



MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL (MTAC)

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: Sept. 22, 2022

6 - 8 p.m.

Welcome – Roll Call

PRESENT FOR THE MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL

- Bob Wilson, Chairperson (absent)
- Kenneth Hopper, Vice Chairperson
- Michael Maves
- Mark Losey
- Jason Aric Jones
- Richard Williamson
- ETS x 2 (vacant)
- Snow (vacant)
- ORV (vacant)

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

- Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Greg Kinser, Michael Morrison, Matt Torreano, Dakota Hewlett, Kristen Bennett, Andrew Kenyon (Forest Service)
- OTHERS: Jenny Cook, Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Karl Davenport, Karen Middendorp, Robert Allen, Trevor Hoffer

Meeting minutes

Meeting called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Vice Chair, Ken Hopper.

ACTION ITEMS

Motion was made to approve the March 24 and July 12 meeting minutes by Richard Williamson and seconded by Michael Maves, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made to approve the Sept. 22 agenda by Michael Maves and seconded by Richard Williamson, with all in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

TRAIL CHAMPIONS

Kristen Bennett – MTAC Resolution No. 4

Bob Wilson proposed recognizing Kristen Bennett, former working out of class DNR State Trails Coordinator, as a trail champion. Motion was made to approve the resolution by Richard Williamson and seconded by Mike Maves, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Jenny Cook – MTAC Resolution No. 5

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf proposed recognizing Jenny Cook, Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) member, as a trail champion. Motion was made to approve the resolution by Richard Williamson and seconded by Mike Maves, with all in favor. Motion carried.

EXPAND NONMOTORIZED USE IN STATE GAME AREA – MTAC RESOLUTION NO. 6

Bob Wilson proposed that MTAC hereby resolves and urges the Department to explore all options for expanding nonmotorized uses on or in state game areas so that it takes full advantage of the flexibility of the Pittman Robertson Act and other state lands tied to federal funding sources, in terms of allowing for uses that are compatible with hunting and fishing and still remain in compliance with state and federal law. Motion made by Ken Hopper to approve the resolution and seconded by Richard Williamson, with all in favor. Motion carried.

PROPOSED MTAC RESTRUCTURE – MTACT RESOLUTION NO. 8

Jason Aric Jones proposed forming a workgroup to include various members of MTAC and its subcommittees to research, investigate, and recommend a restructure of the MTAC. No vote taken on resolution until all user groups can be represented within MTAC (noting vacancies for equestrians).

MTAC VACANCIES

Tim Novak, DNR, mentioned the two ETS vacancies should be filled soon. The Governor's office is working on the remaining open seats for ORV and snow.

NORTH BANK TRAIL PROJECT – MTAC LETTER OF SUPPORT

Kate Terpstra, from the city of Coopersville, has solicited MTAC for their support of the North Bank Trail connection project. Jason Aric Jones mentioned the request is missing elements and he would like to clarify the ask and trail details Ms. Terpstra before a letter of support is granted. Jenny Cook added she would like equestrians involved in the discussions. This item is to be moved to next MTAC meeting in December.

UPDATES

USFS

Andrew Kenyon provided updates from the U.S. Forest Services. For trail related updates, Andrew mentioned an ORV project in Alcona County, on the Huron side of National Forest just completed. The ORV project involved a trail reconstruction and bridge repairs. The U.S. Forest Service is working together with MSU for a capacity analysis on the Manistee River Loop, a nonmotorized trail, to study the amount of use and what improvements can be made to sustain the trail system. This trail has seen an increase of use over the past couple years. Oscoda and Huron Shores do not have a lot of mountain biking trails in the area and the forest service has been getting hammered with the public asking for mountain bike trail development. So, the forest service has partnered with local mountain bike groups. A grant was received from the National Forest Foundation and are in the development stage for what will be called the Wildcat Mountain Bike Trail, about a 14-mile trail system.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

EQUINE TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS) – Jenny Cook (report attached)

NON-MOTORIZED ADVISORY WORKGROUP (NAW) - Jason Aric Jones (report attached)

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (SAW) - Mark Losey (report attached)

OFF ROAD VEHICLE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (ORVAW) - none

ALLEGAN STATE GAME AREA

Robert Allen reported on the progress of the Allegan State Game Area proposal with DNR Wildlife Division (WLD). Mr. Allen said he is still waiting for a determination from WLD and understands it is working its way through the process.

DNR REGIONAL STAFF REPORTS

Written reports are provided to council members.

2022 MEETINGS

Dec. 8

CLOSING/ROUND ROBIN

Ken Hopper, along with MTAC committee members expressed the desire for an orientation to be given to new members to help them understand the purpose of the committee, roles, and responsibilities. Tim Novak, DNR, thinks this is important and will assist with this initiative.

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Trail Champion – Kristen Bennett

The Michigan Trails Advisory Council would like to recognize Kristen Bennett as a trail champion. Kristen Bennett has been a longtime advocate and supporter of Michigan trails and in her capacity and working as the interim State Trail Coordinator, she performed her responsibilities professionally and with high skill. Kristen is a friend to all in the trails community and has worked tirelessly to help support all the trail groups in Michigan and to make Michigan the nation's leading trail state.

In a time when there is political divisiveness throughout the state it is certainly refreshing to have someone like Kristen performing her responsibilities without any political bias and with a focus on supporting trails and trail policy. The Michigan Trails Advisory Council would like to wish Kristen the very best in her future and may she continue to be a key component of the work we do to make Michigan the nation's leading trail state.

Bob Wilson JD, MBA

Trail Champion – Jenny Cook

Jenny Cook began her dream of bringing shoreline riding to Michigan in 2014 and she has tirelessly worked towards that goal ever since. In 2021, she achieved that dream and, in the process, allowed many trail riders to do the same. A bucket list item for many equestrians is to ride on the beach, in the waves, with the wind in their hair and in 2021, that goal came true for hundreds of riders. It is no exaggeration to say this opportunity will remain many of these riders most cherished memories while in the saddle. Jenny spent countless volunteer hours leading up to the two weeks of beach rides while gathering local information for riders, advertising the ride, and working out the logistics with the DNR and MHC. She then spent two weeks of her own time and money to bring this opportunity to the public, and she did so flawlessly and graciously. Jenny welcomed the riders at the gate with a smile, lined up volunteers, organized manure clean-up, answered any and all questions for two weeks straight and all in the gales of November. Her attention to every minute detail made it a wonderful experience for all and has led to plans to make this a yearly opportunity for horseback riders. The riders of Michigan and beyond are incredibly appreciative of her efforts and the opportunity to ride the shoreline of Lake Michigan. Jenny also serves on the Michigan Trails Advisory Council and the Equine Trails Subcommittee where she shares her expert passion for trail riding, horses, and gift of education with all. For these efforts in addition to those of the shoreline rides, we recognize Jenny Cook as a Trails Champion.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf

Non-motorized Use in State Game Areas

The Michigan Trails Advisory Council hereby resolves and urges the Department to explore all options for expanding non-motorized uses on or in state game areas so that it takes full advantage of the flexibility of the Pittman Robertson Act and other state lands tied to federal funding sources, in terms of allowing for uses that are compatible with hunting and fishing and still remain in compliance with state and federal law.

There exist currently several examples where various non-motorized trail uses are specifically permitted in state game areas such as the Cannonsburg Game Area. The latest department outdoor recreation survey has indicated clearly that expanding non-motorized trail use is the greatest single recreation need for the people of Michigan.

The department should specifically explore what other states have been able to do with expanding non-motorized uses in game areas while remaining in compliance with state and federal law. MTAC specifically requests that a series of recommendations be made to council no later than December 31, 2022.

MTAC RESOLUTION 08- 2022

MTAC Board Restructure

Whereas the Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC) was originally enacted by the Michigan Legislature as a part of the Michigan Trailways Act to provide for a multi-member representative body that would advise the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the governor on the creation, development, operation, and maintenance of motorized and nonmotorized trails in the state, including snowmobile, biking, equestrian, hiking, off-road vehicle and skiing trails; and,

Whereas the statute currently mandates that seven (7) of the MTAC seats to be representatives of the motorized trail community, and another two (2) to be mandated as representatives of the equestrian community; and,

Whereas the statute has no specific provisions regarding non-motorized trail user representation from the biking, foot (hiking and trail running), skiing or water trails communities; and,

Whereas the statute leaves only two (2) seats for representation from all non-equestrian related non-motorized trail user groups; and,

Whereas the supporting subcommittees advising the MTAC also lack adequate representation with no specific workgroup representation from user groups such as bicyclists, foot users (hiking and trail running), skiers or water trail users; and,

Whereas the statute makes no differentiation between trail types and user needs other than to specify “motorized” and “non-motorized”; and,

Whereas during the twenty-nine (29) years since the MTAC was initially enacted there have been material changes in both the diversity of trail users and types of trails managed by the MDNR; and,

Whereas changes in technologies have had, and are continuing to have a profound effect on the ways users choose to interact with trails, and the way trails are being constructed; and,

Whereas trails are repeatedly cited as desired recreational infrastructure sought after by both tourists and local residents in our state; and,

Whereas recreational trails have a profound impact on the health and sustainable growth of the Michigan economy; and,

Whereas, it is the statutory charge of the MTAC to appropriately represent the demands of changing trail user demographics and to ensure the inventory of State trails is appropriately addressing those demands; and,

Whereas it is the responsibility of the members of MTAC to represent the collective recreational desires and needs of Michigan citizens to state government; and,

Whereas it is crucial for the MDNR to remain proactive regarding future outdoor recreational needs and use shifts, as expressed by the citizens and businesses of the State;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the MTAC are requesting that the MDNR take the steps necessary to form and support the efforts of a workgroup with various members of MTAC and its subcommittees, and to gather input from public trails stakeholder groups and users, to address and make specific recommendations for a proposed restructuring of the composition of the membership of MTAC, with those recommended presented to MTAC not later than January 31, 2023.

Seeking Approval: July 8th, 2022

September 2022 MTAC Equine Report

People with horses and Michigan horse volunteer friend groups are **working together with Michigan public land managers** to provide wonderful trail experiences for hikers, hunters, and people with horses. The trails are looking great! We are not only enjoying fabulous experiences surrounded by nature, but we are also enjoying riding and driving natural creatures while surrounded by nature. Thank you so much! And ride on!



pc: Pure Michigan



Our ETS Chair, Amy Scharmen Burgdolf, along with equestrian trail volunteers, the DNR, and the USFS employees enjoyed a very informational **Trail Course by Trail Design Specialists LLC** at Pinckney Recreation Area to learn sustainable trail design including four days of intensive classroom and field work. Working together to build sustainable trails is the future of trails!



We are very thankful for the amazing **shoreline horseback riding opportunities** unfolding at Silver Lake State Park in November. There are over 1800 horseback riding reservations already sold for this November. Please refer to the DNR shoreline riding link <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/things-to-do/horseback-riding/shoreline-riding> and the “MICHIGAN, Where Dreams Come True” attachment for more shoreline horseback riding information.



pc: Pure Michigan

Equine Trails Subcommittee members are providing live “**Touch a Horse**” educational opportunities at the **DNR Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit** during the October 1st Community Open House for anticipated over 1000 people featuring hands on horse education with the **Detroit Mounted Police** <https://www.detroitpublicsafety.org/copy-of-contact-your-npos>, **Detroit Horse Power** - an organization helping inner city youth learn life skills with the partnership of horses <https://www.detroithorsepower.org/>, and **Buffalo Soldiers Detroit** - an organization honoring our African American mounted soldiers who helped develop some of our first National Parks <http://buffalosoldiersdetroit.org/history.html>. Please join us for these special opportunities celebrating our communities, heritage, culture, horses, and the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center. Buffalo Soldier Detroit President, Jimmy Mills pictured below.



The Equine Friends of Berrien County Trails volunteer group promoted awareness of the Friends of Berrien County Trails Master Plan at the Berrien County Youth Fair. They also featured the ELRC National Safe Trail Passing Plan for bikers/hikers/equestrians for Michigan trail riding opportunities, and a survey which asked: " **Would you support (safe off road) Berrien County equestrian trails?**" and "**Would you be willing to share a trail with horse riders?**" - **386 said YES first, another 382 said "yes" to sharing.** We hope for support in sharing this information to county planners and to moving forward together with the Master Plan.

It's very important educational **trail yielding signs are posted** especially with e-bikes getting more popular. All trail users seek peace, safety, confidence, and enjoyment when on public trails. We hope the Equine Land Conservation Resource National Safe Trails Passing Plan of Stop, Speak, and Stand Back <https://elcr.org/trails-safe-passing-plan/> is reviewed and implemented as an example of a trails safe passing plan.



Unanimous from the Equine Trails Subcommittee:

In regards the proposed resolution to restructure the MTAC Bylaws, we feel this is an inappropriate proposal since all MTAC sub-committees are not being properly represented. If any Bylaw changes are to occur, then all committee members need to be represented. If not, then all proposed actions need to be held until such a time that all sub-committees are present to voice their opinions.

Safe and happy trails,

On behalf of the Equine Trails Subcommittee

Jenny Cook

SW MI Equine Trails Subcommittee Representative

mi.trail.rep@gmail.com

NAW

Bike/horse conflicts

Jason—thinks legislation draft is a bait and switch to disallow bikers. Read the proposed legislation to judge for yourself

Amy--Posted Horse trails do not allow bikes. What trails are going to be posted horse trails? Multi-use?

Dakota—The DNR does not have a position on the proposed legislation

--Pure Michigan Water trail designation

Applications coming out soon

Tim is extending application to December 1st

Pure Michigan conference in April

Jason—MTAC Restructure resolution that was not voted on(screenshot)

--Allegan non-motorized use in state game areas(Screenshot)

--Jill Sell said this Fall there should be some word from the DNR

Dakota—ARPA funds as asked by John Morrison—what will be spent and by when? Extensions for time? Returned funds?

--Dakota does not have a formalized plan as to how and when the money is complete

Jill Sell—John Morrison was wondering about DNR master Trail plan implementation, updates as a regular piece on the agenda?

Objective Leads within the DNR are the drivers for implementation that hold people to dates and keep things going. They then submit progress update and status updates. Next update is in December.

--John Morrison wondering about regular updates and where this information could be found? How transparent? Jill said they have no public updates accessible anywhere, but could do what is asked of them.

John Morrison—updating on committee reports for wayfinding and the hiring of consultants(Tool Design Group) to help with the project.

No Water Trail report from Mary Bohling

No report from Neal

Kenny gave NCT update with bridges and an annual gathering in Northern Minnesota for all 8 states reps from NCT

Kristin—trail resurfacing happening this summer and design work for Clinton river trail

Jason-Already updates earlier in agenda

Lori-no update but question about DNR SPARK Grants timelines

DNR- Scott Slavin updates on NW Lower Peninsula—White Pine Trail paving(7miles) hoping for November completion. Also ADA Grant applied for to connect some communities. 1.7 Million

--Rob Katona—Marquette trail work happening, Central UP work happening.

--Ron Yesney—Trail from Ramsey, Ironwood, Bessemer

--Greg Kinzer—close to hiring NE Lower Trails position

--Dakota will be taking a position in Maine

Nov. 17th Next meeting(virtual)

Sept. 21st Equine day State Capital

Some DNR divisions are meeting in person and some are not.....

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup MTAC update.

- The team is making progress on the implementation of the Verizon Fleet Management System.
- 2023 Groomer Workshop is scheduled for March in the SOO.
- SAW continues to work on the stump height concerns.
- New snowmobile instructors are being trained this season and educational updates are being made.
- Final report on the groomer study was presented which provided insight into the fleet.
- On-going trail maintenance and construction continues.
- Clubs have been selected and awarded new equipment.
- Free Snowmobile weekend scheduled for February so grab a sled and do some site seeing.
- Next Meeting scheduled for December.
- SAW has expressed concerns about DNR participation in meetings.
- Collaboration with other user groups for funding and volunteerism to assist in trail maintenance.