



# EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE

## Meeting Minutes

Location: Constitution Hall

Lansing, Michigan

December 6, 2022

9:00 – 1:30 p.m.

## Welcome – Roll Call

### EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS):

- Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Chairperson
- Jenny Cook
- Dug Jordan
- Brandy Miller (new committee member)
- Karen Bahrman (virtual)
- ETS Tourism (vacant)

### DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

- Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Blake Gingrich, Paige Perry, Ron Yesney, Nicole Hunt, Greg Kinser, Earl Flegler, Scott Slavin, Jill Sell, Jody Johnston, Rob Katona, Kim Kennedy

OTHERS: Anna Lee, Marsha Korroch

## Meeting minutes

### ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 9:16 p.m.

Motion made to approve Aug. 18, minutes by Jenny Cook and seconded by Dug Jordan, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion made to approve the Dec. 6, agenda by Jenny Cook and seconded by Brandy Miller, with all in favor. Motion carried.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

## BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### **ETS COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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

See written report

#### **Brandy Miller, Central Lower Peninsula**

See written report

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

See written report

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

See written report

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

No report

### **RIGHT-TO-RIDE ACT**

Covered in Karen Bahrman's regional written report

### **ETS/MTAC APPOINTMENTS**

Tim Novak, DNR, reported staff is working on the ETS reappointments for both Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf and Dug Jordan. Tim mentioned that he is hopeful to see the ETS letters released soon. Tim added that there has not been any movement to report for Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC) appointments. The Governor's office has been focused on the recent elections, along with some internal staff changes, is delaying the appointment process.

### **TRAIL MASTER COURSE**

Greg Kinser, DNR, attended a recent trail master course held in Pinckney, Michigan. Overall, the course was a great experience and opportunity to work together with trail partners. Greg mentioned he would like to see continued support from the DNR Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) and believes this is the standpoint for both staff and volunteers. Some discussions should take place to talk about tailoring the course for more specific needs. There was a lot of talk within

the course about sustainable design that will mitigate impact from all trail users. Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf concurred with Greg's findings and added she felt everyone learned a lot. Scott Slavin, DNR, added he thought the class was a bit too militaristic to follow, and suggested a change in the structure.

## UPDATES

### **PRD EQUINE TRAIL DESIGNATION**

Nicole Hunt, DNR, provided an update for the Land Use Order of the Director (LUOD) for the equine trail designation. The draft LUOD was in review with PRD Section Chiefs and has been approved. Next step is to run the LUOD through MTAC at the next meeting in 2023 for their review before submitting to the Natural Resource Commission meeting.

### **State Forest Trail Plan**

Nicole Hunt stated the PRD trail designation plan is still working through the internal process in a draft phase and has not gone through PRD Section Chiefs for review and approval yet.

## **PROJECT UPDATES**

### **Goose Creek**

Greg Kinser, DNR, said he has a meeting tomorrow with principals and the final pieces are falling in place.

### **Cheboygan Camp**

Greg Kinser, DNR, confirmed the state does own the 5-acre parcel and is in discussions over the remaining 11 acres.

### **Inspiration Point**

Paige Perry, DNR, reported as of this November, the Office of Lands Director (DNR) reviewed Pigeon River Equestrian Committees proposals and is not in line to pursue any of them with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, except for connector 5 single track to remove the trail off the road. All other proposals are denied. Paige Perry has requested justification for the denial and feels it is in balance with Pigeon River County current land structures. This decision cannot be appealed.

## **SIGNAGE**

Maia Turek, DNR, provided a written update for signage, below.

Staff continues to work on the signage initiative. We did have a trails input session early in the process but would like to do one again to get the specific signs used on trails for all recreation types so they can be added to the manual. The goal is to have a completed manual by the end of March, but we will need input or at least a list of signs you use/order included. It seems working with staff makes the most sense as you have both the knowledge of what's used and what has been requested.

### **SHORELINE RIDE NOVEMBER/SILVER LAKE STATE PARK**

Jody Johnston, DNR, discussed the recent fall ride at Silver Lake State Park. The ride is now officially a seasonal ride with a LUOD in place. Jody reported that approximately 2000 riders/people attended this year. Initial thoughts were to keep the rider count to 100 per day in order to offer a quality experience. The weather was a bit challenging for this ride due to the time of year. Local businesses appreciated the flow of customers. The reservation system needs some tweaks for next season. This ride will continue to rely on volunteer assistance. Manure control can see improvements as well.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf mentioned people communicated through social media to transfer cancellation spots, which was one of the issues encountered with the reservation system abilities to provide refunds. Jenny Cook pointed out there may be more room for >100 riders each day, accounting there are usually 50 rigs for every 100 horses.

### **DNR HORSE MEET AND GREET**

Jenny Cook is advocating for a DNR horse meet and greet. Jenny offered the following dates as consideration: Michigan Trail Riders Association (MTRA) rides (May 2-June, Aug family, Sept, Oct color) Ranch Rudolf has rentals (15-20) also wagon rides. Brighton Rec Area and Waterloo Rec Area have rentals.

### **OAC HORSE GREET AND MEET/DISPLAY**

Jenny Cook reported the recent Oct. horse greet and meet at the Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) at Belle Isle was well received by the community. The Buffalo Soldiers Detroit were present. Jenny is hoping to be able to provide this event again. Jenny added the OAC is discussing adding an interactive therapeutic horse display possibly coming in Sept. 2023, depending on approvals and funding falling into place.

### **TRAILS SPECIALIST REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **Thunder Valley Expansion**

Rob Katona, DNR, highlighted the expansion at Thunder Valley. Rob said the 3 added loops are finished and they are working on adding new posts and signage. Positive feedback has been received. Rob is hoping the trails will be a sustainable, avoiding wash outs. This trail is on the list for an LUOD to prohibit bicycles. A stack loop system was added off the existing loops, each loop is about 1.5 miles. Southern loop lays a rich top down to a valley. The second loop offers a hardwood cover which creates a lot of color foliage in the fall. The third loop provides a lot of shade. Thunder Valley connects to the fairgrounds.

#### **SLP Trails Specialist**

Tim Novak, DNR, reported he has an offer extended out to a candidate to fill the southeast Lower Peninsula Trails Specialist role. Tim said if all goes as expected, someone will be in place by the end of the year.

**NLP Trails Specialist – Blake Gingrich**

Blake Gingrich, DNR, introduced himself as the new northeast Lower Peninsula Trails Specialist. Blake started with the Trails Section at the end of October and has been with the DNR since 1995 working in various roles.

**2022 MEETING DATES**

Coming soon

**ROUND ROBIN/CLOSING COMMENTS**

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf requested a nomination and vote be taken for a vice chair. Jenny Cook offered to fill the role.

Motion is made to appoint Jenny Cook as ETS Vice Chair by Brandy Miller and seconded by Dug Jordan, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Greg Kinser mentioned the Goose Creek stairs are slated for completion in Spring 2023. Blake Gingrich will be working on this project. The new design to reduce step incline will help with sustainability.

Karen Bahrman said with the proposed upcoming equestrian revised senate bills, now is the time to add in a language change to the ETS tourism rep position. Karen thought the extra rep on ETS should be an At Large position. The revised senate bills currently read to eliminate the Open Meeting Acts reference (OMA) and ETS tourism. Overall, the ETS members present at this meeting agree to change the language to At Large.

Dug Jordan stated the Horse Expo will be in March 2023.

Meeting is adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

## SW ETS Report December 6, 2022

We had a productive **Bass River Recreation Area** workshop with the DNR and biking community. We all agree it's best to keep biking trails separate from hiking/horseback riding/hunting trails. The biking and equestrian communities work very well together in partnership with DNR management teams at this location.

The **Equine Friends of Berrien County Trails** volunteer group promoted awareness of the Friends of Berrien County Trails Master Plan at the Berrien County Youth Fair. They featured the Equine Land Conservation Research National Trails Safe Passing Plan: Stop, Speak, and Stand Back and a survey which indicated 386 people said they would support trails with people with horses especially with the Trails Safe Passing Plan: Stop, Speak, and Stand Back.

\*\* Please consider people with horses when planning public trails in Michigan. Horses are our first autonomous forms of transportation as they will take care of both them and their riders. They provide natural therapy and mobility. Thank you.

\*\* Please include people with horses in Department of Transportation planning. Thank you.

\*\* Please be sure to include Equestrian Camping at Fort Custer in the Michigan State Parks Guide. Thank you.

**Ft Custer** Horse Friends Association had a beautiful Fall Campout in September at the Special Events Area. They are happy the building permit and WIP for the FCHFA storage shed has been received.

As of October 14, 2022, the **Fort Custer Horse Friends Association has volunteered and donated over \$59,123.13 this year for the benefit of the State of Michigan, bird watchers, hikers, hunters, people with dogs, and people with horses.**



Ft Custer Special Events Campground



We are very thankful for the positive support for the November **Silver Lake State Park** Equestrian Shoreline Riding. **Over 2000 reservations, allowing 100 horses per day, were sold.** Many days within the first two weeks, and weekends are sold out, indicating the robust interest in these opportunities.

Riders have traveled from Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, west Virginia, and Wisconsin.

For notifications of opportunities, please text TROT to 80888 and refer to the DNR shoreline riding link <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/things-to-do/horseback-riding/shoreline-riding>



pc: Pure Michigan Silver Lake State Park, Mears, MI

The **DNR Outdoor Adventure Center** invited the **Detroit Horse Power** - an organization helping inner city youth learn life skills with the partnership of horses <https://www.detroithorsepower.org/>, and **Buffalo Soldiers Detroit** - an organization honoring our African American mounted soldiers who helped develop some of our first National Parks <http://buffalosoldiersdetroit.org/history.html> and **ETS members**, to their October 1, 2022, Community Open House to provide horse meet and greet opportunities. We had a wonderful day educating the public about the many benefits horses are for people including cultural, positive economic impact, education, employment, empowerment, fitness, historical, emotional, mental, physical, and substance abuse therapy partners, tourism, mobility, and transportation. We experienced smiles all day by the public, DNR staff, and our exhibitors.

**Our DNR Parks and Recreation Chief, Ron Olson, also had an enjoyable up-close encounter with the horses.**



Michigan Equestrian Trails Representative Jenny Cook, Buffalo Soldiers of Detroit Leroy Rees, and DNR Parks and Recreation Chief Ron Olson



The public was eager to meet horses at the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center.

We hope we can plan MTAC and DNR Management Teams horse meet and greet opportunities soon so everyone can experience the benefits of horses for people, we can extinguish fears of horses, and people with horses can be welcomed on more Michigan public lands. Please consider this Trails Safe Passing Plan to promote knowledge, inclusion, safety, confidence, and comfort for all trail users.



**Please Remember  
The Trails Safe Passing Plan**



**TRAILS SAFE PASSING PLAN: STOP, SPEAK, and STAND BACK**

**STOP:**  
Horses are prey animals and naturally can be afraid of unfamiliar people and objects. Horses have natural "flight" survival instincts and prefer to move their feet towards an exit route. Therefore, people with horses should pass at a walk while other trail users remain STOPPED until passed.

**SPEAK:**  
Please ANNOUNCE your presence.  
Please SAY "Hi" when we pass by.  
Speaking helps horses identify you as a person and will help keep them calm.

**STAND BACK:**  
Please STAND BACK with your whole group on the same side of the trail.  
Please contain children and dogs.  
Please do not hide or stand behind a tree, as these actions may cause horses to fear you are a predator planning an attack.

**SMILE:**  
Enjoy the safe and happy trails!  
Please contact Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council for use of the Trails Safe Passing Plan: STOP!  
SPEAK, and STAND BACK sign at: [RFVHC.Colorado@gmail.com](mailto:RFVHC.Colorado@gmail.com)

Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Cook

Michigan Equestrian Trails Representative

SW Michigan ETS Representative

[mi.trail.rep@gmail.com](mailto:mi.trail.rep@gmail.com)



## **ETS Central Report 12/6/22 - Brandy Miller**

I am very honored and proud for the opportunity to represent the folks who manage the trails of Sleepy Hollow, Yankee Springs, Ionia and Waterloo. I have been spending my weekends and summers at these parks for the past 5 years. I have been able to enjoy their improvements first hand with my group of riders and campers. I also see the conflicts mentioned in the report first hand, however I wasn't privy to what goes on behind the scenes, until now anyway. :)

The trail group presidents have welcomed me and provided a tremendous amount of information and history, although every time I learn something new, I end up with 5 more questions.

I understand the struggle to find balance between use and enjoyment of the trails of Michigan and preservation of them. I hope what I bring to the table can serve both.

### **Waterloo Horsemen's Association - Per Chad Simpson WHA President**

- 2022 Women of Waterloo Girls weekend
- 75 riders for the Portage Lake Parlor ride - Oct 1 (raising money for future trail maintenance)
- Turkey Trot ride - Nov 4-6 - Sold the campground out
- New footing at the creek crossing
- Fresh stain on the split rail fence near the lunch area
- New Swing added to the creek crossing/lunch area dedicated to Wayne Mears (WHA's first president)
- Hi-line polls added to site #2 at the State park area
- Some clearing within sight distances at several road crossings
- \$4,000 of material out of the WHA fund was added to the kids/camp loop to repair a consistently wet area.
- Repairs made to the switch back on the Blue Trail
- Completion of the new pavilion at the Maute Road staging area, joint effort between WHA and DNR.

### **Future Plans:**

- Pursue a new campground at Maute road former prison area... why?
  - Power/electricity already at the road
  - Located at the center of the trail system
  - Waterloo has the trail mileage to bring people from greater distances, but need to stay over with longer drives.
  - They will be looking for approval and funding in the near future for this project
- Red Trail switchbacks erosion and fence repair. (400 tons of material has already been acquired)
- WHS is willing to help DNR repair new road to South Fork Cabin, so each facility has its own access

### **Waterloo Hunt Club**

- Made contact with them, they have an April show coming up, but no date set as of yet.

### **Sleepy Hollow Trail Riders**

- 2 corrals have recently been completed at the cabin area
- Material was added to a recurring wet spot on East Trail
- Replaced rotted sections of bridge decking (to the island)

- Had their Explore the Hollow event the last weekend in October, where the riders get to ride on some of the bike trails Friday afternoon and Saturday.

#### **Looking Ahead**

- E-bikes seem to be a concern on the horizon for Sleepy Hollow, due to the paved road through the park.

#### **Yankee Springs Trail Rider Assoc.**

- 9 mile trail is closed until first of the year, 4 & 6 mile trails remain open
- They are considering a New Year's Day ride
- Currently discussing best location for hitching rails at the new day staging area
- New well is complete
- New signage will be required for the new day parking area
- Looking into cost of treated 2x6 lumber to cover the rails on the pavilion

#### **Ionia Horse Trails Assoc.**

- Ionia has trail expansion in mind, but it is through a former gravel pit (not natural anymore) and should get through stewardship ok - if we can just get them to come out and see the planned area.
- I imagine Ionia will be again looking to add electric hook ups in the horse camp area, as they were close to this in the past.











**Luzerne Boardwalk:** While riding the boardwalk, a horse and rider broke through the decking, no serious injuries occurred (thankfully). The MTRA walked the length of the structure for inspection and found several deck boards showing signs of decay. The forest service was contacted and a request for funding was initiated to repair the deck. An alternate trail was used for the September and October rides.

**Tin Cup Campground:** I attended an informal community meeting regarding the campground, in September. Maps and information were provided and gave concerned citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions. I was able to make contact with the friends groups from both Tin Cup and Hopkins Creek, and discuss the camps and issues. I also made contact with the Lake County ORV Officer and discuss the issue of horses and ORV's/bikes. He was not aware of how horses and bikes interact when making contact, and was very receptive to our concerns.

**Pigeon River Community Equestrian Committee:** The PRCEC is holding their next meeting at the Roscommon DNR office on October 25<sup>th</sup>, which I am planning on attending. I will pass on any current ETS information as well as their concerns and information.

Dug Jordan  
NLP Representative

## **SB 1191**

The proposed amendments to the so-called Right to Ride act have now been introduced by Senator Runestad and are headed to a hearing before the Natural Resources Committee. The draft introduced (the 5<sup>th</sup>) was the work product of one of the Senator's aides, the drafter from the Legislative Service Bureau, myself and a Matt Penniman of the League of Michigan Bicyclists. Matt was looking for a simpler and more objective way of defining equestrian trails, so the 5<sup>th</sup> draft uses current signage as opposed to factors such as trail design. So, if a trail is currently signed for equestrian, or equestrian/hiking, but NOT biking, then biking will actually be prohibited. This essentially makes the trail signage mean what it has always implied, and has the added benefit of requiring very little in the way of new signage (just the addition of signs prohibiting biking). The bill has no effect on trails that are currently signed for biking, or biking/hiking, no effect on trails that are multi-use, meaning currently signed for all 3 non-winter uses (equestrian, hiking and biking), and no effect on trails that are unsigned. The only thing that triggers the prohibition on biking is the presence of equestrian/hiking signage coupled with the absence of biking signage, but the biking community is still unfortunately and aggressively pushing the false narrative that the bill will ban them from any/every trail on which equestrians are allowed. Also unfortunate is the fact that the 5<sup>th</sup> draft was introduced with an undetected drafting glitch, most likely a pagination error, that omitted some critical language from the relatively non-controversial camping provision, but this will be rectified when the bill goes to committee.

## **Trailmaster Course**

I thought the first 3 days, devoted to trail design, construction and maintenance, respectively, were amazing. The 4<sup>th</sup> day, devoted to crew leadership, was more applicable to the agency employees who took the course. As I noted in my course evaluation, when I go out to work on trails I'm with my peers if anyone, meaning people who bring a variety of skills and knowledge to the table, and I know that as soon as anyone realized that all I was going to do was walk around with a clipboard assigning tasks, pointing out safety issues, dispensing positive reinforcement and not lifting a finger myself, I would find myself alone in the woods in very short order.

The emphasis on relatively trivial safety issues was also frustrating in view of our ongoing quest for separate equestrian and bike trails, because while tripping over a mislaid Pulaski may yield a bruise or even a twisted ankle, being thrown from a horse spooked by bikers is likely to yield vastly more serious injuries yet this huge safety issue is largely ignored because maintaining the fantasy of multi-use requires land managers to tune out evidence that one user group is being crushed by another.

## **Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail improvements**

This trail, including the two new and hilly loops, were used during an endurance ride staged at a nearby fairgrounds in September. I rode the 50-miler and while on this trail system noticed that there is actually a third new loop that I checked out later – it too is about 1.5 miles in length and while it is flat and like the others not yet marked, the addition of these three loops nearly doubles the mileage and again elevates this trail to the status of one worth riding.

## **Stanley Lake proposal**

There has still been no progress on this proposal, which I submitted shortly before Paul Gaberdiel retired last fall. It calls for the establishment of an equestrian trailhead at the closed Stanley Lake campground, where dispersed camping would not be prohibited, as well as the marking of two approximately 12-mile loops that go out in each direction on the existing Fox River Pathway, which runs north/south through the campground, and return on existing 2-tracks in the Kingston Plains; if successful a proposal to establish an equestrian campground there and connect it to the Headquarters Lake campground would follow. In July I was told that a portion of the proposed trail crosses Hancock property, and that I would need to obtain their permission (which I'd be happy to do and am somewhat familiar with the process from having to do so in connection with Forest Service projects), but I have not been able to get anyone to provide me with contact information (which is pretty critical for a timber company as large as Hancock).

Karen Bahrman, UP ETS rep  
October 2022