

**Minutes of the
Equine Trails Subcommittee
June 23, 2015**

The regular meeting of the Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) was called to order by Chair Mike Foote on June 23, 2015 at 12:30 p.m. at the Doherty Hotel in Clare. All members were present: **Mike Foote, Janet Holmstrom, Gabrielle Hume, Dick Kleinhardt, Sarah Nicholls, and Kristie Walls.** The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff was present: **Kriss Bennett, Bill Doan, Earl Flegler, Barbara Graves, Kim Kennedy, Tom Paquin, Anna Sylvester, and Paul Yauk.**

Dick Kleinhardt moved the motion to approve the agenda. Kristie Walls seconded and it carried unanimously.

Gabrielle Hume moved the motion to approve the revised March 12, 2015 meeting minutes. Kristie Walls seconded and it carried unanimously.

Business Items for Discussion

Dick Kleinhardt – Northern Lower Peninsula Report:

-Pigeon River - From a safety aspect, it is important that we have connectors to be able to go in and out; maintaining our trails so you can access them. Kerry Mase and her team, the PRCAC Roads, Trails & Forest Access subcommittee, gave a presentation at their last meeting, explaining exactly where trails are located. Pigeon River is going to meet June 25 to look over what they are proposing. On July 16th it is going before the general body of the PRCAC. They are looking for a fair and balanced approach to access within the Pigeon. Anna Sylvester added that in the process the Equestrian Committee works with land managers (Forestry, Wildlife, Parks and Recreation, Law Enforcement). After review it is presented to the PRCAC Roads, Trails & Forest Access subcommittee and then the committee of the whole. They then bring it forward to the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council would vote after listening to concerns from the Subcommittee. If there are any dissensions between the Equestrian Committee and the Advisory Committee, they will get together with each and try to resolve these issues. The Pigeon River requires a Land Use Order for any trails so it will go to the Natural Resources Committee for presentation, and the next meeting it gets approval by the Director.

-Pigeon had 21 workers come in for a work bee. The group contributed 144 hours of volunteer work. They planted posts for signage and brushed out some trails.

-Jinjyr Miller's group (Big Oaks Campground) is coming the 26th and 27th.

-There is going to be a procedure where neighbors go to Scott Whitcomb to gain access to PRC lands for neighbors or subdivision when no nearby access currently exists.

Kristie Walls - Central Lower Peninsula Report:

-No requests from her groups; cleanup was done.

Gabrielle Hume - Southeast Lower Peninsula Report:

-Brighton is going back and forth on relocating campground.

-Ortonville - Kriss Bennett stated that she spoke with Todd Farrell and they were working on a few projects for this summer due to beaver dams blocking trails; to be complete by the end of fall. He is working with the group to get all trails back to quality condition. All agreed to get ones we have under control, and then have discussion on additional trails.

Janet Holmstrom – Upper Peninsula Report:

-Had a walk-around at Courtney Lake with DNR and U.S. Forestry. Eric Cadeau is designing some sites. Potentially able to expand trails behind there.

-Ontonagon will have three equestrian campgrounds by 2017-2018. The Ontonagon County Township Park opened a section to horses right on Lake Superior. Would be nice to have a loop trail connecting them. There is a Supreme Court decision that says between the water and the ordinary high water mark is Eminent Domain. Does this mean we can ride horses there? Anna Sylvester responded that you can continue on a travel path, but you cannot stop and loiter.

-Cedar River North State Forest Campground and Trail Camp has four designated campsites. She cannot tell if any of them are equestrian. Anna responded that last year they did a Land Use Order that opened up several equestrian campgrounds of which that was one of them. When Anna was there a few weeks ago she had not seen any improvements for equestrians yet. She then went to Wells State Park which oversees it and questioned it. They responded that there is not an agreement yet between the horse group and the park as to where the sites are going to go, but you can at least take your horse out if you have some way to tie it. Janet said the gentleman she talked to at Wells said there will be 8 sites. She said it is hard to see from the website on how to get there. Anna will put in a suggestion to Ian at Wells to post GPS coordinates on web site.

-Iron Ore Heritage Trail is open and Ishpeming to Republic is open to horses. It is roughly 17 miles. There is no camping or water, but you do cross some streams.

Mike Foote - Southwest Lower Peninsula Report:

-Ionia electric - has not heard back from Ionia about the electric sites. Kristie Walls said the WIP has been filed. Kriss Bennett will send the updated list to everyone.

Sarah Nicholls – Tourism Representative:

Had the Governor's Tourism Conference in April and had session on implementation plan. Paul Yauk and Nancy Krupiarz gave a nice update on trails. Also presented bicycle tourism marketing plan. She would like to implement a similar one for equine tourism, with a series of three meetings starting in late October or early November in Lansing, Gaylord, and Marquette; three to four hours each with group-based activities. Would like this group's feedback for the locations. Lansing meeting will be tied to the November 12, 2015 ETS meeting. She would like each committee member to come to at least one of these meetings.

Non-equestrian camps in equestrian campgrounds – Anna Sylvester. Anna has received many complaints of allowing non-equestrians into equestrian camps. Their philosophy is that they want all facilities used. Highland is joint use and she does not get complaints from there. She is looking for input from group to discover what the issues are and how they can they control them. Maybe they should make some camps equestrian only, like Headquarters Lake. Do they need rules or guidelines for non-equestrians? Dick Kleinhardt said people in the west are more used to being around horses, versus people in Michigan. Why fill spaces close to equestrians when you have other spaces open? Anna stated the policy is that sites are for everyone. Chair Foote suggested everyone put together a list of concerns, do's and don'ts, and send to him in three weeks. His email is M.foote123@gmail.com.

Chip Neyome from the Saginaw Chip Indian Tribe introduced himself to the committee. He is on the tribe Council. He would like to establish a working relationship with the subcommittee regarding how equestrian trails are established, governing state laws, professional assistance, and basically learning. Barbara Graves will add him as a contact.

Equestrian Mapping Update - Kim Kennedy, GIS Resource Analyst of the Forest Resource Division, gave a presentation on the State Designated Equestrian Trails Mapping project. They want to update the trail line data. Staff will be in the field with GPS to map trails and amenities such as campgrounds, parking lots, bathrooms, staging areas, water sources, signs, mile markers, tunnels, road crossings, water crossings, boardwalks, bridges, trestles, etc. They will be reaching out to each park to find all the amenities available to include in the mapping. Paul Yauk stated they want to focus on what is on state land and make sure it is correct, and to get them information. Sarah Nicholls mentioned that Travel Michigan is going to be revamping their website so it would be good for them to have this information as well. Anna Sylvester mentioned it will be equestrian trails, but multi-use of these trails will be included. These have gone through a trail proposal process and are specifically designated. If anyone thinks of anything else that should be added, please let Kim and her team know. They are going to start the pilot in southeast Michigan at nine parks and recreation areas. Pontiac Recreation Area is their pilot location. Their goal is to have these first nine done by the end of September.

Review of trails project list - Kriss Bennett informed the group that she will provide an updated WIP list at every meeting. The spreadsheet now includes the trail proposal process. Send her emails if you have any questions. Anna Sylvester handed out the Trail Development Proposal sheet and stated that they are now transitioning the trail proposal process to all state parks. It will probably be another month before they get into it, but you will be able to have that transparent approval process for trail proposals in the state parks, like they do the state forest lands. There is an application process for it.

Update on the Trust Fund Grant - Kriss Bennett - there are still some projects that are in the purchasing process. All of the money will be spent by August 1 and they do not have an updated spreadsheet. Anna Sylvester contacted quite a few of the parks and told them this money must be spent, so they are in the process of doing purchase orders right now.

Horse designation multi-use signage – Janet Holmstrom said the MiTRALE book contains MDNR multi-use equine and ATV routes in the western U.P. Even though these trails are open to horses, other users feel the horses are trespassing. Her suggestion is to add a horse emblem on the carsonite trail markers so people understand that horses are welcome on these trails. Anna Sylvester responded that if the trails were designated open to horses in the trail proposal then they can add them on the posts. Bill Doan can have Ron Yesney or Rob Katona look into it. Tom Paquin stated that MiTRALE owns most of their own trails so we would have to go to them to discuss it.

Chair Foote wanted to confirm ‘multi-use’ unless it says no horses allowed. Anna Sylvester responded that horses are allowed on any state forest lands and forest roads, except for a few, but it is not specifically designated as an equestrian trail unless it has gone through the trail proposal process as a designated trail. ORVs and snowmobiles are the same way. The Shore to Shore trail was specifically designated as an equestrian trail. Janet Holmstrom asked how they start the process to get them designated. Anna Sylvester said to work through Rob Yesney, Ron Katona, and Paul Gaberdiel. Anna clarified that multi-use means more than one use. All use means all uses are allowed. All or open usage is where everybody can go, multi-use means more than one, and single or designated/restricted usage. Kristie said that anytime you have a multi-use and post pictures of three things, but there’s five that are allowed, you just created a picture that only three things are allowed. Anna will get clarification. She meets with the Forest Field Coordinator on a regular basis and she will bring it up to him.

Action Items

Review Trail Plan - Chair Foote and Paul Yauk will go through the plan goals and then put it in some file form or color code of progress and have it as a permanent agenda item.

Definition of Corral - Gabrielle Hume stated that there are some equestrians that do not want to see the grassy areas churned up, and they feel that fencing around picket posts would be more suitable. Anna Sylvester will take the draft language ‘when picket posts are present, pen will be erected around posts’ to the District Supervisor meeting tomorrow and ask for input.

Equine Tourism Marketing Plan - If you have more people for the Equine Tourism Marketing Plan, please send them to Sarah Nicholls. She thinks the DNR has a list of all the friends groups/volunteers. Barbara Graves will get a list from Miguel Rodriguez and send it to Kristie and Gabrielle to review.

Simar Approval Letter - Paul Yauk included the approval letter for Simar in the packet. He said the project is moving forward. Anna Sylvester stated that one of her requirements was to have an on-site meeting with all of the stakeholders, and then have the basic design drawn up by Eric. Then it will go to section chiefs for name and site design approval.

Approval Process - Paul Yauk said they have a plan to streamline the approval process. Anna Sylvester and he have been working with field staff on how to move this forward. In the past,

there was extra time given when somebody would not get to it. Now, when somebody does not get to it, it will be deferred. Anna Sylvester said the defer mechanism is if you do not respond within the timeframe, it is an automatic deferral and you do not have input. It used to be 30 days for field supervisors to approve projects in the proposal database; now it is 14 days. It will be at the district supervisor level for 7 days, her level for 7 days, and then the chief's for 7 days. They figured 8 weeks at the most now. Exceptions would be if someone was on vacation or there was a conflict resolution issue. They want to make sure everyone has an opportunity for input. Anna said to help the process along, when you are doing the trail development proposal, meet with your recreation specialist and park managers and do some ground work. If possible, involve the Wildlife biologist, Forestry unit supervisor, Law, and Fisheries; anyone that needs to be included in the development. Big Oaks is a good example. Everyone was on site, they all looked at it, they all agreed to it, and it has been moving through fast.

Gabrielle Hume inquired about the Blue Ribbon Panel meetings. Earl responded that they announced last week of who was appointed to the committee and that it is called The Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee for State Game Areas. Paul Yauk requested it be put on our next agenda.

Announcements and Updates

Anna Sylvester announced Paul Gaberdiel is the new Trail Specialist. He was a fire officer for 25 plus years, is very familiar with the trails program, and has been a great asset to them.

Gabrielle Hume asked what they needed to do to submit for another grant. Anna Sylvester responded that Kriss Bennett can define it more with the project list and then Kriss and Paul Yauk can work with Matt Lincoln, who is our grant person, and submit for project proposal grant monies. She said they need to get the list defined and work with them on the goals from the implementation plan and find out what the priorities are. Paul said January is a good time to think about them and submit by April 1st. Anna said the approvals are not until November or December, so submissions next year will be for 2017. Also, another funding source is the Partnership Match program which is another good consideration. It can be any kind of services or dollar value. Matt Lincoln will send out a notice to all of our friends groups, usually in October or November.

Dick Kleinhardt asked if anything has been disclosed to the PRCAC relative to the pavilion. Anna Sylvester responded that the process for that was they were going through the recreation plan and would submit that. They want to validate with the PRCAC that the Elk Hill campground is a developed area, and as such we can put development on there.

Janet Holmstrom provided 28 pages of responses from her survey on what people do and do not like in horse campgrounds.

Next meeting is November 12 and will be in Lansing. Barbara Graves will check on meeting space in Constitution Hall for a 9:00 – 1:00 p.m. Tourism meeting and 1:30 – 4 p.m. ETS meeting.

Action Items

- Week of 7/10/15, at the latest, to get suggestions to Chair Foote of pros and cons of non-equestrian people in equestrian camps. He will compile and send to Anna Sylvester.
- Kriss Bennett – trails project list; review at each meeting.
- Chair Foote and Paul Yauk – Trail Plan spreadsheet; review at each meeting.
- Earl Flegler – provide update on The Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee for State Game Areas.
- Anna Sylvester will get back to committee via e-mail on corral definition.
- GPS mapping - amenities to Kim Kennedy - send all amenity items to Chair Foote. He will compile into a Word document and give to Kim Kennedy for mapping.
- Anna Sylvester - multi-use carsonite signs – she will talk to FRD field coordinator and will keep everyone updated.
- Anna Sylvester - she will have someone put directions to Cedar River Campground on the webpage.

Dick Kleinhardt moved the motion to adjourn. Sarah Nicholls seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 3:36 p.m.