreation.
- 32 Parking area for tin cup spring
- 34 Open trails to horses that aren't and could add space for change. Space within existing camp facilities.
- 37 Please expand, build more trails longer, we love to ride and camp.
- 40 It gives horses and other that use these trails a better chance for gathering in a safe environment.
- 41 Expanding existing trails and creating new ones
- 46 Open the trails at the dunes north of Warren Dunes by Bridgeman
- 48 Many need more maintenance and facility improvement

Horse Expo F

- 4 Taper riding areas previously closed to horses once open to them
- 5 Reopening
- 6 Need more camps for overland trail riders, nothing fancy. Need more connecting trails from west Michigan to the north.
- 9 Please fix the Polly Ann trail
- 11 I see places closed to horses that are open to other users. Why can't we share?
- 14 Better maps, trail footing maintenance
- 15 More trail will allow more distribution of riders and result in less wear and erosion
- 16 More trails

- 17 Pigeon River Area needs to reopen more of the proposed campsites outside of Elk Hill. They could develop loops to ride out and back to them. At least then we could trailer from home (property owners) to ride. Market this and bring in tourism.
- 26 Overnight camping sleepy hollow and let horse ride all trails
- 28 Always looking for more and different trails to ride
- 31 State land next to my house-would save on fuel cost
- 35 Please reopen all closed trails
- 39 More trails and camping available closer to southern population centers
- 41 Would promote tourism
- 43 I think it is sad that people who have been visiting the same park for over 20 years must fight to keep it running

Horse Expo G

- 2 Reopening trails Ogemaw City
- 16 Outdoor showers
- 17 Showers
- 19 Closing because of complaints. Trails are perfect, just open them up!

Lapeer Posse

- 1 Better parking, open state game areas and railways ROWs
- 2 Better parking, open state game areas and railways ROWs
- 3 Open state game areas in Lapeer Co. and railway ROWs
- 4 More connecting trails
- 5 Open Lapeer state game area, Lapeer Posse enjoyed caring for and riding in this area
- 6 Need more connecting trails with better parking

Mail In Survey A

- 1 Reopen closed trails
- 2 More trail in middle between Lansing and Grayling
- 3 Reopen closed camp and open up Elk Hill trails
- 4 Previously closed Pigeon River, Holly REC Area and Lapeer state game area
- 5 Reopen as they belong to the tax-payers
- 6 We have nothing (state parks in UP) for trailheads, sites or water for horses in the UP. Huge waste of resources and tourism dollars. Wisconsin generates millions from equine tourism that have great maps of trails too.
- 7 Mountain Bikers have forced the separation of trails at Fort Custard and are claiming historical equestrian trails
- 9 Open trails and campsites that have been closed
- 10 Reopen existing trails in all areas with closure in the last few years
- 11 Pigeon River two track roads
- 13 Community help work bees
- 15 This can be a major industry with multi trails for all. Horses do not ride trails in winter so snowmobiles can use them. Horse, hikers and bikers and ATV's in the summer
- 16 I would like to see hiking trails combined as horse trails, being that these trail systems are still in place
- 17 We are surrounded by game area with no horses allowed. Would love to see it opened.
- 18 We have some of the most beautiful forest, no reason we should not promote them for tourism.
- 19 More sites in Yankee springs. Reopen any closed trails

- 20 Any and all state land should be made available to equine partners, bathrooms and primitive cabins would be nice.
- 21 Need to reopen Mackinaw city trail. Add trails around Gladwin and Beaverton.
- 22 We would like to see trails in Pigeon River reopened and additional campground in the Pigeon River Area
- 24 Big enough clearing to park of camp in state forest. More trails back in Pigeon River.
- 25 Reopen previously closed trails
- 26 For Custard Park would be a great place for overnight camping with horses
- 28 Develop riding trails close to or in Monroe County
- 29 Connect existing trails to develop a system of trails. Ask for donations for trail maps like the snowmobile trails and provide the maps at local businesses.
- 30 We need more horse friendly riding trails. Horses should not be forced to ride on roads with traffic in order to get to the next trail
- 31 At the Bay deNoc Grand Island trailhead in Rapid River Michigan, there are so many trails around that beautiful campground to make loops, instead of just going up the trail and back down. More people would be willing to come and use that campground if that were an option.
- 32 Mowing and improved outhouses / toilet paper, maintenance of roads in and keep access to rivers and crossing.
- 33 Number of horse camps should be greater. Mowing and camp road need gravel, need shade trees. Do not close river crossing or move camps away from rivers. Love to swim in rivers.
- 34 Need to establish strong local interest and generate USFS and DNR
- 35 Reopen Pigeon River Trails and offsite camps. I work hard and only get two times a month with two days off together. I hate arriving to a full campground. I would be happy to buy a license to trail ride.
- 36 Horse can cover a lot of ground. Preserving more land for horse backing make the sport more enjoyable and lessens the impact.
- 37 Better access for river crossing at Goose Creek
- 38 Waverly State Rec area in Macomb county had over 900 acres yet is closed to horses
- 39 Pigeon River Country is now very limited on horse trails. Reopen the trails that have been closed.

Mail In Survey B

- 1 Keep Shore to Shore trails and camps open, add trails and facilities
- 2 Open snowmobile trails to horses
- 5 Ft. Custer overnight campground, more trails, shower and toilet at Yankee springs, electricity at Silver Creek
- 6 Ft. Custer needs campgrounds for horses
- 7 Ft. Custer needs campgrounds for horses
- 9 At local campground need more loops, could have if use closed trails and 2 tracks
- 10 More Alpena area
- 11 Trees trim higher in camps. Longer Trails, reopen closed trails.
- 13 We are losing too many trails, horse industry brings money to MI
- 14 Pine Martin Run could expand to other side of country road 440; Blueberry Ridge could allow horses again; Inland Lake could allow horses again
- 15 Open more of PRC to horse
- 16 MI has much to offer
- 22 Need access to connecting Pontiac Lake to Highland Rec under M59
- 23 Proud lake has no camping but could use stage area
- 24 Need horse campground in Wayne County

- 25 Highland trails closed by current manager for no reason
- 26 Need toilets and picnic structures need in my area. Dexter
- 27 Need trails in Lapeer or close by
- 28 Expand Pinckney trail staging area, toilet, water, covered picnic area
- 29 Reopen closed trails
- 31 Waterloo has many now closed trails east of Loveland Rd and West of Mt Hope Rd.
- 32 Horse recreation has grown, riders looking for trails and facilities closer to home
- 33 Reopen Blueberry Ridge
- 34 Expansion at current trails yes, but no new trails. Improve what we have
- 35 More opportunities in upper part of north Penn. Goose creek, Elk Hill, Holly State Rec area have been closed
- 37 More trails
- 39 More access to Waterloo
- 40 More trails in mid state, ride in SGA and refuges to be allowed, lower camp fees
- 41 Reopen PRC, do not move Goose Creek campground

MTRA Survey

- 1 Electric sites more rustic sites at hopkins creek open at Mackinaw camp
- 6 Would like to see parking for horse trailers for Owosso to Ionia Trail-Meijer
- 7 There are areas: West Branch St. Helen Houghton Lake for example where lots of state land but no use allowed or set up
- 8 East side of Waterloo rec area is currently closed with promises to re survey and create eco friendly trails
- 9 I feel more water pumps at certain camps should be available like Luzrene, Hopkins Creek and keep Goose Creek open
- 13 Open all trails back up - improve campground - electric, showers same as for family camping
- 14 Reopen the MI trail from Cheboygan to Mackinaw
- 15 The northern spur of the trail to Mackinaw
- 16 The north/south spur would be great to have back!
- 17 Pigeon River
- 18 Reopen Pigeon River / Elk Hill access. Update camping facilities. Running water instead of hand pump. We use a lot of water. Expand and promote areas open in local and national media.
- 19 Goose Creek Stay where is. This is a mutual use trail big family camp, fly fishing. Son like fly fish horses both. Huron Tuscola county needs trails. Thumb area.
- 20 Open and improve closed area
- 21 We need to open closed camps. Also would be nice if our trails could not get logged. Especially when we are riding through.
- 22 Campgrounds we have cannot handle all that want to camp. More would mean more revenue for state and organizations.
- 24 Worried about South Branch. Love the camp - afraid it will be closed to horses. Smith Bridge worried about losing access to water.
- 25 Would love to see Wolverine Campground turned into overnight horse camping. Also South Branch camp - would love to have access to all the area.
- 26 Reopen Mac Camp. Love to keep all our equine camps open for many years to come.
- 27 North South Trail system
- 29 North South Trail system
- 30 There are many opportunities - we just need to be allowed to have trails opened
- 31 Some campgrounds are not suitable for large truck trailer rigs. Elk Hill in particular.

- 32 Make campground accessible for large rigs
 - 33 Open up areas that have been closed to horses
 - 34 Electric and better bathrooms
 - 35 Access to additional trails water sources, bathroom services
 - 36 Additional access
 - 37 I would love old trails / camp back
 - 39 I live in Oscoda Tawas area of the Huron National Forest and can ride anywhere I want. I hope this never changes!
 - 42 The closing of Pine Point Area of the Manistee National Forest, Oceana County
 - 43 Reopen the Elk Hill Area what they have available is mostly road and dangerous
 - 45 State land around my home
 - 46 The area around Metamora
 - 47 Northern MI, especially to Mackinaw
 - 48 Reopening of Elk Hill more trails reopen in Waterloo
 - 51 More trails
 - 52 Keep current trails or find alternative to keep the unique Shore to Shore open. More MI advertisement
 - 54 Better camps, parking, single track trails that are marked
 - 55 More trails
 - 56 More trails and neatly trimmed
 - 57 The MTRA has asked to improve Hopkins Creek and been told no
 - 59 MTRA maintains the Shore to Shore network and can do more to keep trails open if allowed
 - 60 Add renovate facilities (toilets, wells, picket and parking areas) on all camps on S to S trail. Add to and/or relocate camps and/or trails in order to remove riders from roads and towns place signs on roads where horses do ride and/or cross.
 - 63 Need trails accessible without trailering
 - 64 Reopen closed trails and areas
 - 65 More trails at Elk Hill. More campsites same that are not in group camping
 - 66 Minden city and Lapeer state game area
 - 68 Elk Hill area
 - 71 MTRA members already volunteer their time to build and maintain trails
 - 72 Gladwin county
 - 73 Having a trail camp back in Mackinaw City
 - 74 Lots of room for improvements
 - 76 Equestrian improvements are a must for the future, return revenue is there
 - 77 Sleepy hollow has proposals for expansions for the trails that need approval
 - 78 We need more horse trails
 - 79 There is a supportive trail group at sleepy hollow that has been working for years to expand trail and mileage and add camping
- Pontiac Lake Horsemen Association*
- 1 Polly Ann Trail which is linkable
 - 4 Reopen and expand trails formerly used by the MTRA
 - 5 I hear about trails closing from others and it scares me
 - 6 Previously closed trails should be reopened. Expand trails in parks
 - 7 Pontiac lake could use more camping facilities. Only one outhouse hand pump is hard work.
 - 8 Bald mountain Lapeer State Game Area, Holly use to be open to horses. Reopen
 - 9 Reopen closed trails, expand in parks
 - 10 More horse friendly campgrounds
 - 12 Highland rec area needs horse only campground

- 13 Nice to have restrooms and showers in campgrounds

Raisin River

- 1 Reopen use CPR Lands state land
- 10 Munsen Park in Monroe
- 11 Maybury State Park could have camping
- 17 We need some repair on Maybury Trails
- 18 Trails need to be established in Monroe County

SE Independent Riders

- 1 Promote trails nationally, more large rig space in campgrounds and parking lots, running water
- 2 More trails would be great

UP Rider A

- 1 Reopen small camps that are closed so we can develop trails near them
- 2 Mow trails and need regular clean up
- 4 Would like to ride and camp at porcupines
- 6 Horse riders should bury horse manure
- 7 Horse only trails
- 10 Reopen trails, improve camps
- 11 Need more trails
- 13 More trails, with no ATV bikes, more camps
- 14 Larger places to park, more trails
- 17 More trails
- 18 No motorized vehicles on horse trails
- 20 More trails and more camping
- 23 Hitching posts would be awesome
- 26 Better trails with access for horses
- 27 More designated trails / camps for horses that are non motorized
- 28 Water and camping at thunder valley
- 29 Need facility like pine martin in ottawa forest
- 33 Water and bathroom
- 34 More overnight camping and more group camps
- 40 A local multi trail use group has applied for a grant to improve trails and create a camp ground for equine user
- 42 More camps
- 43 More camps
- 44 Allow horse to use closed national forest campgrounds
- 45 Need central info so can find trails

UP Rider B

- 1 Western UP Ontonagon county
- 3 More parking for large rigs
- 4 People around champion wanting to use horse pulling grounds
- 5 Champion horse pulling grounds could be developed for trail / camping
- 7 Local closed campgrounds could be converted creating looped trails
- 9 More trails with parking and other facilities
- 11 More horse friendly camping and looping trails

- 15 Reopen Blueberry Ridge
- 16 Need more toilets at Pine Marten
- 19 Champion horse pulling grounds improvements for outdoor area
- 20 More camping overnight places
- 21 Keep campgrounds simple and low cost
- 22 USFS looking for volunteers to maintain loop trail system

Waterloo Horsemans Association

- 1 More trails with bathroom and showers
- 8 Reopen old trails
- 9 Open more riding trails
- 12 Shower, running water, electric water pump
- 13 Groomed / trimmed trails
- 14 Need more trails
- 15 Reopen closed trails and camps
- 16 Hiking trails opened to horses
- 17 Open more trails will bring new people to camps
- 19 Expand trails at Waterloo
- 20 Reopen unused Waterloo Trails
- 21 More trails to ride on
- 22 Upgrades signage and accessibility
- 23 More trails: ex Waterloo to Pinckney, Sleepy Hollow a camp and more trails electricity in horse camps
- 25 More trails
- 26 More campsites and trails
- 27 Open trail to Greene lake
- 28 Open trails at Waterloo
- 31 Open Waterloo to green lake
- 34 More trails
- 35 More trails
- 36 More Waterloo horse trails, open lost nation trails

Waterloo Hunt and Metamora Hunt

- 1 Lots of trails like stoney creek park in Rochester are closed, horses have less impact than do ORVs or snowmobiles
- 5 I cannot ride on state land in Petersburg
- 7 Acquire more land within boundaries of parks
- 10 Reopen old trails
- 11 More state trails for riding

Yankee Springs

- 2 Opening more trails in Waterloo
- 7 Power and water hookups for weekenders
- 8 Keep trails clean and kept
- 10 More trails at Yankee Springs expand day use, more camping
- 11 Expand trails at Yankee Springs, expand day use, more camping
- 13 More Trails and funds for trail improvements and maintenance
- 14 More trails, wider trails for driving horses. Better erosion Maintenance
- 15 Erosion management, separate trails for biking

- 16 More trails for Yankee Springs
- 18 Larger day use area at Yankee Springs
- 21 Reopen trails in PRC
- 23 More is always good
- 24 Volunteers can help and do majority work

DRAFT

5. Comments to Question #11 as to Restrictions on Use of Funds

11. Would you support some type of required fee for riding if you were certain the funds collected would be legislatively dedicated to such things as the maintenance, development and/or reopening of equine trails and related facilities such as campgrounds and parking lots?

	Count	%	%
all money to be used on horse-specific trails, camps, etc.	41	58.6	4.7
money to be kept in local area/at specific site	10	14.3	1.1
"horse people" should control/have input in use of funds	6	8.6	0.7
only if other users (trails, canoes, etc.) have to pay too	6	8.6	0.7
will only pay after trails have been (re)opened	3	4.3	0.3
need transparent accounting	2	2.9	0.2
funds controlled by nongovernmental, non-MEP, non-horse council entity	1	1.4	0.1
funds to be divided equally	1	1.4	0.1
<i>Total Number of Comments</i>	70	of 70	of 877
Suggestions / Restrictions on Collection of Fees	Count	%	%
amount must be reasonable/affordable	6	27.3	6.8
detachable bridle tag that can be moved from horse to horse (i.e., per rider not per horse)	4	18.2	4.6
ok if not collected by government	2	9.1	2.3
a tag fee like for ORVs and hunting	1	4.5	1.1
annual, one time fee	1	4.5	1.1
don't increase camp fees (already too high)	1	4.5	1.1
fee should be discounted for those who volunteer	1	4.5	1.1
not a good time to ask given price of gas	1	4.5	1.1
prefer a sales tax on all DNR-related sales, to be used to support all DNR users/activities	1	4.5	1.1
small fee might be fair in places that don't collect camping fees	1	4.5	1.1
trail sticker	1	4.5	1.1
would pay < \$5 per individual for access to all trails	1	4.5	1.1
yearly pass would work for those who ride a lot	1	4.5	1.1
<i>Total Number of Comments</i>	22	of 22	of 877
Other Comments			
we already pay enough, e.g., via taxes, park entry fees	9		
prefer to volunteer/donate time/equipment, etc.	7		
comment about how poor MI is for riders relative to other states	3		
comment about how good riders are for MI economy	3		
Not At All Relevant/Don't Make Sense!	26		

6. Comments to Question #12

12. Please provide any other comments about horse trail riding that you would like to share

a. Summary of comments

need more trails/riding areas	30
need more/improved camping areas	15
open all state land to equine use	7
need better acces to state land, e.g., easements	1
stop closing trails/keep trails open	12
reopen closed trails	4
support multi-use trails, willing to share with other users	8
do not support mixed use, not willing to share	8
comment about not wanting to ride on roads, e.g., for safety	6
we already pay enough to use trails	10
willing to pay some kind of fee to use trails	10
actual/potential/lost contribution to economy/tourism industry	23
need to partner with Pure MI campaign	3
need more advertising/promotion of MI horse riding opportunities	3
need more effective lobbying for riders/horses	3
need more/better maps, would like a phone app	2
need more/better trail signage/markings	3
MI/DNR poor at providing for/working with equine users	11
need better relationship with DNR	3
negative comment about dnr	3
closures not supported by any real evidence/rationale	5
equine use has low(er) environmental impact	8
MI trails are great/love riding in MI	16
comment about the personal benefits of trail riding	7
comment about willingness of riders/riding groups to volunteer	9
thanks for your work/keep up the good work	9

b. Comments by group (#12)

Back Country

- 1 Connectors trails to/between downstate campgrounds would be nice
- 2 We ride in other states and they are very much in tune and open to equine use, MI does not get it
- 3 All state land should be open
- 4 MTRA maintains all their trail camps, The area needs some camps
- 5 Need access to public lands via easements
- 7 Please welcome horses other states are watching and not coming
- 8 Michigan needs more advertising for equestrian
- 9 Horses are a boom to our economy. The DNR's problem is costing our economy money. DNR also should find a way to enable trail riding - not rely on unfunded allegations to deny trail riding. With out any evidence of harm done by horses, DNR has taken our due process right to ride. Bottom line: Open up trails.
- 10 Trail riding provided recreational opportunities for young old disabled and tourist dollars for state
- 12 Have pure MI put in Equine support
- 13 The bill talks about sounds science review for closing - whatever happened to that!
- 17 MI is missing out on revenue from a huge equine industry and tourist trade from other states
- 19 Why is it that SE MI DNR is so amiable with equestrian active but the northern sectors have dug in their heels and reared up against equine users.
- 29 Michigan has lost so much revenue through lack of tourism of promoting need to welcome equine involvement instead of funding ways to shut us out! I have \$100,000 when our legislators need to write language in a bill to demand that the department work will cooperatively with the equestrians this is pretty sad, shameful it shouldn't be this way.

Brighton Riders

- 1 More collectively lobbying for trail riders
- 2 We spend a lot in other states because this state is so unfriendly to horses we should be bringing out of state horses here
- 5 Quit comparing us to snowmobilers, we have a right to be there
- 15 Waterloo to Pinckney trail
- 16 Promote MI horse riding for tourism

Cadillac Tack Sale A

- 2 DNR more friendly to incorporate trails with private lands (Manistee)
- 6 Snowmobile permits don't go where it was intended
- 12 Pig River used to be fun/now too restricted
- 16 No facts to support accusation horses damage trail/land
- 17 Would like trail riding club in North MI and have more trails
- 21 Why cant we use llamas in MN park trails
- 22 No facts to support accusation horses damage trail/land
- 24 Area of tourist industry that could be more developed
- 30 To close ORV trails
- 31 To close ORV trails
- 32 We pay enough

- 44 Love that MI has parks to ride in
- 45 Very offended pig river closed to horse riders
- 48 Have citizens group decide not govt.
- 49 We already spend enough
- 52 Keep affordable
- 55 Wish there where more
- 59 Fortunate in the north to have so many trails
- 60 State land should be available to ride anytime
- 61 Roads are not trails

Cadillac Tack Sale B

- 3 Outdoor people should share everything equal
- 7 Keep our trails
- 13 Good luck you're doing a great job
- 14 Good horse trails
- 17 How bout a price cap
- 18 A welcome sign for equestrians
- 22 Recognize original founders and keep what they started
- 24 Its not fair that I pay taxes just like everyone else but I can't use the trails around my house.
- 25 Love the shore 2 shore trails
- 26 Need picnic tables
- 27 Not enough trails in Osceola County
- 31 Gas prices keep northern MI the place to be
- 33 Too many restricted areas

Horse Expo A

- 5 We love the shore to shore trails, please keep up the good work
- 7 Thank you for your efforts
- 8 Can't do enough
- 14 So much money goes to Ohio, Indiana Kentucky and Tennessee! Why not keep dollars here, DUH!
- 17 Most horse riders take out what they bring into areas.
- 19 thank you for your efforts
- 23 I love it!
- 27 Need more trails to attract tourism, Check with Pure Michigan Campaign
- 29 If purchasing a bridle tag would help create more(and keep more) trail riding areas, many people I ride with would be willing to do so
- 31 We ride with ORV's, motorbikes and mutual respect works.
- 35 We have been going to Indiana and Ohio because the campgrounds have electric and showers
- 39 We need more horse trails
- 40 It is fun
- 43 Please study the successes and funding in other states. MI is WAY behind in providing the equestrian opportunities
- 44 Michigan camps and trails are still in the dark ages. They need to be updated to todays needs. I.e. access to water, better roads to camps etc.
- 48 Love to ride in Michigan, lets keep the trails open for all

50 Open out camps back up.

Horse Expo B

- 18 We need more which would bring more money into Michigan
- 35 Sure would like to see more trail areas open to riding
- 37 You need to get my 9,000 and 10,000 mile patches
- 38 A phone app of horse trails would be great
- 39 Its fun to go fast
- 46 Also like to see roadside easements with plenty of room for bikes, hikers and horses

Horse Expo C

- 3 They need to keep bikes off all horse trails
- 6 State of Michigan is missing out on a source of revenue that surrounding states are enjoying
- 19 I would like to see driving horse trails
- 20 Thank-you keep up the good work, keep the trails open
- 22 It's a lot of fun for the whole family, good workout and way to enjoy nature on the land God gave us to enjoy
- 23 We are blessed to have great trails, we can always use more
- 24 Happy to pay yearly fee to ride Michigan trails
- 29 More riding on State ground
- 35 Additional sign on road connecting trails where road cross trails
- 40 Horses are a lot of fun and they do not harm the environment
- 42 Volunteer trail grooming
- 43 I would like to see lots of state forest areas developed for equine camping and trail riding
- 44 Stop closing trails. Horses and ORV's can get along with proper precautions
- 45 Keep them open
- 48 Like to see trails open for llamas, horses and bikes
- 50 DNR attitudes need to change. Many long range plans are failing in there goals because of their inability to blame themselves for changes they have made in ecosystem
- 51 Keep them open, charge people with private campground with equestrians much more to encourage camping in DNR camp.

Horse Expo D

- 1 Horse people need voice heard
- 5 Need more horse trails
- 8 Work with DNR
- 16 More trails
- 17 Trail riders help oversee proper use of trails
- 19 Need more trails in MI
- 25 More state riding camps
- 29 Feel bridle fees are ok (as other states)
- 30 Please reopen trails

Horse Expo E

- 4 Good activity with no pollution
- 6 To see Michigan on horseback is the way to go
- 16 I would like to get the mountain bikers off proud lake trails and open trails at island lake state park
- 24 Your going to have unhappy riders if you take our trails
- 25 Michigan needs to have more horse camps, it could be good revenue for the state
- 28 Hope we can keep trails open with our already paid tax dollars so the next generation can enjoy the parks and trails
- 37 Thank you
- 40 Maps and watering info
- 46 Its state land, public land, why can't we ride. All kinds of motorized vehicles are allowed

Horse Expo F

- 4 Improve camp sites, electricity, more parks open to horse overnight camping
- 6 please open up all the rail trails to horses, I can't ride from place to place unless roads
- 7 We already work to keep trails open and work to keep camps open and useable. Why should we have to pay on top of that? I have not heard of snowmobiles and mountain bike people having work bees etc.
- 8 I am 16 and trail riding and it is the best thing I do
- 15 We ride horses to get out into the outdoors, not ride with vehicle competition on the roads
- 16 We ride horses to get out into the outdoors
- 17 Something should be done for homeowners who purchase property to have access to ride on the Pigeon River. Now property is worthless for that purpose
- 26 Let horses be on all state land
- 31 Riding fee would be fine if I could ride next to my house
- 39 There are many horse groups willing to help with maintenance of trails
- 43 This is a family tradition that is very memorable experience for families by taking parks away you are killing the family traditions of my youth. I want to share this with my own children within the next 30 years
- 45 It is discouraging to see white pines trail closed to horse riding when just north of howard city, no one uses it
- 49 Keep it open

Horse Expo G

- 4 To many go out of state to ride/much more horse friendly. What a shame
- 22 Price of gas/riding close is better

Lapeer Possee

- 1 Need more areas
- 2 Open state game areas to trail riding
- 5 Perhaps our new governor will keep the DNR under control
- 6 Open King Ranch and Venner

Mail in Survey A

- 2 Indiana has a wonderful system worth cost of pass. Would like to see in Michigan to be used for improvements
- 5 Leave nothing but tracks, horses do not scare wildlife or add erosion if trails are maintained properly
- 6 ORV and Truck share roads OK, No pavement please. Consider carriage driving opportunities also. People travel with RV to trails all over country as a retirement lifestyle
- 7 For custard need a equestrian campground. Horse industry is an unrecognized economic asset for Michigan. It is time to nature and accommodate this 8 billion dollar asset
- 8 We need more trails open to horses. We have ridden with trail riders in south Dakota and other states and these people have dollars to spend in the area
- 10 Horse clubs if asked would be much more proactive about all aspects of trail management
- 12 MI should realize the economic value of horse ownership /breeding/training/showing/trail riding and promote these positive assets by increasing opportunities for use of horses-racing, showing, exhibiting, and trail riding. Horses are 24/7/365 payers into the economy - they do not get parked 6-8 months - they support farmers, vets, farriers, car shops, insurance companies, farm and feed stores, tack shops, fencing companies, tire and trailer businesses, and their local state communities through property and income taxes, license fees for vehicles and use fees for camping. We do not pay to play! Plus we support local businesses at home for supplies and fuel, and the surrounding area/campsites, groceries stores, gas stations, restaurants, dump stations, camp grounds public/private laundry facilities, etc. If economic support needs proof just ask the business people of Vainderbelt about their loss of "horse" customers has affected them if any of them are still in business. We do not want more than any other user groups but we also do not want to be discriminated against for unsupported reasons.
- 13 Horse tag bought, should be good for any horse I own. One tag per rider good for a year
- 14 I would like to see more forest service campground open to horses. Especially those that do not get much use. Also more trail open at these campgrounds
- 15 Expanding campground to accommodate big rigs. All trail users use big rigs now, meaning hikers, horseback riders and bikers. No problem with separate trails, but all can share same camp sites.
- 16 Because of low environmental impact, no more then a barely used deer trail, and no interference of wildlife, I believe that horse should be able to ride on any trail available.
- 17 Consider trail markers like on snowmobile trails which give emergency position in case of accident. Would love to see a trail across UP east to west.
- 18 The forest should be open to all who want to use it. We all need to get along. I am for multi-use trails.
- 20 Michigan money is going out of state due to lack of available facilities.
- 21 It is not safe riding on road or ORV trails we need our own trails. If there were more camping areas and restrooms it would be nice.
- 22 Trail riding in Michigan has been a primary form of recreation for almost 30 years., Have seen more loss than gain of trails over that time. Many of our friend go out of state to places that carter to horseback riders. Seems like Michigan is not taking advance of a great source of tourism dollars.
- 24 There are many thousands of acres of forest land that are still open for riding but either have not or limited access. If the DNR does not have money to develop access areas, they should allow horse clubs to fund and built and maintain.
- 25 No motor, no pollution can coexist that are caring for the environment. Leave it as good or better than your found it.

- 26 Michigan is great place to ride, thanks for continuing to help us keep our rights.
- 28 Trails in Monroe county
- 29 Mark trails are the safest for riders with reminders to stay on trails only. Keeps everyone happy. I agree that the trails could be multi-use and shared with others. Maybe riders should pay for a trail permit to ride a system of trails just like snowmobilers pay to ride the trails during the winter. a Trail permit tag would be worn on the saddle to identify riders who have registered. Thank-you for your hard work and dedication for this cause. You are appreciated
- 31 Making these camp grounds multifunctional will not only bring more families to our area but will also help keep people in our area. Our family, for example, has multi-interest in outdoor activities. We like to horseback, go four-wheeling, go for walks, go mountain biking and just do things together outdoors. We enjoy going on our camping trips with our whole family which includes our four dogs, two cats, and our horses. So the more camp grounds that are not just for one activity but multi-active is where we like to go. I think making more campgrounds this way will help to promote a healthy family lifestyle.
- 32 Fees have increased dramatically and services have decreased
- 33 Thank you for engaging the bureaucrats in favor of trail riding. Pigeon River is a perfect example of one special interest excluding some other user. Activities will shut us out if we are not activists.
- 35 This is my main hobby. I respect and love the outdoors. Michigan need to capitalize on its incredible resource instead of closing it to the public. Public land is Public to all not a few.
- 36 Horseback riding is such an enjoyable way to be out in nature. I think it is our duty to promote physical activity in getting people outside.
- 38 Could not live without it. Have been riding for 50 years in all aspects but trail riding is the best and now all I do.
- 39 Please keep motorized vehicles off horse trails. Mountain bikes need a separate trails.

Mail in Survey B

- 1 Separate users, particularly ORVs
- 4 They say horses are not using sleepy hollow but no one at booth to see us go in
- 6 Love to see bridge fee to give horse riders political voice
- 7 It is deeply important for those who ride trails. It is a lifestyle connected to their hearts souls. I believe people love it so much that they would move to another state if more trails are lost. I know of families that have already done so. Please don't make me move too!
- 8 It is a shame that powers that be do not seem to value horses like in other states. We are a fiscal asset
- 9 I would rather stay in MI
- 10 Ask us for work bee and we will show up
- 13 No safe place to ride other than the trails
- 14 Horse impact only when too many horses because lack of enough trails
- 26 Sharing trails with bikers after horse people do all the work is not ok, also safety hazard
- 30 No motorized vehicles on horse trails
- 31 Separate bikes and horses. But hikers and horses are ok
- 39 Like to see 4 mile lake become open to trail riding off of Dexter and Chelsea road
- 40 Already pay way too much for campgrounds with lousy service. MI DNR makes us feel unwelcome and then we do not support them, other states welcome riders*
- 41 DNR need to treat horse people better, Ohio caters to horseback riders

Mail in Survey C

- 2 Not sure if 2 checked the right box but 2 think a fee on MI recreational passport would work for most people.
- 4 Shore to shore is special, lets partner with Pure Michigan campaign to promote tourism about shore to shore. Even if we only rode short rides in our adjacent country park: I would support an easy-to-see bridle tag attached to my brow band. Attachable so I could buy as many as I thought I would need on any given ride (I have three horses); and so I could move them from bridle \$20 each would be fair.
- 9 I am making up a list of emergency vets
- 13 Want to ride at home but not on traffic roads, reopen trails, want to ride in safe places*
- 14 It is a shame that ORV get more attention, horses are easier on the environment

MTRA Survey

- 1 Contact local riding clubs to help with trail maintenance-volunteers work free
- 2 We already spend money all year on equine hobby
- 8 Keep trails open to us-not allow other interest to exclude us from shared trails
- 10 I would like to see some trails and camping areas south of US 10, West of I-75, north of I-69 and West of US 127 area
- 12 Only if money would never be taken away from the trails. Government always changes money other areas. I ride on the trails all over MI and in other states. Most of trash found on trail not from trail riders. Shell casing and beer cans would be put back in saddle bags.
- 13 Please stop making it harder and harder to enjoy our God give beauty in this state.
- 15 I don't understand why all trails are not open to horses. Horses are what brought most of our ancestors to MI.
- 16 I love it. I am very grateful for the trails I ride.
- 17 It is not promoted enough in MI and other states. Also, MTRA is the best kept secret. After we rode across the state in September many people in our home town area did not even know about the organization and/or schedule of rides.
- 18 WE have a lot of access to trails and wonderful MI wildlife and want to see it continue.
- 19 We love Goose creek we use this campsite the 4th of July about 60-100 in our group if it changes away from the river it will break up our 4th of July trip we will never camp again that weekend. We ride horses and use the river, some of our group has gone for 4 years. Leave Goose creek spend the money to build trails in Hargron County The Thumb.
- 20 Current fees should be adequate
- 21 This is assoc. We have money, knowledge, power and good people. I think when we work together we can get a lot done.
- 24 Please do not let fishermen and others close our trails
- 25 Please keep MI Shore to Shore Trail open and do not allow fishermen and special interest groups to close our trails plus Mac trail.
- 26 Please keep MI shore to shore trails and camps open. Horse riders should have the same rights and access as fisherman hikers, snowmobilers, etc.
- 30 We pay enough - if there is a project that needs doing tell us and we will come up with money to make it happen.
- 31 I want to ride with my grandchildren from my home near Lapeer State Game area

- 33 Having horse people tell DNR how to make trails. Like Ionia where stones were put in trail thinking this was good for horses???
- 38 Dog field trails in Gladwin have prevented riding in this area for most of the equine folks in the county. We need this area back at the price of gas some can not afford to haul miles and miles to trail ride.
- 51 Stop taking trail away from us, we are tax payers also
- 52 MI needs income, horses bring money, promote unique trail MI offers
- 54 If money is absolutely necessary charge at each facility and keep money in that area
- 60 1) We need to begin to emphasize our value in preserving and passing on a large and unique body of knowledge which will be lost if opportunities for participation and use are lost. 2) We need to begin to emphasize the fact that horseback is the means by which many older/disabled people are able to continue to enjoy activity and to access tax supported recreational activities. 3) We need to emphasize the whole source Neptune of horse centered activities and the multitude of benefit to youth and families. 4) Find the business owners in Vanderbuilt who have gone broke some restrictions were placed on PRC and the summer the bridge project shut down the road. Get their stories and publish them.
- 63 No road riding put trails back in woods and meadows. Roads are too dangerous for grandchildren and me.
- 65 New trails on state land instead of shutting them down
- 67 No changes. If it ain't broke don't fix it. MTRA does a good enough job maintaining region 2 horse back riding hiking trail. The group is composed of a lot of dedicated and responsible equestrians.
- 68 People making decisions on horse trails need to be horse people themselves
- 70 Pines Point is really sad. Can we protect the butterfly and still ride?
- 71 Owning horses is an all year round hobby. As horse owners we support the economy more then other recreational hobbies.
- 73 Would like to see the Gladwin Field Trial Area more accessible to horses. There are several miles of trails, but only a small portion available t horses.
- 74 More trails between Gladwin and Houghton Lake
- 76 Communication with DNR making this a horse friendly state adding trail mileage
- 79 MTRA has a wonderful trail and has spent umpteen hours and dollars supporting the equine tourist attraction.

Pontiac Lake Horseman Association

- 6 The economy could be stimulated by creating an Oakland county trailways system throughout the existing equine riding parks
- 8 Always contentious use of trails, however if laws rules and regs carefully written and enforced there should be no reason for same
- 9 The economy could be stimulated by creating an Oakland county trailways system throughout the existing equine riding parks
- 10 Cannot trust funds will be used for horses. But if pay to ride all users must pay*

Raisin River

- 1 Great memories made every time
- 10 I ride and drive my horse almost daily and would love to see more trails opened
- 15 We need riding trails in zone 4

- 17 Very limited horse trails in and around Monroe County. We need more trails
- 18 Need more riding trails in lower eastern Michigan

SE Independent Riders

- 1 Update facilities, attracting tourists would raise revenues

UP Riders A

- 1 Want many trails with varied terrain beautiful vistas and easy stream crossings. In camps all I need is water and an outhouse
- 2 Thank you for thundery valley trail
- 3 Everyone should ride more
- 4 Allow Horses in Porkies would be great tourist attraction
- 6 We need more trails
- 20 Could bring in tourism with more camps
- 22 Make it safe for horse and riders
- 24 More trails and camps in UP
- 31 Water and camping
- 44 Recommend Pine Martin Run

UP Rider B

- 1 Lots of property in Ontonagon City but need marked designated trails, people not local are afraid to get lost, trails are not just for snowmobile
- 7 Camping for multiple days
- 11 Would ride more often with more trails
- 16 Bay de Noc trail needs better camping
- 19 Cam pion is setting up their horsepulling grounds for rustic camping and expanded horse trail rides
- 21 Have you Google horse campgrounds? In other states private owned equine friendly campgrounds use federal, county, and state dollars. If Upper Michigan had more trail systems the state wouldn't necessarily have to own burden campgrounds expense. The logging industry does a nice job of starting trail systems - management is needed to map and complete some loops. Snowmobile trails often go through swamps.

Waterloo Horsemen's Association

- 2 I love waterloo
- 8 Get rid of restrictions
- 12 Riding together is a spiritual experience
- 15 Reopen closed trails
- 18 More horse trails
- 19 Electricity and showers at horse camps
- 21 Stop closing trails
- 23 More sharing of trails, hike bike and horse
- 29 DNR more worried about horses then trash dumpers and poachers
- 32 Expand trails*

33 MI equine activities need expansion*

Yankee Springs

13 If more funds are available for volunteers more could be done

21 DNR needs to stop limiting where horses ride, bikers and hikers need to respect equine, we are riding the trails before them.

DRAFT

Appendix C. Part 721, Michigan Trailways, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT (EXCERPT)

Act 451 of 1994

PART 721

MICHIGAN TRAILWAYS

324.72101 Definitions.

Sec. 72101. As used in this part:

- (a) "Advisory council" means the Michigan snowmobile and trails advisory council created in section 72110.
- (b) "Council" means a Michigan trailway management council established pursuant to section 72106.
- (c) "Department" means the department of natural resources and environment.
- (d) "Equine access locations" means open access roads, management roads, forestry access roads, 2-track and single-track trails that are not wildlife paths, staging areas for pack and saddle animals to be dropped off or picked up, and associated wilderness campsites.
- (e) "Fund" means the Michigan trailways fund created in section 72109.
- (f) "Governmental agency" means the federal government, a county, city, village, or township, or a combination of any of these entities.
- (g) "Michigan trailway" means a trailway designated by the commission pursuant to section 72103.
- (h) "Pack and saddle trailways" means trailways and equine access locations that may be used by pack and saddle animals.
- (i) "Rail-trail" means a former railroad bed that is in public ownership and used as a trailway.
- (j) "Trail" means a right-of-way adapted to foot, horseback, motorized, or other nonmotorized travel.
- (k) "Trailway" means a trail or other land corridor that features a broad trail capable of accommodating a variety of public recreation uses.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995;—Am. 1997, Act 129, Imd. Eff. Nov. 5, 1997;—Am. 2010, Act 46, Imd. Eff. Apr. 2, 2010.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72102 Legislative findings and declaration.

Sec. 72102. The legislature finds and declares that a statewide system of trails, trailways, and pack and saddle trailways will provide for public enjoyment, health, and fitness; encourage constructive leisure-time activities; protect open space, cultural and historical resources, and habitat for wildlife and plants; enhance the local and state economies; link communities, parks, and natural resources; create opportunities for rural-urban exchange, agricultural education, and the marketing of farm products; and preserve corridors for possible future use for other public purposes. Therefore, the planning, acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of trails, trailways, and pack and saddle trailways are in the best interest of the state and are declared to be a public purpose.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995;—Am. 2010, Act 46, Imd. Eff. Apr. 2, 2010.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72103 Designation as trailway; public hearing; establishing and changing permitted uses; revocation of designation.

Sec. 72103. (1) Upon petition by any person or on its own motion, the commission may designate a trailway in this state as a "Michigan trailway". The petition or motion shall propose permitted uses of the trailway. The commission shall not designate a trailway as a Michigan trailway unless it meets, or will meet when completed, all of the following requirements:

- (a) The land on which the trailway is located is owned by the state or a governmental agency, or otherwise is under the long-term control of the state or a governmental agency through a lease, easement, or other arrangement. If the land is owned by a governmental agency, the commission shall obtain the consent of the governmental agency before designating the land as part of a Michigan trailway.
- (b) The design and maintenance of the trailway and its related facilities meet generally accepted standards

of public safety.

(c) The railway meets appropriate standards for its designated recreation uses.

(d) The railway is available for designated recreation uses on a nondiscriminatory basis.

(e) The railway is a multiuse trail suitable for use by pedestrians, by people with disabilities, and by other

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users, as appropriate.

(f) The railway is, or has potential to be, a segment of a statewide network of trailways, or it attracts a substantial share of its users from beyond the local area.

(g) The railway is marked with an official Michigan railway sign and logo at major access points.

(h) The railway is not directly attached to a roadway, except at roadway crossings.

(i) Where feasible, the railway offers adequate support facilities for the public, including parking, sanitary facilities, and emergency telephones, that are accessible to people with disabilities and are at reasonable frequency along the railway.

(j) Potential negative impacts of railway development on owners or residents of adjacent property are minimized through all of the following:

(i) Adequate enforcement of railway rules and regulations.

(ii) Continuation of access for railway crossings for agricultural and other purposes.

(iii) Construction and maintenance of fencing, where necessary, by the owner or operator of the railway.

(iv) Other means as considered appropriate by the commission.

(k) Other conditions required by the commission.

(2) The commission shall not designate a railway a Michigan railway under subsection (1) unless a public hearing has been held in the vicinity of the proposed Michigan railway to take testimony and gather public opinion on the proposed designation including, but not limited to, the proposed uses of the railway and whether or not motorized uses are appropriate for the railway. The public hearing shall be held at a location and at a time calculated to attract a fair representation of opinions on the designation. A transcript or a summary of the testimony at the public hearing shall be forwarded to the commission.

(3) At the time a Michigan railway is designated under subsection (1), the commission shall, in consultation with the governmental agencies in which the railway is located, establish uses to be permitted on the railway. In establishing permitted uses, the commission shall consider all of the following:

(a) The safety and enjoyment of railway users.

(b) Impacts on residents, landowners, and businesses adjacent to the railway.

(c) Applicable local ordinances.

(4) A change in the permitted uses of a Michigan railway established under subsection (3) relating to whether or not a motorized use is allowed on the railway shall not be made without approval of the commission after a public hearing held in the same manner as provided in subsection (2).

(5) The commission may revoke a Michigan railway designation if it determines that a railway fails to meet the requirements of this section. Before revoking a Michigan railway designation, the commission shall provide notice to all entities involved in the management of the railway. If the railway is brought into compliance with this section within 90 days after providing this notice, the commission shall not revoke the designation.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72104 Designation as railway connector.

Sec. 72104. (1) Upon petition by any person or on its own motion, the commission may designate a railway, bicycle path, sidewalk, road, or other suitable route that does not meet the requirements of this part for a Michigan railway as a "Michigan railway connector" if the connector meets all of the following:

(a) The connector meets appropriate safety standards and appropriate design standards for its designated uses.

(b) The connector connects directly to a Michigan railway.

(c) The public agency having jurisdiction over the connector has consented in writing to the designation.

(d) The connector is marked with an official Michigan railway connector sign and logo at major access points.

(2) An aquatic corridor capable of accommodating watercraft that connects to a Michigan railway may be

designated as a Michigan railway connector if it meets the requirements of subsection (1)(a) to (d).

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72105 Operating and maintaining railway; agreement; provisions.

Sec. 72105. The department may operate and maintain a Michigan railway that is located on state owned land or may enter into an agreement with a council or 1 or more governmental agencies to provide for the
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operation and maintenance of the Michigan railway. An agreement entered into under this subsection may include provisions for any of the following:

- (a) Construction, maintenance, and operation of the railway.
- (b) Enforcement of railway rules and regulations including permitted uses of the railway.
- (c) Other provisions consistent with this part.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72105a Adopt-a-trail program.

Sec. 72105a. (1) The department shall establish an "adopt-a-trail" program that will allow volunteer groups to assist in maintaining and enhancing Michigan railways, pack and saddle trailways, and rail-trails.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), volunteer groups in the adopt-a-trail program may adopt any available Michigan railway, pack and saddle trailway, or rail-trail or Michigan railway, pack and saddle trailway, or rail-trail segment and may choose any 1 or more of the following volunteer activities:

- (a) Spring cleanups.
- (b) Environmental activities.
- (c) Accessibility projects.
- (d) Special events.
- (e) Trailway maintenance and development.
- (f) Public information and assistance.
- (g) Training.

(3) The department shall designate the activities to be performed by a volunteer group in the adopt-a-trail program. The department may provide for more than 1 volunteer group to adopt a Michigan railway, pack and saddle trailway, or rail-trail or Michigan railway, pack and saddle trailway, or rail-trail segment.

(4) A volunteer group that wishes to participate in the adopt-a-trail program shall submit an application to the department on a form provided by the department. Additionally, volunteer groups shall agree to the following:

- (a) Volunteer groups shall participate in the program for at least a 2-year period.
 - (b) Volunteer groups shall consist of at least 6 people who are 18 years of age or older, unless the volunteer group is a school or scout organization, in which case the volunteers may be under 18 years of age.
 - (c) Volunteer groups shall contribute a total of at least 400 service hours over a 2-year period.
 - (d) Volunteer groups shall comply with other reasonable requirements of the department.
- (5) A state park manager or a district forest manager may issue to volunteers who are actively working on adopt-a-trail projects that last more than 1 day free camping permits if campsites are available. A state park manager or a district forest manager may waive state park entry fees for volunteers entering state parks to work on adopt-a-trail projects.
- (6) While a volunteer is working on an adopt-a-trail project, the volunteer has the same immunity from civil liability as a department employee and shall be treated in the same manner as an employee under section 8 of 1964 PA 170, MCL 691.1408.
- (7) The department shall design and erect near the entrance of each Michigan railway, pack and saddle trailway, or rail-trail in the adopt-a-trail program or along the trailway an adopt-a-trail program sign with the name of the volunteer group's sponsoring organization listed for each volunteer group that has contributed at least 100 service hours by volunteers.

History: Add. 1997, Act 129, Imd. Eff. Nov. 5, 1997;—Am. 2010, Act 46, Imd. Eff. Apr. 2, 2010.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72106 Michigan railway management council; establishment; purpose; adopting operating procedures and electing officers; powers; dissolution.

Sec. 72106. (1) Two or more governmental agencies may establish a Michigan railway management council for the development and management of a Michigan railway pursuant to the urban cooperation act of 1967, Act No. 7 of the Public Acts of the Extra Session of 1967, being section 124.501 to 124.512 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

(2) Upon formation, a council shall adopt operating procedures and shall elect officers as the council considers appropriate.

(3) A council may do 1 or more of the following as authorized in an interlocal agreement entered into
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© Legislative Council, State of Michigan [Courtesy of www.legislature.mi.gov](http://www.legislature.mi.gov) pursuant to Act No. 7 of the Public Acts of the Extra Session of 1967:

(a) Operate and maintain that portion of 1 or more Michigan railways that is owned or under the control of the governmental agencies establishing the council.

(b) Pursuant to an agreement under section 72105, operate and maintain that portion of 1 or more Michigan railways that is located on state owned land.

(c) Coordinate the enforcement of railway rules and regulations and other applicable laws and ordinances, including permitted uses of the railway on railways owned or under the control of the governmental agencies establishing the council or, pursuant to an agreement under section 72105, railways that are located on state owned land.

(d) Receive any grant made from the fund or other funding related to that portion of a Michigan railway within its jurisdiction.

(e) Acquire or hold real property for the purpose of operating a Michigan railway.

(f) Perform other functions consistent with this part.

(4) A council may be dissolved by the governmental agencies that participated in creating the council.

However, if a council has entered into an agreement with the department under section 72105, the agreement shall specify how the council may be dissolved.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72107 Closure during pesticide application.

Sec. 72107. In agricultural areas, a Michigan railway may be temporarily closed by the entity operating the railway to allow pesticide application on lands adjoining the railway. The entity operating the Michigan railway shall post the closure of the railway or arrange with a landowner or other person for the posting of signs and the closure of the railway during pesticide application and appropriate reentry periods.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72108 Commission; powers.

Sec. 72108. (1) The commission may do any of the following:

(a) Grant easements or, pursuant to part 13, use permits or lease land owned by the state that is being used for a Michigan railway for a use that is compatible with the use of the Michigan railway.

(b) Enter into contracts for concessions along a state owned Michigan railway.

(c) Lease land adjacent to a state owned Michigan railway for the operation of concessions.

(2) If the commission approves of the acquisition of land by the department, the commission may state that the specified land is acquired for use as a Michigan railway. Following acquisition of land that the commission states is acquired for use as a Michigan railway, any revenue derived from that land pursuant to subsection (1), except as otherwise provided by law, shall be deposited into the fund.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995;—Am. 2004, Act 325, Imd. Eff. Sept. 10, 2004.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72109 Michigan trailways fund.

Sec. 72109. (1) The Michigan trailways fund is created within the state treasury.

(2) Except as otherwise provided by law, the state treasurer may receive money or other assets from any of the following for deposit into the fund:

- (a) Fees collected from users of trailways on state forest lands.
- (b) Payments to the state for easements, use permits, leases, or other use of state owned Michigan trailway property.
- (c) Payments to the state for concessions operated by private vendors on state owned property located on or adjacent to a Michigan trailway.
- (d) Federal funds.
- (e) Gifts or bequests.
- (f) State appropriations.
- (g) Money or assets from other sources as provided by law.

(3) The state treasurer shall direct the investment of the fund. The state treasurer shall credit to the fund interest and earnings from fund investments.

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(4) Money in the fund at the close of the fiscal year shall remain in the fund and shall not lapse to the general fund.

(5) Money in the fund may be expended for any of the following purposes:

- (a) The expenses of the department in operating and maintaining the Michigan trailway system and enforcing Michigan trailway rules and regulations.
- (b) Grants to or contracts with councils or governmental agencies to operate and maintain segments of Michigan trailways and to enforce Michigan trailway rules and regulations.
- (c) Funding Michigan trailway construction and improvements.
- (d) Acquisition of land or rights in land.
- (e) Publications and promotions of the Michigan trailways system.

(6) In determining the expenditure of money in the fund, the department shall consider all of the following:

- (a) The need for funding for each of the purposes listed in subsection (5).
- (b) The estimated cost of Michigan trailway management for each governmental agency that manages a Michigan trailway, based on previous costs, trailway mileage, level of use, and other relevant factors.
- (c) The need of each governmental agency that manages a Michigan trailway for financial assistance in managing that trailway, and the amount of money from the fund received by that agency in the past.
- (d) The amount of revenue accruing to the fund that is generated from each Michigan trailway.
- (e) Other factors considered appropriate by the department.

(7) The department shall submit a report to the legislature on or before December 1 of each year describing the use of money appropriated from the fund in the previous fiscal year.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72110 Michigan snowmobile and trails advisory council; creation; duties; membership; terms; vacancy; qualifications; chairperson; vice-chairperson; staffing; procedures; quorum; meetings; powers; compensation; contracts; responsibilities.

Sec. 72110. (1) The Michigan snowmobile and trails advisory council is created within the department.

(2) The advisory council shall advise the director of the department and the governor on the creation, development, operation, and maintenance of motorized and nonmotorized trails in this state, including, but not limited to, snowmobile, biking, equestrian, hiking, off-road vehicle, and skiing trails. In advising the director and the governor on the creation and development of motorized and nonmotorized trails in this state, the advisory council shall seek to have the trails linked wherever possible. The advisory council may perform additional related duties as provided by this part, other law, or as requested by the director or the governor.

(3) The advisory council shall consist of 11 members appointed by the governor. Members of the advisory council shall be appointed for a term of 4 years. A vacancy on the advisory council occurring other than by expiration of a term shall be filled by the governor in the same manner as the original appointment for the balance of the unexpired term. A vacancy shall not affect the power of the remaining members to exercise the duties of the advisory council.

(4) Not fewer than 5 members of the advisory council shall be an owner of an ORV licensed under section 81115 or an owner of a snowmobile registered under section 82105. Not fewer than 3 members of the advisory council shall be an owner of a snowmobile registered under section 82105. Not fewer than 1 member of the advisory council shall possess experience as an instructor in a snowmobile safety education and training program or an ORV safety education course. Not fewer than 1 member of the advisory council shall be a resident of the Upper Peninsula of this state. Not fewer than 2 members of the advisory council shall be members of the equine trailways subcommittee created in section 72110a.

(5) The governor shall designate a member of the advisory council to serve as the chairperson of the advisory council at the pleasure of the governor. The advisory council may select a member of the advisory council to serve as vice-chairperson of the advisory council.

(6) The advisory council shall be staffed and assisted by personnel from the department, subject to available funding. Any budgeting, procurement, or related management functions of the advisory council shall be performed under the direction and supervision of the director of the department.

(7) The advisory council shall adopt procedures consistent with this section and other applicable state law governing its organization and operations.

(8) A majority of the members of the advisory council serving constitute a quorum for the transaction of the advisory council's business. The advisory council shall act by a majority vote of its serving members.

(9) The advisory council shall meet at the call of the chairperson and as may be provided in procedures

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adopted by the advisory council.

(10) The advisory council may, as appropriate, make inquiries, studies, investigations, hold hearings, and receive comments from the public. The advisory council may also consult with outside experts in order to perform its duties, including, but not limited to, experts in the private sector, government agencies, and institutions of higher education.

(11) The advisory council may establish advisory workgroups, including, but not limited to, an advisory workgroup on snowmobiles, as considered necessary by the advisory council to assist the advisory council in performing the duties and responsibilities of the advisory council. In addition, the equine trailways subcommittee created in section 72110a as a subcommittee of the advisory council shall serve as advisory to the advisory council.

(12) Members of the advisory council shall serve without compensation. Members of the advisory council may receive reimbursement for necessary travel and expenses consistent with relevant statutes and the rules and procedures of the civil service commission and the department of technology, management, and budget, subject to available funding.

(13) The advisory council may hire or retain contractors, subcontractors, advisors, consultants, and agents, and may make and enter into contracts necessary or incidental to the exercise of the powers of the advisory council and the performance of its duties as the director of the department considers advisable and necessary, in accordance with this part, other applicable law, and the rules and procedures of the civil service commission and the department of technology, management, and budget, subject to available funding.

(14) The advisory council may accept donations of labor, services, or other things of value from any public or private agency or person.

(15) Members of the advisory council shall refer all legal, legislative, and media contacts to the department.

(16) In addition to the responsibilities provided in this section and otherwise provided by law, the advisory council shall do both of the following:

(a) Make recommendations to the commission and the department on the expenditure of money in the fund.

(b) Advise the commission and the department on the implementation of this part and the establishment and operation of Michigan trailways.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995;—Am. 2010, Act 46, Imd. Eff. Apr. 2, 2010.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72110a Equine trailways subcommittee; creation; staffing; funding; membership; appointments; terms; vacancy; removal; meetings; quorum; business conducted at public meetings; writings subject to freedom of information act; compensation; duties; development of plan for statewide network of pack and saddle trailways.

Sec. 72110a. (1) The equine trailways subcommittee is created as a subcommittee of the advisory council. The department may provide staffing and administrative support to the equine trailways subcommittee. The equine trailways subcommittee may also be staffed and funded by user groups and other interested persons.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), the equine trailways subcommittee shall consist of the following members appointed by the director of the department:

(a) One individual representing the state's tourism industry.

(b) Five individuals representing the equine industry as follows:

(i) One individual from the Upper Peninsula.

(ii) One individual from the northern Lower Peninsula.

(iii) One individual from the central Lower Peninsula.

(iv) One individual from the southeastern Lower Peninsula.

(v) One individual from the southwestern Lower Peninsula.

(3) The senate majority leader and the speaker of the house of representatives shall each submit a list of 3 persons to the director of the department. The director shall appoint at least 1 person from each of those lists to the equine trailways subcommittee. The members first appointed to the equine trailways subcommittee shall be appointed within 60 days after the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section.

(4) Members of the equine trailways subcommittee shall serve for terms of 4 years or until a successor is appointed, whichever is later, except that of the members first appointed 2 shall serve for 2 years, 2 shall serve for 3 years, and 2 shall serve for 4 years.

(5) If a vacancy occurs on the equine trailways subcommittee, an appointment for the unexpired term shall

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be made in the same manner as the original appointment.

(6) A member of the equine trailways subcommittee may be removed for incompetency, dereliction of duty, malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, or any other good cause.

(7) The first meeting of the equine trailways subcommittee shall be called by the department within 30 days after the appointments have been made. At the first meeting, the equine trailways subcommittee shall elect from among its members a chairperson and other officers as it considers necessary or appropriate. After the first meeting, the equine trailways subcommittee shall meet at least quarterly, or more frequently at the call of the chairperson or if requested by 3 or more members.

(8) A majority of the members of the equine trailways subcommittee constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a meeting of the equine trailways subcommittee. A majority of the members present and serving are required for official action of the equine trailways subcommittee.

(9) The business that the equine trailways subcommittee may perform shall be conducted at a public meeting of the equine trailways subcommittee held in compliance with the open meetings act, 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.261 to 15.275.

(10) A writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by the equine trailways subcommittee in the performance of an official function is subject to the freedom of information act, 1976 PA 442, MCL 15.231 to 15.246.

(11) Members of the equine trailways subcommittee shall serve without compensation. However, subject to the availability of funding, members of the equine trailways subcommittee may be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties as members of the equine trailways subcommittee.

(12) The equine trailways subcommittee shall do all of the following:

(a) Within 1 year after the appointment of its members, prepare and submit to the advisory council a recommended plan for a statewide network of pack and saddle trailways. The recommended plan for a statewide pack and saddle trailways network shall include both of the following:

(i) All pack and saddle trailways on state owned land that have previously been open for use by pack and saddle animals at any time and that the equine trailways subcommittee determines are appropriate for pack and saddle trailways.

(ii) All additional state lands that the equine trailways subcommittee determines would be appropriate for

pack and saddle animals and would contribute to a statewide network of pack and saddle trailways.

(b) Advise the advisory council and the department on the development and use of the pack and saddle trailways network.

(c) Advise the advisory council and the department on other matters related to the promotion of the state's equine industry.

(d) Advise the advisory council and the department on funding to conduct pack and saddle trailway reviews under section 72115 and to provide for the reopening of previously closed pack and saddle trailways, the preservation of existing pack and saddle trailways, and the development of new pack and saddle trailways across the state.

(13) If the equine trailways subcommittee is not appointed as provided for in this section, the department shall, within 2 years after the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section, work with the equine industry to develop a plan for a statewide network of pack and saddle trailways.

History: Add. 2010, Act 46, Imd. Eff. Apr. 2, 2010.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72111 State agencies; duties.

Sec. 72111. All state agencies shall cooperate with the commission and the department in the implementation of this part.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72112 Rules.

Sec. 72112. The commission may promulgate rules as it considers necessary to implement this part.

History: Add. 1995, Act 58, Imd. Eff. May 24, 1995.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

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324.72113 Michigan heritage water trail program.

Sec. 72113. (1) The Great Lakes center for maritime studies at western Michigan university, in conjunction with the department, the department of history, arts, and libraries, and the Michigan 4-H youth conservation council, shall develop a plan for a statewide recognition program to be known as the "Michigan heritage water trail program". This program shall be designed to do all of the following:

(a) Establish a method for designating significant water corridors in the state as Michigan heritage water trails.

(b) Provide recognition for the historical, cultural, recreational, and natural resource significance of Michigan heritage water trails.

(c) Establish methods for local units of government to participate in programs that complement the designation of Michigan heritage water trails.

(d) Assure that private property rights along Michigan heritage water trails are not disturbed or disrupted, or restricted by the state or local units of government.

(2) Within 1 year after the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section, the center for maritime studies at western Michigan university, in conjunction with the department, the department of history, arts, and libraries, and the Michigan 4-H youth conservation council, shall submit a copy of the plan developed under subsection (1) to the standing committees of the legislature with jurisdiction primarily pertaining to natural resources and the environment.

History: Add. 2002, Act 454, Imd. Eff. June 21, 2002.

Compiler's note: For transfer of powers and duties of department of history, arts, and libraries related to Michigan heritage water trail program to department of natural resources, see E.R.O. No. 2009-26, compiled at MCL 399.752.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72114 Statewide trail network; plan; establishment; modification to include additional trails; availability of plan on department's website; recommendations from equine trailways subcommittee and other trailway users.

Sec. 72114. (1) Within 1 year after receiving recommendations from the advisory council under subsection (4), the department shall establish a plan for a statewide trail network that includes Michigan trailways, pack and saddle trailways, and other recreational use trails. The plan for a statewide trail network shall be designed to accommodate a variety of public recreation uses and shall specify the types of uses that are allowed on each trail segment. The plan for a statewide trail network shall be in conformance with section 72115 and the determinations made under section 72115. Prior to the department establishing the plan for a statewide trail network, the commission shall hold a public meeting to receive testimony from the general public.

(2) After the plan for a statewide trail network is established under subsection (1), if the department is informed that additional trails should be added to the plan or that uses on particular trail segments should be modified, the department may modify the plan to include additional trails or to modify the uses on particular trails. However, any modifications shall be in conformance with section 72115 and determinations made under section 72115.

(3) Upon establishment of a plan for a statewide trail network under subsection (1), the department shall make the plan available on the department's website. If the department modifies the plan for a statewide trail network, the department shall make the updated plan available on the department's website.

(4) Within 1 year after receiving recommendations from the equine trailways subcommittee under section 72110a, the advisory council shall review recommendations from the equine trailways subcommittee as well as other interested trailway users and shall make recommendations to the department for the establishment of a plan for a statewide trail network. If the advisory council does not submit recommendations to the department as provided for in this subsection, within 2 years after the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section, the department shall review the recommendations of the equine trailways subcommittee under section 72110a and recommendations of other interested trail users and shall establish a plan for a statewide trail network as provided for in subsection (1).

History: Add. 2010, Act 45, Imd. Eff. Apr. 2, 2010.

Popular name: Act 451

Popular name: NREPA

324.72115 Pack and saddle animals; access to pack and saddle trailways on public land; restrictions.

Sec. 72115. (1) Subject to subsections (2) and (3), pack and saddle animals shall be allowed to access pack and saddle trailways on public land managed by the department as follows:

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and saddle trailways on public land managed by the department as follows:

(a) Access on land of the state forest system is allowed unless restricted by statute, deed restriction, land use order, or other legal mechanism, in effect on the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section.

(b) Access on land of the state park system or state game area system is prohibited unless authorized by land use order or other legal mechanism in effect on the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section.

(c) Access on other land managed by the department is allowed according to the specific authorization or restriction applicable to the land.

(2) Access by pack and saddle animals may only be restricted on lands described in subsection (1) after the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section if conditions are not suitable for pack and saddle animals because of public safety concerns, necessary maintenance, or for reasons related to the mission of the department. Restrictions related to the mission of the department shall be supported, to the greatest extent practicable, by a written science-based rationale that is supported with documentation that is made available to the public. Prior to determining that access by pack and saddle animals be restricted, the department shall make every effort to resolve any public safety or maintenance concerns. Subject to subsection (3), the department shall not restrict pack and saddle animals from lands described in subsection (1) unless all of the following conditions are met:

(a) The commission, upon request of the department, holds a public meeting on a proposal to restrict access by pack and saddle animals on pack and saddle trailways to receive testimony from the general public. The commission shall invite the advisory council, the equine trailways subcommittee created in section 72110a, and the Michigan horse council to attend the meeting.

(b) The department, after considering testimony at the commission meeting under subdivision (a), provides a specific rationale for its determination to restrict access by pack and saddle animals.

(c) Any decision by the department to restrict access by pack and saddle animals shall not take effect for a period of time set by the department, but not less than 60 days. However, if the director determines that a restriction must be imposed because of user conflicts or due to an imminent threat to public health, safety, welfare, or to natural resources or the environment, the director may issue a temporary order restricting access by pack and saddle animals for 30 days or until the threat or user conflict is abated. A temporary order under this subdivision may be reissued if the threat or user conflict persists.

(d) A written statement shall be posted at the trailhead in which the restriction is imposed stating the cause and estimated duration of the closure.

(e) A list of pack and saddle trailways on which the department has restricted access for pack and saddle animals, including temporary orders, shall be posted on the department's website and notification shall be provided to the equine trailways subcommittee created in section 72110a.

(3) Any restrictions described in subsection (1) on access by pack and saddle animals that were in effect on the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section shall remain in effect until those restrictions are reviewed using the process outlined in subsection (2). For the following areas, the department shall review the restrictions on access by pack and saddle animals previously imposed by the department according to the following timelines:

(a) Not later than June 15, 2010, the Pigeon river country state forest.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2011, the Lapeer state game area and the Gladwin field trial area.

(c) Not later than January 1, 2012, the Lost Nation state game area and the Blueberry Ridge pathway.

(4) A person shall not use pack and saddle animals on state-owned land except on pack and saddle trailways that are open for access by pack and saddle animals.

History: Add. 2010, Act 45, Imd. Eff. Apr. 2, 2010.

Popular name: Act 451

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Appendix D. Positive Interactions: The DNR and Equine Trail Users

During a discussion after the January 2011 Natural Resources Committee (NRC) meeting the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Director Rodney Stokes queried Michigan Horse Council (MHC) attendees about positive interaction between the Department and the Michigan equestrian community. In the next 34 days MHC contacted various equestrian groups that interact on a regular basis with the DNR and compiled a listing of some of the most long standing positive interactions. This list of those groups who had positive interactions was then presented at the February 2011 NRC meeting to the committee members and Director Stokes. Also named for positive interactions were DNR individuals: Jim Radabaugh, Brenda Curtis, Paul Curtis, and all the DNR employees currently are working on the new CIS (Clinton, Ionia, Shiawassee) Trail.

1. Michigan Horse Council

Largest representation of horse enthusiasts in Michigan
DNR has been an active part in every MHC sponsored Trails Symposium held since 1999
DNR has had a booth at every Stallion Expo
MHC has had presentations by DNR personnel at Expo
MHC provides tickets for the Expo to Natural Resource Commissioners and other DNR personnel
MHC assisted in passing the passport legislation
MHC President Mike Foote is also part of the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee and the Equine Trails Subcommittee
<http://www.michiganhorsecouncil.com/>

2. Michigan Trail Riders Association

Across the upper portion of lower Michigan, East and West, North and South
Established with DNR approval and assistance in June 18, 1963: Trails from East/West: Lake MI to Lake Huron
Trails North/South: Mullett Lake to Cadillac
About 487.1 miles of trail
18 camps including Elk Hill in Pigeon River area, and a private camp at Mullett Lake
50 year positive working together anniversary with the DNR in 2013!
<http://www.testrong.com/forum3/index.php>

3. Waterloo Horseman's Association

Waterloo State Recreation Area
Established with DNR approval and assistance in 1993 as a way to keep the horse camp and trails open in this recreation area.
50 miles of trails
Second oldest equestrian affiliation with the DNR
<http://www.waterloohorsemen.org/>

4. Sleepy Hollow Trail Riders Association

Sleepy Hollow State Recreation Area

Established with DNR approval and assistance in 1997 as a way to create equestrian trails in this recreation area. Potential for equestrian camp.

Currently equestrians are allowed various camp outs, including those for equestrian 4-H groups with permits through the DNR.

9 miles of trails

11 proposed miles of trails

*Even though there is no equestrian campground equestrian camping has been allowed for 4-H groups and special events.

<http://www.shtra.org/>

5. Ionia Horse Trails Association

Ionia State Recreation Area

Established with DNR approval and assistance in 1997 to keep the horse camp and trails open in this recreation area.

18 miles of trails

In 2010 the DNR reversed its initial decision to close half of the equestrian camp at the request of equestrians.

<http://www.freewebs.com/ioniahorsetrailsassociation/index.htm>

6. Friends of Allegan County Equestrian Trails

Allegan State Game Area: Allegan County Equestrian Trail System

2 campgrounds: Ely Lake & Pine Point * NOTE: Closed November 15 – 30 for firearm deer season

Established with DNR approval and assistance in May 18, 2010

60 miles (proposed)

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10371_10402-237228--,00.html

7. Bass River Recreation Area

6 miles shared hike/bike/horse/ski

8. Brighton Trail Riders Association

Brighton State Recreation Area

Established with DNR approval and assistance in April 19, 1997 as a way to keep the horse camp and trails in this recreation area.

18 miles of trails and a horse camp

<http://brightontrailriders.com/>

9. Fort Custer Horse Friends Association

Fort Custer State Recreation Area

Established with DNR approval and assistance in May 1998

Established to support the currently mixed use trails. Hike/Bike/horse/ski/snowmobile.

26 miles of trails

Currently equestrians are allowed various camp outs with permits through the DNR.
Highland Trail Riders Association

7. Highland State Recreation Area

Established with DNR approval and assistance in 1998

12 miles of trails & equestrian camp

<http://www.highlandtrailriders.com/forums/>

Kal-Haven Linear Trail State Park

34 miles multi user: bike/hike/horse/ski

<http://www.vbco.org/government906753.asp>

8. Lakeland Trails State Park (linear)

13 miles multi user: bike/hike/horse/ski

<http://www.trailink.com/trail/lakelands-trail-state-park.aspx>

9. Maybury Trail Riders Association

Maybury State Park

11 miles of trails

<http://mayburytrailriders.homestead.com/>

10. Ortonville Recreation Equestrian Association

Ortonville State Recreation Area

Established with DNR approval and assistance in 1998 to support the trails & campground.

8.5 miles of trail & equestrian campground

<http://www.hadleyhills.com/index.htm>