



# EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE

## Meeting Minutes

Location: MSU VDL Facility/Room115  
Lansing, Michigan  
August 10, 2022  
1:00 – 4:30 p.m.

### **Welcome – Roll Call**

#### EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS):

- Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Chairperson
- Jenny Cook
- Dug Jordan
- Kristie Walls
- Karen Bahrman (absent)
- ETS Tourism (vacant)

#### DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

- Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Peter Costa, Nick Van Bloem, Paige Perry, Ron Yesney, Michelle O'Kelly, Elissa Buck, Nicole Hunt, Greg Kinser, Dakota Hewlett, Earl Flegler, Linda Walter, Scott Slavin

OTHERS: Anna Lee, Karen Middendorp

### **Meeting minutes**

#### ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 1:08 p.m.

Motion made to approve May 18, 2022 draft meetings minutes by Jenny Cook and Dug Jordan second, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Jenny Cook asked to move agenda item "OAC Horse Meet and Greet – Belle Isle/Detroit", as Linda Walter, DNR, will be joining the meeting after 3 p.m.

Motion made to approve the August 10, 2022 agenda with change by Dug Jordan and Jenny Cook second, with all in favor. Motion carried.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Diane Traver from Equine Friends of Berrien County Trails submitted a public comment. Diane's comment is the desire to meet with DNR staff regarding the Andrews University property in Berrien Springs concerning horseback riding opportunities. Earl Flegler, DNR Wildlife, commented the State does not own the property referenced. Kristie Walls asked Earl what properties have been purchased in the past five years utilizing NRC Trust Fund money. Earl suggested to look at the NRC Trust Fund public web page, they have a list located within the page. The subcommittee asked for horse trail riding opportunities to be considered when large land purchases are acquired by the State.

## BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### **TIM NOVAK, STATE TRAILS COORDINATOR, INTRO**

Tim Novak introduced himself as the new State Trail Coordinator with the DNR Trails Section. Tim's background history in recreation is in various capacities, including a bachelor's degree in Outdoor Recreation and a masters in Parks and Recreation Administration. Tim worked with the University of Notre Dame in their athletics department and worked for Rochester Community school's as their District Athletic Director. Most recently, Tim comes from the City of New Baltimore, where he served as their Parks and Recreation Director.

## **ETS COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Dug Jordan, Northern Lower Peninsula**

Dug submitted a written report for his region. Doug pointed out that a homeless community is squatting along the lakefront at Lake Dubonet. Additionally, at Lake Dubonet, the lack of grass cutting is creating a tick issue with both riders and horses. Nick Van Bloem, DNR, passed Doug's regional report to park supervisors who manage these campgrounds, and has not received a response yet. Kristie Walls asked about DNR staff shortages and wondered if some of the money allocated for the staff roles can be applied to contractor services. Greg Kinser, DNR, suggested to have the local folks that are willing to volunteer reach out to the park supervisors. Greg did say there is a difference in commitment between mowing and maintaining for an event, as opposed to regular scheduled maintenance.

### **Karen Bahrman, Upper Peninsula**

Karen submitted a written report for her region. Karen extended a thank you to Rob Katona, DNR Trails Specialist, for his work on the additional loops within the Thunder Valley Trails. Karen asked the DNR to think about a press release for these improvements.

### **Jenny Cook, Southwestern Lower Peninsula**

Jenny Cook submitted a written report for her region. Jenny expressed the areas in Berrien County, specifically Andrews University, is ideal for horseback riding that borders Indiana, has a shoreline, and rolling terrains. Although, it sounds discouraging after hearing the information from DNR Wildlife at today's meeting.

Jenny asked where the funds came from for the improvements that happened at Bass River Recreation Area, since these were not asked for from the equestrian community. Nick Ban Bloem, DNR Trails Specialist, said the park received equestrian capital outlay funds.

For Custer Horse Friends Association is requesting to install a shed and Nick Van Bloem, DNR Trails Specialist, added the next step in this process is stewardship.

Scott Slavin, DNR Trails Specialist, commented that he is open to start discussions regarding horseback trail riding opportunities on the Hart Montague.

Jenny expressed concerns that the additional proposed Grand River Greenway trails will be too close to the equestrian trails. Jill Sell, DNR Trails Specialist, will be in contact with Jenny and/or her contacts for design discussions.

### **Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Southeastern Lower Peninsula**

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf submitted a written report for her region. Amy questioned the road crossing signage on the Lakeland trails asking if a sign existed to include horse crossing, currently the signs show bike and pedestrian icons. Nick Van Bloem was told by Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) that the trail crossing signs can only have 2 icons, and an additional sign can be added to show a horse with rider icon. These signs are not provided or managed by the DNR; one will need to work with entity that manages the roads.

### **Kristie Walls, Central Lower Peninsula**

Kristie Walls did not have much to report as she said not a whole lot is going on in her area. Two projects worth the mention are the proposed trail expansion at Ionia Recreation Area which has been soft approved, this area used to be a gravel mine. Externally, money has been set aside for this project and will not be a cost to the DNR. This expansion will get the park up to a 20-mile target and make it a more marketable destination.

Second, Yankee Springs Recreation Area is building a new day staging just past the park entrance. Water and electric are already there, and the hope is to see this completed by the end of Sept., which is the busy equestrian riding time of the year. This is a great location for the new staging area.

### **ETS CENTRAL REP AND MTAC REPS**

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf asked what the subcommittee can do to improve the process of filling member vacancies. Tim Novak, DNR State Trails Coordinator, said the Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC) equestrian seats are appointed by the Governor. Tim said he is in communications with the Governor's staff liaison and is fairly certain Jenny Cook will be reappointed to MTAC prior to the next meeting in Sept. When MTAC has a vacancy the DNR issues a public posting soliciting candidates which fill out an online form found on the Governor's boards web page.

Nick Van Bloem added it has been expressed to the Governor's liaison the importance of reappointing current council members that wish to stay on. Other MTAC vacancies may take some time in filling due to staff changes.

### **ETS REAPPOINTMENT PROCESS**

Nick Van Bloem asked Kristie Walls if she will be stepping down in the fall of this year? Kristie said she is under the impression terms are limited and believes she will not be supported by the Governor's office for another term. Nick said the DNR will post publicly open positions that are available, and reappointments do not need an application, just an intent to extend the term. Amy said the subcommittee would like to get rid of ETS tourism position and would like to see an At Large position rather than eliminating any representation. Nick pointed out with current legislation; the DNR cannot change a position to an At Large. Karen Bahrman expressed she felt an At Large will be a duplication of some regional efforts and would like to see the ETS tourism position go away.

The DNR will move forward with the reappointment process of Jenny Cook and Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf for the ETS subcommittee.

Jenny Cook mentioned the Michigan DNR Outdoor Recreation Advisory Council does not have equestrian representation and perhaps this is something to explore.

### **OMA LEGISLATION**

Nick Van Bloem has had internal discussions with DNR staff on working to remove the Open Meetings Act (OMA) requirement, however the feedback is this will not be addressed in an election year.

### **SILVER LAKE STATE PARK NOV. SHORELINE LAND USE ORDER**

Nicole Hunt, DNR, said the MOU was received last month between the Michigan Horse Council and the DNR outlining the agreement for manure clean-up. As a result, the Land Use Order of the Director (LUOD) has been submitted and will be included in the Sept. Natural Resource Committee (NRC) agenda for information purposes. If there are no issues from the NRC, it will move on for action in Oct. The reservation system should be ready to go Live in Sept. Communications will be released by the DNR marketing group with reservation information.

### **LIVE HORSE MEET AND GREET – TRAILS SUMMIT OCTOBER**

Jenny Cook offered a meet and greet for the Oct. trails summit in Roscommon at the RAM Center. Jenny said seeing a horse up close will help with all the user groups to break barriers and even DNR staff that have not had any opportunities to see live horses. Tim Novak remarked that at this time there will not be an in-person trails summit this Oct. and the DNR will be looking to host a trails summit possibly in the Spring of 2023. Jenny extended if there are any other times a demonstration can be provided to the DNR she is happy to set it up. Tim said there will be an opportunity just a matter of when.

## UPDATES

### **PRD SIGN WORKGROUP AND ETIQUETTE (Trail Plan 4.1.B)**

Nick Van Bloem reported that PRD is working with a consultant looking at signage holistically. Realizing trails is a much larger piece of the pie, the signage team within PRD has set aside trails to provide more of a focus on our needs. Fall is the timeline for the sign team to connect with trails needs.

Ron Yesney, DNR, is leading the trail etiquette objective for the trail plan. Ron will begin working on it sometime this fall, although he has completed some basic research. Ron does have background with the Ride Right campaign, and he will be beneficial moving this forward.

### **PRD HORSE TRAIL DESIGNATIONS**

Earlier this week, Nick Van Bloem sent a spreadsheet to the ETS subcommittee with list of the seven trails identified by Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf last November. Nick has internally discussed these trails one by one with other DNR Divisions looking at how much each trail system is a trail and what parts are either forest roads or county. Locally, the trail managers came up with final recommendation, noted on the spreadsheet.

Tin Cup there are some folks working on organizing a friends group. Once they are in place a trail proposal can start to be worked on. Scott Slavin, DNR, said some of the mapped trail will change according to the map provided by Nick. Same will be for Hopkins Creek.

Cedar River and Thunder Valley are yes to move forward.

Cedar River North trails south loop will maintain bike access for 3/4 mile of the trail (campground loop open to bikes) along with the entry road.

Nicole Hunt said upon agreement from this ETS subcommittee, the LUOD will be placed on the agenda for the NRC to review. Next step will be to send the LUOD (see attached) to the DNR Director for review and approval. It is possible to expect the finalized LUOD by Dec 2022.

Kristie Walls made a motion to the ETS subcommittee to approve the proposed LUOD with the verbiage as submitted as part of the minutes today for Cedar River North trails with exception of

the entry road and south loop campground and all the Thunder Valley trails to be equestrian use only, prohibiting bicycles or electric bikes.

### **ETS Subcommittee Vote**

Kristie Walls - in favor  
Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf - in favor  
Jenny Cook - in favor  
Dug Jordan - in favor  
Karen Bahrman - absent

The LUOD and maps will be modified accordingly as new trails are reviewed, approved, and added.

### **CHANGES TO RIGHT TO RIDE ACT**

Nicole Hunt, DNR, will be working on making some changes to the PRD policy to incorporate new language to require a review in identifying and reducing incompatible use on trails.

### **CAMP GRAYLING EXPANSION**

Dug Jordan is working with the DNR to lease land for this expansion. Dug has met with stakeholders to discuss issues, the takeaway is the assurance that no trails or roads will be closed during military trainings. Dug is skeptical because he has seen roads closed during these times, and this may affect planned rides/events. Dug is working with military staff to create education for rider and horse safety. There has been mixed feedback, seeing a lot of negative comments on social media.

Greg Kinser, DNR, mentioned the Forest Resource Division and the military are working together, and he is not in the loop with the conversations taking place.

### **OAC HORSE MEET AND GREET - BELLE ISLE, DETROIT**

Linda Walters, DNR at the Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) is working with Jenny Cook providing a horse meet and greet.

Linda is excited to help foster the love of horses. She is hoping to ignite some passion and expose etiquette. Linda has talked about a concept program with state parks and possible training for DNR staff. Linda has thoughts that there is an opportunity for an exhibit at the OAC to simulate a horse experience, with a video screen and motion. OAC has limited content for the trails section with opportunities to add a whole lot more.

### **TRAIL MASTER CERTIFICATION COURSE**

There will be a Trail Master Certification Course offered at the Pinckney Recreation Area on Sept 15 through the 18. Right now, 6-8 people have registered. Nick and Amy will connect with the organizer to finalize payment details.

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Aug. 10, 2022

**DNR Q3 2022 STAFF UPDATES**

Written reports given to committee members.

**2022 MEETING DATES**

Oct. 26 – Location MSU VDL Facility

**ROUND ROBIN/CLOSING COMMENTS**

Meeting adjourned 4:29 p.m.