

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

**MEETING MINUTES**

**November 4, 2011**

Approved February 27, 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

**ABSENT FOR THE ETS**

Richard Kleinhardt  
Michael Foote  
Jane Carmichael (resigned)

**PRESENT FOR STAFF**

Lynne Boyd, Chief, Forest Management Division (FMD)  
Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, FMD  
Annamarie Bauer, Trail Planning Specialist, FMD  
Abby Rubley, Promotional Agent, FMD  
Scott Whitcomb, Pigeon River County State Forest Unit Manager, FMD  
Paul Curtis, Park Management Plan Administrator, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD)  
Daniel Eichinger, Wildlife Division  
Donna Stine, Policy Coordinator, DNR

**GUEST PRESENTER**

Rique Campa III, Michigan State University

**PUBLIC ATTENDEES**

Mike Stinson, Pigeon River and Beyond, and Back Country Horsemen (BCH)  
Gabrielle Hume, BCH  
Therese Kline, Michigan Horse Council (MHC), Michigan Trail Riders Association (MTRA)

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Chair Batie** called the ETS meeting to order and welcomed everyone. All those in attendance introduced themselves. **Chair Batie** announced that ETS member Jane Carmichael, Upper Peninsula Representative, submitted her resignation due to the death of her husband effective October 13, 2011. **Chair Batie** will work with Jim Radabaugh to find a replacement. She then introduced the newest member of the ETS, Sarah Nicholls, who replaces Rebecca Behm as the Recreation and Tourism Representative.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:**

**Chair Batie** announced that the agenda is ambitious and that the group will have to prioritize discussion items. She added an agenda item "Leave No Trace" that will be covered by Scott Whitcomb. **The amended November 4, 2011 Agenda was unanimously approved.**

**APPROVAL OF MARCH 18, 2011 MEETING MINUTES:**

**A motion was offered by Jan Herrick and supported by Chair Batie to approve the Draft Minutes of the June 16, 2011 meeting. The minutes were approved.**

One abstention - Sarah Nicholls

**BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION****RESEARCH PLAN WITH RESPECT TO ELK AND HORSE INTERACTIONS AND IMPACTS – Rique Campa III:**

Presented a PowerPoint titled "A Proposed Research Project: Elk Responses to Recreational Use and Habitat Potential in Michigan" (attached). He indicated that they were in the process of securing funding for the four year study. **Chair Batie** asked about available funding from the DNR. It was pointed out that that this project would not be eligible for Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grants which are a primary recreational grant funding source. It was determined that the ETS would write a letter supporting the research project.

**MARKETING AND PROMOTION – Sarah Nicholls:**

Provided an introductory overview of some initial thoughts relative to marketing and promotions. Opportunities with the "Pure Michigan" campaign (currently there is no equine specific equine subsection tab) and the development of an actual marketing plan were identified as possibilities.

**Donna Stine** indicated that the DNR is currently working closely with Travel Michigan and that they are considering making changes to the template. She indicated that perhaps Sarah Nicholls could be involved in that process. **Sarah Nicholls** expressed interested in participating.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE DRAFT 2011 RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT OF THE ETS (DRAFT REPORT) – Jan Herrick:**

Presented a summary of all the comments on the Draft Report received to date, including those submitted electronically to the DNR. She noted that some people did provide more than one response. She has entered the comments in a spreadsheet (that was provided). She categorized them by topics, and indicated whether the comments were favorable, unfavorable or neutral. The need to provide anonymity was discussed; summary attached.

**HOW TO ADDRESS THE COMMENTS / TIMETABLE FOR FINALIZING THE DRAFT REPORT – Chair Batie:**

Recommended that the ETS begin to finalize the Draft Report unless there is input from the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council (MSTAC). None of the comments received created a need to change the Draft Report; however, there were edits and corrections that need to be made.

**Chair Batie called for a motion to finalize the Draft Report. A motion to finalize the Draft Report was offered by Jan Herrick and supported by Sarah Nicholls. The motion passed unanimously.**

Thanks and appreciation was expressed by the ETS to all those who took the time to provide comment.

### **STAFF REPORTS** (by exception)

#### **PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY STATE FOREST (PRCSF) – Donna Stine:**

Provided an update on the activities concerning equine use at the PRCSF. The DNR has recommended an improved equine access plan to the ETS, and the ETS has supported this plan and included such support in the 2011 ETS Draft Recommendations Report. A Land Use Order of the Director (LUOD) was provided to the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to open three additional designated campsites in the PRCSF. The DNR will work with the US Fish and Wildlife Services to review this change and move forward. There is a goal to have a loop trail open for spring, the short-term worker contracts have been extended, improved signage is being looked at, and there will be a need for assistance in helping to post additional signage. Planning efforts for the renovations at the Elk Hill Equestrian State Forest Campground (Elk Hill) are underway. The next meeting, with respect to redesign of the campground, is scheduled for November 9, 2011. Chair Batie will attend; Dick Kleinhardt attended an earlier campground redesign meeting.

**Scott Whitcomb** added that surveys have been completed for Elk Hill and the Group Camp Area. He is also working on the Volunteer Agreement with Ada Takacs, Volunteer Program Coordinator for FMD. Abby Rubley, Promotional Agent for FMD, is working on a communications plan for the PRC. She is also working on improved equine communications intended to be shared on a regular basis. It will be proactive and include information/updates from DNR FMD, PRD and WLD that can be shared with the equine community via newsletters and other communication methods.

**Chair Batie** noted the need to compile a list of associations and groups to share the information with, and said she would take the lead in preparing such a list.

#### **LEAVE NO TRACE – Scott Whitcomb:**

Presented a PowerPoint on "Leave No Trace" (attached). This is a voluntary program. It is a code of good conduct that will help achieve compliance for Forest Certification and Federal Aid Programs.

#### **SLEEPY HOLLOW AND FORT CUSTER – Paul Curtis:**

##### **Sleepy Hollow**

Reported that 3.5 miles of new equine trail has been constructed at Sleepy Hollow. An Open House is planned for November 5, 2011. A ribbon cutting ceremony and pot luck will begin around noon. Overnight camping will also be permitted for this day only.

##### **Fort Custer**

The DNR has invested \$50,000 to date and approximately 750-800 hours in staff time for the improvements. New facilities at Fort Custer include a gravel staging area, vault toilet, well with hand pump, and temporary signage. November 14, 2011 is the official date for trail

separation. Any necessary adjustments will be made over the fall and winter before trails are recorded and mapped.

**TROLZ PROPERTY ACQUISITION (RIVER RAISIN RECREATION AREA) – Paul Curtis:**

Reported that a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant has been submitted for the acquisition of a larger block of land in south eastern Michigan. The application was submitted by PRD and supported by WD. The property has great waterfowl habitat. If the grant application is successful and the property acquired, it could have a waterfowl and equine focus. Chair Batie and others testified in support of the acquisition.

**Jim Radabaugh** stated that a draft capital outlay plan had been prepared and submitted for equine facilities including two modern campground facilities 50 sites each, one rustic campground with 25 sites, and 40 miles of developed trails. The requested amount was \$8,000,000 to the general fund.

**Chief Boyd** clarified that there are three equine funding initiatives, two MNRTF grant applications (one for development and one for acquisition) and the capital outlay request.

**STATEWIDE PLANNING – Paul Curtis:**

DNR representatives met with the National Park Service (NPS) in August to review and confirm the initial planning process. The next meeting scheduled for December 16, 2011 will include Chair Batie when the group will review the ETS 2011 Draft Recommendations. The NPS internship has been extended as has a seasonal park ranger position at the DNR to assist in this process. Mary Hanson, an equine expert from the NPS and “Leave No Trace” trainer will also participate in this effort. The invitation list will be expanded to include Jan Herrick and Sarah Nicholls.

**INVENTORY AND DATABASE DEVELOPMENT – Paul Curtis:**

The inventory is tied to the Statewide Plan. There is good inventory available in southern Michigan. Data is still being collect for facilities within a 30-mile radius of state facilities. Requests have been sent to DNR field representatives to assist in the collection. It is not expected to be completed for the December meeting. **Paul Curtis** indicated he was interested in the data Gabriele Hume has gathered. Once the data has been collected, it will be shared with the ETS for review and input. It was noted that there will be a need to maintain the inventory.

**MICHIGAN SNOWMOBILE AND TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL – Jim Radabaugh:**

The MSTAC met in October; there was a presentation on the “Up North Trails” initiative. This included a presentation on the US-23 Heritage Route. This initiative could serve as a model template for all Michigan trails. David Lorenz, Travel Michigan/MEDC was in attendance and was asked if they had any money available for this effort. He indicated there was no funding available and that they were the portal for providing information. Abby Rubley is working on a draft proposal of recommendations that will be presented to the MSTAC for review.

**PASSPORT REVENUES – Jim Radabaugh:**

There was 24.7 percent participation for fiscal 2011 for the Recreation Passport which brought in approximately 17.2 million dollars for State Parks Operations and Waterways. It also

yielded funds for local grants and forest recreation. The goal for fiscal 2012 is 30 percent participations which will generate approximately 21.3 million dollars.

### **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **GLADWIN FIELD TRIAL AREA:**

**Chair Batie** asked for an update on the status of equine use in Section 3 in the Gladwin Field Trial Area. Request will be forwarded to Earl Flegler in WD.

#### **BLUEBERRY RIDGE:**

The Public Notice for the hearing for Blueberry Ridge (attached) was shared. **Chief Boyd** stated that a community meeting was held on October 13, 2011 concerning this issue. There was good attendance with discussion on both sides of the issue. The NRC (has no decision making authority on this topic) will take comment. ETS members will be sent invitation/notice via certified mail. Blueberry Ridge was originally designed and developed for cross-country skiing.

#### **DRAFT 2011 RECOMMENDATION REPORT OF THE ETS:**

There was discussion on the need to provide general edits, additional language to help clarify points and revise some of the target dates referenced in the report. These modifications were agreed to as long as they met the spirit and intent of the report, and did not modify or change the content.

**Chief Boyd** indicated that there was no reference to working with forestry/timber industry groups. Specifically recommendations R-21 and R-22 should reflect this cooperation pointing out that every trail mile takes timber off the market.

**Chair Batie** will work with FMD to develop language and continue discussion to address this need. She suggested the benefits to a mediation process to resolve trail user conflicts rather than have groups always turning to the DNR. Chair Batie noted that various issues remain, such as whether the ETS want to include carriage driving in its future discussions and reports.

The next agenda will focus on funding discussions.

### **PUBLIC APPEARANCE**

**Gabrielle Hume** offered to provide a list of non-state equine facilities to Sarah Nicholls and will send a copy to Chair Batie.

### **NEXT MEETING**

TBD

Chair Batie thanked everyone for there efforts and participation. The meeting adjourned at 3:15 PM.