

**Minutes of the
Equine Trailways Subcommittee
August 23, 2013**

The regular meeting of the Equine Trailways Subcommittee (ETS) was called to order by Chair Sandra Batie on August 23, 2013 at the MSU Diagnostics Center in Lansing, Michigan. The following members were present:

Sandra Batie, Chair
Richard Kleinhardt
Sarah Nicholls
Mike Foote
Jan Herrick, Vice-Chair

Members unable to attend:

Joni Gleason

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff was present: Jim Radabaugh, Mary Nardo, Matt Lincoln, Anna Sylvester, Darlene Moore, Earl Fleigler, Dennis Nezich.

WELCOME

Chair Batie welcomed everyone and reviewed meeting protocol; introductions followed.

AGENDA

Approval of the April 10, 2013 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Mike Foote moved to approve the April 10, 2013 minutes of the ETS. The motion was seconded by Chair Sandra Batie and it carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chair Batie announced that there would be an addition to the agenda today to add Matt Lincoln to speak after Mary Nardo to present the Equine Priority List.

MOTION: Richard Kleinhardt moved to approve the addition to the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mike Foote and it carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Jim Radabaugh referred to a document that was presented in the July Michigan Snowmobile and Trail Advisory Council meeting. This hand-out looks at mini plans projected and group agendas as well as their goals. Implementation of the Comprehensive Trail Plan (CTP) is in progress and targeting a 1 to 5 year plan for accomplishments. October 2013 is the deadline to finish the plan. Jim stated that he is looking to MSTAC to define their leadership role in the scope of the Comprehensive Strategic Plan and that the CTP is mandated by law.

Matt Lincoln spoke about the Public Lands Strategy (PLS) status. It is still on the desk of the legislators and is not approved. There is hope that it will be on the fall agenda for the Governor.

Equine Trails Subcommittee Meeting
Draft Minutes from August 23, 2013

It must be approved before the cap can be lifted on DNR land purchases north of Clare, Michigan. Chair Batie asked Matt to forward the link to access the (PLS) so it could be passed on to the committee members.

Jim Radabaugh discussed the Trail Proposal "Clone." In a February 2013 meeting there was a lack of agreement between the Forest Trail Proposal and the PRD, which prompted a letter from the ETS to Ron Olson. Ron responded by talking about the system and the data base and suggested the "cloning" of the Trail Proposal process to also be the one used in the Parks and Recreation Division (PRD). It will be reviewed which will take approximately 3 months and requires that Jim Radabaugh draft a letter to the data base administrator to approve the proposal. There is an appeal process built into this, however, Jim said there are very few appeals. The current plan requires 17 signatures and he would like to see the number of signatures required to be reduced for our plan and that is a possibility.

NEW BUSINESS

Mary Nardo provided an Equine Trails Project List for review by the committee. This list is a result of a request from February's ETS meeting. She explained the importance of the list as it relates to money, grants and actual improvements/projects that can be accomplished. She further stated that this list closely tracks the ETS priorities for 2013 and beyond.

Matt Lincoln then handed out another document that combined the ETS wishes and priorities which included all of the PRD projects and its intention was to guide the priority request for the **MNRFT**. Chair Batie asked Matt how they arrived at this list. Specifically she asked why some of the projects that they discussed in the ETS focus groups were not on this list. Matt explained that this list was mainly for "large" projects and that some of the smaller projects may be able to be funded at the local level and therefore was not on this list. Chair Batie advised the committee members to survey the areas they represent and make sure all associations have their wishes be known. Matt asked that the ETS come up with their top 4 priorities by the end of September. Mary Nardo explained how these lists are streamlined. Unit Supervisors in the field are communicating with their areas and bringing that information to Lansing. Executively, they put it all together and determine what can be done based on funding, permit requirements and if there are endangered species or environmental issues that would put a halt on a project. She indicated that the application for the trust fund monies was done in April 2013. September is when the opportunity to add more details to support money from the trust fund takes place. Chair Batie did not feel that there was sufficient time nor was the committee in the position to put their project list together by September. Mary Nardo suggested that this process is in transition and that 2014 is really where we want to focus and "project" our priorities and bring forth those projects that need our attention. Questions and concerns continued on this matter and Chair Batie wanted to move forward with the meeting and come back to this discussion after lunch.

Dennis Nezych from the Forestry Resources Division (FRD) narrated a slide presentation which provided an oversight in State and Federal land in Michigan. He described the Forestry's management goals for state forest lands. A large portion of his presentation relayed the importance of timber sales and how those sales and marketing strategies are done. He explained that the forest land is co-managed with the Department of Wildlife Division.

Al Davis, Vice President of the Michigan Trail Riders Association (MTRA) told Dennis that he has some questions about equestrian concerns but felt Dennis had addressed those but did ask him when “safety” concerns or questions arise about activities on state forest land, who do they contact. Dennis said he would provide a map of designated district supervisors that could be used as point of contact.

Chair Batie talked about trail and trail riders wishes when it comes to logging on trails and what their concerns were. She updated the committee on two meetings that she was part of, one was with FRD representatives, Al Davis and Mike Foote. The second was with Bill O’Neil, Chief Forester. A summary of those meetings was prepared as well as a page of concerns with respect to forest practices and some suggested changes. Chair Batie also asked the committee how they felt with her representing the ETS ideas and communication on their behalf in meetings such as this. Vice Chair, Jan Herrick placed a motion to allow Chair Batie to speak or negotiate on behalf of the ETS with the Forest Division and their representatives as well as to correspond with Director Keith Creagh about this topic. Motion by Jan Herrick, Vice-Chair to allow Chair Sandra Batie to represent/negotiate the ETS to Forest people as well as correspondence with the Director of the DNR, Keith Creagh with ETS matters and issues. Mike Foote seconds the motion and it carried unanimously.

Al Davis spoke about the unique nature of the Michigan Riding and Hiking Shore to Shore Trail. To his knowledge, it is the only long distance, shore to shore trail (or border to border) in the nation, which is not a guided trail. The Shore to Shore is laid out by the members of the association; riders go independent with no guide, at their leisure. The importance of trail markers to such a design is crucial. He also mentioned that riders come from throughout the Nation and even Canada and Europe and what are the trail attributes that they desire and how existing forest practices can affect those.

Jan Herrick offered and explained a “mediation process” that can be used when there are conflicts between groups. Susan Butterick who is with the Alternative Dispute Resolution/Mediators requires training and work to become a “qualified mediator.” Parties can choose their mediator. There would be several issues with a mediator such as who could be put in place with the DNR, and the mediator would have to become familiar with federal, state and DNR laws pertaining to each jurisdiction. Community Resolution Centers could be an option to “regulate” our processes. There are also volunteer mediators within the community centers. There would also have to be an “authority” in the DNR that could accept the settlements that the mediation would bring forth. Mediation is a tool that could be used within the DNR for multiple purposes.

Nomination of two ETS appointments for Dick Kleinhardt and Jan Herrick’s terms that are expiring are coming due. The process is laid out in law in Public Acts 45 and 46 in 2010. Nominees provide letters to the House and Senate representatives from their district for Support and recommendations to the DNR Director.

Chair Sandra Batie discussed her attendance and experience at the 3rd Friends Summit. Equestrians participated in large numbers and had their own break-out sessions. A proposed “Friends” agreement was passed out. Chair Batie noted that many equestrians felt it was not well designed for equestrian types of events or volunteer projects. She and Therese Kline of the Michigan Horse Council met with Miguel Rodriguez from the DNR and expressed concerns for a

more applicable process. Anna Sylvester, DNR , Northern Field Operations Manager was going to work on conformity for groups to convene and noted that currently, insurance costs are a concern for many Friends groups.

Sarah Nicholls handed out a Pure Michigan information piece that had an executive summary of 8 goals for the next 5 years for the tourism industry. A committee for each goal has been established with 2-3 people on each goal. Sarah said she was in charge of this strategy for the next 5 years. Jan Herrick made a motion to congratulate Sarah Nicholls on her work on tourism and being selected to head the 5 year project for Pure Michigan. Richard Kleinhardt seconds the motion and it passed unanimously.

Matt Lincoln from the DNR updated us on Equine Trails and Facilities. Matt said there will be an intern starting in the fall to collect maps from the DNR and put it all together. This should be completed by the end of the year. Brighton, Sleepy Hollow, Highland and Ionia reroutes are approved to be moved forward. Electric to 5 campsites are in the plans for Ionia but funding is needed and apparently they have some well issues out there too. Sleepy Hollow is the No. 1 priority with a new trail suggested along the ridgeline in the works. It went through the whip process but is not supported by the DNR trail density analysis applied to Sleepy Hollow. It is suggested that perhaps it has reached its maximum of equestrian trails in the area. A copy of the trail density report was handed out. Next step is to offer an alternative, perhaps re-purposing a biking trail to equestrian use. Chair Batie noted that the concept of density seems to be one of the many definitions by DNR professionals. She stated that the density concept will be a topic to be put on the October agenda. Pickney is set to build a \$74,000 staging area but funds are needed. Clear Lake State Campground is researching whether or not a horse campground would be justified due to not having enough trails to support it. Fort Custer has a need for a new well; they just finished a new pavilion. Waterloo, Paul Yauk is in the process of relocating 500 feet of trail. Rockport, volunteers are marking as we speak, creating a new draft and then overall access to the park. Mayberry – staging area needs expansion but lacks funding. Pontiac Lake needs a well in the staging area. Yankee Springs – Matt Lincoln has to gather information on that one. Trolz property – still on the table and the hope is that the nature conservancy will help out. Lakeland Trails – joint multi-use trail dedication set for September 21, at the Putnam Township Hall.

Chair Batie suggested that with the communities' approval, she will work with Matt Lincoln on ETS priorities for details for the MNRTF grant. She recommended that the committee members identify their region's riding association needs and requests by September 18 and get them to her. Motion for Chair Batie to work with Matt Lincoln on priority list was put into motion by Richard Kleinhardt and second by Mike Foote. It passed unanimously.

Chair Batie opened the floor back up to the public for final comment. There was none.

Motion to adjourn by Mike Foote and second by Jan Herrick. Meeting adjourned.