



EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Location: DNR Customer Service Center
4166 Legacy Parkway
Lansing, Michigan 48911
February 15, 2023
1:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Welcome – Roll Call

EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS):

- Amy Scharmen-Burgdorf, Chairperson
- Jenny Cook, Vice Chairperson
- Dug Jordan (virtual)
- Brandy Miller
- Karen Bahrman (virtual)
- ETS Tourism (vacant)

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

- Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Sage Hegdal, Blake Gingrich, Paige Perry, Ron Yesney, Nicole Hunt, Greg Kinser, Scott Slavin, Jill Sell, Rob Katona, Peter Costa

OTHERS: Mary and Richard Bakale, Marsha Korroch, Kim Engle, Darlene Alexander, Ernie Birchmeier, Kristen Clemens, Anna Lee

Meeting minutes

ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 1:03 p.m.

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

Motion made to approve the Feb. 15, agenda by Dug Jordan and seconded by Jenny Cook, with all in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Bakale from Muskegon County Trail Riders Association shared pamphlets with the committee members for equine trails located in Muskegon and mentioned an equine obstacle course is under development in the area.

Ernie Birchmeier announced Michigan Farm Bureau Insurance Company has an equine advisory committee made up of equine owners. Michigan Farm Bureau Insurance has been actively involved in the equine industry, supporting their members for many years. The committee meets 1-2 times a year to bring forth any issues and make policy recommendations, which go to the board of directors.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

SELP TRAIL SPECIALIST

Sage Hegdal is the new DNR Parks and Recreation southeastern Lower Peninsula Trails Specialist, backfilling Nick Van Bloem.

ETS COMMITTEE REPORTS

Jenny Cook, Southwestern Lower Peninsula

See attached written report.

Karen Bahrman, Upper Peninsula

See attached written report.

Brandy Miller, Central Lower Peninsula

See attached written report.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Southeastern Lower Peninsula

See attached written report.

Dug Jordan, Northern Lower Peninsula

Dug Jordan shared for awareness that four counties (Otsego, Crawford, Kalkaska, and Roscommon) are now opposed to the Camp Grayling expansion, it appears that opposition is growing daily. Public comment has already closed for this proposal.

Kirsten Clemens from Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and an avid trail rider introduced herself and let the committee members know her role with EGLE involves recycling rubber tires. Kirsten mentioned recycled rubber materials may aid with trail washouts or other trail issues. Kirsten said there are grants available and suggested the committee reach out to her for more information.

MUSKEGON COUNTY TRAIL RIDERS ASSOCIATION (MCTRA) SIGNAGE/SNOWMOBILE POSTS

Muskegon County Trail Riders Association placed laminated directional signage for horse trails on snowmobile posts. The association received a letter from the local snow club grant sponsor in the area requesting the signage be taken down. DNR confirmed that signs should not be posted on regulatory posts without approvals. Jill Sell, DNR, mentioned some of the snow clubs take signs down when not in season and if this is the case here, the horse association may be able to work out a plan.

BIG OAKS/AVERY LAKE ALPOA PERMITS

Kim Engel, a resident of Avery Lake, shared concerns regarding cutting off equine access on the east side of Avery Lake. Kim reported that rocks are being placed along the road, preventing access to the old boat launch on Avery Lake and she found out from the Avery Lake Property Owners Association (ALPOA) that access will be cut off for horses due to an eroding shoreline. Kim is of the understanding that ALPOA has applied for land use applications with the DNR to install a riprap system, to prevent further shoreline damage and erosion. Kim is asking if the DNR can approach this in a public way. Greg Kinser, DNR, will need a better understanding of the situation before he can respond.

OPEN MEETINGS ACT (OMA) ABSENCES/DNR MEMO

Tim Novak, DNR, approved for the Equine Trails Subcommittee, that a committee member who joins remotely for reasons other than medical or military, can be acknowledged as present virtually, but will not have the right to vote.

MICHIGAN TRAIL RIDERS ASSOCIATION (MTRA) CAMP MAINTENANCE

Dug Jordan talked about volunteers cutting grass cutting at the MTRA campsites. Dug mentioned due to the high tick population in the area, it is important to keep the area maintained. Dug would like to discuss with the DNR the specifics of costs for fuel, maintenance of vault toilets, and equipment repair.

Dug Jordan asked if the oak wilt restrictions will be in effect this year (April 15 – July 15)? Greg Kinser, DNR, said oak wilt restrictions are here to stay. These restrictions will change the way how our maintenance is scheduled.

Scott Slavin, DNR, mentioned the Shore-to-Shore ride permits and dates are being reviewed with staff and Scott will send a reminder to the DNR unit managers about safety concerns that should be addressed prior to the ride dates.

Blake Gingrich, DNR, said the Goose Creek steps are slated for March/April completion, as long as all permits are in place.

Dug Jordan mentioned the Luzerne Boardwalk most likely will not be completed before the June ride. There will be an alternate trail in place for the June ride.

UPDATES

EQUINE TRAIL DESIGNATION

State Forest Trail Separation Plan

Nicole Hunt, DNR, reported the land use order draft is being review internally by other division staff. Nicole will report back on this at the May ETS meeting.

Equine Trail Designation in State Parks and Recreation Areas

Nicole Hunt, DNR, this continues to move forward, staff is currently working with the maps for internal approvals. Nicole will include a review of the maps at the May ETS meeting.

State Forest Campgrounds LUOD

Nicole Hunt, DNR, pointed out the state forest campgrounds are co-managed between Parks and Recreation (PRD), Forest Resource Division (FRD), and Wildlife Division (WLD). The approval to make any land use changes is not solely within PRD's discretion. In the past, this is something that has not been supported. Nicole said the question can be asked again but is uncertain how successful it will be. Nicole mentioned there has been internal discussions of putting some of the state forest campgrounds on the reservation system to help alleviate some of the camp availability issues and conflicts.

CAPITAL OUTLAY 2022/2023

Scott Pratt, DNR, to provide a written update.

ETS/MTAC APPOINTMENTS

Tim Novak, DNR, said recent changes within the DNR are prolonging any decisions.

SIGNAGE

Maia Turek, DNR, is working with trails section staff on signage. Jenny Cook would like to see the trails safe passing plan incorporated into the nonmotorized signage guide. Maia will have a presentation to share with ETS at the May meeting.

TRAIL MASTER COURSE 2024

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf relayed information received from Greg Kinser. The DNR is looking to schedule another trail master course in spring 2024. Greg will be inquiring to see if the course can be tailored to provide information that will work best for Michigan's trails needs and sustainability.

RIGHT-TO-RIDE EQ/BIKE MEETING

ETS is asking if there will be a meeting planned with bikers and equestrians, mediated by Michigan State University (MSU). Tim Novak, DNR, will talk to Ron Olson, PRD Chief.

DNR HORSE GREET AND MEET/DISPLAY

Jenny Cook can coordinate a horse meet and greet with DNR staff. Suggestion was made to arrange this at the May ETS meeting. Dug Jordan offered to hold a horse meet and greet in northern Michigan for DNR staff and mentioned the MTRA June or Sept. ride can be considered.

OAC HORSE DISPLAY

No update

TRAILS SPECIALIST REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Pigeon River County Equestrian Committee proposal update (written)

Cedar River - Rob Katona, DNR

Rob shared a presentation regarding Cedar River trail updates, improving wet areas and installing culverts.

Tin Cup - Scott Slavin, DNR

Scott provided a presentation on Tin Cup Springs horse trails and campground.

Hopkins Creek is slated for some improvements.

2023 MEETING DATES

May 17 - Brighton area (meet and greet)

Aug 23 - Ralph A. MacMullan Center

Nov 8 - Lansing

ROUND ROBIN/CLOSING COMMENTS

Meeting adjourned at 4:13 p.m.