



MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL (MTAC)

Meeting Minutes

Location: Ralph A. MacMullan Center (RAM)

104 Conservation Drive

Roscommon, MI 48653

Date: March 23, 2023

Time: 1 – 3 p.m.

Welcome – Roll Call

PRESENT FOR THE MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL

- Brian Beauchamp, Chairperson
- Kenneth Hopper, Vice Chairperson
- Michael Maves (virtual)
- Mark Losey
- Ryan Laporte
- Jason Aric Jones
- Richard Williamson
- Jenny Cook
- Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf
- Karen Middendorp
- Tavon Brooks

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

- Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Greg Kinser, Ron Yesney, Peter Costa, Blake Gingrich, Rob Katona, Jill Sell, Paige Perry, Lee Maynard, Sage Hegdal, Christopher Stark, Nicole Hunt, Jennifer Etienne, Jason Fleming, Scott Pratt

Meeting minutes

(Draft Version)

Meeting called to order at 1:07 p.m. by Chair, Brian Beauchamp.

Council and DNR staff introductions.

ACTION ITEMS

Motion was made to approve the Dec. 8 meeting minutes by Jason Aric Jones and seconded by Karen Middendorp, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made to approve the March 23 agenda by Ryan Laporte and seconded by Jason Aric Jones, with all in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- **Alex MacDonald** mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.
- **Lisa Tidbury** mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.
- **Michelle Palumbo** mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.
- **Darin Kowalski** mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.
- **Debra Smallman** mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.
- **Holly Wright** her daughter is a mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.
- **Robert Morris** mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.
- **Becky Carlsen** mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.
- **Cindy Kesler** President of the Proud Lake Trail Riding Association, equestrian advocate. Advocate to separate multi use trails allowing both horses and mountain bikes.
- **Joel Mikkelson** volunteer with the Hart Montague trail. Concerned with funding for equipment purchases to maintain trails. Would like to see a long-term solution.
- **Pete Lundborg** would like to see a connection between Baldwin to downtown Pentwater.
- **Nancy Effrusi** brought attention to an incident involving horse trail riders and mountain bike users at the Proud Lake Recreation Area.
- **Tre Gaffni** mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.

- **Lyndsay Boring** equestrian advocate that does not feel safe sharing multi use trails with mountain bike users.
- **Steve Poirier** mountain bike advocate with concerns over the mountain bike trail closure and new trails at Proud Lake Recreation Area in Oakland County.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

PROUD LAKE RECREATION AREA

Tim Novak, DNR State Trails Coordinator, commented that over the past couple years a group of DNR staff, equestrian users, and mountain bike users put in motion a trail separation plan which had gone through the stages of planning and development. Both the equestrians and mountain bikers. came to a consensus and agreed upon a final trail separation plan. The mountain bike trail was not built to the design specs that was agreed upon and did not follow designated path. The rogue path went through areas of the park that conservation staff specifically marked off as restricted. Proud Lake Park staff temporarily closed the new mountain bike trail in order to correct the issue and move the trail back to the original trail plan specs that was agreed upon. The overall time from the discovery of the error and fixing the bike path is estimated to be between 2-4 weeks, which the new trail will than reopen.

Jenn Etienne, DNR, spoke with Bill Hermann (contractor) weather dependent, Bill will work this weekend correcting the bike path. Jen mentioned the final mileage for the path is 4.61 miles, which is a bit over what was originally planned for.

Jason Aric Jones does not want to see the equestrians pitted against the mountain bike users. Jason is asking where the compromise is when originally 11 miles of trails were shared and now with the separation, the equestrians have over half of the trail miles and the mountain bikers have 4.61 miles. Jason feels a professional trail designer should have been utilized from the start of this project. Also, Jason would like more compatibility with DNR stewardship when it comes to designating trail use on state lands.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf said equestrians do not feel safe riding at Proud Lake. Amy assured that the mountain bikers and equestrians are in favor of separating trails. Equestrians do not feel they need to give up trails. Amy added that since 1990, equestrians have lost access to 14 state trails. At Fort Custer 13 miles of trails were lost to the mountain bikers to the point where new trails had to be built for equine use . Additionally, equine use has been prohibited on many linear trails and Amy is not sure what the reason is for that.

Richard Williamson agrees that he can see the need to give both trail users separate trails.

Jenny Cook discusses how horses are prey animals and are always on the look-out for danger. Mountain bikers have characteristics that a horse can conclude as a threat to them which creates an unsafe situation for the trail riders, horses, and mountain bikers.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf pointed out the DNR website reports 2000 miles of biking trails and 845 miles of equine trails. Also, on the DNR website 28 parks and camps are available for equine use, while 175 parks and camps are available for mountain bike users.

Brian Beauchamp asked the council going forward how should this topic be addressed. Jason Aric Jones suggested inviting League of Michigan Bicyclist to provide an update at the next meeting. Tim Novak, DNR, said this specific trail correction at Proud Lake will be completed and reopened by the next meeting. However, Tim said we can foster an open conversation between mountain bike and equestrian use at Proud Lake on future trail expansions, design and development, along with the DNR trail proposal process.

Mark Losey concluded that what he heard today from the public comment is this trail plan at Proud Lake has not been properly communicated to the public.

MOTION

Motion was made by Brian Beauchamp for the DNR to address LMB, affiliate MMB, PLTRA and have a coordinated community outreach plan about what transpired at Proud Lake Recreation Area with the separation of horse and bike trails. (Tim Novak will respond to any public comment cards that listed an email address). Motion not carried, no second or vote taken.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEM - LONG TERM REVENUE SOURCING FOR ALL STATE TRAILS*

TRAILS STAFF

Tim Novak, DNR, introduced two new trails section members. Sage Hegdal is the northeast Lower Peninsula Trails Specialist, backfilling the vacancy from Nick Van Bloem and Lee Maynard is the trails section Nonmotorized Grant Coordinator, backfilling the vacancy from Dakota Hewlett. Both Sage and Lee are very talented and hold a wealth of knowledge in their fields.

MTAC RESTRUCTURE FROM SUBCOMMITTEE (resolution 08-2022)

Jason Aric Jones mentioned resolution 08-2022 was voted on and passed at the December 2022 MTAC meeting. Jason said the resolution outlined a restructure of the body for MTAC, which was created and formed 30 years ago. The 30-year-old model does not fit anymore. Too many changes have occurred over the years with trail recreation. Any changes made to the MTAC structure will have to be made through legislation. The proposed restructure model will bring in more inclusion and representation across the board. A subcommittee has not been formed as of yet.

No action was taken in forming a subcommittee for this meeting with the new council members being recently appointed. The resolution will be shared amongst the council members and the agenda topic will be readdressed at the next MTAC meeting.

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

Tim Novak, DNR, said in the interest of committee members that were appointed over the time COVID-19 restrictions were in place and other members who were not properly onboarded, he is working with his staff to form an advisory board orientation. The orientation will be open to both new and current members. Tentatively, Tim has set up Wednesday, April 19, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. and the orientation will be virtual.

Ken Hopper said the orientation is a good opportunity to define expectations and purpose. Should it be considered a time to look at the overall MTAC picture, current legislation, and is the MTAC board functioning as it should. Ken feels MTAC should be involved in the orientation structure process.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf said the Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) has a list of goals to work together with the DNR on and MTAC should develop a similar list.

Mark Losey suggested holding a work session outside of the quarterly scheduled MTAC meetings with DNR staff. Orientation and restructure brain storming.

Brian Beauchamp suggested to set up meeting outside of MTAC quarterly meetings, or Mark Losey suggested Brian and Tim Novak work on a starter plan and come back to MTAC group.

MOTION

Jason Aric Jones made a motion that he will work with Brian Beauchamp and Tim Novak on an agenda to look at the MTAC structure, Mark Losey seconded.

Ken Hopper added to the motion that MTAC convenes as a group to look at MTAC structure, Mark Losey seconded, with all in favor. Motion carried.

EBIKE USAGE ON MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

Tim Novak has formed an Ebike subcommittee with DNR policy and regulatory staff, along with Neal Glazebrook from LMB. The group has met one time.

MOTION

Motion made by Jason Aric Jones to table this topic and move to the next MTAC meeting, Brian Beauchamp seconded, with all in favor. Motion carried.

UPDATES

USFS

None

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) – Jenny Cook (report attached)

Jenny Cook extended an invitation to the Brighton Riding Stables horse educational experience on May 17, 2023 from 10:00-noon for our MTAC Representatives. The focus is to educate about horses and build relations with our fellow trail partners for the safety and enjoyment of everyone including dogs and horses.

Horse Meet and Greet is being held on May 17 at the Brighton Riding Stables for DNR staff. Contact Jenny or Anna Centofanti

Non-motorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW)

Jason Aric Jones reported for the first quarter NAW meeting. There were several new appointed members introduced. Discussions took place on PURE MI trail town applications and how the process works. Resolution from Jason Aric Jones regarding DNR stewardship was presented and tabled as no vote was taken. DNR is looking into hiring a consultant to help implement the State Trail Plan to make it manageable.

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW)

Mark Losey and Karen Middendorp reported for the first quarter SAW meeting. The Verizon Fleet management GPS trackers are almost completed. These trackers will provide a vision to see how they are used and track the equipment maintenance. The Verizon Fleet system will also make connections with equipment manufactures regarding common issues. Approximately 187 miles have been purchased to date with permanent trail funds. Pinney Bridge is still in the works. The Ride Right campaign will filter over to ORV with a similar message, relaying educational and safety messages. DNR field contacts are transitioning from FRD to PRD over the next season. Efforts are still in place to keep Miners Castle trail going. The equipment subcommittee is meeting regularly. The recent Snow Groomer Workshop was a success, and the presence of DNR staff was greatly appreciated.

Off Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup (ORVAW)

Tim Novak reported for the first quarter ORVAW meeting. The meeting was held in-person at the Grayling Nature Center with an impressive public turn out. The committee is working with legislatures to update the Sunset Bill.

ALLEGAN STATE GAME AREA

Tim Novak has made some progress with the DNR Wildlife Division (WLD) and has been told WLD is still meeting with the internal focus group. The focus group is having broader discussions about allowing bike usage over all State Game Area (SGA) managed lands.

Robert Allen is just asking for a response to his proposal submitted to WLD over two years ago. The response he has received is that WLD has formed an advisory focus group to make a recommendation.

MOTION

Jason Aric Jones made a motion asking the Director of the Wildlife Division to provide a detailed update including milestones regarding their place with recreational nonmotorized trails in SGA's and when the Allegan State Game Area formal final proposal response will be available at the next MTAC meeting. Ryan Laporte seconded, with all in favor, motion carried.

Jill Sell, DNR, mentioned that although Jason Aric Jones motion is valid, she is not sure if it is realistic. Jill said a more realistic request is to ask for a formal response to Mr. Allen's proposal.

REGIONAL TRAIL PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Tabled

2023 MEETINGS

June 27 - RAM

Sept. 28 – W.U.P/Marquette (Trails Summit)

Dec. 7 - RAM

CLOSING/ROUND ROBIN

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

March 23, 2023 MTAC Equestrian Report – Jenny Cook

Michigan Horse Trails Directory – Check out the Michigan Horse Trails Directory managed by MTAC Equestrian Representative Amy Scharmen. The MHTD lists horse camping, events, trails, and volunteer friends' groups. Our total 2022 horse trail volunteer recorded value was **\$502,903.41**, and there were many more hours and materials donated that were not recorded. Our dedicated efforts are evidence of how important access to public lands is to people with horses. <http://michiganhorsetrails.com/>

Michigan Horse Trails Directory Event Calendar 2023
<http://michiganhorsetrails.com/events.html> for contact info
Facebook: Michigan horse trails directory

March
25: Michigan Trail Riders Association banquet
31, April 1-2: MICMO April Fool's Gold Yankee Springs

April
1: Horses for Hope Spring Round Up Ride E.A. Cummings Center
1: Muskegon County Trail Riders 3rd Birthday Party Ride
15: MHC Spring Round Up Ride D bar A Scout Ranch Metamora
15-Sept 1: MHC Statewide Trail Ride Challenge
22: Ride for the Ranch Fundraiser Grace Adventures Paradise Ranch
22: Yankee Springs Vaccine Clinic
22: Friends of Allegan County Equestrian Trails poker ride at Silver Creek
22: GLDRA Tin Cup Distance Riding Clinic
29: Brighton Trail Riders/Pinckney Trail Riders banquet

May
6-7: GLDRA White River Spring Endurance Ride at Timber's Edge
6: Waterloo Horseman Green Lake Ride
4-7: MTRA May Blossom Ride
6-7: MICMO April Showers Bring May Flowers at Silver Creek
13: Muskegon County Trail Riders Blessing of the Horse
12-14: Highland Trail Riders Poker Ride Spring Camp
13: Brighton Trail Riders Celebrate Spring Ride and Annual Meeting
13: Yankee Springs Membership Appreciation Ride
18-21: Fort Custer Horse Friends Camp
20: Allegan County Pleasure Riders Annual Benefit Ride Silver Creek
19-21: Pinckney Trail Riders Blessing of the Horse/Ride to Hell and Back Camp
20: Cheff Center Spring Trial Ride
21: Hungerford Trail Riders Blessing of the Trails Ride
26-28: Ortonville Rec Eq Friends Poker Ride Camp
27-28: GLDRA Grand Island Bay de Noc Endurance Ride
26-29: Sleepy Hollow Trail Riders Memorial Weekend Camp

June
2-12: MTRA First June Ride Shore to Shore
2-4: MICMO Ez Pz Lemon Squeezy Silver Creek
3: Muskegon County Trail Riders Judged Trail Ride
9-11: Pontiac Lake Horseman Summer Fun Camp
10: Ionia Horse Trails Association Forbidden Trails Ride
10-11: GLDRA White River Summer Endurance Ride at Timber's Edge
16-18: Proud Lake Trail Riders Scrabble Ride
16-July 1: MTRA Second June Ride Shore to Shore
24-25: GLDRA Grand Island North Endurance Ride (Bay de Noc)

July
8-9: GLDRA AHAM Endurance Ride at Hopkins Creek
15: GLDRA Distance Riding Clinic Classroom Holiday Inn Brighton
22-23: MICMO Horses for Hope Everett A. Cummings Center
29: Hungerford Trail Riders Christmas in July Ride

Michigan Horse Trails Directory Event Calendar 2023
<http://michiganhorsetrails.com/events.html> for contact info
Facebook: Michigan horse trails directory

August
5-12: MTRA August Family Ride
11-12: GLDRA Detroit Horse Power Distance Ride - Kensington and Proud Lake trail
19: Hungerford Trail Riders Poker Ride
19: GLDRA Distance Riding Clinic Mock Ride at Brighton

September
1-4: Sleepy Hollow Trail Riders Labor Day Weekend Camp
2: Yankee Springs Annual Meeting
2-4: GLDRA White River Labor Day Endurance Ride at Timber's Edge
7-18: MTRA Shore to Shore September Ride
8-10: Highland Trail Riders Horseshoe Hunt Fall Camp
9: Ortonville Judged Trail Ride
9-10: GLDRA Keweenaw Endurance Ride at Marquette
14-17: Fort Custer Horse Friends Camp
15-17: Pontiac Lake Horseman Tour the Trails Fall Camp
15-17: Brighton Trail Riders Poker Ride Camp
16: Hungerford Trail Riders J+M Camp Picnic Ride
16: Muskegon County Trail Riders Horses for Hospice
22-24: Proud Lake Trail Riders/Kensington Circle Ride
23: Cheff Center Ride-a-Thon Benefit Ride
29-1: MHC Statewide Trail Ride at D bar D
30-1: GLDRA Distance Riding Clinic Cedar Creek Crossings

October
7: Ionia Horse Trails Association Annual Chili Cookoff
6-8: MICMO Mane 2 Trail Connection 4-H Club Pontiac Lake
7-15: MTRA October Color Ride
7: Autumn on the Polly Ann Trail
14: Yankee Springs Halloween Spooktacular
14-15: GLDRA Oak Leaf Run Endurance Ride at Silver Creek
14: Hungerford Trail Riders Spooktacular
21: Muskegon County Trail Riders Fall Fun Ride
22: Maybury Trail Riders Spooktacular
26-29: Addison Oaks Trail Riders Camp 'N Ride
28: Horses for Hope Halloween Ride at Cummings Center
26-29: Sleepy Hollow Trail Riders Explore the Hollow Weekend Camp

November
1-30 Michigan Shoreline Horseback Riding Season Silver Lake
<https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/things-to-do/horseback-riding/shoreline-riding>
3-5: Waterloo Horseman Turkey Trot
11: Hungerford Trail Riders Banquet

December
2: Fort Custer Holiday Party

Amy Scharmen had a productive meeting with our new DNR Equestrian liaison, Sage Hegdal, at Pinckney Rec. They toured the trail master course re-route, staging area, special events campground, pine forest, bridge, and low lying, wet area improvements and discussed trail riders' needs. We look forward to working together with the DNR management teams at this location and all other equestrian friendly Michigan locations.

The February 23, 2023 ice storm and the following week's heavy, wet snowstorm did extensive damage and caused several impassable trails at Pinckney Rec. Our equestrian volunteers have spent 60 hours so far to clear the horse trails. We are very thankful for ALL the work our equestrian volunteers do to help keep public trails open for DNR management teams, hikers, dog walkers, bird watchers, horseback riders, and hunters across Michigan.

We invite you to join the **Trails Safe Passing Plan of Stop! Speak and Stand Back** webinar which will be featured during a national American Trails webinar on Thursday, March 30, 2023, at 1:00p.m. EST. Please sign up for the webinar even if you cannot attend at the actual time as you will be able to watch the webinar at a later time. We hope by posting, knowing, and following the Trails Safe Passing Plan of

Stop! Speak and Stand Back, everyone will know what to do when they encounter people with horses. This action plan helps ALL trail users including our animal friends who use the trails, dogs and horses. Our trail passings will be safer and more efficient, public land managers can have an agreed upon trail user passing/ yielding plan, and people with horses can be welcomed on more public lands.

<https://www.americantrails.org/training/the-trails-safe-passing-plan-stop-speak-and-stand-back>

Webinar Partners



Horse Meet and Greet- We'd like to schedule a Horse Meet and Greet with DNR management teams and subcommittee members, especially those who are making decisions about people with horses including PRD, Stewardship, NAW, and MTAC members. Brighton Riding Stable has offered to be an educational location option. A weekday in May would be best for Brighton Riding Stables.

Here is a sample of what we would like to educate:

Horses Are Prey Animals

Due to the natural pecking order of predator and prey, horses expect people to be the leaders of our partnerships.

These partnerships provide opportunities to practice confidence, empathy, empowerment, kindness, leadership skills, patience, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and self-discipline.

Horses appreciate when they are treated with respect.



1

Horses Communicate

Horses provide clear communication through their physical body language of ears, head, mouth, and tail positions, and through eye expressions.



2

Horses Have Blind Spots

Horses have eyes on the sides of their heads so they can look for predators and danger in a 350-degree radius.

Horses have blind spots up close, between their eyes, and directly behind them.

If approaching from behind, please STOP and ANNOUNCE yourself and allow TIME for people with horses to turn their horses to face approaching trail users.

Always ask horse owners before approaching their horses.

Please approach horses at their sides, not directly at their faces or behind them.



Photo courtesy of Pam Morgan, Equi-Culture Foundation, LLC, Adams, Michigan

A Horse's Senses

Horses can hear better than people as they can rotate each ear independently in nearly all directions.

Horses have a stronger sense of smell than people, so they will notice people, other wildlife, and objects before people.

Horses are exceptional search and rescue partners.



Photo courtesy of Debra Phipps, Michigan Trail & Park, W. Calhoun, Michigan

A Horse's Body



Photo courtesy of Jodi Gail Photography, Great Lakes Trail & Park, Michigan

The horse's body structure is designed to carry people perfectly.

Horses can carry up to 20% of their weight (approximately 220 pounds) and pull up to twice their weight (approximately 2,200 pounds).

Each of their gaits (walk, trot, and run) simulate our gaits, providing people essential industry, therapy, and transportation partners.

Horses Are Transportation



Photo courtesy of Pam Morgan, Equi-Culture Foundation, LLC, Adams, Michigan

Horses provided our first autonomous modes of transportation.

They have excellent situational awareness and self-preservation skills.

They will take care of both themselves and their rider.

Horses provide mobility for people.

Horses Mirror Our Attitudes

The size, speed, and strength of horses hold people immediately accountable for our attitudes and actions.

Horses will mirror our attitudes, providing us a reflection of how we are portraying ourselves to others.



Photo courtesy of Pam Morgan, Equi-Culture Foundation, LLC, Adams, Michigan

Horses Are Herd Animals

Horses prefer to be in a herd because there is safety in numbers.

People with horses often camp and travel in groups on the trails to keep their horses calm and comfortable.



Photo courtesy of Pam Morgan, Equi-Culture Foundation, LLC, Adams, Michigan

When you encounter people with horses, please follow the Trails Safe Passing Plan: Stop, Speak, and Stand Back

STOP:

Horses are prey animals and naturally can be afraid of unfamiliar people and objects. Horses have natural "flight" survival instincts and prefer to move their feet towards an exit route. Therefore, people with horses should pass at a walk while other trail users remain STOPPED until passed.

SPEAK:

Please ANNOUNCE your presence.
Please SAY "Hi" when we pass by.
Speaking helps horses identify you as a person and will help keep them calm.

STAND BACK:

Please STAND BACK with your whole group on the same side of the trail.
Please contain children and dogs.
Please do not hide or stand behind a tree, as these actions may cause horses to fear you are a predator planning an attack.

SMILE:

Enjoy the safe and happy trails.
Please contact the Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council for use of the Stop! Speak, and Stand Back sign at: RFVHC.Colorado@gmail.com



Why the Trails Safe Passing Plan: Stop, Speak, and Stand Back is important and helpful foreveryone:

People with horses have more risks of injuries as they are:

1. in sitting positions,
2. on live, prey animals,
3. over eight feet above the ground.

Bicyclists and hikers are in upright positions, on an object, or on the ground, and are less likely to fall or have injuries.

Bicyclists automatically have specific characteristics that cause horses to fear the bicyclists could be a potential predator:

1. Bicyclists travel swift speeds like potential predators.
2. Bicyclists travel semi-silently like potential predators.
3. Bicyclists have elevated heart rates like potential predators.

Therefore, please practice the Trails Safe Passing Plan: Stop, Speak, and Stand Back to promote safety, inclusion, confidence, and comfort for everyone.



Photo courtesy of Julie Ann Phipps, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Horses Are Our Partners

Horses are cultural and historical. They carved their place in history and carried people into the future on their backs.

Today, horses are declared health partners as Equine Assisted Services (EAS) providing emotional, mental, physical, and substance abuse therapy.

Enjoy!!

If interested in more *Touch a Horse* opportunities, please email touchahorsetoday@gmail.com