



EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS)

Meeting Minutes

Roscommon, Michigan

Sept. 11, 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
- Brandy Miller
- Anna Lee (virtual)
- Sam Norman

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

- Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Scott Slavin, Sage Hegdal, Paige Perry, Scott Pratt, Blake Gingrich, Ron Yesney, Nicole Hunt, Greg Kinser, Rob Katona, Peter Costa, Stephanie Rosinski, Lee Maynard

Meeting minutes

ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 1:05 p.m.

Motion made to approve June 12, 2024 minutes by Dug Jordan and seconded by Jenny Cook, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion made to approve the Sept. 11, agenda by Jenny Cook and seconded by Brandy Miller, with all in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT (none)

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CENTER (OAC) DETROIT MI

Scott Pratt, DNR

The OAC is working on creating a horse trail riding simulation display, focusing on what a real-life horseback riding experience could be like. Once set up, the display will include signage and information on Michigan's state designated equestrian trails. The goal is to complete this project in the FY25 budget year. Scott Pratt will let ETS know what the DNR needs in terms of videos of trail riding experiences. The OAC will work with the simulation creators to produce a bullet point list of features to include, this will be shared with ETS members for comment.

ARNOLD ROAD ACCESS TO STATE LAND

Jill Koester/Scott Slavin, DNR

Traverse City area horse trail riders are working with the DNR mapping out horse trails in the Williamsburg/Traverse City area. Jill Koester has identified Arnold Road (County deeded access road) as a perfect option for an equestrian trail head. Arnold Road is a two-track that leads to state land and is mostly accessed by horse and foot traffic. Part of this access site runs through a member only golf club. The golf club has petitioned the County to close this road, which in turn would not allow equestrians access to the state land with vehicles and trailers utilizing Arnold Road as an access point but was denied. The golf club is now working with concerned members of the public to determine how best to maintain access to the public land that Arnold Road provides. Local equestrians have been exploring other ideas to access the state land and devise another trail head point. Jill mentioned that at the end of Arnold Road someone has deposited a pile of debris, making it impossible to get a car back there. Jill has been advised to communicate with Scott Slavin, DNR, and share the ideas equestrians have been exploring.

EQUINE SPRINT TEAM

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf/Tim Novak, DNR

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf has reported that the Equestrian Sprint team with DNR members have decided to disband. Some of the topics that were discussed during these meetings will be brought back to the ETS meetings, such as campgrounds.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf has started collecting equestrian trail design guides and ideas, along with receiving information from DNR staff and equestrian groups. Amy is planning on submitting a design guide by the end of this year or at the Q4 ETS meeting.

SIGNAGE SUBCOMMITTEE

Tim Novak, DNR

Tim Novak stated that recently a nonmotorized signage subcommittee was formed. Committee members are Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf (ETS/MTAC), Brandy Miller (ETS), John Bollman (NAW), and Stephanie Swanberg (NAW).

The signage workgroup will discuss equestrian etiquette signs, equestrian campground signage, and other equestrian sign needs.

CAMPGROUND ENFORCEMENT

Dug Jordan

Scheck's State Forest Campground is still having issues with cars parking in equestrian campsites, people accessing the horse water steps with kayaks, and ORV's riding through the campground areas.

Stephanie Rosinski/DNR

Stephanie stated that Scheck's DNR staff has moved boating access site down the river, away from the water steps, but it is not desirable access point. DNR is looking for water access options outside of the horse campground, and adding ORV parking outside of Scheck's campground, in addition to adding no ORV's signs in the campground.

Nicole Hunt, DNR, mentioned to keep in mind, these 2 locations are state forest campgrounds. The current LUOD dedicates a portion of 50' outside of each of the camp sites as "state park" lands. Depending on where these activities are taking place they may not be in violation.

STATE FOREST CAMPGROUNDS

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf

Amy mentioned an equestrian group is forming to talk about state forest campgrounds to discuss ideas on reducing trail conflicts. Meetings will start in October.

EQUESTRIAN RESERVATION TAB - CABINS

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf

Amy is working with DNR staff to add a tab to the CAMIS reservation system allowing cabins at Waterloo and Sleepy Hollow to be reserved online. **UPDATE** tabs should be available by end of next week (Sept. 21).

RAIL TRAILS - DETERMINING ACCESS

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf

Fred Meijer - Berry Junction Trail (Jill Sell, DNR)

The DNR website reflects equestrians have access to a portion of this rail trail. These particular trails were transferred administratively from state forest to state park lands. Which means they

were formerly open to equestrian use, but under state park land use they are closed for equestrian use. DNR staff is continuing to work on an LUOD mapping designated state equestrian trails. DNR staff will need to include these situations in the discussion when mapping the equestrian trails for the proposed LUOD. Nicole Hunt asked Amy to share the list with equestrian groups for feedback. Jill Sell will check and verify current landowner permissions that are currently in place.

Betsy Valley (Scott Slavin, DNR)

Scott Slavin stated the Betsy Valley Trail Committee claims equestrians do not have access to the trail system. Conversations have taken place with board members on allowing horses, some members are in favor and open to continuing the conversation.

UPDATES

ETS REGIONAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Sam Norman – see attached report.

Sam discussed the process of training and gaining trust with horses. Desensitizing horses for situations. Conditioning and social behaviors and the horse's actions in response to the human feelings. Creating horses that are more tolerant against various trail user groups (hikers, bikers). The U.P. has a lot of open land where you can ride and may not encounter much, these areas can be considered safe zones that are needed to work with horses on the training mentioned above. Keeping in mind being realistic of what each group needs, ensuring everyone has their slice of the pie.

Jenny Cook – see attached report.

Brandy Miller - see attached report.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf- see attached report.

Dug Jordan – see attached report.

MTRA UPDATE

Dug Jordan

Cheboygan Camp

Dug reported there is a new city manager, and conversations have been initiated about purchasing additional acreage. The industrial value has been brought up by the city has an interest in a DNR parcel located on the river to discuss potential land exchange.

MDOT Northern MI Plan

MTRA has met with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and discussed hazardous trail road crossings and presented solutions, conversations are still occurring.

NONMOTORIZED TRAIL MAINTENANCE FUNDING SUBCOMMITTEE

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf

A Nonmotorized Trail Maintenance and Funding Subcommittee has been formed in anticipating for a long process to cultivate ways on funding sustainable nonmotorized trail creation, maintenance, and improvements. Recurring meetings are scheduled for 1x month over the next year and will include various stakeholders along the way.

Some topics to be discussed and researched will be:

- Local level involvement
- Maintenance repair and reroutes
- Funding
- Bridal Tags

Anna Lee has been conducting research on funding for nonmotorized trails. Results reflect that Michigan people that have been polled come to a consensus that nonmotorized recreational funding model needs revamping. Anna will share the report once completed, by mid-October or early November.

Anna Lee has also been involved in writing a handbook for a Michigan State University (MSU) college semester course on trail planning/development and will share once released.

THUNDER VALLEY (LUOD) PUBLIC MEETING

Ron Yesney, DNR

Ron Yesney, DNR, will share the notes from the Thunder Valley public meeting that was held on June 15 with ETS members. Ron stated the majority of people attending (approximately 38) were in favor of prohibiting bicycles on the Thunder Valley trail system. Some of the reasons given included safety, creating a safe zone for young horse training, and eliminating conflicts with bikers. Overall, the meeting was positive, and everyone was cordial. NAW committee voted to support the LUOD.

Tim Novak, DNR, followed up by saying the next step is to present the draft LUOD at the September Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC) meeting for discussion and solicit support.

EBIKE 1-YEAR TRIAL SURVEY AND SIGNAGE

Tim Novak, DNR

The draft ebike survey is being circulated with DNR staff, and feedback involves applying modifications based on skip logic. Sign orders are currently restricted due to fiscal year-end purchase restrictions. October will start the new FY and sign orders will be placed. The sign shop vendor has limited resources and large orders will take some time to produce.

2024 MEETING DATES

- Sept. 25-26 Trails Summit (Lansing)
- Nov. 13 (Detroit)

ROUND ROBIN/CLOSING COMMENTS

Meeting adjourned at 4:21 p.m.

DRAFT

2024 ETS Report - UPPER PENNSULA Q3

1. Looking out for the well-being of the Horse

- **The value of compatible varied trail use groups.**
- **Platforms of Training and desensitizing horses as a methodology for the wellbeing of horse and rider.**
- **Behavioral data as part of a larger database to analyze changes in a specific trail use for other than solely historic user group accommodation decision.**

2. We are in the discussion stages of the feasibility of a foot/hoof traffic trail system at Stanley lakes north of Seney.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Norman

ETS 3Q 2024 SW - Jenny Cook

Bass River - Equestrians continue to enjoy the equestrian trails at Bass River. We are thankful for the support from MDNR and Bass River Horse Friends.



Photo credit J. Klein Photos at Bass River Recreation Area, Michigan

Ft Custer Recreation Area - Trails are looking great with the cooperation of the MDNR and the Fort Custer Horse Friends. We are thankful for electricity at the equestrian campsites. With this improvement, the equestrian campsites are being reserved more frequently.



Photo credit: Pure Michigan at Fort Custer Recreation Area

Equestrians are very excited about another **Michigan Shoreline Horseback Riding Season** at **Silver Lake State Park**. We are thankful the MDNR is managing the season.



Photo credit: J Klein Photos

Equestrians enjoy riding the **Van Buren State Trail**.



2024 Q3 ETS Report - Central Lower - Brandy Miller (9/11/24)

[MHTA - Trails Incident Report- Form](#)

[MHTA - Trails Incident Report - Spreadsheet](#)

Sleepy Hollow <https://shtra.org/>

- Recent Events:
 - 8/30. 8/31, 9/1 - Labor Day camp weekend
- Project Updates:
 - They are prepared to be flexible in their event dates, per completion of the new pipeline project.
- Upcoming Events:
 - 10/17-10/20 - Explore the Hollow Weekend camp over
- Project Updates: ongoing gas line replacement

Ionia <https://www.ioniahorsetrailsassociation.org/>

- Recent Events:
- Upcoming Events:
 - 10/4-10/6 - IHTA Chili Cookoff weekend **-cancelled**
- Project Updates:
 - May 20 – Successfully set new front panels on 7 sites, cleared path to vault toilets
 - Also making temporary signs to “stay off grass” for the FTR lunch area.
 - Trevor is ordering, locally made, Manure Responsibility signs (20) for corrals, and one identifying the West Side Staging area and laminating 2 signs for the Phase 2 path encouraging usage.
 - New signage for the Cart Trail

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

- Recent Events:
 -
- Upcoming Events:
 - Sept 14 @ 2:00 location TBD - Annual members meeting
 - Oct 12 - Halloween Spooktacular
- Project Updates:
 - Ron Walker and Travis Buehler of the Friends group accomplished the very large task of opening the 9 mile loop. This loop had overgrown with Olives and other picker bushes to become impassable. This is significant, because without the 9 mile loop, the number of campers will be low, as there is not enough mileage for people to stay over for a weekend of riding.

Waterloo

- Recent Events:
 - July 30 - Stakeholders meeting for next phase of improvements. Suggestions for a new modern equestrian camp were voiced and well received.

- 3 non-equestrians commented about heavy usage concerns by bikes, and this needed to be taken into consideration for future park decisions. Concerns were for other user groups, and trail surface impacts. None of these comments were from equestrians.
- Upcoming Events:
 - Oct 5 - Portage Lake Ride
- Project Updates:
 - Development of a modern equestrian campground at the Maute Rd location was presented by Chad Simpson and well received by the Waterloo DNR at the Stakeholders meeting on July 30th. They are working together to establish a meeting time at the site in the near future.
- Other:
 - Campers in the equestrian park had issues because the reserved sites were not marked as such and parking in the wrong spots. People who reserved them arrived and people were camped in them.

Waterloo Hunt Club - No Report

Please give a description of the Trail incident from above.

16 responses

Dirt bikes on horse trail west side Pontiac lake

Evidence of substantial use of portions of the eq trail system by atvs/motorcycles

Family (mom dad child) of bikers peddled past our 2 horses very fast, when we saw they were not going to slow down, we got off the trail The second time they passed, I said "just to let you know for next time, bikes are supposed to yield to horses. Not all horses are as calm as ours." We both smiled and wished each other a nice day. Then as the mom peddled away she yelled back, "why don't you clean up your horse shit!" I said nothing.

2 separate incidents with a Side by side, they didn't know the rules approaching equestrians. I had to explain to them to slow to a stop and turn off ignition.

Child on bike had cut down some blossoming branches and were carrying them while peddling. Me and 3 other equestrians were standing just outside the equestrian staging area when she snuck up behind us. All horses spooked and were scared. She had no clue that it was her that was scaring the horses and kept peddling toward us. Fortunately we all stayed on our horses.

Golf cart in camp

Non-equestrian campers had ORV/ATV's in campground and using them.

Passed from behind by four bikes on horse trail and again in staging area, same group of bikes were on hike / bike trails and parts of horse trail in more than one area. The Two/ fat tires bikers were not peddling and two were regular bikes.

A man jogging on the switchback ran his shoulder(body checked) two of our horses off of the trail while we are standing at the bottom. I had a timid rider on trail and we were debating on cutting the ride short and heading back or continuing on. Jogger had enough time to see us and decide on a different path.

We encountered him on the top of the stitch back first an were in decent towards the bottom when he didn't move off to get up the trail. He continued and ran through our horses as we were heading down

Second encounter was at the bottom where we had two riders who were rammed into to get us off the trail.

I had started down the equestrian trail that goes south out of the parking lot. There is a bike trail that crosses shortly there after which had a large shrub blocking visibility on the on the



east corner of the two trails crossing. I had no way to see the bike coming behind the shrub and because he never slowed up for the trail crossing he never saw me approaching on the equestrian trail. He came out of the blind corner so fast and so close in front of me that my horse spooked badly and I was dumped. I fortunately only sustained some extremely bad bruising. The really disappointing part was the bicyclist did not even stop to ask if I was injured or needed help. He just continued on down the trail. I was not aware previously that there was such a thing as an incident report that could be filed so I never contacted DNR or anyone regarding this. It just recently came to my attention when I brought this up in a Facebook group in response to a different posting that these reports should be filed.

Met a jeep on trail 17. About half way from trail 18. Asked jeep to stop so we could pass. They swore at us and sped by. It had a lit over lights. Blue and bright lights on at us. Then gunned it and backed off on muffler three times. Its narrow through there and not much room to get off the trail, also muddy. We got off the trail and then they passed and swore. F u. At us. Dangerous to our horses! We were unaware that they could be on that trail. Tracked them to where they entered on trail 19. And exited on 17 to the main road.

Runner came running up behind us. Didn't say anything scarred the hell out of my horse. Runner was told to announce the self's coming up on horses.

These people were DELIGHTFUL. They asked to pass. They were fun. I liked seeing them and their cheering families. We met probably 45 runners. Every one asked to pass or we asked to pass. All were so polite. I liked them and sharing the trail with them.

Camped at Schecks Trail camp for 2 weeks. Every weekend the watering hole at the river was completely clogged with kayakers and people on tubes. Many people pull their cars, trucks and trailers right up to the trail entrance leading to the water hole so they don't have to carry their kayaks very far, but make it very difficult and dangerous for horse and rider to navigate through all the traffic to get to the river. Once their, they are lined up along the beach and hang out for hours to party, making bon fires, playing loud music, smoking and being rambunctious in the water. All VERY DANGEROUS situations to try to get horses to the water. Many of the tubers and kayakers are coming from upstream, and not through the camp, but see the beach and decide to hang out for hours before continuing their journey. It is very frustrating that the Schecks People Camp is right around the corner, but they don't use it. We are not allowed in their camp with the horses, but they are allowed to take over our camps, clogging all the best camp sites for day use and loitering all day in our water holes. There was also a homeless person living in a tent right at the edge of the trail to the water hole. I reported this a week into camping there, but nothing was done about it and he was still there, with all his garbage strewn all over the site, when we finally left on 8-3-24. He is probably still there now. The horses have to walk by his tent to get to the water and if he was moving around inside it spooked them every time. It is very unsightly and uncomfortable to be around as a camper.

Met a male bicyclist riding a white Cannondale mountain bike on the equestrian trail within Silver Creek Park at a fork in the trail. I told the bicyclist that he was not allowed on the trails. He said that he's been doing it for 35 years and then took off. I rode after him to try and get a picture but couldn't catch up to him in time.



Southeast Trail Associations: All organizations have been busy holding their spring/summer events and work bees. Attendance is up and that is great to see. Brighton's road repairs are in process and we're hoping it'll be reopened soon. Ortonville was granted funding to complete 4 trail improvements needed, thank you for finding the extra funding so they could complete all 4 at one time. Proud Lake's trail separation is complete! Thank you to all who helped during that very long process. All of the associations are getting ready for their Fall events and continuing to clear trails as needed. With all this rain, it's been a prolific growing year for overgrowth and severe storms continue to knock down trees and dump torrential rains on our trails.

Stoney Creek Horse Trails: I scouted the Stoney Creek designated horse trails with my side by side while staying up north to determine their condition. The area seems to be seeing more ATV use than it used to and I could not get through any way I tried due to the deep mud holes in the roads. I don't even see how most people would be able to drive their car/truck to access the parking lot for the GEMS project at the east end of the Lee Grande Ranch. I did submit a map to Greg and Paige of where I scouted and where I was stopped by trail erosion. Off shoot trails that are not seeing ATV usage are eroded from rain damage and have not been cleared of tree overgrowth enough to get through. Is there any funding available for fixing the erosion that is happening here? Is this considered a ATV forest road or route or trail? I don't know that may trail riders will want to ride these trails if they are busy with ATV, while some areas are easy to get off the trail, other areas are not due to the logging growth and ATV could not see you around curves or corners. I had a couple of dirt bikes come up on me very fast. I used to ride this area frequently and did not expect it to be in the shape it is now in.

ODNR, Malabar, Pleasant Hill and Mohican: I recently camped near Mansfield, OH at Malabar State Park and Mohican State Forest. The ODNR does a really nice job on the trails and camps there and since our last visit two years ago, they have generously used rolling grade dips to cut down on the erosion of the trails and also take care to balance conservation with recreation. All three parks have lots of elevation change and it feels like you're riding a mountain goat in many of the areas which many trail riders prefer to flat land riding. Bike and horse trails are separate, and they did a great job of informing riders and bikers of which trails they could use and when trail crossings were coming up with signage. They also have the trail crossing structures that slow bike riders down at the potentially dangerous crossings. The width of some of these were 3' and some could have been little wider than that. The ODNR also has all of their trails on the app OuterSpatial and I was able to download the app and use it to navigate our rides, it was a really nice option. You can have all of the trails in the area downloaded or choose just one user groups trails. Because we were only allowed on the designated horse trails, I chose to just have the horse trails on my map.



Mayhem Swamp: Recently in conversation with Scott Slavin, the Kalkaska County Road Commission had placed seasonal road signs at the entrance/exit to the swamp, on State Rd and Rayborn Rds. I contacted John Roger's, the road commissioner and inquired about the signs. He told me that the county owned the easement but would not maintain it. He additionally said that is open to all users, horses, bikes, ORV's, hikers. He did ask about the gates closing it off to users, I informed him that I had the key and would get them opened. I asked if the property owner, whom had told the MTRA to stay out and that it was private property raised any issue, Roger's simply stated to have him call him. Scott and I are planning on going over there, open the gates and inspect the trail for use.

Endurance Riders: I was contacted by a Barb Curly regarding MTRA assistance with a National endurance ride, utilizing the Shore to Shore trail and campgrounds. She stated the ride is being scheduled for late July 2025, and it has been advertised nationally and has been receiving positive feedback from various states, including Florida, Arizona and Oregon. She is putting together a presentation for the next board meeting, October 5th

USFS Camps: The USFS has contacted the MTRA and other horse groups that they will implement changes to the 4 campgrounds, being closed camps with reservations for group camping at a \$60 dollar a day fee, 10 dollar daily use fee for others. They could not provide a start date, due to changes at the camps, fencing, gates, water to name a few.

Dug Jordan
NLP ETS Representative