



# EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE

## Meeting Minutes

Delta Township Hall

Lansing, Michigan

March 13, 2024

1:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

## **Welcome – Roll Call**

### EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS):

- Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Chairperson
- Jenny Cook, Vice Chairperson
- Dug Jordan (virtual)
- Brandy Miller
- Anna Lee
- Sam Norman (virtual)

### DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

- Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Sage Hegdal, Paige Perry, Scott Pratt, Lee Maynard, Blake Gingrich, Ron Yesney, Nicole Hunt, Greg Kinser, Rob Katona, Peter Costa, Heather Durocher, Doug Rich, Jill Sell

## **Meeting minutes**

### ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 10:01 a.m.

Motion made to approve Nov. 6, 2023 minutes by Jenny Cook and seconded by Brandy Miller, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion made to take the agenda items out of order by Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf and seconded by Jenny Cook, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf requested to add the topic; Ebike Land Use Order (LUOD) to the agenda.

Motion made to approve the March 13, agenda by Brandy Miller and seconded by Dug Jordan, with all in favor. Motion carried.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Jill Koester

Ms. Koester is speaking on the need for more equestrian trails in the Grand Traverse region, stating there is a substantial horse community in the area. She has seen a huge increase in trail usage. Ms. Koester mentioned she has experienced issues with ORV's and bikers on the trails. Additionally, while camping at horse designated campgrounds equestrians are confronted with others using the horse watering holes, causing chaos making it unsafe. She would like to see more signage at the watering holes and on the trails.

Teresa Stevens *(copied from public comment card)*

I'm very much interested in additional designated horse trails in the Williamsburg area. It would also be wonderful to have some horse designated trails in Kalkaska County, such a beautiful area with many two track roads! With the influx of ORV's, kayakers, and bicycles in the areas, it has become increasingly dangerous for horseback riders to safely enjoy trails and even the designated horse campsites are now used by non-horse campers. Having more designated horse only trail options would offer a safer, more enjoyable outdoor experience for horse riders. Sadly, I have been using and looking for more privately owned camps and horse trails to use. I pay to ride safe, it's a limited choice, but a safe option. I much prefer the areas near me, as I love where I live. Kalkaska County and Grand Traverse County truly need more strictly horse trails! Thank you!

Holly Rudolph *(copied from public comment card)*

I'm in support of designated horse trails in the Williamsburg area. We ride this area often and have noticed an increase in ORV and motorbike traffic. We make an effort to stay off the specified ORV trails and would like to have an area where we feel safe riding. The ORV/motorbikes tear up the trails and spook the horses. Even if there were signs posted notifying the bikers that horses potentially are present and educating them as to right of way and how to drive by or interact with horseback riders. This would be extremely helpful.

Joy Dean

Ms. Dean would like to know the DNR process for a trail proposal. Greg Kinser, DNR and Scott Pratt, DNR advised Ms. Dean to begin with your local DNR contact to start a discussion. Ms. Dean is concerned with the amount of ORV traffic in the area she rides horses (Williamsburg, MI).

Paul Erickson

Mr. Erickson mentioned he enjoyed the shoreline ride at Silver Lake State Park last fall. Overall, this was a great experience and the Silver Lake community has benefited from this opportunity. Mr. Erickson also stated his desire for the Hart to Montague trail open up for equestrians. Mr. Erickson has ideas on how to accomplish this and would like help to develop this.

## BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### STATE FOREST ROADS/PATHWAYS

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf

Amy continues to receive communications from trail riders regarding the need for more designated horse only trails pointing out the concern over ORV and bike traffic sharing these trails. There has also been concerns expressed over erosion. Jenny Cook added the riders are worried about safety. Amy added signage will be helpful in some of these instances.

Sam Norman from the Upper Peninsula (U.P.), commented that with the inability to identify people or ORV machines, something needs to be in place to enforce rule breakers.

Greg Kinser and Scott Pratt both reinforced to report any incidents to local law enforcement which will establish a pattern and timelines.

Dug Jordan spoke with Lake County ORV Law Enforcement Division (LED) where they mentioned incorporating ORV/equine etiquette into their ORV safety and education program.

Jenny Cook said adding the ride right message when obtaining an ORV permit/license will create awareness. Ron Yesney, DNR, said he will bring this idea to the Ride Right Committee. Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf asked if there is still a plan to add nonmotorized users to the Ride Right committee. Ron Yesney replied that discussions are taking place internally and he will follow-up when more information is available.

### EQUESTRIAN TRAIL DESIGNATION – IDENTIFY CRITERIA

Nicole Hunt, DNR

Nicole Hunt pointed out the language from the Natural Resources and Protection Act either allowing or restricting equestrian riding on state forest lands, and in conjunction with equestrian trail designation, that it will be beneficial to have deeper discussions to gain a better understanding on the interpretation of this language, ultimately coming to a common ground in agreeance for the outcome. Nicole would like to set up a small group to move forward with this process. Nicole and Amy will connect to determine the group members.

### ETS REGIONAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Dug Jordan** – see attached report.

**Brandy Miller** - see attached report.

**Jenny Cook** – see attached report.

**Sam Norman** – see attached report.

**Anna Lee** – see attached report.

**Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf** - see attached report.

**VOLUNTEER HOURS** (refer to Brandy Millers report)

**EBIKE LAND USE ORDER OF THE DIRECTOR (LUOD)**

Nicole Hunt, DNR

Nicole presented and reviewed the proposed draft LUOD Ebike proposal. An Ebike Subcommittee has been established and has been exploring the impact ebikes will have on nonmotorized natural surface trails. Studies indicated there has not been significant damage on the trails as opposed to traditional mountain bikes. The subcommittee is evaluating expanding class I ebike use on nonmotorized natural surface trails. Class II ebike permission will be reserved for mobility impairment, with a use permit issued from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for each circumstance. The DNR and Ebike Subcommittee will be summarizing a survey that was is currently being circulated to the public. The intention is after one year to come back together and evaluate Ebike LUOD outcomes. The Ebike LUOD will be presented at the April 2024 Natural Resource Council (NRC) meeting.

Jenny Cook asked if the impact on other trail users has been considered? Particularly equestrians as vulnerable trail users? Jenny mentioned that ebikes will be traveling even faster and quieter than bicycles causing potentially more risk of injuries for people with horses. Plus, this will be another user group that is uneducated about trail etiquette and equestrians as vulnerable trail users. Jenny added that it was voiced by multiple ETS members that equestrians are retreating and are being bullied off the trails due to safety concerns of bicycles and now fears of e-bike users. With lack of knowledge about equestrians as vulnerable trail users, and lack of trail monitoring, this will compound our trail safety problems, worries, recreation, and therapy.

**UPDATES**

**ETS TRAIL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN PROGRESS/GOALS**

Sage Hegdal, DNR

Sage has been working with the ETS developing a spreadsheet (attached) outlining goals for equestrians and cross aligning each task with the Trails Strategic Plan.

**Motion**

Jenny Cook made a motion to accept the sheet as presented with some modifications after further discussions and seconded by Anna Lee, with all in favor. Motion carried.

**GOOSE CREEK PHASE II**

Blake Gingrich, DNR

Blake reported that the Goose Creek Phase II Project has been completed. Blake shared a picture of the newly constructed steps (*pic attached*).

### **TRAIL ETIQUETTE SIGNAGE/RIDE RIGHT**

Tim Novak, DNR

Tim said the sign shop Inclusive Coordinator reviewed the trail etiquette sign and identified issues with colors, referencing colors cannot distinguish with people that are color blind. Changes were made and the sign is now brown (*pic attached*).

### **NAW/ETS MEETING FOLLOW-UP**

Tim Novak, DNR

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf

Tim reported that trails staff is working on recognizing different use types and best practices on how to support each other, reducing conflict.

Amy stated that as demonstrated today from the public comment, there is clearly a need to separate trails that are experiencing conflict.

Amy identified the following trails to focus on for separation.

#### **Northern Lower Peninsula**

- Big Oaks – look at designating interior trails as horse trail
- Tin Cup Springs – Will this be non-motorized?
- Shore to Shore Trail
- Cadillac, Traverse City/Williamsburg, Presque Isle County – safe, non-motorized horse trail possible?
- Investigate trails around Shore-to-Shore campgrounds
- Lake Dubonnet
  - Garey Lake
  - Goose Creek
  - Scheck's
  - Hopkins

#### **Upper Peninsula**

- Cedar River North
- Thunder Valley
- Drummond Island

### **NONMOTORIZED TRAIL MAINTENANCE SUBCOMMITTEE CREATION**

#### **Motion**

Motion made by Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf to form the NAW/ETS Subcommittee (nonmotorized trail maintenance subcommittee) and seconded by Brandy Miller, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Anna Lee and Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf have volunteered to be on this committee.

**2024 MEETING DATES**

- June 12 (Grayling)
- Sept. 11 (TBD)
- Nov. 13 (Lansing)

**ROUND ROBIN/CLOSING COMMENTS**

Jenny Cook noticed Fort Custer Equestrian Campground is not listed on a printed directory. Greg Kinser advised to talk with the local park supervisor.

Meeting adjourned at 4:11 p.m.

# Multiuse Trail



Yield to horses  
Coordinate before passing



Goal 1: Sustainable maintenance and development						
Trails Master Plan Reference	Priority	Objectives	Assignment	Details of Status	Notes	
1a1		Utilize the EQ Trail improvement tracker and the implementation plan to track EQ trails maintenance projects and goals throughout the state.	Amy & Sage to take lead, with the additional involvement of Trails and park staff.	Implementation tracker is updated quarterly and presented at ETS. Staff and volunteers work together to resolve issues. Appropriate staff should be notified of emergency/unsafe situations immediately, and not wait for the next ETS meeting.		
1a2		Create a statewide non-motorized trail maintenance program. Consider existing resources.				
1a3		Educate volunteers/staff on sustainable trail building/maintenance. Conduct Trail Master Course.	Trails Unit	First Trails Master Course offered to volunteers 3/2023. IMBA course to be offered to Rose Lake staff 4/2024. Trails Master Course to be offered to volunteers fall 2024.		
1a4		Maintain shaded trail through communication with departments such as Forestry and other trail users.			Kenny?	
1b1		Create a comprehensive EQ Trails Inventory	DNR - complete but check in with Kim to see if it's done, Thunder Valley still needs its own page on the website.	RAS working on updating inventory and GIS data to include comprehensive geospatial data, and descriptions of public EQ trails, trailheads and campgrounds including those "permissive use" trails that are identified as suitable for EQ use.	Nicole - maps and LUOD, dedicated equestrian maps complete, to go on agenda by July/August, for approval in September/October.	
1b2		Investigate other state trail classification standards and utilize resources to develop standards for Michigan trails. Combine with maintenance program. Consider resources from US Forest Service.				
1c1		New riding opportunities in the UP - Investigate and provide designated trail riding opportunities in several dispersed locations in the UP that will provide a minimum of 10 miles of well-marked trails and basic trailhead amenities for day rides.	ETS and Friends Groups - proposal for Stanley Lake. There was a private stable owner that was considering allowing camping at his property and proposing horse trails over there to the DNR. Connect Courtney Lake Campground with trails	Investigate and provide designated trail riding opportunities in several dispersed locations in the Upper Peninsula that will provide a minimum of 10 miles of well-marked trails and basic trailhead amenities for day rides	Stanley Lake	
1c2		New riding opportunities in NLP - using existing or new state forest EQ campgrounds north of Clare and south of the Mackinaw Bridge, identify opportunities for loop riding trail development that would provide a minimum of 20 total miles of riding opportunities per campground.	ETS and Friends Groups - Scott Slavin proposal, not advertised as EQ trails, but EQ are allowed. Look into loop riding and mapping, can advertise more as destination places to go. Any single tracks would be designated as closed to bikes. Big Oaks single track trails can be designated as horse trails - other horse trails are roads. look at some rural rail trails in NLP. Needs history on why we have lost access to some rail trails such as CIS trail in Owosso. Can Fred Meijer money be used for equestrian trails or are horses prohibited based on funding?	Using existing or new state forest EQ campgrounds north of Clare and south of the Mackinaw Bridge, identify opportunities for loop riding trail development that would provide a minimum of 20 total miles of riding opportunities per campground	Tin Cup	S2S camps Big Oaks

Equestrian Trails Implementation Plan

		Progress to date			
1c3	3	New riding opportunities in SLP - Identify opportunities for designation of EQ trails in state parks and state game areas which won't conflict with management plans or land acquisition or management funding sources. Include CIS and Hart-Montague trails.	ETS and Friends Groups - barrier love to get into state game areas but wildlife won't budge. Look at some rail trails to see if they would be appropriate.	Identify opportunities for designation of EQ trails in State Parks and State Game Areas which won't conflict with management plans or land acquisition or management funding sources	ongoing identification of appropriate trails
1c4		Present information to equestrians on the DNR's trail proposal process. Allow equestrians the ability to assist in the identification and development of the connecting EQ trails on private and public land.	DNR - this presentation was done at an ETS meeting, give presentation as needed.	This information would allow EQ users the ability to assist in the identification and development of connecting EQ trails on private and public land. Amy to do all trail groups meeting in March, Amy will provide information in detail to the group.	
1c5		After the gap analysis is complete, partner with the US Forest Service, other states, local governments and other public entities to provide trails and campgrounds that are identified as needed.	DNR - gap analysis needs to be done, great project to tackle with MTAC, DNR would complete.		
1c6		Investigate modern campgrounds at Waterloo. Build modern amenities at Ionia and Ft. Custer.	Trails Staff and Volunteers	Looking at improving equestrian amenities to create a destination park.	Plans to have electricity at Ionia and Ft. Custer. Investigating modern campground at Waterloo.
1c7		Designate trails/camps based on compatible/incompatible use.			Separating some state forest trails and designating camps for those with horses. Designate non-equestrian camping at specific sites.
2a1		Work with ETS members to develop "Quality Trail Experience" guidelines to incorporate into classification and maintenance standards.	Jessica, Heather, Sage, volunteers	Survey to go out in spring 2024. Results and continued work to be done at the 2024 Trails Summit.	Expected completion date, 12/24.
2b1		Utilize the trails inventory to determine if any trails need to be decommissioned and develop a closure process.	Nicole and Volunteers	On March 2024 ETS Agenda	
2f1		Work in collaboration with DNR to expand promotion of volunteer opportunities and volunteer recognition.	Heather, Anna Lee?	Volunteers submit information to Sage or Heather to include in promotions, e-mails, social media.	
3c1		Work with the DNR staff to determine ongoing maintenance needs that are above and beyond the abilities of volunteers to complete. Establish a plan and budget to cover additional maintenance needs, including new revenue ideas to support additional expenses.	Tim	Look at adding additional funds to the Trails maintenance budget for maintenance above and beyond the abilities of the volunteers.	
4a1		Conduct a gap analysis based on new trails inventory. Find gaps where infrastructure needs to be pursued to achieve the vision and goals (e.g. abandoned county roads, utility corridors or user created trails). Connect existing EQ trails with particular attention to Southeast Michigan state parks and recreation areas.	ETS, DNR and Friends Groups - connect horse trails with other existing horse trails, maybe move this off the priority list	Gaps where infrastructure needs must be pursued to achieve the Vision and goals (e.g. abandoned county roads, utility corridors or user-created trails). Connect existing EQ trails with particular attention to Southeast Michigan state parks and recreation areas	
4a2		Pursue facility gaps - prioritize potential projects by geographic area where trails and facilities can be enhanced and/or expanded for equine use.	DNR/ ETS - capital outlay funding through Scott, other projects throughout state, project update worksheet	Prioritize potential projects by geographic area where trails and facilities can be enhanced and/or expanded for equine use.	
4a3	2	Expand trails to a minimum of 10 mile loops - look for opportunities to configure trails so multiple loops are provided including connections to other trails nearby (including neighboring states)	DNR/ Friends Groups - done everywhere except bass river. This one may be done.	Also, look for opportunities to configure trails so multiple loops are provided including connections to other trails nearby (including neighboring states).	Bass River - waiting for completion of paved trail and final route approval.

Equestrian Trails Implementation Plan

Progress to date						
4b1		Develop policies around more shared or designated use trails across DNR agencies - Assess the suitability of other park and wildlife lands, ORV trails, rail trails, and existing looped trails for EQ use. (do not pursue snowmobile trails for horses.)	DNR - do not pursue snowmobile trails for horses, ORV trails and rail-trails can be added. Look at some hiking trails to see if they are appropriate. Everyone wants to ride on game lands but wildlife may not want that.	Assess the suitability of other Park and Wildlife lands, ORV trails, snowmobile trails (undeveloped) rail-trails, and existing looped trails for EQ use.		
4b2	4	Reopen or Repurpose Forest campgrounds to provide more EQ camping opportunities - objective of designating 2 or more EQ campgrounds with access to 20 miles of loop trails and/or connectivity to existing equine trails in the UP.	DNR - talk to scott pratt about Stanley Lake opening	Objective of designating 2 or more EQ campgrounds with access to 20 miles of loop trails and/or connectivity to existing equine trails in the Upper Peninsula.	HQ lake Done	Stanley Lake - PJ surveyed the trail, mostly on state land, but may need to find reroute if route doesn't work out.  Big Oaks - gathering information from volunteers.

Equestrian Trails Implementation Plan  
 Progress to date

Goal 2: Funding					
Trails Master Plan Reference		Objectives	Assignment	Details of Status	Notes
1c1		Research other states for EQ funding and report to DNR (bridle tag, include purchase of equipment and contract work in the legislation.)	ETS - bridle tag, include purchase of equipment and contract work in the legislation		
2a1		Investigate if additional funding from the Recreation Passport is possible, and how the funding source can be coordinated among all trail types.	Tim		
2b1		Work with MTAC to develop effectiveness indicators for equestrian trails.	?		
2f1		Work with MTAC to develop a process for advising DNR staff on priority RTP projects.	Lee		
3a1		Develop a trail sponsorship package for businesses and organizations. Create philanthropic materials highlighting the benefits of trails and the importance of funding.	Anna Lee, Heather?		
3b2		Create different fee schedules for EQ campgrounds based on amenities. This could provide the means for development of expanded amenities and for users to pay for services received.	DNR - scott	This could provide the means for development of expanded amenities and for users to pay for services received	
3d1		Develop a tracking tool and create an annual report with quantified volunteer hours and value in terms of dollars invested in trail work.	Jenny?	Report this information publically.	

Goal 3: Planning and Collaboration					
Trails Master Plan Reference		Objectives	Assignment	Details of Status	Notes
1a1		Inform the public on how they can effectively participate in the DNR's land management planning process.		DNR we've done some of this, timber process plans, etc. DNR at meetings explaining how the public can get more involved. DNR should be including any trail user groups in plans for the timber management (due to loss of trees on trails) - call groups in to be included. Good for MTAC too.	
1a2		Use existing Friends model to expand program - collaborate with riding associations to facilitate opportunities so that the equine community can learn how to initiate Friends associations, perform trail maintenance activities, and achieve certification for chainsaw operations.	ETS and Friends Groups	Collaborate with riding associations to facilitate opportunities so that the equine community can learn how to initiate friends associations, perform trail maintenance activities, and achieve certification for chainsaw operations	
1a3		Develop a group of qualified Michigan mediators/facilitators who will receive education in the laws and regulations which affect DNR's administration of lands under its stewardship.	MTAC - no conversation in a while		
1a4		Develop a process for referrals to mediate/facilitate and resolve recurring conflicts between user groups utilizing those qualified Michigan mediators/facilitators who have received training in the laws and regulations related to DNR land administration. Utilize MTAC as a forum for directing and facilitating conflict resolution at the regional or state organizational level. Costs of mediation/facilitation to be borne by the user groups involved in the conflict.	DNR/ MTAC	Promote utilization of MTAC as a forum for directing and facilitating conflict resolution at the regional or state organizational level. Costs of mediation/facilitation to be borne by the user groups involved in the conflict	
1a5		Seek relationships to better represent diverse populations, reach out across socioeconomic divide (Buffalo soldiers, Detroit Horse Power, community outreach opportunities, event sharing). Establish trail riding display at Outdoor Adventure Center.	Sage	OAC was approached about this and is ready and willing to install equestrian display. Need to purchase the materials and provide to OAC. Include other groups in gatherings and equestrian promotional events.	
1b1		Investigate working with MDOT/SOS to include sharing roadways with horses education, roadway signs for safety, driver's education.	ETS		
1c1		Provide information to DNR staff on a monthly basis to be included in the listserv e-mails.	Anna Lee, Heather?		
2a1		Participate in annual summit and prepare priorities annually to incorporate in planning work occurring at the summit.	Volunteers	Completed in 2024, continue annually.	
2b1		Create an ETS application, develop ETS member responsibilities, expected time commitments, meeting dates, etc. Have application available online and in person. When vacancies occur, formalize application review and interview process, including a list of interview questions. Formalize letters for acceptance or regrets to ETS.		Done?	

Equestrian Trails Implementation Plan

Progress to date

2b2		Formalize a mentorship program and other volunteer positions for applicants who would like to be involved on ETS, but either need further development or are waiting for a position to open in their area. Engage interested volunteers as much as possible.			
2c1		Follow MTAC guidelines to reorganize representation.	Tim	Currently in progress.	
2 e1		Work with MTAC and other user groups to develop annual schedule for volunteer days, work bees, and other maintenance activities that may assist in reducing repetitive work and generating a cost savings.	Tim, Volunteers.	Make this an agenda item at MTAC to present to all user groups, come back at next meeting with a schedule to compare and develop.	

Goal 4: Marketing, promotion, and education					
Trails Master Plan Reference		Objectives	Assignment	Details of Status	Notes
1a1	1	Develop sign guidance for EQ trails - develop uniform sign guidance covering design, content and location information for use on EQ trails, trailheads, and campgrounds. Partner with Friends groups to place and maintain signs where needed.	DNR - happening, presentation at next ETS meeting.	Develop uniform sign guidance covering design, content and location information for use on EQ trails, trailheads, and campgrounds. Partner with Friends Groups to place and maintain signs where needed	Where does signage go? Trailheads, where people enter, common beach entrance, intersection, places where we see large flows of traffic, at rest areas, along trails.
1b1		Work to create statewide trail etiquette signage and education. Add trail yielding order and etiquette educational signage and acknowledgment box when people purchase a Recreation Passport, State of Michigan camping reservations, ORV trail permits, Snowmobiling permits, E Bike Permits, Ride Right educational materials/publications etc.	Tim	Signage is in the process of being created. It has been approved.	
1c1		Identify at least one trail that would appropriately highlight equestrian heritage and work with the Michigan History Center, local museums, and partners to create interpretive signage.	Sage, Heather		Grand Island Bay de Noc
2a1		Create promotional platforms to draw new users - collaborate with Pure Michigan, riding associations and others on the development of innovative promotional platforms that will draw new users (the development of awards/patches for riding certain areas of the state or volunteering for maintaining certain amounts of trail corridors, etc.)	ETS - create a brochure. Tourism rep from ETS position? Michigan trails magazine - someone needs to solicit advertisers to get into there.	Collaborate with Pure Michigan, riding associations and others on the development of innovative promotional platforms that will draw new users, e.g. the development of awards/patches for riding certain areas of the state, or volunteering for maintaining certain amounts of trail corridors	Michigan Horse Trails Directory, Michigan Shoreline Horse Friends, Pure Michigan highlighting horse trail tourism 2023, Michigan Visitor's Bureau and Pure Michigan, MHC saddle time challenge, riding tags
2a2		Promote public riding stables on DNR managed lands.	Sage, Heather, Park Supervisors	Public riding stables at Maybury and Waterloo. Sage will work with park supervisors and vendors to gather information for Heather to publish. Spring 2024	Included in Michigan Horse Trails Directory
2a3		Assist in establishing a Detroit equestrian Trail, at least 6 miles long, in connection with Detroit Horsepower and the Joe Louis Greenway Collaborative.	Amy & Sage with DHP	DHP applied for a feasibility grant. DNR needs to talk to partners about DHP trail support.	
2d1		Build EQ media database with Photo Ambassadors.	Anna, DNR		
3a1		Work with the Land Information Access Association to provide guidance on trail towns catering to equestrians. Apply for Pure Michigan Trail Towns with interested towns and work with them to let them know what they would need to be friendly to equestrians.	ETS/MTAC - can any of the trail towns be put up for the pure michigan trail towns. ETS would be happy to work with interested towns to let them know what they would need to be friendly to EQ.		
3a2		Create promotional materials that can be used to communicate annual accomplishments and priorities (annual report), including volunteer investment value, and benefits of trails to the economy.	Volunteers with Heather		

Equestrian Trails Implementation Plan

Progress to date				
3b1		Work with DNR staff to plan and implement biannual trail showcases.	Tim and volunteers	
3d1		Work with environmental education programs to incorporate equestrian learning within trail programming.	Nature programs and other outdoor education programming.	
4a1		Broaden GIS Data to include other public lands and Trails. Inventory and publish EQ trails and facilities on other public lands such as county parks, municipalities and federal lands. Improve state forest maps to include all forest roads, trails, focal points, etc. to use with apps.	DNR - Kim (including GIS mapping of it online, have brochures, etc., make it available on the website) - DNR doesn't have printed maps and brochures for the public, state-wide map	Inventory and publish EQ trails and facilities on other public lands such as county parks, municipalities and federal lands.  Nicole - maps and LUOD, dedicated equestrian maps complete, to go on agenda by July/August, for approval in September/October 2023.
4a2		Complete maps and LUOD for dedicated equestrian trails.	Nicole	MTAC requested meeting with NAW and ETS to discuss trail designation. That meeting happened in 2024. DNR staff to determine Thunder Valley designation then LUOD can be put forward in 2024.

Red= no progress; orange = some progress; green = objective achieved  
 prepared by Kristen Bennett, State Trails Planning Specialist

In conversation with Mike (Hartwick Pines) he informed me that the Grayling work crew is looking at starting the west side of the Goose Creek project this week. Have had nothing but positive comments regarding the East side steps, only 1 negative response.

Numerous comments have been posted on-line voicing concern with the roads going into the Tin Cup campground. They comment are stating it is from recent logging operations. I contacted Greg (Kinser), in regards to this issue. Greg also informed me that there is a new forester for my area, in replacement of Dave Lemmin.

The MTRA will be holding its annual banquet on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, in Clare, followed by a Board of Directors meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

On April 3<sup>rd</sup> the Pigeon River Country Equestrian Committee (PRCEC) will be holding its quarterly meeting, being held at the Roscommon DNR Field Office.

Dug Jordan  
NLP ETS Representative

Q1 - 2024 ETS Report Central - Brandy Miller March 13, 2023 1:00-4:00 - Lansing

Combined 2023 Volunteer hours -

DNR GROUPS - TOTAL			\$581,821.07
NON DNR GROUPS - TOTAL			\$134,708.11
TOTAL FOR MICHIGAN			\$716,529.18

Sleepy Hollow

- Recent Events:
  - 2/3/24 - Annual membership meeting, potluck, raffle, fundraiser
  - 2/3/24 - Rangers Andy Scheitz and Michelle Trowbridge did a wonderful job explaining the current pipeline project affecting the park. They were knowledgeable and humorous and their time was very appreciated by the entire sleepy hollow group. They also discussed how they would communicate closures of roads and trails as these circumstances change throughout the process. :)
- Upcoming Events:
  - 5/24-5/27 - Memorial Weekend Camp Over
  - 8/30-9/2 - Labor Day Camp over
  - 10/17-10/20 - Explore the Hollow Weekend camp over
- Project Updates:
  - They are preparing to be flexible in their event dates, per completion of the new pipeline project.
- Other:
  -

Ionia

- Recent Events:
  -
- Upcoming Events:
  - April - Spring Cleanup - Dates to be determined
  - 5/10-12 - MHC Trail Mileage Competition Kick off weekend \*\* note that previously this event was held at a privately owned facility and due to requests from ETS representatives, is now being held at a state campground :)
  - 6/7-6/9 - Forbidden Trails Weekend - adding in a lunch stop over point for horses and riders at the neighboring trials facility. Also the previously forbidden section one is going to be open for riding, adding approximately 10 more miles of trails.
  - 10/4-10/6 - IHTA Chili Cookoff weekend - possible construction project, They are doing some work in the modern camp, but the biggest issue is road rebuilding from the dam back to the campgrounds.
- Project Updates:
  - **Ionia Recreation Area's modern and equestrian campgrounds, mini cabin closed Sept. 9-Oct. 31, 2024**

- The planned park enhancements to upgrade the toilet and shower building, sanitation station, drain field and park's electrical system has been delayed. As a result, the modern and equestrian campgrounds and mini cabins will now close Sept. 9-Oct. 31, 2024. A proposed \$3.9 million in federal relief funding from [Gov. Whitmer's Building Michigan Together Plan](#) made these renovations and others possible. (updated 2/12/24)

**Yankee Springs** <https://ystra.org/>

- Recent Events:
  -
- Upcoming Events:
  - April - Shots/Wellness Clinic
  - May - Member appreciation Ride- Dates coming
- Project Updates:
  - Ron Walker (YSTRA President) leveled out the gravel piles in the day parking, which looks amazing :)



- 
- Other: (Yankee)
  -

## Waterloo

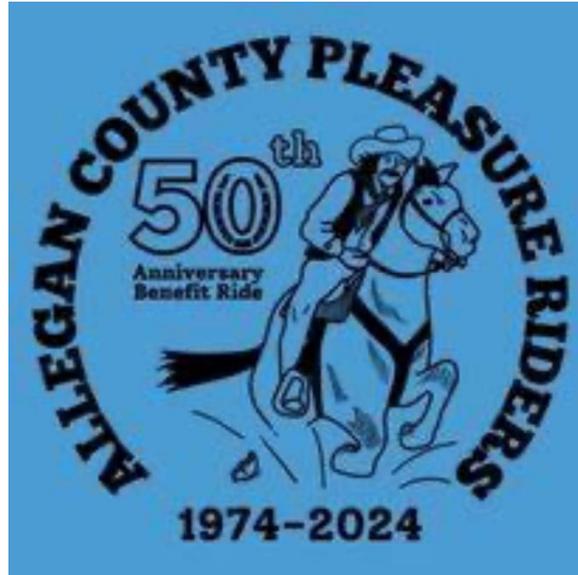
- Recent Events:
  - 2/24/24 - Banquet & Annual Membership Meeting
- Upcoming Events:
  - 5/4/24 - Green Lake Ride
- Project Updates:
  - New High Line / Picket Poles were installed in the Maute Road staging area
- Other:
  - **Chad Simpson (WHA President) made contact and has arranged the following:**
  - *Per meeting on above date, (2/26/24) I, Chad Simpson, President of Waterloo Horsemen Association understood agreements as follows;*
  - 
  - *Power Line Poles will be removed by Consumers Energy and will remain on site per DNR approval.*
  - 
  - *Asphalt Millings will be milled and transported by Holcim Aggregate or subcontractor of Holcim Aggregate to an agreed location parcel south of Green Road near NE area of said Parcel and stockpiled per DNR approval*
  - 
  - *200 ton of Donated "Bank Run Sand" will be stockpiled at loader operators leisure in and near same area as above.*
  - 
  - *WHA welcomes any added donations of bin blocks, rocks and/or roadway gates (if not damaged during removal process)*
  - 
  - *WHA would like to thank all parties involved for contributing financially with your donations and your concerned interest in assisting our equestrian community to becoming one of the best trail destinations in Michigan. Would love to follow up with Holcim's offer of a picnic area and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. Maybe even come back and ride the newly intended trail.*
  - 
  - *Thanks Again & Happy Trails*
  - 
  - *Chad Simpson*
  - *WHA President*
  - Hiker / Runner Events using horse trails - concerns
    - How many events?
    - Are the events posted anywhere in advance so riders can avoid the area if they choose?
    - Are we sharing equitably with the other users for our special events?

**Waterloo Hunt Club** - No Report

[Park closures Website link](#)

## ETS SW Report 2024 Q1 - Jenny Cook

**Allegan County Pleasure Riders** will have their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Benefit Ride on Saturday, May 18, 2024. This is the longest running equestrian benefit ride in the nation! Proceeds go to Wings of Hope Hospice and Wings Home in Allegan County.



**Bass River** volunteers continue to clean up the equestrian/hiking/hunting trails as needed. We are thankful for the help of MDNR maintenance teams.

The **Fort Custer Horse Friends Association** has planned a trail workday with dog musher volunteers on Saturday, March 16. We are very happy with the gravel improvements, grading of the equestrian parking area and help from MDNR management teams. We are asking if Fort Custer equestrian camping could please be added to the Michigan Parks and Recreation Area printed map/chart.



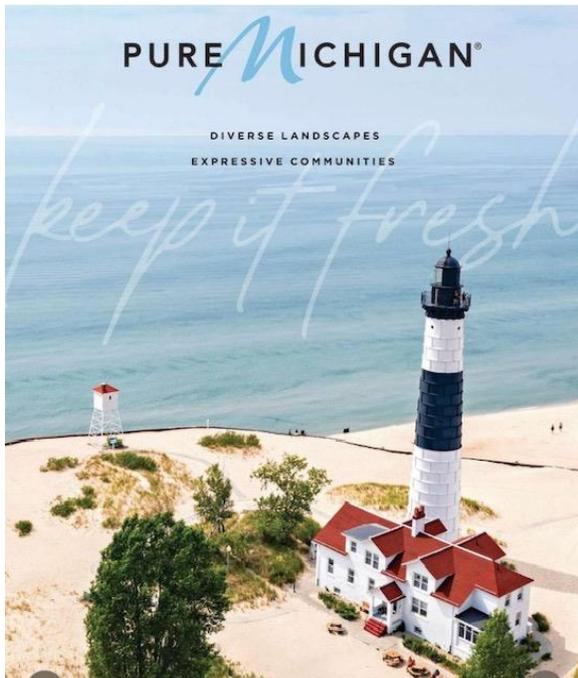
We are thankful for a wonderful 2023 **Shoreline Horseback Riding Season**. We are thankful we have been informed the MDNR is taking full management of the season including manure management along the Equestrian Dune Route. We are looking forward to more “dream come true” opportunities horseback riding the Lake Michigan shoreline at Silver Lake State Park.



**Michigan Horse Expo** took place at Landing Livestock Pavilion took place on March 8 - 10. This was a gathering and celebration of all different kinds of horse breeds and disciplines. We celebrated all the many ways horses naturally improve our lives through education, mobility, recreation, emotional, mental, and physical therapy, transportation, and tourism. Equestrians generate over \$2,600,000,000 (\$2.6 Billion) in Michigan economic impact annually. Pictured with Representative Amos O’Neal.



We are happy the **2024 Pure Michigan** Spring/Summer travel guide highlights Michigan trails and features an equestrian trail photo. We are happy the QR code leads to Michigan Horse Trails Directory for horse trails, horse camping, horse rentals, volunteer horse friends groups and more. <http://michiganhorsetrails.com/index.html>



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PURE MICHIGAN Spring/Summer 2024

We are hoping we can schedule **horse rides at Brighton Riding Stables** with NAW, MTAC, Forestry, Stewardship, and Wildlife MDNR management team members in late May or a Saturday in June.

We are pulling together on some brief horse education for the **Nature Awaits** program for all Michigan 4th graders and families. We hope by providing some basic facts about horses, everyone will know what to do when they encounter people with horses, and people with horses can be welcomed on more State of Michigan public lands. Sample provided.

We would like to work with Michelle O'Kelly and Emily Leslie [LeslieE1@Michigan.gov](mailto:LeslieE1@Michigan.gov) or **517-242-8760** to advertise our volunteer stewardship workdays by the MDNR like other DNR volunteer stewardship workdays.

Looking forward to another great horseback riding / horse camping year in Michigan!

**Thank you DNR Management Teams for working with our equestrian communities.**

**Sam Norman**

**2024 ETS AGENDA ITEMS - UPPER PENNSULA Q1**

- 1. Organization of the Upper Peninsula horse groups into an association/partnership is in motion. It is gaining momentum very quickly.**
- 2. The Keweenaw Heartlands Project**  
We will be interested in having the equestrian community involved in this project once it is under DNR management  
<https://www.keweenawcommunityfoundation.org/keweenaw-heartlands-project>
- 3. The trail and camp request for Stanley has been discontinued due to the original requester and her group backing out of the project. We are looking at an addition to the existing trail system at Headquarters Lake that will be beneficial to the quality of the equestrian assets in the north central part of the Upper Peninsula.**

Anna Lee, ETS Statewide Tourism Representative

Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB) Outreach

I have a goal of making sure all the CVBs in the state are sharing information about the horse trails and trail riding opportunities in their area. I started by creating a list of every CVB in the state. Then I mined their websites to identify contact information and made notes of whether they are already promoting equestrian trails, and if so, how and to what extent. After that I began contacting them. So far, I have had some success with the Grayling Visitors Bureau, who recently updated their horseback riding page (see screenshot below).

Graylingmichigan.org/things-to-do/outdoors/horseback-riding

Home / Things To Do / Outdoor Recreation / Horseback Riding

Share

Horse Trails in Grayling MI

Michigan Trail Riders Association helps develop and maintain horse trails in Grayling MI and throughout Michigan. Results of the Association's efforts include the Shore-to-Shore Riding and Hiking Trail which winds from Empire on Lake Michigan to Oscoda on Lake Huron. A Shore-to-Shore Riding and Hiking Trail spur goes south from Grand Traverse County to Cadillac; a second spur goes north from the Frederic/Grayling area into the Pigeon River State Forest near Indian River and Mullet Lake.

Also see the Michigan Horse Trails Directory website for further detailed information on the numerous horse trails in the area.

The campgrounds below cater to horse travel and are on trails:



4 Mile Trail Camp

Group area designed for use by equestrian campers riding the Shore to Shore Riding/Hiking Trail. Non-equestrian campers are also welcome. Maximum capacity is for 200 individuals and can accommodate...

READ MORE



Goose Creek Trail Camp

Located near the majestic Manistee River, this rustic campground is surrounded by tall jack pines. There is a large open group camping area designed for equestrian campers riding the Shore-to-Shore...

READ MORE



Michigan State University (MSU) Trails Policy Coursebook

Bob Wilson and I recently received a grant from the MSU Libraries Open Educational Resources program to support the development and publishing of a Michigan-based trails policy and law coursebook. The coursebook will be used to help teach a Trail Policy and Law course (CSUS 491) in MSU's Department of Community Sustainability. About a dozen natural resource professionals (including several DNR employees) have agreed to serve as external reviewers for certain chapters of the book. We are intentionally writing and formatting the coursebook in a way that will be understandable and accessible to the public. Our hope is that it will provide Michigan's trail managers, advocates, and volunteers alike with a thorough understanding of the regulatory framework surrounding trail development and management in Michigan and empower them to lead and influence trail management and development in their communities. When completed, the coursebook will be available for free in multiple formats (print and digital). We anticipate that the book will be ready for distribution by August of this year.

**Proud Lake**

Separation of trails is almost complete, probably about two days' worth of work on two small sections left, hoping that will be done very soon

**Equine Industry**

The results of the 2023 American Horse Councils' economic study have been released. Total economic value of the equine industry is \$177 billion up from \$122 billion in 2017 with 2.2 million jobs being linked directly and indirectly to the equine industry. The number one contributor to the equine industry is now THE RECREATION SECTOR.

<https://horsecouncil.org/press-releases/results-from-the-2023-national-equine-economic-impact-study-released/>

**Michigan Horse Trails Association**

Jenny, Anna and I have formed a non-profit, soon to be 501c3, statewide trails organization. We will be able to enter MOU's with land managers where necessary, and put forth our statewide volunteer efforts on behalf of Michigan's Horse Trails, Campground and Volunteer Organizations with this association. We rolled out memberships at the Michigan Horse Expo and had a warm welcome from many trail riders. We will have individual, family, business and organizational memberships. Looking forward to partnering with the DNR with this new association.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/367722736150566>

**Michigan Horse Expo**

Record breaking numbers attended this year's Michigan Horse Expo, we saw and talked with many trail riders or those interested in doing so and continued to share information on the Michigan Horse Trails Directory, DNR website and more where riders can find the info they need to get out and enjoy Michigan's trails by horseback. It was incredibly wonderful to have Sage Hegdal join us for the day on Friday. Many volunteers and attendees chatted with her about DNR, thanked her for what you all do for us, and so many gushed about how much they love Shoreline riding at Silver Lake. Thank you Sage, hopefully next year the DNR will have a table in the trails area so attendees and trail volunteers can interact with them all weekend long.

**State Forest Trails**

We continue to be contacted by trail riders within Northern MI and the U.P. who are concerned with dwindling access to safe state forest trails/roads for horseback riding due to conflicts with bicycles and ATV. We heard from some concerned riders in the Williamsburg area in public comment at this meeting, we also talked with a couple other riders at the expo who said the same thing of that area and mentioned how dangerous bike and horse trail crossings were at the Muncie Lake area. They had a very scary experience when their horses were spooked by bikes coming over a hill at high speed. We also talked with riders from the Cadillac area who have concerns about erosion and safety concerns for that area. Trail riders have also reached out from the Drummond Island and Presque Isle areas with their concerns. Many trail riders express that their areas are only safer to

ride during the week, but what about trail riders who work during the week and only have the weekends to hit the trails?

### **Headquarters Lake Campground**

Is now on the reservation system, huge shout out to Muskallonge Lake State Park for being willing to work with us so trail riders can now feel confident in planning their trip to this absolutely gorgeous campground and trail.

### **Ride Right Language for Multi-Use Trails with Horses:**

**Yield to horseback riders.** Slow down and prepare to stop if needed.

**Communicate with horseback riders before passing.** Ask before passing and follow the directions from the rider. A rider may ask you to stop, or they may have you continue slowly by. Speaking helps horses identify you as a human and will help keep horses calm.

### **Give horseback riders right-of-way.**

Please stand with your whole group on the same side of the trail.

Please do not stand behind a tree or other objects. Stay in sight of the horseback riders.

Please contain children and dogs.

**Thank you for helping our trails be safe for everyone!**

### **Follow Up to NAW/ETS meeting**

- VASA: advertised as biking, hiking, and skiing, <https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/parksandtrails/Details.aspx?id=65&type=SFPW> (in Williamsburg area)
- Days River Pathway: advertised as having some trails only for bikers, does say that horses are allowed in activities, but most/all trail riders in that area do not feel they are allowed to ride it, one told me horses are absolutely NOT allowed <https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/parksandtrails/Details.aspx?id=92&type=SFPW> I am wondering if this pathway would be a good one to have separate trail at so that horses could still have some trail to ride here.

Located near Gladstone, the Days River Pathway provides a variety of terrain for hiking, biking and skiing adventures. With 9 miles of trails and five possible loops, the trail provides an opportunity to travel through a beautifully dense forest and along the Days River. There is currently a 3-mile looped single-track trail available exclusively for mountain bikers at the trailhead of the pathway. There is continued work being done to expand single-track mountain biking opportunities for visitors. The trail is groomed for cross-country skiing in the winter. The trailhead is 5.3 miles northwest of Gladstone via M-35 North and Days River 24.5 Road. The pathway is maintained with the help of [Delta County Nonmotorized Trails](#).

- Jordan Valley: advertised as hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing, bikes do have a LUO banning them, horses do not. But I wonder what would happen if trail riders rode it.  
<https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/parksandtrails/Details.aspx?id=43&type=SFPW>
- Thunder Valley, doesn't have a DNR webpage yet, map says No Bikes and the trail riders who helped with the creation and building of it understood it to be closed to bikes and for horses,  
[https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/Publications/PDFS/RecreationCamping/Eq\\_Trails\\_ThunderValley.pdf](https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/Publications/PDFS/RecreationCamping/Eq_Trails_ThunderValley.pdf) The Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail is in the Marquette area of the U.P. The Noquemanon Trail Network is the non-motorized trail network in the area, working towards 150+ miles of trails. Allowed access to these trails are described as: **All non-motorized human-powered activities are welcome unless signed otherwise.** <https://noquetrails.org/>

Trails which do have LUOD prohibiting horses

<a href="https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/managing-resources/laws/orders/luo">https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/managing-resources/laws/orders/luo</a>
<b>State Forest Areas with Horse Restrictions by LUOD:</b>
Gladwin County state owned land
Blueberry Ridge
Pigeon River
Shingle Mill Pathway
High Country Pathway
Betsie Valley Trail (Segment 2)
Falling Waters Trail (paved portion)
Cadillac Pathway in Wexford County