



EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Location: Maybury State Park
49601 Eight Mile Road
Northville, Michigan 48167
May 17, 2023
1:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Welcome – Roll Call

EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS):

- Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, 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, Matt Torreano, Lee Maynard, Kim Kennedy, Scott Pratt, Nicole Hunt,

OTHERS: Paul Erickson, Anna Lee, Valentia Sierra, Madison Janes, Barb Kurti

Meeting minutes

ACTION ITEMS

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

Motion made to approve Feb. 15, minutes by Jenny Cook and seconded by Brandy Miller, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion made to approve the May 17, agenda by Dug Jordan and seconded by Brandy Miller, with all in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Paul Erickson, President of the Oceana County Agricultural Society, talked about the potential for an equine trail head at the William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail connecting the Oceana County Fairgrounds (map attached). The fairgrounds currently are used by equestrians for overnight camping.

Scott Slavin, DNR, will meet in late June with Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf to discuss further.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

ETS REGIONAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Brandy Miller, Central Lower Peninsula

See attached written report.

Jenny Cook, Southwestern Lower Peninsula

Bass River Recreation Area: equestrians are thankful for the improvements and continue to organize volunteers and work in partnership with management teams.

Ft. Custer Recreation Area: equestrians are thankful for the matching grant to purchase and install a shed to store equipment and tools, plus six corrals with covers at three of the equestrian campsites. We have cleared all the horse friendly trails including many miles of multi-use trails. We appreciate the partnership with management teams and the pleasant relationships with all trail users at Ft. Custer.

We are looking forward to the Horse Greet and optional horse trail ride at Brighton Riding Stables with ETS and DNR management teams on Wednesday, May 17, 2023. We plan to share information about horses and enjoy a pleasant horse experience together.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Southeastern Lower Peninsula

Brighton: Brighton Recreation leveling of campsites has begun, added gravel, BTRA will be buying new picket posts, but the pole yard is out of poles at this time, two sites will have corrals and improved footing for corrals once complete, the rest will have picket areas. Also, the funding will be used to improve the east side of the water crossing. BTRA and DNR have been discussing possible reroutes of trail also to bypass some eroded areas and build sustainable trail learned in the Trail Master Course. They just had their spring ride last weekend.

Highland: Highland has plans for a new equestrian staging area and the pavilion should be built soon. Their first campout was last weekend and was well attended.

Lakelands: Waiting for engineering of eq staging area in Gregory to assure proper drainage of the lot before spreading already purchased gravel. DNR plans to purchase more. Pinckney Trail Riders and Patriot Concrete are donating and setting concrete mounting blocks at the Gregory and Stockbridge staging areas. The blocks have been poured and set and are awaiting final delivery to their sites. We look forward to MUCH needed trail etiquette signage along the Lakelands trail once the DNR decides on this signage. Horses should also be included on the road crossing signs as that will let others know to expect to encounter horses on the trail.

Maybury

Ortonville: OREA has been busy clearing a very high quality "east" trail that was approved for addition, that will add about a mile of trail which will bring their trail total to twelve miles. OREA is hoping to have that trail open and ready to go next weekend for their memorial weekend campout. Very excited to advertise for them once it's complete.

Pinckney: We have held three work bees on the trail reroute and need to hold one or two more to complete it. We have submitted to the DNR measurements of a low lying, muddy trail that will need gravel added. DNR will provide gravel, PTRAs will provide equipment to spread it. This weekend is our Blessing of the Horse and Ride to Hell and Back which riders absolutely love! Putnam Township Fire Department helps to make it a safe road crossing for the day for our riders.

Pontiac Lake: They will get an improved Teggerdine staging area this year. This is the off-season lot and open all year long to riders. Their first camp out is in June.

Proud Lake: Separation of the mountain bikers from the horse trail continues with the building of new mountain bike trails. Bikers built trail in ecologically sensitive areas they were not supposed to, so they had to close down that trail and this has caused yet more conflict and hard feelings between bikers and trail riders as bikers believe it is the fault of equestrians that they "lost" their new trail. An info graphic should be released soon by the DNR to clear up this misinformation. Cindy Kesler has proposed a temp trail for the connector trail so that full separation of the bike and horse trails could be attained this year. I hope the DNR will give consideration to this. Just recently "No Bikes" signs have been added to the equestrian staging area, bikers will now need to stay to the very West side of the field to access the red loop or neighborhood near the staging area. This comes just after a report of heavy bike traffic through the equestrian staging area on Saturday, May 6th, with bikes flying by the trailer with no announcement and spooking the horses tied there. The trail rider said she will not go back but was reassured that no bike signs now exist, and this should not happen anymore.

Michigan Horse Trails Directory Website: <http://michiganhorsetrails.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/612789875951763> (6.1K members)

SE Trail Group Events: <http://pinckneytrailriders.com/calendar.html>

Michigan Trail Group Events: <http://michiganhorsetrails.com/events.html>

I have been hearing more and more on Facebook from out of state riders who travel to various other states for horse camping that they enjoy camping in Michigan more than anywhere else. And I agree, we have much better footing (less mud, more sand) and gorgeous riding/campgrounds and incredibly hard-working volunteers. It's a great time for the DNR to start really putting effort and money into improving our camping facilities and advertising what we have to offer horse campers. We also need attention paid to enforcement of the rules for the safety and enjoyment of our equestrian campers. One bad experience with inconsiderate or dangerous behavior in a horse camp and you may never see those tourist's dollars here again.

Dug Jordan, Northern Lower Peninsula

Luzerne Boardwalk: the boardwalk is not going to be usable this riding season, per the USFS. The USFS put in a request for funding to repair the boardwalk and was approved for \$18,000. Estimates for the repairs came back as \$80,000 & \$90,000; this would be to completely replace the entire surface. An alternate trail has been established to bypass the boardwalk.

Goose Creek: in conversation with Blake Gingrich, DNR, the replacement of the steps will begin around the 1st of June. I have extended an invitation for DNR staff to attend the MTRA board meeting on June 25th, at 11:00 am. It would be an opportunity to meet other board members, riders, see the camp full of riders and rigs, and hopefully the steps project will be completed for use during the ride.

Scheck's Trail camp: Jenny Cook informed me of a complaint she received of extensive ORV's and other un-authorized activity at the camp last weekend (May 12-14). I contacted the reporting individual, and she will be sending me an e-mail documenting the incident(s). Which I will forward upon receipt, to Stephanie Rozinski, DNR personnel, and ETS Members.

Trail maintenance: Trail clean-up continues along the S2S trail, with removal of several trees occurring the first week of April, camp maintenance of replacing picket poles, clearing limbs in preparation of the first June ride, starting at Stoney Creek and ending in Oscoda.

ORV Enforcement: This question has been raised in the past, with the DNR supplying counties with grants for ORV officers, could there be a provision included for the patrol of the horse camps during weekends? I realize that most of ORV patrol is done on weekends, and this is when most

incidents occur at the camps, it will not solve the issues, however a few fines and tickets can be a deterrent.

Karen Bahrman, Upper Peninsula

Becoming an Outdoor Women (BOW) is a program for women to learn more about the outdoor recreation and acquire skills that are necessary to enjoy outdoor recreational activities. Karen noticed the program has been expanded including all sport recreations except for equestrian. Karen volunteered to teach a class, starting with this summer's program. Incoming registrations indicate that over half the registrants have signed up for the equestrian course as a first or second choice. Class size is six people. The class course will be three days and will cover grooming, saddles, mounting, and be lead around on a short rope.

SIGNAGE

Background: In January 2022 the DNR contracted with KMA to develop a signage standards manual that would formalize design and size elements to improve efficiencies at the Sign Shop while also more tightly managing our public-facing messaging and brand.

Where we are today: This has been no small project. As of March 1, 2023, the vendor handed over their completed portion of the manual. However, this was missing a lot of detailed signage for trails, regulatory, and instructional information. The signage team is now tackling the changes and needed additions. We have set a deadline of July 10 to have the first draft ready for division-wide review.

What's next?

The following actions are underway to bring the project to a close:

- Establish staff guidelines for ordering signage – June 15
- Update manual with design/text clarifications – June 30
- Add signage used in trails, waterways and regulatory programs – June 30
- Review on-site signage for messaging, placement, and condition - ongoing.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf wants to work with DNR on the trail etiquette portion of this sign project. Tim Novak, DNR, will connect with Maia Turek, DNR, and circle back.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

Operations committed approximately \$275K for equestrian projects this year. Bass River bathroom improvement and guard rails (sharp edges). Ionia Recreation Area is adding electricity to every site. Fort Custer is adding a shade area around the campground, Tin Cup campground is scheduled for improvements. Stewardship approved the Proud Lake reroute, outside of oak wilt risk season (Aug).

RAIL TRAILS

FRED MEIJER / CIS / HART-MONTAGUE

Fred Meijer trail has deed restrictions that do not allow equestrian use. Jill Sell, DNR, added that the Flat River and Grand River are deed restricted on the gifted sections of trails, not allowing equestrian use. Jill will have to get more clarity on these restrictions.

Jenny Cook talked to a commissioner from St. Johns, as she heard the town of St. Johns is not horse friendly. The commissioner said funds that were received for the trails stipulated that horse activity be excluded. Jenny indicated it is important to be educated on how funds can affect trail uses.

Jill Sell, DNR, mentioned the CIS trail had the wrong limestone spread and needs to be corrected with ARPA funding. The CIS trail will still have a limestone base and could still accommodate equestrian use with new stone. Jill explored the idea of having a separate side path for equestrian use but discovered there is not enough space (width) to have two parallel trails next to each other.

Jill Sell will get more information and clarity on the Sleepy Hollow and St. John CIS Trail connector. Scott Slavin, DNR, added the surface of the trail needs to be considered for sustainability.

Scott Slavin, DNR, is talking to staff internally regarding equestrian trail use on the Hart-Montague trail to see if it will work out.

UPDATES

TIN CUP SPRINGS CAMPGROUND

Scott Slavin, DNR, staff has pulled off the project for the past month to open state parks and state forest campgrounds. The crew will be back on site in the next few weeks to continue construction.

HOPKINS CREEK ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

Scott Slavin, DNR, crews have been onsite and met with Parks and Recreation (PRD) and Forest Resource Division (FRD) staff and have agreed on the necessary improvements. There is not a set date of when this will be completed but is on a project list and funding has been identified.

MTRA CAMPS/MOWING

Greg Kinser, DNR, has reached out to DNR staff and communicated the need for mowing in campgrounds. Scott Slavin added the Shore-to-Shore use permit document shows every campground and the manager's phone number.

STANLEY LAKE TRAIL/CAMP PROPOSAL

Karen Bahrman submitted a proposal in the Fall of 2021. The request is to establish an equestrian trail head along with two trails loops of twelve miles each at the currently closed Stanley Lake Campground. Hopes are to connect Stanley Lake Campground to Headquarters Lake by trail.

Karen learned that her trail proposal process submission is different than the process that was used for the Tin Cup. Karen mentioned the Tin Cup trail proposal, approval, funding, and project completion transpired over a two-year process. With Karen's proposal there has been several deterrents such as funding and staff resources.

P.J. Costa, DNR, said he needs more clarity on where the trail sections will be and will have to verify property boundaries. P.J. confirmed the Upper Peninsula DNR District Manager does not have staff to handle any extra tasks. P.J. and Ron Yesney, DNR, can push through the proposal through the process and see what the outcome will be.

HEADQUARTERS LAKE RESERVATION SYSTEM/SIGNAGE

Nicole Hunt, DNR, is working with Jason Fleming, DNR, to begin a switch over for 2024. Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf mentioned to add the six sites at Cedar River North.

REVIEW OF MAPS PRD HORSE TRAIL DESIGNATIONS

Nicole Hunt, DNR, shared a consolidated map of equestrian trails located on campgrounds, staging areas, and game areas. There are individual maps for each area in a PDF version. The Land Use Order (LUOD) will incorporate these areas as designated equestrian trails. Any future modifications to the LUOD will be added to the document and updated with revised dates of the maps. The LUOD will be added to the July or Aug. Natural Resource Commission (NRC) agenda and asking for final approval in Sept. or Oct. by the DNR Director.

LUOD STATE FOREST HORSE TRAIL SEPARATION

Discussions from the recent Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW) meeting indicated concerns about prohibiting bikes on Thunder Valley Trail in the Upper Peninsula. The DNR will have to explore these concerns through additional conversations with the NAW members. This topic can remain on the agenda for updates.

Dug Jordan and Scott Slavin are working together on the Shore-to-Shore Trail. Next steps are to identify private lands and obtain permissions. This may be a long process.

TRAIL GROUP EVENT INSURANCE

Nicole Hunt, DNR, reviewed instances when group event insurance is needed for equestrian users, such as riding in non-designated areas. The risk level determines the amount of insurance is needed.

ETS TRAIL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN PROGRESS/GOALS

Sage Hegdal, DNR, revitalized a document started back when Nick Van Bloem, DNR, was working with ETS. Sage reviewed the objectives and goals with the ETS members.

ETS TOURISM APPOINTMENT

DNR will work on an appointment.

2023 MEETING DATES

Sept. 12 – Grayling Township Hall

Nov 8 – Lansing

ROUND ROBIN/CLOSING COMMENTS

Meeting adjourned at 4:11 p.m.

Q2-2023 ETS Report Central 5/17/23

Sleepy Hollow

- Events:
 - Workbee April 22nd - Canceled and rescheduled for April 29 - also canceled due to weather
 - Memorial Weekend Camping Event
- Project Updates:
 - They are working to publicize the rental cabin, which now has horse pens
- Other:

Ionia

- Events:
 - June 10 - Forbidden Trail Ride
 - Oct 7 - Chili Cook off
- Project Updates:
 - 16 volunteers participated in a work bee on April 8.
 - Campground is cleaned up and ready to go
 - Rangers downed many dead ash trees before they could fall in the middle of the season and make a mess or worse.
 - Sites have been chosen for 4 more corral sites, and prep work has begun.
 - Grading and drainage material will be installed later this summer with corrals set afterwards.
- Other:
 - Trails are clear and ready for riding.
 - Replacement obstacle was installed where one was removed a couple of years ago.
 - Phase 2 of the Confidence Course brushed out some time in May, and it will be mowed throughout the summer.
 - Riders will be encouraged to use this path to complete the circle around the campground, or as a shortcut to the Phase 1 course from Day Staging.

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

- Events:
 - May 13 - Member appreciation ride
 - Sept. 2 - Annual Meeting
 - Oct 14 - Halloween Spooktacular
- Project Updates:
 - Continued work on the Day Parking area, hitching rails have been installed
 - New vault toilets installed in day use area
- Other:
 - Sponsorships: They are down on Business sponsorships this year
<https://ystra.org/business-sponsors>



Provided by:
Yankee Springs Recreational
DNR Unit

Waterloo

- Recent Events:
 - May 6 - Green Lake Ride
 - Green lake ride was moved back 1 week this year to avoid a bike event. We encountered many courteous hikers on the trip. The collaborative efforts of DNR staff and WHA volunteers resulted in a wonderful and well organized event, enjoyed by over 150 riders!



- May 13 - workbee
- June 3 - Ride to Survive event - American Cancer Society
- Project Updates: Still have pens to install in Camp ground. As far as I know, that has not started yet. Possible tree removal, and substrate preparations needed first.
- Other:
 - 3 Steel tube donation boxes have been added (Maute Rd, Farm Lane Campground, State Park)



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Waterloo Hunt Club

- Visited the hunt club 4/8/2, They really seem to not need any cooperation from the DNR because most of the trails they use are the same trails maintained by DNR/WHA. No special needs.