



Non-Motorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW)

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: March 17, 2022

10 a.m. – Noon

Welcome – Roll Call

PRESENT FOR THE NON-MOTORIZED ADVISORY WORKGROUP (NAW):

- Andrea LaFontaine, Chairperson
- John Morrison (absent)
- Mary Bohling
- Neal Glazebrook
- Kenny Wawsczyk
- Kristen Wiltfang
- Jason Aric Jones
- Lori Hauswirth

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

1. Kristen Bennett, Annalisa Centofanti, Dakota Hewlett, Scott Slavin, Nikki Van Bloem, Jill Sell, Greg Kinser, Paige Perry, Jason Stephens, Brian Mastenbrook, Jon Mayes, Nicole Hunt, Ron Yesney, Michelle O'Kelly

Others: Jenny Cook, Kristie Walls, Karen Bahrman, Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Mark Losey, Teresa, Renaud, Emily Shinevar (MSP)

Meeting minutes

ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 10:04 a.m. by committee Chair, Andrea LaFontaine.

Motion was made to approve the October 21, 2021 draft minutes as is. Kenny Wawsczyk and Mary Bohling approved, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made to approve the March 17, 2022 agenda as is. Kristen Wiltfang and Lori Hauswirth approved, with all in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Equestrian, Jenny Cook, presented a Horse Trails Safe Passing plan (see attached). A question was brought up as to whether a bell is as effective as a human voice. Equestrians in the meeting responded, saying human voice is the best practice. Often, horses will be afraid of a bell sound. Earbuds were pointed out to be an issue, as a horse rider cannot communicate with a trail user that cannot hear the horse or rider talking.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

MOTION TO ELECT VICE CHAIR

Kenny Wawsczyk nominated himself for the vice chair position. Jason Aric Jones and Andrea LaFontaine approve, with all votes in favor. Motion carried.

PROPOSED TRAIL USE DISCUSSION

Equestrian, Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, discussed and presented a proposed draft legislative bill to amend the Right to Ride public act; 1994 PA 451, amending various sections (see attached documents).

Equestrians are asking the DNR to identify horse trails with fundamentally incompatible user issues for riders and horses, reducing conflict and safety concerns. Additional concerns were discussed regarding State equine campground policy and the need for a reservation system in order to guarantee site availability. Also, the need to add additional campsites dedicated for horse use only. The DNR and equestrians are recognizing a trail list, provided in the documents enclosed from Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, targeting trails across Michigan for proposed special Land Use Orders of the Director (LUOD) specifically for horse only.

NAW committee members Lori Hauswirth and Jason Aric Jones added they would like to see data or an assessment of where issues are before moving forward with legislation, along with acknowledging or identifying if there is user group support to maintain horse only trail systems. Also, noticing most of the trails on the list are already designated horse only. These conversations need to continue to avoid pitting user groups against each other, working towards a common end

goal. Andrea LaFontaine mentioned to keep in mind the legislation avenue is a strategy move, sparking discussions. The proposed language is still in draft version and has not been accepted yet.

Dakota Hewlett, DNR, noted some of the trails from the targeted list are on Forest Resource (FRD) lands. Dakota asked if either division would like to comment; Jason Stephens, FRD, had no additional comments at this time. Nikki Van Bloem, DNR, stated a meeting between Parks and Recreation (PRD) and FRD is scheduled next week to discuss the trail list.

MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND – EASEMENTS

John Mayes, DNR Recreation Grants Unit Manager and Program Manager for the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), provided information regarding commercial crossings and crossing easement on trails. Trail management and ownership is divided into 2 segments, local unit managed and operated versus state owned managed and operated. Reviews for a commercial crossing easement that are State managed and operated go through real estate services section of the DNR, which ultimately will be handled through the land exchange review committee. The second segment for local unit managed trails involves the MNRTF, which has acquired trail corridors throughout state and are assisting local governments to acquire or develop pathways. About once or twice a year the DNR receives a request from local government seeking approval for a grant to add another crossing. The DNR discourages additional crossings of pathways as there are more conflicts with added crossings. The DNR regional grant coordinator and local government will partner together to review and consider if the crossing is necessary, discussing impacts, working towards a resolution.

Kristen Wiltfang, committee member, asked about boundary rezone cases where developers request easement on trail property that is grant assisted. Some of the property deeds from previous granted trails do not have any indication the property is encumbered. Is there a way to proactively go back and add a declaration of notice? Jon Mayes advised if an older deed does not have the declaration of notice in place, with support from the DNR, the local unit of government can request to have those encumbrances added to the property deed. More recent property deeds most likely will have the chain of title included in the documents. Kristen asked if there is a template or model language to share? Jon directed Kristen to the DNR web site or handbook.

UPDATES

RIBBON CUTTINGS

Dakota Hewlett shared the ribbon cutting for the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Trail on Belle Isle will be on April 26, 2022. Phase one of the 6-mile loop has been completed.

STATE TRAIL COORDINATOR UPDATE

Kristen Bennett, DNR, provide an update on the State Trails Coordinator position, noting that

applications have been reviewed internally. Potential candidates have been sent to Quality-of-Life Human Resources for a final credential review. Kristen said the DNR is hoping to begin interviews in early April and have a permanent State Trail Coordinator in place by the end of April.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Neal Glazebrook, committee member, spoke about the Michigander event being held July 26 – 31, 2022. Neal mentioned the event has been taken over by the League of Michigan Bicyclists (LMB). Registration is now open to public. The route will span across Great Lake-to-Lake Trail (GLTL) starting in South Haven.

2022 MEETING DATES

June 8; Sept. 7; Nov. 17

Andrea LaFontaine is hoping to resume in person meetings and will keep everyone updated.

ROUND ROBIN/CLOSING COMMENTS

Andrea LaFontaine shared she attended a public meeting held in Pontiac about public trails in the community. Understanding the process that communities take implementing trails, involves a lot of time and labors. Andrea recognized Kristen Wiltfang's work for all her efforts not only in Oakland County but overall, all the time she has given through her work.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Legislation Presentation – Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf
NAW Meeting; March 17, 2022

Introduce the legislation

Introduce the Areas Affected

Reasons for bike separation:

- Most trail riders and MB agree use does not mix
- For MB – trail surface complaints, horses aerate the soil, bikes compact it
- For trail riders – safety, life threatening injuries, examples
- History of separation of multi-use trails:
 - Trail riders lose trails built for horses to MB
 - Or it takes years to create the separation
 - This continued discussion of and need for separation of shared trails creates constant and continued conflict – policy will solve this
 - Reciprocal closures for designated/posted horse trails and designated/posted mountain bike trails
- Riders need designated horse trails
 - Safety from unintentional and intentional harm
 - Assurance of less conflicts
 - Can be paved off or more often not even included on multi-use non-motorized trails
 - Increased usage of trails, decreased safety for trail riders – busy trails become inaccessible to most trail riders

Reasons for Equestrian Campground Policy

- Equestrians camping with their horse are only allowed in 6.5% of the DNR managed campgrounds in Michigan, 93.5% of the campgrounds are inaccessible to campers with horses
- Equestrians can only access 0.5% of the DNR managed campgrounds when camping with a horse in the U.P., only 2 campgrounds in the whole of the U.P.
- Example: Headquarters Lake only has 6 campsites, it is 2.5 hours away to the next nearest horse campground, there are 307 non-equestrian campsites in 9 other campgrounds in this immediate area and yet, many times HQ Lake sites are full of non-eq while the non-eq campgrounds have plenty of sites for the 6 campers. This flat out denies trail riders their right to public access of our campgrounds and trails. Trail riders are asking for 8 other sites to be designate for those camping with horses in the U.P., only a part of that campground, these sites are designated by corrals which were built for horses. We are asking for 14 campsites in the U.P.
- Equestrian campgrounds were built for those camping with horses, they were managed for those camping with horses until recently. We are seeing an increase in conflicts ranging from safety issues to the denial of our public access when non-eq camp in horse camps.
- Equestrians are prohibited from camping in non-eq campgrounds due to safety concerns and these same concerns should hold true and give merit to why equestrian campgrounds should be for those camping with a horse whenever possible and in some cases, that is the only responsible choice
- Equestrian campgrounds have been improved and maintained in many cases with volunteers from the trail groups donations, time and efforts to remain open and usable for the future of trail riders

- Non-eq like the big sites that many of the trail riders rigs will only fit into, again, denying access to the campground, they park near the amenities created for those camping with horses
- Non-eq campers behavior is many times not safe to be around with horses, families that don't know how to act around horses, campers partying till late hours, shooting fireworks and guns in camp, riding ATVs even though none of these are allowed, they are happening in our state forest campgrounds
- Not enough DNR patrolling of campgrounds to deal with the conflicts and even when called, the DNR many times cannot respond in time to address or do not take the complaints seriously
- Mixed use camping is bad policy in non-eq campgrounds as well as in equestrian campgrounds
 - The USFS has now recognized the fact that non-eq in equestrian campgrounds threatens trail riders access, see attached whitepaper memo

Horse Trails to close to bikes, only the designated horse trail within these areas, not the entire trail system

Southeast MI

- Proud Lake – has plans to build separate bike trails, close horse trails to bikes

Northern Lower Peninsula

- Big Oaks – 26 miles
- Tin Cup Springs - 20 miles
- Shore to Shore Trail – 420 miles
- Elk Hill – 60 miles
- Investigate trails around other equestrian campgrounds

Upper Peninsula

- Cedar River North – 17.5 miles
- Headquarters Lake – 25 miles
- Thunder Valley – 9 miles

Horse Trails already closed to bikes

Southeast MI

- Brighton Rec
- Highland Rec
- Maybury State Park
- Ortonville Rec
- Pinckney Rec
- Pontiac Lake Rec

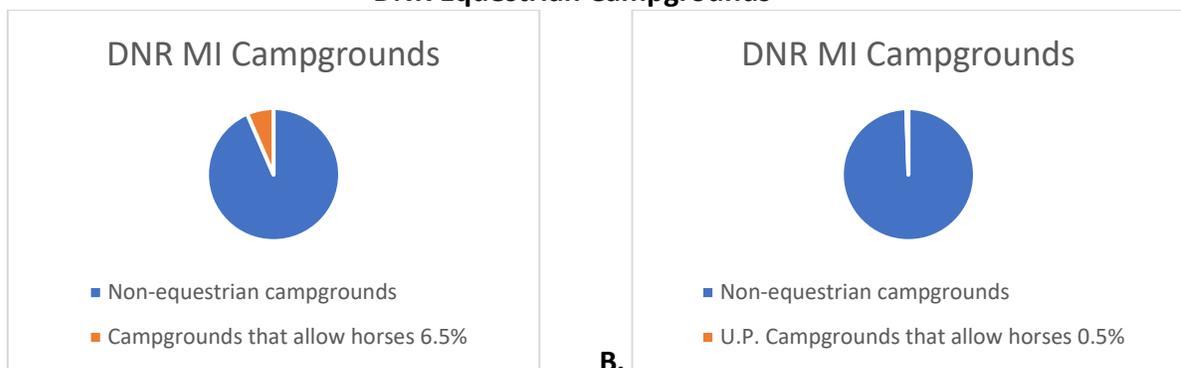
Central MI

- Barry State Game Area
- Ionia Rec
- Sleepy Hollow State Park
- Waterloo Rec
- Yankee Springs Rec

Southwest MI

- Allegan State Game Area
- Bass River Rec
- Fort Custer (except one agreed upon multi-use section)

DNR Equestrian Campgrounds



A. 6.5% of the total DNR-managed campgrounds in Michigan allow equestrian camping

B. 0.5% of the total DNR-managed campgrounds in Michigan which allow equestrians are in the U.P. Equestrians camping with their horses are not permitted in 93.5% of the DNR-managed campgrounds in Michigan as shown in the above chart. Only 6.5% of the total DNR-managed campgrounds in Michigan allow equestrian camping and only 0.5% of those campgrounds are in the U.P. As an example of what trail riders are requesting, there are only 2 DNR-managed campgrounds in the U.P. which allow for equestrian camping. Trail riders request that Headquarters Lake be designated for camping with a horse. At this time, there are only 6 camping sites available at this campground. In the surrounding area, there are 9 other campgrounds which amounts to 313 total campsites available in the area. Trail riders ask that the DNR protect the 6 equestrian campsites, only 1.9% of the available campsites in this area, for campers who have a horse. The other 307 campsites in the area do not allow for equestrian camping and it is 2.5 hours to the next closest campground which allows horses. Trail riders are also only asking for 8 other sites at the Cedar River North Campground in the U.P. to be designated for camping with a horse. This would preserve 14 campsites in the whole of the U.P. under DNR-management.

DNR-Managed Equestrian Campgrounds:

Big Oaks Equestrian State Forest Campground, Atlanta, MI, Northern Lower
 Black Lake Trail Camp, Cheboygan, MI, Northern Lower
 Brighton Recreation Area, Howell, MI, Southeast
 Cedar River North State Forest, Escanaba, MI, Upper Peninsula
 Elk Hill, Vanderbilt, MI, Northern Lower
 Fort Custer Recreation Area, Augusta, MI, Southwest
 Headquarters Lake, Newberry, MI, Upper Peninsula
 Highland Recreation Area, White Lake, MI, Southeast
 Hopkins Creek (Shore to Shore camp), Manton, MI Northern Lower
 Ionia Recreation Area, Ionia, MI, South Central
 Ortonville Recreation Area, Goodrich, MI, Southeast
 Pontiac Lake Recreation Area, White Lake, MI, Southeast
 Shore to Shore Camps, Northern Lower
 Waterloo Recreation Area, Grass Lake, MI, South Central
 Yankee Springs Recreation Area, Middleville, MI, South Central

Proposed Equestrian Campgrounds:

Little Brevort Lake, Upper Peninsula
 Stanley Lake, Upper Peninsula
 Tin Cup Springs, Luther, MI, Northern Lower