

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)
EQUINE TRAILWAYS SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS)**

MEETING MINUTES

February 27, 2011

Approved July 11, 2012

**MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health
4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing, Michigan 48910-8104**

PRESENT FOR THE ETS

Sandra Batie, Chair
Jan Herrick
Sarah Nicholls
Mike Foote (arrived at 11:40)

ABSENT FOR THE ETS

Richard Kleinhardt
One Vacancy

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Ron Olson, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) Chief and State Trails Coordinator
Donna Stine, Policy Coordinator, DNR
Jim Radabaugh, State Trails and Recreation Unit Manager, PRD
Annamarie Bauer, Trail Planning Specialist, PRD
Brenda Curtis, Forest Recreation Planner PRD
Paul Curtis, Park Management Plan Administrator, PRD
Earl Flegler, Wildlife Division (WLD)
Christine Hanaburgh, WLD
Valerie Frawley, WLD

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

None

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Batie called the ETS meeting to order and welcomed everyone. All those in attendance introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chair Batie added three discussion items to the agenda.

- Michigan Horse Council's (MHC) Positive Interactions Between the DNR and Michigan Equestrian Trail Riding Community Update as compiled by Therese Kline
- Equine Marketing, Promotions, and Tourism Update – Sarah Nicholls
- Elk Research Proposal Update – Chair Batie

Chair Batie called for approval of the Agenda as amended. **A motion to approve the Agenda as amended was offered by Herrick and supported by Nicholls. The Agenda was unanimously approved.**

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 4, 2011 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Batie offered minor corrections and clarifications to the minutes. **A motion was offered by Herrick and supported by Nicholls to approve the November 4, 2011 Meeting Minutes as corrected. The Minutes were unanimously approved.**

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**DNR REORGANIZATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ETS – Ron Olson, PRD**

Chief Olson began with an overview of the recent changes within the DNR that moved the Recreation and Trails Section from the Forest Management Division to PRD, effective January 8, 2012. One of the main reasons for the shift is to create greater efficiencies and to maximize funding opportunities for recreation. (Note: The current need for PRD facilities is \$320 million).

The PRD is in the “Lifelong Memory Business.” The DNR must balance managing the lands while providing customer opportunities. It’s all about the experience, health benefits, etc.

He shared the four priorities of the DNR:

- 1) Improving Customer Service
- 2) Stimulate the Recreation Passport Program
- 3) Stimulate Getting People Outdoors
- 4) Stimulate the Economy through Conservation Activities

He talked about working collectively with stakeholders and workgroups to achieve common end results that position Michigan as a trail leader. He used the Minnesota website as an example, which boasts awards and accomplishments, recognizing that Michigan may have more and/or better trails. **Herrick** asked for the meaning of “The Trail State” and if it is an official goal. **Chief Olson** suggested that the challenge is how to market this concept. Part of it is marketing and promotions. The DNR will put the horsepower behind the marketing. The goal is to be more organized and clear with the communications strategy. We need to do a better job conveying our story and promoting these recreational opportunities.

There was additional general discussion concerning the multiple media challenges and the need for clear, effective communications to convey facts (vs. rumors) and accurate information to the majority of the equine community.

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS UPDATE – Sarah Nicholls, ETS

Nicholls announced the upcoming Governor’s Conference on Tourism March 25-27. This conference, in Grand Rapids, will provide a yearend review tourism report as well as the strategic plan for 2012-2017. This will include an open discussion to generate this vision.

She has a student researching horse tourism/trails etc. at the state and national levels via websites and will share this information for reference and use as it becomes available.

Anyone can list an event(s) on the Travel Michigan website. There may also be an opportunity to have a page for equine related events.

Five faculty members from Michigan State University are working with Dan Lord from PRD to develop a list of potential projects (9-10 sites) for students from the Planning, Design and Construction Program. The goal is to bring the classes to the projects over the next 3-4 years. A European Conference on Horse Leisure and Tourism is scheduled in France this May. This provides an opportunity to present the survey results.

TROLZ PROPERTY UPDATE – Paul Curtis, PRD

Curtis provided a detailed update on this land acquisition opportunity (Attachment 1). **Chair Batie** requested the ETS to designate a representative for this effort. **A motion by Foote supported by Nicholls for Jan Herrick to serve as the ETS representative and point of contact on the Trolz Property acquisition. The motion passed unanimously.**

LAKELANDS TRAIL UPDATE – Paul Curtis, PRD

Curtis provided a detailed update for Paul Yauk, PRD (Attachment 2). There was general discussion in support of trail extensions. **There was a motion by Herrick supported by Foote for the ETS to send a letter of support to the Director for the Lakeland Trail extension.**

MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR PROJECTS – Christine Hanaburgh, WLD

Hanaburgh provided clarification on Wildlife State Management Plans. There is no single state management plan for Wildlife Areas. Approval from the United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) is required for recreation activities on lands involving Pittman Robertson and Dingell Johnson funds (either acquisition and/or management). Activities need to be monitored to assure compliance with federal requirements to ensure any nonhunting and fishing activities that are occurring are secondary and incidental. It's all about the frequency and intensity of the use. There was discussion on the use of a permit to control use and intensity recognizing that there is a cost associated with enforcement. The USFWS can join in and oversee compliance. **Foote** asked if there is a set of criteria or measurement for the evaluation. The ETS is looking for explanations and/or examples, something quantitative. **Hanaburgh** indicated that every situation is different; there is no single example. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) provides guidance for applying the regulations. States are required to have Assent Legislation to be eligible for license fees. There is no set list of prohibited recreational uses.

2012 ETS WORK AND MEETING SCHEDULE – Chair Batie, ETS

(Finalization of ETS Report and Posting; Compiling List of Associations; Report on 2011 Equine Activities)

The ETS is required to meet quarterly. **Chair Batie** will work with Andrea Turner to identify three future meeting dates and poll the ETS for availability. She noted that much of the work outlined in the ETS report will be folded into work by other groups. She then asked the ETS about the plan of work for 2012 including carriage driving, packing, a state conference (this may be a better topic/task for the MHC) and revenue. Should these items be taken up this year or later?

Carriage Driving – **Foote** indicated that the MSU Carriage Group is part of the MHC. **Herrick** offered to do a Google search and follow-up.

Packing – **Chair Batie** asked **Foote** to research pack animals. He agreed.

Revenue – The ETS recognized the need to tackle this issue and that there will most likely be resistance and pushback from the equine community. There is a concern that if the ETS does not initiate a proposal others including the legislature might present their version of a bridle tag. ETS should look to successful models. **Nicholls** will have her student research revenue model options for successes and failures.

ELK RESEARCH PROPOSAL UPDATE – Chair Batie, ETS

Chair Batie indicated that they are still looking for funding and encouraged the DNR to provide a letter of support for the research.

MICHIGAN SNOWMOBILE AND TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL (MSTAC) PLAN OF WORK AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE ETS – Donna Stine

Stine indicated that the MSTAC has one year to review the recommendations provided by the ETS once the plan has been finalized. **Chair Batie** asked when the ETS Report would be finalized and posted. **Radabaugh** indicated later this week. **Stine** stated that the DNR then has one year to review the recommendation presented by MSTAC. She then reviewed the Plan Outline provided (Attachment 3). She mentioned how trails standards such as minimum widths could help to solve encroachments and trespasses issues along trail corridors. She asked the ETS to review the Plan Outline and provide comments. The ETS is not expected to do the work and that there would be assistance provided by the workgroups. **Stine** has asked for comments back by next week from other groups, however, she open to receiving input later as the process moves forward.

PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY STATE FOREST (PRCSF) PROGRESS – Donna Stine

Stine provided an update on the activities concerning equine use at the PRCSF.

Campgrounds – the following progress is being made:

The Elk Hill Equestrian Campground is being added the DNR Central Reservation System (CRS).

The Group Campground will also be available under the CRS but will be coordinated through the PRCSF Headquarters.

Three dispersed, designated campsites have been opened for equestrian use.

Brenda Curtis presented a prototype pull through campsite for consideration (Attachment 4). There was discussion on the river access site and consideration for alternative watering options. **Chair Batie** raised the question what are the “trade offs”?

The trail reroute and removal of barrier posts will need to be coordinated with construction. There are two options for moving forward with design and construction. A small portion of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant could potentially be used for this work.

Option One – The Department of Technology, Management and Budget would oversee the project and bid work out to a consulting firm.

Option Two – The DNR to retain project and design “in house.”

Recreation and Trails – the following progress is being made:

DNR staff is documenting trails with GPS. The DNR is waiting for the USFWS visit for review and approval of trails. DNR has expanded the recommended trail miles from 4 to 9.

Approximately one mile of the Shore-to-Shore Hiking and Riding Trail is being closed to vehicles until a reroute of the trail on steep slopes occurs. Once complete the trail will be marked.

Leave No Trace – looking to a subcommittee to implement.

Law Enforcement – the DNR is stepping up enforcement.

Stine noted that there is a need for an Evaluation Plan to measure results and confirm if changes have made a difference.

STAFF REPORTS (by exception)**EXECUTIVE DIVISION - Donna Stine**

PRC Related Legislation, December U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Letter (Attachment 5).

The Director has committed to improved equine access (Attachment 6).

Progress on Campground, Trails, No Trace Camping and Riding, and Sustainable Trails at the PRC State Forest – A committee has been formed and they have met two times. There are three subcommittees: Leave No Trace; Campgrounds; and Signage. The question was asked if the committee is taking minutes. Answer yes. **Chair Batie** asked for copies.

PARKS AND RECREATION DIVISION - Jim Radabaugh, PRD

UP Representative Progress – a list of names and suggestions has been compiled and calls are being made. The next step is to follow-up with Chief Olson. The hope is to have the new representative at the next meeting.

CIS Trail Update – the engineering bridge study has been completed. It identified over 1.5 million dollars in bridge improvements along the 42-mile rail-trail to make it recreation ready. The DNR has secured a grant for the paving portion of the project in the five towns. Ovid to Owosso will be the first segment to have equestrian improvements.

Equestrian Grant \$300,000 – the first priority for grant funds will be Elk Hill Equestrian State Forest Campground.

GLADWIN FIELD TRIAL AREA UPDATE – Earl Flegler, WLD

This area covers approximately 8 square miles. Section 3 has approximately 400 acres open to horse use. The entire area has been reviewed as required by legislation and the current restrictions remain in place. There are multiple recreation use restrictions, including ORV use, small game hunting, and archery deer between October 1 and November 15. It was dedicated in 1916 as a dog field trial area. Lands are co-managed by Forest Resource Division and Wildlife Division. The question of parking for equestrian use came up during the review process. There is some parking that even large horse trailers can use. A map of the locations will be posted on the equestrian website.

PARKS AND RECREATION DIVISION – Paul Curtis, PRD**Statewide Equine Plan Progress and Relationship to ETS**

Curtis gave an overview of the Statewide Planning Process (Attachment 7). There was discussion by the ETS regarding their participation and input in this planning process. **A motion by Herrick, supported by Foote recommending Batie, Herrick and Nicholls serve as the ETS representatives in this process passed unanimously.**

Sleepy Hollow Update

(Refer to Attachment 7 for details.)

Rockport Update

Management planning was recently completed which included phase one zoning. Phase two will include a 10 year action goals that could include equestrian trails and campground.

Waterloo Pinckney Update

Management Plan updates in process. Phase one is going for Director signature, while phase two will be a 4-6 month process. **Batie** asked if trail recommendations were part of this process.

Curtis replied yes.

PRD is currently looking at a connector between Pontiac and Highlands with an M-59 crossing.

2011 POSITIVE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE DNR AND THE MICHIGAN EQUESTRIAN TRAIL RIDING COMMUNITY UPDATE - *compiled by Therese Kline*

(Refer to Attachment 8 for details.) **A motion was offered by Herrick and supported by Foote for the ETS to send a letter to Director Stokes thanking hi and the DNR for their work. Chair Batie to send letter. The motion passed unanimously.**

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Laingsburg would like to be recognized as an equine friendly town and destination. **A motion was offered by Foote supported by Herrick to send a letter to Laingsburg in support of this initiative. The motion passed unanimously.**

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

None

NEXT MEETING

TBD

Chair Batie thanked everyone for there efforts and participation. The meeting adjoined at 2:30.