

**Minutes of the
Equine Trailways Subcommittee
October 23, 2012**

Approved November 28, 2012

The regular meeting of the Equine Trailways Subcommittee (ETS) was called to order by Chair Sandra Batie at 10:00 a.m. Tuesday, October 23, 2012, at the Doherty Hotel, 604 North McEwan, Clare, Michigan 48617. The following members were present:

*Sandra Batie, Chair
Jan Herrick
Joni Gleason*

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff was present: *Annamarie Bauer and Paul Curtis*, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD)

Public attendees included: *Bill Nelson*, Leave No Trace Instructor and Secretary for the Michigan State 4 H Trail Ride Committee; *Gale Moore and Carrie Barr*, Sleepy Hollow and Michigan Trail Riders Association (MTRA); *Chuck Fanslow*, MTRA President; and *Becke Grimm and Jay Grimm*, Great Lakes Distance Riders

WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Batie welcomed everyone and gave a brief review of the meeting protocol. A special welcome was extended to new ETS member Ms. Joni Gleason who gave a brief introduction of her background and experience.

AGENDA

Chair Batie added two items to the Agenda: Updates on the Trolz Property and Planning Efforts at Rockport State Park. Chair Batie then asked for approval of the Agenda. There were no other changes and the Agenda was unanimously approved.

MINUTES

The minutes of the July 11, 2012 ETS meeting were acknowledged. Chair Batie asked for approval of the minutes. A motion was offered by Ms. Jan Herrick and supported by Ms. Gleason to approve the minutes. **Motion to adopt the July 11, 2012 meeting minutes were unanimously carried.**

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Ms. Becke Grimm stated that she was impressed with the efforts and appreciated the work by the ETS. She felt that huge progress had been made.

Mr. Jay Grimm commented on the Lake County area at M-37 where there are state and federal lands and activity concerning the Little O Trail (off-road vehicle).

Mr. Gale Moore suggested that in the EQ plan referencing the use of carriages, the language should be changed to cart/carriage, and where it says riding trails, the language should be driving trails.

Mr. Bill Nelson asked if the person replacing Mr. Curtis would have passion for the equine program and if that person could start attending ETS meetings as well as Mr. Curtis. He commented that the Equine Chapter appears to be a good job. Many "friends groups" recognize a need for maintenance funding and various funding options including some type of bridle tag.

Mr. Chuck Fanslow, who had volunteered to get a "Friends Group" together for the Gladwin Field Trial Area, commented that section 2 and parts of section 3 for the Area offered approximately 12,000 to 13,000 acres of usable riding area for horses. There are various riding access points and they are working to establish a couple of dispersed campsites. He noted that there has been a dramatic turnaround regarding the consideration and accommodations to the equine community in the Gladwin Area. He noted that there are no marked trails at this time; a situation which could lead to potential conflicts.

Mr. Fanslow also provided an update on activities at the Pigeon River Country (PRC) State Forest, as he is a member to the PRC Equine Committee. The Central Reservation System is in place. They are evaluating looking at the potential of continued use of one of the remote campsites that is difficult (nearly impossible) to access. Fire rings and picnic tables have been updated at both the destination campground and group trail camp. They are looking at the possibility of adding more restroom facilities and water wells with consideration to solar power for the well. The PRC Equine Committee is looking at the potential for a land acquisition of about 40 acres for increased equine opportunities near the PRC State Forest. Potential areas being considered include an area near the south end of Aloha State Park, an area near M-68, Stony Creek Trail Camp, LaGrande Ranch, Loon Lake, and Clear Lake.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Equestrian Plan (Draft)

Chair Batie offered a brief overview of the process and legislative requirements as well as the history of equestrian planning. She referenced other current planning initiatives at the state level including the five year update of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and the release of the recommendations by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission. Mr. Curtis added details about the statewide equine collaborative planning process initiated by the DNR with assistance with the National Park Service (NPS). This process did not include ETS members.

Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council Comprehensive Statewide Plan (Draft)

Chair Batie asked the ETS to focus on content of the Equine Chapter (draft copy provided) for the MSTAC Statewide Plan and provide edits to her for consideration. The group proceeded to review the Equine Chapter section by section. She then asked Mr. Curtis for a status update on the inventory of equine facilities. Mr. Curtis indicated that the inventory was an ongoing work in progress and that the state is working on building coordinated data sets for a comprehensive system. The DNR will be a web portal of useful information that over time could become an interactive site to gather a more complete data. There was discussion about including nonstate

facilities that are available for equine use. Mr. Curtis emphasized that the initial focus was on state lands.

Action Item: It was agreed that there should be a discussion in the EQ plan regarding facilities that are open to equine use but not designed or improved for horses such as use of multi-use rail-trails.

Discussion continued with the Vision Statement which speaks to “ideals.” It was noted that there was no reference or discussion on dispersed camping. Mr. Curtis felt this could be accommodated in the campground section. A variety of methods were used to obtain information for the Gap Analysis including an overall survey, a survey of equestrians, and five focus group meetings held around the state including one in the upper peninsula and four in the lower peninsula.

The section by section review continued with review and discussion on the Overall Goals.

Action Item: It was agreed that item 14 should be added that addressed implementation/progress tracking.

Goal 3 focuses on tourism, an expertise of Ms. Sarah Nichols.

Action Item: Chair Batie offered to get input from Ms. Nichols on this item. It was acknowledged that there was an extensive list of goals and objectives. Mr. Curtis asked the group to prioritize their top three choices for each goal.

There was discussion on mediation.

Action Item: Ms. Herrick to write a clarification statement.

Use of the Communication with Association LISTSERV

Chair Batie would like to begin to use the LISTSERV for communications. Information that could be shared includes survey results, project updates, and ETS updates, etc. It is intended to be a one way form of communication not conversational. There was discussion on other means of communication including Facebook and posting on the ETS website.

Rails-to-Trails and Department of Transportation Funding

Discussion on why equine use was not considered a form of non-motorized transportation as it relates to grant funding eligibility.

Action Item: Bauer offered to get clarification from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

UPDATES

Pigeon River Country State Forest (PRCSF)

Update provided under public comment discussion by Mr. Fanslow.

Discussion of Campgrounds Near PRCSF

Update provided under public comment discussion by Mr. Fanslow.

Lakeland Trail Extension

The section from Munising to Stockbridge has been cleared and is open for trail use. There are continuing discussions on a possible reroute. Chair Batie asked to be involved to be certain there would be equestrian input on any reroute plans.

Gladwin Area

Update provided under public comment discussion by Mr. Fanslow.

Sleepy Hollow

The proposed Ridgeline Trail is under review by the park planner and stewardship group. A wet area is being evaluated as to the need of a potential DEQ permit.

Waterloo Trail Requests

The management planning process is nearly completed. There is an expansion of equine trail being considered. The public hearing has been completed. The plan requires Division Chief Approval.

Iron Ore Heritage Trail Update

There was discussion on the permitted uses on the multi-use trail from Harvey to Republic. Ms. Bauer offered to check with the Executive Director of the Recreation Authority for an update on trail use.

Blue Ribbon Parks Committee Report Update

The Committee had released their report. A copy of the Press Release with a link to the plan is attached.

Legislative Update

There were no legislative updates.

Survey Updates

MSTAC Survey

Results of the survey were provided.

Equine Focus Groups and Survey

Survey results will be tied to the report and will appear in the appendix of the report.

STAFF REPORTS (by exception)

Meeting adjourned.

The next ETS Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 28, 2012, at the Doherty Hotel, Clare. There was discussion about holding the meeting in the Lansing area; the DNR will research the possibility.