



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



RODNEY A. STOKES
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: September 19, 2011

MEMORANDUM TO THE DIRECTOR

Information: Natural Resources Commission

Subject: Review of Equestrian use at Blueberry Ridge Pathway Pursuant to Directors Order 4.30.3, 2005 and Public Acts 45 and 46 respectively.

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, authorizes the Director to issue orders to implement land use rules.

Discussion and Background:

On April 2, 2010, Michigan's governor signed two bills into law; Senate Bill 578 and House Bill 4610 of 2009, now known as Public Acts 45 and 46 respectively. PA 4610 requires that "Before determining that pack and saddle animals will be restricted, the DNRE must make every effort to resolve any public safety or maintenance concerns." With specific reference to Blueberry Ridge the Act further requires the DNR to "review previously imposed restrictions by Jan 1, 2012".

The pathway was built in 1986 as a cross-country ski trail. Over time, nonmotorized summer use became increasingly popular there. In 2005, a conflict arose between equestrians and hiking, biking, and running users. In response, the DNR held a public meeting in June 2005, and developed a citizen advisory committee comprised of representatives from both user groups. After several meetings, the committee recommended that the DNR construct a separate trail for equestrians near the Blueberry Ridge Pathway. Subsequently, the DNR completed the Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail four miles from the Blueberry Ridge Pathway in 2007. Simultaneous with the decision to build a separate trail, the DNR implemented a Director's Order prohibiting equestrian and bicycle use at Blueberry Ridge Pathway.

This Memorandum and the *Review of Equestrian Restrictions on Blueberry Ridge Pathway (September 6, 2011)* will be posted on the Department's website from September 19, 2011 through November 10, 2011 for public review and comment.

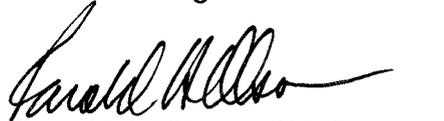
By means of this memorandum, the Department formally requests the Natural Resources Commission to hold a public meeting at its November 10, 2011 meeting to receive testimony on the Department's proposal that the Land Use Order restricting equestrian and bicycle use at Blueberry Ridge Pathway continue in force.

Recommendation:

The Department's proposes that the Land Use Order restricting equestrian and bicycle use at Blueberry Ridge Pathway continue in force.

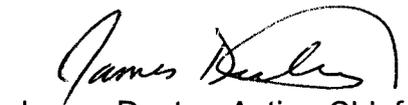

Lynne M. Boyd, Chief
Forest Management Division

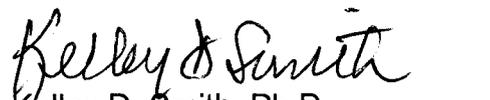

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Michigan Department of
Natural Resources

Review of Equestrian
Restrictions on Blueberry Ridge
Pathway
(September 6, 2011)

Purpose:

On April 2, 2010, Michigan's governor signed two bills into law; Senate Bill 578 and House Bill 4610 of 2009, now known as Public Acts 45 and 46 respectively. Although these acts did not result in any changes to the regulations regarding horseback riding at the Blueberry Ridge Pathway they do require the Department to review existing horse use restrictions there. Specifically PA 4610 requires that "Before determining that pack and saddle animals will be restricted, the DNRE must make every effort to resolve any public safety or maintenance concerns." With specific reference to Blueberry Ridge the Act further requires the DNR to "review previously imposed restrictions by Jan 1, 2012". This paper is to accomplish the review of previously imposed restrictions on equestrian use at Blueberry Ridge.

Background: (See also Appendix A, Chronological Facts)

Blueberry Ridge Pathway was originally constructed on State Forest land on the west side of CR 553 (T47N-R25W, sec 21, Marquette County) in 1977. In 1979 a large land exchange between the state and Cleveland Cliffs Iron Co. (CCI) resulted in losing most of the land containing the trail which was then approximately 10 miles long. CCI allowed the state to continue grooming the trail after the land exchange but timber harvesting by CCI made much of the trail unusable by 1986. In the fall of 1986 the first three loops of the current Blueberry Ridge Pathway were constructed on the east side on CR 553 (T47N-R25W, sec 22). These are what are currently named the Crossroads, Husky and Wolverine loops comprising 5.7 miles of trail. The following year the Superior loop was built followed by Wildcat and Spartan in 1988. Finally the Lighted Loop was built in 1993. The combined length of all the loops grew to 13.6 miles (See BBR map, Figure 1). After the initial three loops were constructed on the east side of CR 553 skier support increased substantially both with cash contributions and volunteer work efforts. The lighted loop was a cooperative effort between Marquette Board of Light and Power, Bresnan Communications, Superiorland Ski Club and the Red Earth Loppet Organization. User data collected during the years 1993 – 1999 showed an average of 22,500 skier visits per year with donations averaging over \$5,500 per year. Since 1999 donations have experienced a modest decline averaging just over \$4,600 per year from 1999 – 2010.

Grooming was originally done by DNR employees using a snowmobile and tracking equipment. Grooming demands increased as loops and skating lanes were added so that the Department purchased a Pisten Bully groomer in 1990. DNR staff continued the grooming operations until 2002 when contract grooming arrangements with Noquemenon Trail Network (NTN) were established.

In the fall of 2003 erosion on steep slopes was observed and an effort was made to repair the damage using landscape matting and grass seed. Signs were posted at the treated areas asking trail users to stay off the repaired areas. The signs were mostly ignored. The repair efforts were unsuccessful due to continued equine use of the repaired areas. (Appendix B, Slope stabilization)

In the spring of 2005, a group of local Blueberry Ridge Pathway (BBR) users approached the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with complaints about equestrian and mountain bike use at BBR. The bulk of the concerns were with regard to trail damage caused by horses. Trail users reported that equestrians had recently discovered BBR and that their use had increased

significantly. A public meeting was held in June, 2005 attended by 54 citizens and 7 DNR staff (See Appendix C, press release June 16, 2005). Twenty-seven people gave oral comments and 31 written comments were received. Users on both sides of the issue expressed their concerns and interests in the trail. (Minutes are included as Appendix D, both summary and original form)

User Concerns:

Hiker/Skier User Group:

Trail damage from erosion was the most commonly cited problem attributed to equine use at BBR. In addition to the general problems associated with erosion there was also fear that the damage would eventually become so severe that ski trail grooming equipment would not be able to negotiate the worst areas.

Others expressed concern about divots caused by horses. Both walkers and runners were concerned that the divots were dangerous, causing trips, falls, and sprained ankles.

Finally, some expressed concerns about horse manure on the pathway. Users complained that the horse droppings were impossible to avoid and were unsightly. They were also concerned about the potential spread of noxious weeds from seeds in the manure.

Equestrian User Group:

The equestrian users felt strongly that their riding opportunities were increasingly limited due to conflicts with ORV's on other public lands and by limitations on private lands. They felt that with BBR being on public land, they had as much right to be there as other non-motorized summer users. The equestrian group said they had no problem with hikers and runners, and felt that sharing the trail was important for all users. They also felt that mountain bikes were contributing to the erosion at least as much as horses.

2005 Recommendations and Management Response:

Following the initial public meeting a working group was formed of citizens representing the various users. There were 8 citizen members – four equestrians and four skier/runners. The group's charge was to address user conflicts and trail damage issues. Between July and September 2005 they met three times to develop a set of recommendations for BBR. Each meeting had a public comment period.

The meetings were well attended, cordial and constructive. Members contributed insightful comments and worked together well. The DNR staff present at the meetings provided facilitation, background on department policies, funding alternatives and other supporting information.

Recommendations:

Specific recommendations of the citizens working group were:

- First the DNR should develop a separate non-motorized trail, specifically for equestrian use and that BBR be permanently closed to equine use and mountain biking via a land use order of the director (See Appendix E, press release July 25, 2005 and Press Release Sept 6, 2005).

- Secondly the BBR trail should be closed to all summer users until the spring of 2007. Rehabilitation work should be conducted during that time allowing adequate time for the vegetation to become established with minimal disturbance.

The Minutes of the Sept 18 meeting of the working group read, “After much discussion, all agreed that the new trail location will be in Sections 36 and 26 of T47N, R25W.” This is the location of the Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail. (See TVET map, Figure 2).

DNR Response:

The DNR accepted the committee recommendations and began implementation:

- In response to the first recommendation, DNR promptly started development of the new equestrian trail. From December 2005 through August 2007 work progressed on the Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail (TVET) with financing from a Recreation Improvement Fund grant. The cost of the new trail was \$19,500 for materials plus several weeks of staff time for lay out and construction. Members of the equine community worked with the DNR in trail development.
- In response to the second recommendation, DNR staff accomplished the rehabilitation work at on BBR at a cost of \$11,600 for materials and department staff time during the summer of 2005. A Director’s Order (Appendix F) closed the trail to all non-winter activities from the summer of 2005 to May 15, 2007. The trail was reopened to summertime use in 2007, but with restrictions prohibiting equine and mountain bike use.

2011 Recommendation and specific rationale for the recommendation:

After reviewing the 2005 decision and the process by which it was reached, the Department recommends that the current policy prohibiting equestrian use via Director’s Order be continued. The reasons for keeping BBR closed to equestrian and bicycle users are:

- DNR implemented the recommendation for a separate and nearby non-motorized trail for horses in lieu of Blueberry Ridge Pathway . This recommendation was made through a public process involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders. DNR made a significant investment in the new Thunder Valley Equestrian trail as a result of this publicly vetted recommendation. This new trail is only six miles from BBR. Site conditions at Thunder Valley are more favorable for equestrian use because the trail is built on heavier soils that can better accommodate horse traffic. The trail is also less hilly than BBR, which will help to prevent erosion problems associated with steep slopes. And, just like BBR, Thunder Valley is closed to all motorized use.
- The resolution of user conflicts at BBR was made through an open, transparent, and public process. As a result of this process the DNR made specific agreements with the primary stakeholder groups. At the heart of these agreements was the development of TVET and the prohibition of horses and mountain bikes at BBR. This decision led to Department investments of over \$30,000 in site rehabilitation at BBR and new trail development at TVET. The Department wishes to honor these public agreements. It would likewise not be fiscally responsible to abandon the investments made to resolve this issue.
- BBR was originally designed to be a ski facility and is not well suited for equestrian or bike use. History has clearly shown this to be the case. The soils at BBR are fragile, very sandy and susceptible to erosion. The topography is ideal for a challenging cross-country ski trail, but the soil characteristics and terrain are not well suited for horses or bikes.

Summary:

The DNR in cooperation with ski, equestrian, and other community interests has invested substantial time, money, and resources to develop a meaningful and fair response to the user conflicts and resource damage at BBR. In 2005, the primary user groups, including equestrians, were deeply involved in the process. The Department and stakeholders unanimously agreed that BBR is not a suitable facility for equestrian use and that the Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail would provide a suitable alternative. As a result, the Department recommends that the prohibition of horses and mountain bikes at BBR continue

Figure 1. Blueberry Ridge Pathway Map

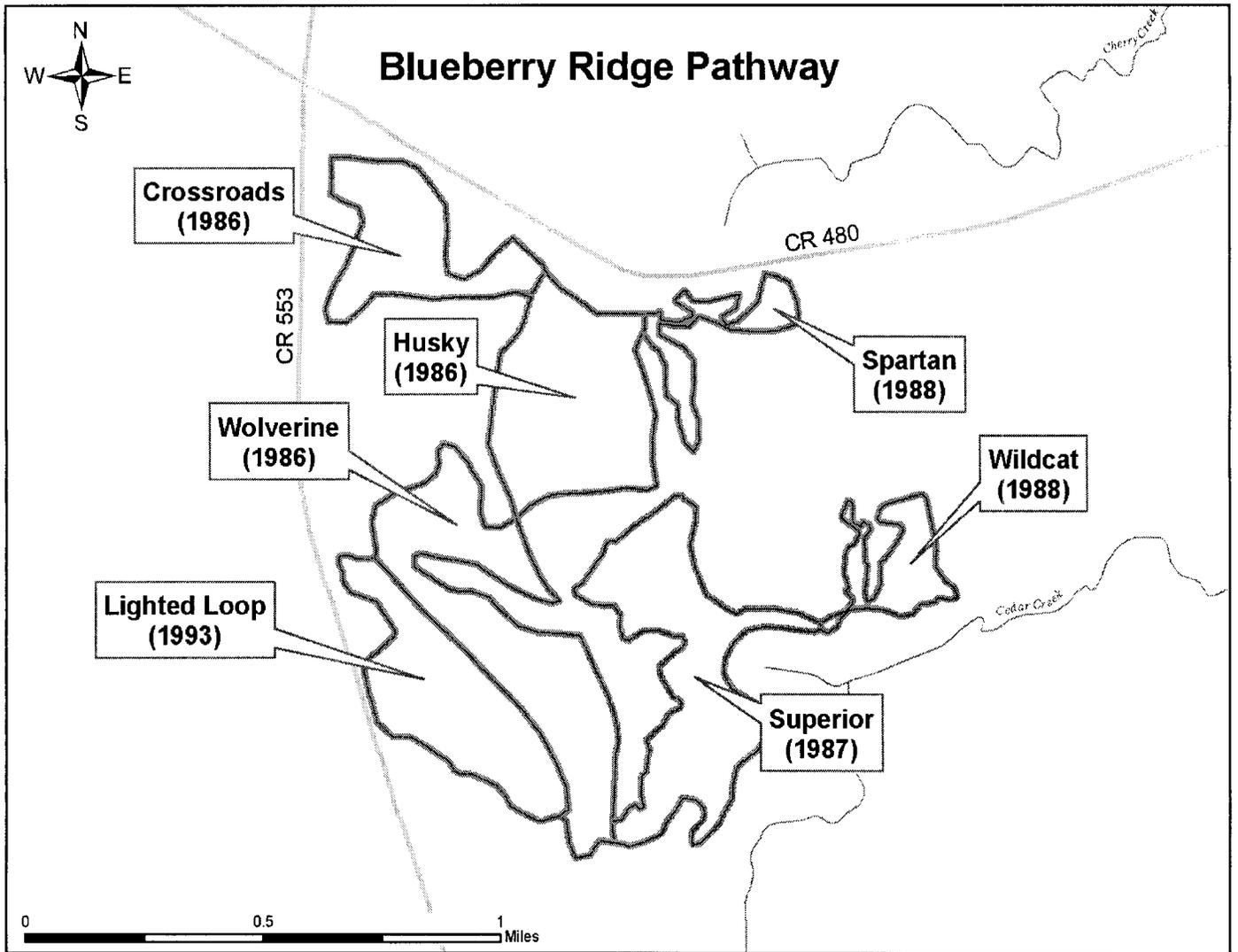
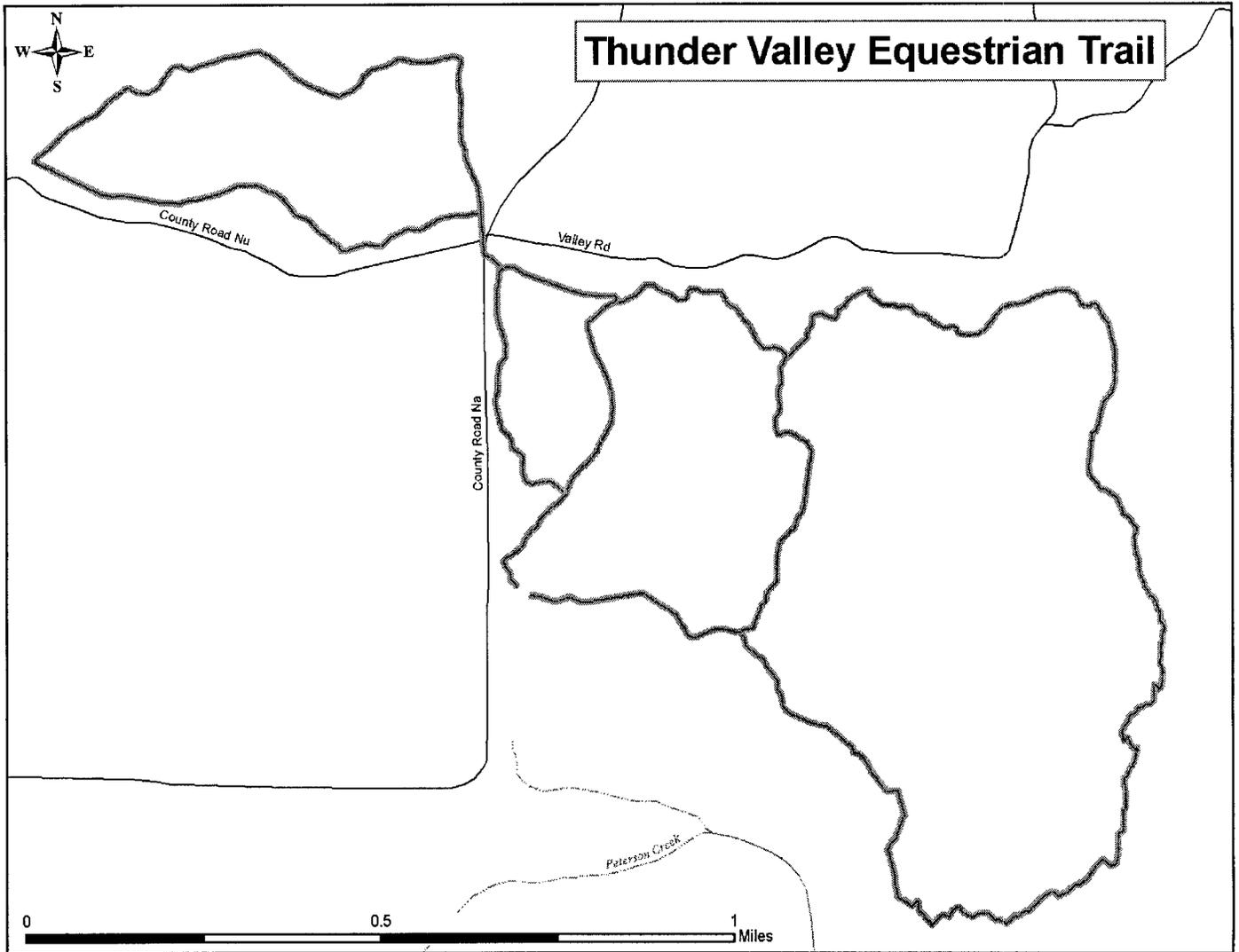


Figure 2. Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail Map



BBR Equestrian Use Review – Appendices

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Appendix A.

Chronological Facts About Blueberry Ridge Pathway and Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail

1977 – Original Blueberry Ridge Pathway constructed on west side of County Road 553.

1979 – Land exchange with CCI – traded over 8,000 acres in Sands Township (south and west of crossroads of 480 and 553) for Little Presque Isle Tract north of Marquette. Most of Blueberry Ridge trail was now on CCI ownership, but we were able to continue operation of the pathway.

Winter 1979-80 to Winter 1985-86 – Maintained the 9.6 miles of trail using an Alpine snowmobile with “homemade” leveler and track setter. Grooming on loops 1 & 2 (5 mile or 8 km) was fairly consistent. Grooming on loop 3 was occasional as time permitted.

Trail was popular and well liked by trail users.

Winter 1985-86 – Conflict between Blueberry Ridge Pathway and timber harvest operation by CCI. We managed to keep trail open but could see that it may not be possible to keep entire trail in operation next year.

Summer 1986 – It was clear that most of trail was lost due to logging operations in area.

Fall 1986 – The DNR approved a proposal to build a new trail on the east side of County Road 553 on state ownership. Constructed first three loops of new trail (now named Crossroads, Husky, and Wolverine). Length of new trail was 5.7 miles or 9.3 km.

Winter 1986 – 87 – Trail proved to be very popular and well liked. Contributions doubled. Grooming continued to be done with Alpine snowmobiles with leveler and track setter.

1987 – Constructed fourth loop on Blueberry Ridge assisted by Jon Nelson of NMU (and other interested individuals) in trail layout. DNR constructed the new Superior loop.

Length of trail system increased to 8.6 miles or 14.1 km.

Winter 1987-88 – Loop 4 was extremely popular (as was the entire trail). In order to improve grooming and also to attempt to groom the entire trail system, DNR utilized a Trac Truck from District 4 and purchased grooming attachments. The Trac Truck was a fire unit used to fight wetland wildfires in summer months. The unit was used on Blueberry Ridge during the winter months and enhanced the grooming program greatly. The DNR had regular grooming on the entire trail system, and began to set double tracks on the north loops and a track and skating lane on the south loops.

1988 – DNR constructed two more loops on Blueberry Ridge – Spartan and Wildcat. Construction was funded by the Red Earth Loppet Organization. The Spartan loop was constructed under contract and the Wildcat loop was constructed by DNR personnel. Jon Nelson of the Red Earth Loppet Committee played a major role in layout of the new loops.

The Red Earth Loppet organization expressed interest in moving their event onto the Blueberry Ridge Pathway.

Winter 1988-89 – DNR continued grooming with the Trac Truck, and also attempted to convert an old snowmobile trail groomer into a pathway groomer for Blueberry Ridge. This was attempted to try to improve our methods of grooming so that south trail loops could be groomed in a single pass to accommodate both

diagonal skiers and skaters (a 6-8 foot wide skating area with single track set at one side of the trail) and in order to handle increased trail mileage – now 11.9 miles or 19.4 km not including the skating track. This snowmobile groomer was old and had numerous breakdowns, and DNR continued grooming primarily with the Trac Truck.

The Red Earth Loppet ski event was held on Blueberry Ridge.

Voluntary contributions toward trail maintenance sky-rocketed.

Winter 1989-90 – DNR utilized a Piston Bully groomer at the end of the season on a trial basis.

The Department submitted an application for funding under the Recreation Improvement Fund for purchase of a Piston Bully groomer. The application received a lot of support from local organizations and individuals and the purchase was ultimately approved.

The Red Earth Loppet organization used the trail system for a second year for their annual race.

User survey conducted by Jon Nelson of NMU (as part of survey #of skiers/car 2.4).

Winter 1990-91 – Piston Bully groomer was purchased and in use for full season. The north three loops were double tracked for classic skiing. The south three loops are groomed for both classic and skate skiing.

Fall 1993 – The Lighted ski loop was constructed thru the cooperative efforts of the DNR, Marquette Board of Light and Power, Bresnan Communications, Superiorland Ski Club, and the Red Earth Loppet organization.

Winter 1993-94 – DNR regularly groomed 13.6 (22 km) of trail. Car counters were installed at North and Central (lighted loop) parking lots. This was done to get reliable data on trail use by skiers.

Winter 1998-99 – After 10 years at Blueberry Ridge, the Red Earth Loppet ski race was reorganized as Noquemenon Ski Marathon, and relocates to a point-to-point course running from Ishpeming to Marquette.

For the ski seasons from Fall 1993 – Spring 1999 – Average skier visits per year – 22,500; Average total donations (from skiers) per year - \$5,569.

July 2005 – Blueberry Pathways working committee to address pathway use issues, including continued use by horses. A proposal was adopted to prohibit equestrian use and mountain biking on Blueberry Ridge, and to construct a separate equestrian trail in the area (Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail).

August 2005-May 2007 – Blueberry Ridge was closed to all non-winter activities. Trail restoration work was done to mitigate erosion.

FACTS ABOUT THUNDER VALLEY EQUESTRIAN TRAIL (TVET)

September 2005 – The DNR approved a proposal for development of a separate non-motorized trail, with horseback riders as the targeted users. Other non-motorized users, such as hikers, bikers and mushers, will be welcome to use the trail.

Dec 2005 – Aug 2006 – lay out and map the first of three trail loops.

May 2006 – Design and lay out the trail parking lot.

July – Sept 2006 – Construct loop one for the TVET).

August 2006 – Clear parking lot area by having a local logger cut trees. Department staff piled and burned brush, and stumped, cleared and leveled the parking lot.

Sept 2006 – DNR installed a toilet vault and building.

October 2006 – The DNR graveled and packed the trail parking lot; signed the trail with confidence markers; and continued brushing trails. The first three loops of the trail were completed.

Dec 2006 – Jan 2007 – Lay out of final loop of trail system.

Jan – Feb 2007 – The DNR brushed and mapped the final loop of the trail system.

March 2007 – GPS files were sent to Lansing for printing of trail maps.

June – Aug 2007 – The DNR installed barrier posts at all road crossings. Toilet building was finished on the inside. Construction of the final trail loop was completed. Trail signing was installed.

July 18, 2005

Slope Stabilization Project-DRAFT

Blueberry Ridge Pathway

The Problem:

These trails were not planned, designed or engineered for year-round multiple use.

The lay out and routing of the various trail loops was done in such a way as to maximize elevation changes. i.e., we made the "hilliest" trail possible, given available terrain and without excessive crowding of trail loops upon each other.

However, as evidenced by our current problems, good ski trails do not make good biking or equestrian trails. The sandy soils and the shallow-rooted grasses and forbs that grow on them during the snow-free season cannot withstand high traffic volumes, especially on moderate to steep slopes.

Those slopes are denuded pretty quickly and the resultant bare soils are subject to mass movement downhill. This, combined with continued traffic makes revegetation and rehabilitation quite difficult.

An attempt was made in the fall of 2003 to revegetate the most problematic areas of the trail. We used native grass seed, protected by "curlex" landscaping netting. This was completely unsuccessful. Some of this was due to environmental factors (weather and soil). But mostly, the inability to keep traffic off the affected areas resulted in the destruction of the landscape netting, continued mass soil transport and loss of the seed before it could germinate.

As of the summer of 2005, the problem hasn't cured itself and pressure from various user groups has prompted more aggressive attempts to look for a solution.

Some Proposals:

- A) Rehabilitate/revegetate those areas found to be "Moderate" or "High" priority in the June 2005 survey(See Work Areas map). This would involve approx. 4000 linear feet of the pathway, to a width of 12-16 feet.

Options for this include:

1. Encourage soil-building and revegetation using products from Quattro Environmental(literature attached)
 - a. Soil building using "KiwiPower", "FertilFibers" "Atlas SoilLock" and topsoil, combined with seeding.
 - b. Soil holding using "LandGrab", "KiwiPower", FertilFibers and topsoil, combined with seeding.
2. Encourage soil-holding and revegetation using products from Midwest Industrial Supply.(literature attached)
 - a. Soil holding using "SoilSement" and topsoil, combined with seeding.

In order for these methods to work we would have to restrict/eliminate access to those areas being rehabilitated. Specifically, it would mean closing loops to all access during the snow-free season for a period up to 18 months. Affected loops would be: Spartan, Superior & Wildcat; and a portion of Wolverine. This would leave the better part of four loops available(see map)

We would have to:

Educate the public as to our reasons, etc for the closures.

Engineer – i.e. barriers to entry.

Enforce – Your guess is as good as mine as to how to do this, but might have to go so far as closing the trail to all use during the snow-free season in order to protect the resource

- B) “Armoring” damaged/vulnerable slopes with rock/gravel/clay. Essentially hard-surfacing the trail This would also require providing for drainage and erosion control, just as we would do on a low-volume forest road, only it would be all slopes, with the associated BMP and engineering concerns. Revegetation would not occur.
- C) “Cushioning” damaged/vulnerable slopes with biodegradable materials such as mulch, wood chips, geotextiles , etc. Because of the “soft” nature of these materials, runoff would not be a problem but they might be subject to the same mass transport forces that affect the soil. Revegetation might be an option, if topsoil and seeding were included.

Some things to consider before work can begin:

Timing: We probably should time this to allow several weeks – 1 month before ski season begins, to allow things to “set-up” or “take root”

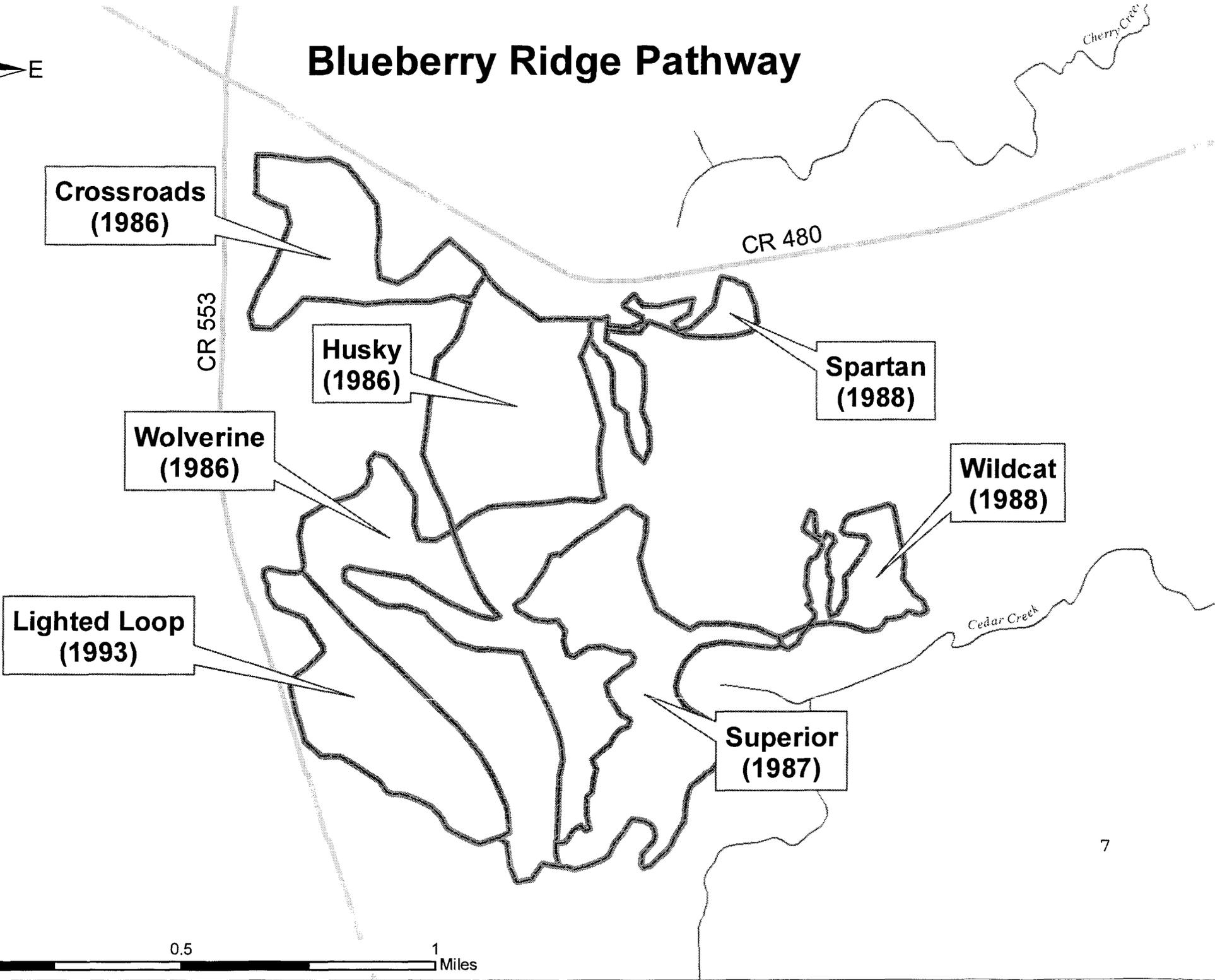
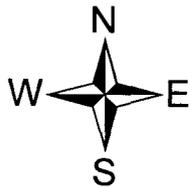
Labor: This shouldn't be too labor-intensive , with the exception of removal of the old landscaping netting and spreading of materials from the back of a pickup or ORV.

Soil/Seed: We need good quality topsoil, delivered to the “Supply Dumps” along Co Rd NI (See Logistics Map) Need a way to load pickups (backhoe?)

Transporting Equipment/Materials: Most of the trail is undrivable by anything larger than a 4WD pickup. An exception would be the road (Co Rd NI) that runs between #2 and #10. That road would support limited travel by a small dumptruck.

Controlling Traffic: I would suggest using gates at the locations marked on the Logistics Map. Snowfence just doesn't say “Stop” the way a gate does. Lightweight galvanized panel gates could be hung from permanently mounted metal gateposts with the option of locking the gates when needed. Such gates could be used over and over as needed. Use natural “choke points” so that a 12 foot gate would be adequate. In support of this, we need public education in the media and signing at the trailheads and gate locations.

Blueberry Ridge Pathway



JUNE 10, 2005 - COPIED FROM FIELD NOTES
 BBR SKI PATHWAY NOTES Jeff Abble

WP#	REMARKS
112	Ref. Pt#1 on BBR Trail Map - Crossroads Parking Lot
113	Ref. Pt#2 on BBR Trail Map. Jct of Crossroads / Husky Loops
114	P.O.B. Area needing slope stabilization - Approx 200L x 12' W. ^{LOW} PRIORITY
115	Ref Pt#3 on BBR Trail Map. Jct of Husky / Spartan Loops
116	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 125' L x 12' W. <u>High Priority</u>
17	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 300' L x 12' W. <u>High Priority</u>
18	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 75' L x 12' W. <u>High Priority</u>
19	Ref. Pt#4 on BBR Trail Map
20	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 450' L x 12' W. <u>High Priority</u>
21	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 150' L x 12' W. Med Priority
22	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 200' L x 12' W Med Priority
23	Ref Pt#5 on BBR Trail Map. Jct Husky / Wolverine Loops
24*	Ref Pt#6 on BBR Trail Map. Jct Wolverine / Superior Loops
25*	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 100' x 12'. Med Priority
26*	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 200' x 12'. <u>High Priority</u>
27*	Ref Pt#8 on BBR Trail Map. Jct Superior / Wildcat Loops
28	Ref Pt#9 on BBR Trail Map. Also; P.O.B. slope stabilization 200' x 12'. <u>High Priority</u>
29	P.O.B. slope stabilization 75' x 12'. Med. Priority
30*	P.O.B. slope stabilization 125' x 12'. Low Priority
31*	P.O.B. slope stabilization 200' x 12'. <u>High Priority</u>
32*	P.O.B. slope stabilization 125' x 12'. <u>High Priority</u>
33*	Ref Pt. #7 on BBR Trail Map.
34*	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 100' x 12'. Med. Priority
35*	P.O.B. slope stabilization. 150' x 12'. <u>High Priority</u>

BBR SLC PATHWAY NOTES Jeff Noble
JUNE 10, 2005 COPIED FROM FIELD NOTES

<u>WP#</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
136*	P.O.B. Slope Stabilization. 120' x 12'. Low Priority
137*	Ref. "Superior By-Pass" on BBR Trail Map.
138*	P.O.B. Slope Stabilization. 180' x 12'. <u>High Priority</u> .
139	Ref Pt #10 on BBR Trail Map. South Jct of Wolverine/Lighted Loops
40	Ref Pt #12 on BBR Trail Map. North Jct of Wolverine/Lighted Loops
41	Ref. Pt #11 on BBR Trail Map.
42	Ref. "Lighted Loop" Parking Lot on BBR Trail Map
43	Ref. "Wolverine By-Pass" on BBR Trail Map.
44	P.O.B. Slope Stabilization. 200' x 12'. <u>High Priority</u>
45	P.O.B. Slope Stabilization. 250' x 12' High Priority.

GLOSSARY

P.O.B. (Point of Beginning). Area where slope work shall begin, travelling along trail loops in "normal" (clockwise) direction. All P.O.B.'s are located & labeled by this protocol.

* WP's marked with an asterisk were recorded while travelling ^{that} trail segment in a counter-clockwise direction. Above P.O.B. protocol still holds.

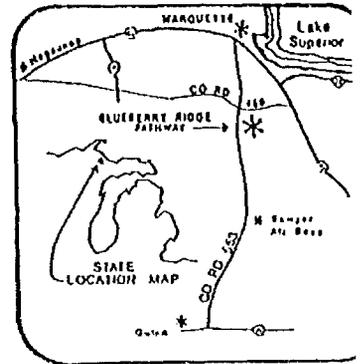
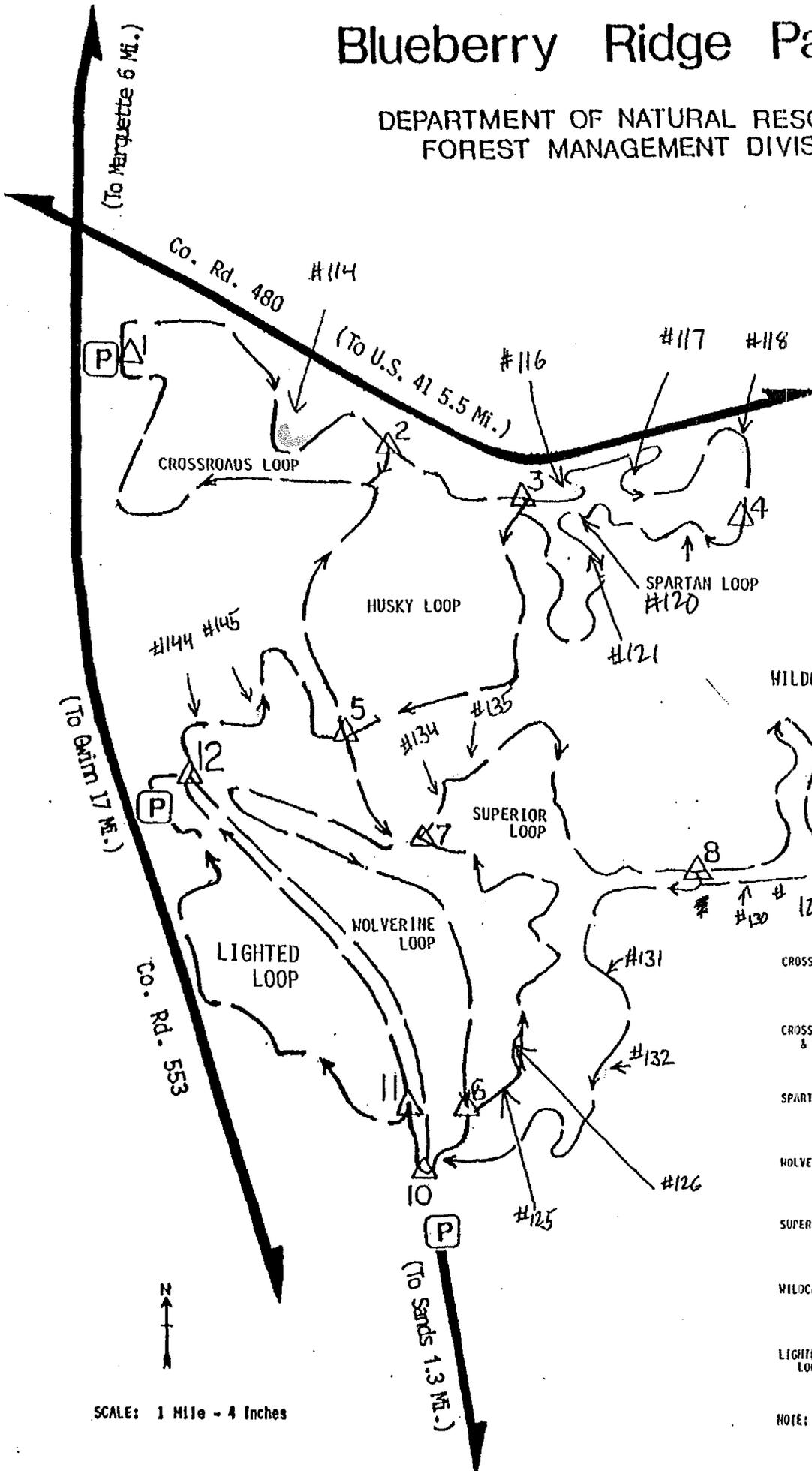
High Priority ~~is~~ ① Noticeable soil displacement or ② steep slopes or both. Also, ~~no~~ ground-cover vegetation scarce or absent.

Med. Priority Some soil displacement, moderate slopes. Some ground cover vegetation present

Low Priority Little soil displacement. Shallow slopes. Fair ground cover vegetation present

Blueberry Ridge Pathway

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
FOREST MANAGEMENT DIVISION



SCALE: 1 Mile - 4 Inches



- CROSSROADS: 1.5 MILES
2.5 KILOMETERS
LEVEL TERRAIN
DIFFICULTY - EASY
- CROSSROADS & HUSKY: 3.0 MILES
4.9 KILOMETERS
LEVEL TO SLIGHTLY HILLY
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
- SPARTAN: 1.6 MILES
2.6 KILOMETERS
ROLLING TO HILLY
DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED
- WOLVERINE: 2.7 MILES
4.4 KILOMETERS
LEVEL TO SLIGHTLY HILLY
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
- SUPERIOR: 2.9 MILES
4.8 KILOMETERS
ROLLING TO HILLY
DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED
- WILLCAT: 1.7 MILES
2.7 KILOMETERS
ROLLING TO HILLY
DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED
- LIGHTED LOOP: 1.7 MILES
2.7 KILOMETERS
LEVEL TO ROLLING
DIFFICULTY - EASY

NOTE: DIAGONAL SKIING ONLY ON CROSSROADS, HUSKY, AND SPARTAN

DIAGONAL AND SKATING ALLOWED ON WOLVERINE, SUPERIOR, WILLCAT, AND LIGHTED LOOP

Appendix C. Press Releases

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 16 JUNE 2005

CONTACT: Bill Brondyke, 906-346-9202

Ann Wilson, 906-228-6561

Blueberry Pathway to be Focus of Public Meeting

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources will host a public meeting to discuss varied recreational uses of the Blueberry Ridge Pathway. Located just south of the intersection of County Road 480 on M-553 in Marquette County, the pathway is heavily used by cross country skiers during the winter. Recently, the pathway has become an increasingly popular recreational destination for a variety of users during the warm weather months.

The meeting will take place at 7 p.m. Tuesday, June 21, at the Hiawatha Snowmobile Clubhouse, just north of the crossroads of County Road 480 on M-553. The meeting will open with an overview of the development of Blueberry Ridge by the DNR, followed by a public comment period. Those who wish to speak at the meeting can call Ann Wilson at 906-228-6561 to sign up prior to June 21 for a five (5) minute time allotment. People who chose to speak upon arrival at the meeting will be allowed three (3) minutes to speak.

"As sometimes occurs on public trail systems, there are many different types of recreational enthusiasts frequenting Blueberry, including skiers and snowshoe enthusiasts in winter, then the hikers, runners, mountain bikers and horseback riders during spring, summer and fall," said Bill Brondyke, Forest Management Unit Supervisor in Gwinn. "The goal of this meeting will be to discuss the various uses to determine if all are compatible, and what recourses might be available to alleviate potential conflicts."

Written comments will be accepted through July 1, 2005, at the DNR's Marquette Operations Service Center, 1990 US 41 South, Marquette, MI 49855, to the attention of Ronald Yesney.

Those familiar with Blueberry or have expressed opinions of the varied uses of the pathway are encouraged to attend this meeting to participate in the discussions or provide written comment.

For more information, contact Bill Brondyke, 906-346-9202.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, 25 July 2005

CONTACT: Mike Paluda or Ann Wilson 906-228-6561

Blueberry Ridge Trail Agreement Reached

A special committee formed earlier this summer to assist the Michigan Department of Natural Resources resolve issues of erosion on the Blueberry Ridge Pathway near Marquette has announced its recommendations.

The Blueberry Ridge Committee, comprised of area residents and trail user groups, has unanimously recommended to the DNR that Blueberry Ridge Pathway be closed temporarily during the spring, summer and fall seasons to allow for necessary trail stabilization and resource restoration until the spring of 2007.

The trail system will be closed to all users, effective immediately, to allow for stabilization and revegetation. DNR officials have pledged to open the trail for cross country skiing and snowshoeing once adequate snowfall has allowed for trail grooming to commence, which usually occurs in early December. The trail will be closed once again to non-snow month users for all of 2006.

"Following our review of the significant erosion totaling more than 4,000 feet of trail, it was determined that in order to repair the surface, we need to act now to halt any further damage and protect the resource," said Mike Paluda, Upper Peninsula supervisor for Forest, Mineral and Fire Management.

When the trail reopens to warm weather users in the spring of 2007, mountain bikes and horses will not be allowed on the Blueberry Ridge Pathway. Paluda said it is the intention of the DNR to seek a Director's Land Use Order to temporarily close the trail and to prohibit mountain bikes and horses once it is reopened. With support from the committee, the DNR will seek an alternative trail system that will allow for improved trail riding conditions for horseback riders and mountain bikers.

Paluda added that two options are being considered for this second trail system. One concept would weave another trail through the existing Blueberry Ridge Pathway tract. The second option would move the horseback riders and mountain bikers to adjacent state land where they would have the use of their own trail system. Paluda said with the second trail option, winter users could include dog sledders and ski-jourers not currently permitted use of the Blueberry Ridge Trail.

The committee will meet again in September to consider the options for the location of the new trail. Paluda said the DNR is committed to building the new trail system and will begin immediately to secure appropriate funding to accomplish that task.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Blueberry Closed

Cross-country skiers in Michigan's Upper Peninsula have never been so anxious for snow, particularly those who like to loop the scenic paths at Blueberry Ridge. Marquette County's favorite 19 mile trail system has been closed to runners, hikers, bikers and horse back riders since August 22 when Michigan's Department of Natural Resources Director Rebecca Humphries signed into law the Land Use Order prohibiting all traffic. According to Humphries mandate, it will stay that way for warm weather users until 2007.

Orange snow fence and signs have been posted at the parking lot entrances since early August when the DNR's special citizen advisory committee voted unanimously to ban users until erosion issues can be resolved.

DNR officials have pledged to open the trail for cross country skiing and snowshoeing once snowfall allows for grooming, usually by early December.

In the meantime, work is progressing to restore and stabilize the fragile pathway which has been severely eroded by users over the past summers.

Mike Paluda, the DNR's U.P. Supervisor for Forest, Mineral and Fire Management, reports, "We have about \$10,000 to do renovation work and a plan from our Nursery Manager Rich Mergener." Mergener reviewed the trail system on September 1, and recommends back blading the areas with large ruts, spreading peat, fertilizer and lime on the exposed portions of the trail to improve the soil and prepare them for seed and erosion mats. "To get the grass to grow this fall, we should get this completed by the end of September," states Mergener in his report.

However, when the trail reopens in the spring of 2007 it will be for human foot traffic only. Mountain bikes and horses will not be allowed. "We've pretty well decided to lay out a new trail and parking lot southeast of Blueberry," adds Paluda. The state owns the several hundred acres, roughly the same size as the existing Blueberry Pathway system, and plans to designate the trail for equestrian and bike use. "We need to get concurrence from the committee and then the proposal into the system for funding," according to Paluda, who despite the work ahead is optimistic about the new development particularly if volunteer labor comes forward. "We'll need members of the user groups to help us scout and flag new trail."

The new trail system may also attract year around users. "I've been contacted by some of the local members of the sled dog group who may be interested in using the new trails in the winter," says Paluda, adding, "It all kind of fits together." Currently mushing and skijoring are not permitted at Blueberry.

**BLUEBERRY RIDGE PATHWAY
PUBLIC COMMENT MEETING
JUNE 21, 2005**

Present from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Mike Paluda – UP FMFM Field Coordinator, Debbie Begalle – Western UP District Forest Supervisor, Bill Brondyke – Gwinn Management Unit Supervisor, Lt. John Cischke – Eastern UP Law Supervisor, Terry Popour – Gwinn Management Unit Fire Supervisor, Ann Wilson – UP Communications Representative, Monica Weis – Gwinn Management Secretary

Public - see attached sign-up sheets 54 signed in. Approximately 5-10 were unsigned.

Meeting commenced at 7:20 pm

Bill Brondyke presented a power point presentation of the Blueberry Ridge (BBR) Pathway

Brief Q/A session:

What are the specific user conflicts? This is the reason of the meeting, to get from the public/users their issues or concerns.

What types of grants support the pathway? RIF Grants and monies from the Recreational Trust Fund.

Cost comparison BBR to other areas? Do not know what is spent on other trails. Grooming and maintenance are funded through grants. The grooming contract for last season was \$ 15,900. Left over recreation funds are used for summer maintenance.

Is there a charge for trail use? No, only donations.

Last season's \$ 4,700 donations for the trail were collected during what time of the year? Winter.

Pay a fee for summer usage? DNR requires permission to collect fees.

A new state law is needed to collect monies? Yes, has to be passed by the legislature. Cross-country skiers have always been willing to pay a user fee, but

the legislature and governor have repeatedly rejected additional fees for passes, tags etc.

Propose a pilot project for tags – horses, bikers, daily/season use? Can propose but the idea needs to go to the legislature for approval. Legal authority must be present for any type of fee collection.

Mike Paluda – Funding sources for recreation are hard to come by. Currently there is a policy of no-growth for trails, unless there is dedicated funding, which both ORV and Snowmobile enjoy. Presently, the funding is not available. A specific use “horse trail” has been proposed in the past but there has not been enough use to justify. Many Michigan trail riders are showing interest. Money is the key issue. At this point, we can say get off the trail, yet we cannot readily have or develop another specific use trail.

Floor opened to the pre-meeting sign up of a five-minute comment period.

Muller, George – Wife is horse enthusiast. He is a mountain biker. Sees there are many complaints as well as solutions. Supports multi-use of trail. Benefits for horse use; wide trails, hills and level parking lot. Spreads out manure as most others do the same, picks up trash and stewards the land. Gave \$ 100 donation to the DNR. Horse riders will work with the DNR via donating labor. Trail use signs may help. Regarding erosion – channels from bike tires worse than horse tracks. Personally no problems with unleashed dogs. Asked the audience for all the horse riders to stand up – approximately 80% stood. All users have an impact and all users should work together.

Hannuksela, Paul – Biologist with soils, recreation, and dendrology background. Long history with BBR, helped clear initial trail. Skis, runs, and bikes trail. The DNR trail brochures and hike/bike guide state 12 miles of skiing, no mention of a horse designation. Hoof prints are an annoyance and hazard. The equestrian trail at Pine Martin Run has a 10 – 15’ wide ribbon of sand with horse traffic accelerating the erosion. There is a degree of disturbance between a half-ton animal with steel shod hooves versus every other type of footfall. Skiers supply BBR with time and money. Skiers make a commitment. Suggests banning horses and address the erosion issues. Submitted written comments and photos.

Floor opened to a three-minute comment period.

Hutchens, Mike – Displaced user groups – money is not to be the issue, erosion and user conflict seem to be the issue on public land. Too many take ownership due to the current signage on state property. By excluding some users, it becomes

more trouble managing people rather than the resources. Alter the trail to minimize summer use/horses. Management options are available for multi-use; the labor from horse riders is available to help bring it about.

Koistenen, Janet – Runs on the trails. Horse traffic devastates the sandy trail. Running over horse divots is a hazard. Inexperienced horses cause problems when rider cannot control the horse. Horses scare people, they can be daunting. Horses do cause damage. If there will be signage allowed, riders need to follow the signage.

Kidder, Barbara – Uses trail daily for walks. Has observed the degradation on all trails, especially Wolverine and the lighted loops. On the Wolverine, netting appears to have been put down regarding erosion, and the horses have torn it up. “Foot traffic only” signs have been ignored. Not all her footprints over the 11 years of walking even equate with a horse passing through once. The soil is fragile and not holding up. Vegetation is gone, tree roots are exposed, and runoff follows the trenches, deepening them. Has seen the destruction through the years. Suggests closing trail to horse traffic.

Tuma, Scott – In 1986 gave sweat equity to the trail being part of the NMU ski team. Bikes and runs on the trail. One user group cuts other users enjoyment, Motocross put in their own trails – asking Cleveland Cliffs for land. Also, put in a trail by Nordic Bay Lodge. The two user groups are incompatible. Willing to volunteer time to have separated trails.

Kallio, David – Generally meeting is about horses. Groups need to join to get trails to ride and alleviate the problems. Horse use is up in the past two years. Alternate trails would be a solution. DNR has to come up with trails that are not in conflict – a specific horse trail.

Savola, Julie – Can multi-users co-exist? Wisconsin trails came up with solutions. Does not want exclusion for any group when knowing the usage and coming up with solutions – switchbacks, foot traffic/horse traffic only sections, yield signs and by pass on hills. Work together with erosion problems. www.michiganhorsecouncil.com addresses horse and bike issues. Submitted information on the horse council, signage and volunteer efforts.

Kerkela, Judy – Is a non-motorized multi-use trail being developed? There are conflict issues between users all across the nation – less land, more users. Rides all over and sees that co-existence does work.

Carmody, Willow – 14-year-old horse rider rode BBR once or twice obeying the signage. All people have rights to the trail. Agrees that some riders disobey trail signs. Acknowledges her horse does do damage. Possibly split the trails for horses/bikers. Open to the possibility of having their own trails.

Miller, Jane – Read a letter for Jane Carmichael who was unable to attend – Carmichael is a horse rider who works with the Alger County trails. User conflicts can be resolved as in the Pine Martin Trail and Swan Lake areas. Believes there is a win-win situation with all users, being sure to include the horse rider's voice. Jane Carmichael's letter has been submitted.

Contiois, Candia - Uses the trail for horse riding. Others leave nasty notes on the vehicles of horse people. Has been verbally attacked as well as others. She moves off the trail when coming upon dogs off leashes. Enjoys the scenery and safety of a non-motorized trail. Will continue to ride BBR until there is a 'no horse' sign.

Neldberg-Weesen, Lauri – Worked with the Marquette Horse Club and Noquemanon Trail Network on a trail at Strawberry Lake. A Gwinn connecting trail is not a high priority at this time. Would like to connect the Gwinn trail with the Strawberry trail without being motorized. Horse people like the large parking lot, non-motorized, less bugs, quiet, and safety of the trail. Erosion is happening, yet flora is growing nearby. The trail is wide enough for horses. Believes parallel pathways, signage, and education would address some of the issues.

Jenema, Victoria – Respects skiers for all the effort putting the trail in. Erosion does exist. Public property should be for all users. Other solutions to the conflicts: side-by-side trails, by passes. Horse community is willing to put in effort to ensure there are no problems.

Muehrcke, Burt – Uses the trails. No one group should be excluded. The groups have to work together to solve the problems.

Duncan, Joan – Horse rider with the Michigan Trail Riders Association. All the 'networks' of trails are being closed off due to more home/land owners buying up tracts of land. BBR should be tolerant of all users. Perhaps the farthest and biggest loops could be for horse use only on a preliminary trial run to see the effects. Horses are a way of life for many people. Horse people are willing to work toward a compromise at BBR.

Hurst, Don – Seems horse people are willing to put in sweat equity as the skiers did at the beginning. If possible, the horse groups could clear their own trail – this might be one solution.

Waara, Frida – Avid skier. Used to mountain bike at BBR but not any longer – sees the effects on erosion from bikes. Wants to save BBR for skiing. Does not want a ski trail of sand. Trail conditions for skiers are important, the soil is not like that at Bay de Noc – BBR is sandy and we need to protect it.

King, Josh – Runs the trails at BBR. Multi-use proponent. Acknowledges the trail is soft. Notices that horses do make divots in the trail creating hazards for bikers and runners. Perhaps a harder surface could be applied on the trail rather than sand.

Nelson, Greg – Multi-use is doable. The ground surface is temperamental. Make another trail for specific usage. DNR mission statement indicates that the trails will be for the future and that needs to be ensured. There is deterioration on the trails; perhaps creating a single use trail will help this problem. There is the energy from the horse people and State land space to create two trails.

LaBelle, Mary – BBR does not need horseshoes on the trail. The two groups are on a collision course. There should be no exclusions. Her family uses both the motorized and no-motorized multi-use trails. Groups should work together to come to a solution.

Kantola, Sarah – Runs at BBR. Horseback rides because ground is soft. Notices erosion on the expert trails. Sticks primarily to the green and blue when on horseback. Accepts divots on trail as part of running.

Fjeldheim, Pam – Runs at BBR. Sees there is a conflict. Runs and accepts the holes, dodging them. Does not wish to run on pavement. Willing to follow the directive of the DNR regarding the designation of BBR.

Redfern, Dave – Has not ridden at BBR. Conflict due to increasing traffic. Problems arising because trail is sandy. Problems will continue unless the trail is closed completely. DNR needs to see that single use trails are not the solution. Horse clubs do donate 2/3 of those present, when you are relying on the 1/3 of skiers support.

Maas, Wendy – Wants to solve the issues. Marquette has a wonderful community feeling – with so many outdoor activities, sporting groups, enthusiasts. This area is the place to ski. Everyone can work together. On her property, notices that yes, horses do make divots and cause erosion problems. Not into exclusion – inclusion would like all to work together.

Hurley, Jackie – Cross-country ski-trail, how did the skiers get the land?

Mike Paluda: Was involved with the Cadillac ski trail. Money was needed to develop the ski trails since skiing was becoming so popular. The DNR used to have the funds. Now there is a no growth trend. Support for recreation is declining.

Perry, Karin – Oakwood Trail System (OTS) in Munising. It is not easy, it took six years to develop, but the trail is multi-use and motorized. Sees the restrictions of the State and Forestry land issues. A single use trail is not feasible. For the OTS, the horse community did the work and supplied money. The need to work together is more of a solution rather than having individual, single use trails.

General comments:

Years ago, horse people would ride back roads and interconnect trails. Now things are gated and signed no trespassing.

Sand affects grooming of the snow for skiing. Erosion bogs the groomers down.

No hunters or motors are a good thing at BBR. Give horse people a chance to work together to develop something.

Create a trail for horses.

Hannuksela, Paul – using the remaining one minute of his time – Get horses off BBR and onto a separate trail system. He is the first one willing to help create this new trail, but will fight horse people if they decide to stay at BBR.

Mike Paluda wrapped up meeting:

Users of BBR brought up the issues involving horses. In 2002, the Cadillac ski trail was closed by a Director's Order (D.O.) to horses. There was not the anticipation of all the horse traffic on the trail. There are alternate horse trails in the Cadillac area to accommodate the horse riders' demand. Horse demand here is not high enough to warrant construction, but it is obviously gaining in popularity.

There would need to be a review "if" there is a D.O. to close the BBR trail. The review would involve the Law Enforcement Division, thereby acknowledging Lt. Cischke's participation at the meeting

Yes there is damage to BBR the DNR documented the erosion problems by GPS. Erosion is a problem, not an urgency at this point. The sand is not going in to any water sources causing a problem.

If the money is available, there is no problem. It is possible with sweat equity and alternative funding.

Suggests a small committee, 6-8 members to explore different ways of going about this issue. Submit your name, what it is you want to work on, your skills, what you intend to bring to the committee and what your expectations are. Recommending to Lansing that a month extension be granted before anything is determined. This will bring about a decision in mid July.

Be respectful of each other to minimize "anti" feelings on both sides.

Floor opened up to a brief Q/A session

Causes of erosion? Mountain bikes, horses, and occasional ORVs are the problem.

If a D.O. does occur, would all three causes of erosion (bikes, horses, ORV) be banned? Can close the trail to any or all, too early to tell.

Suggest that until work on an alternative plan is in place, no one group should be excluded from use at BBR.

There is an impact of snow packed down over the trail, killing off vegetation cover. The groomers could also be part of the problem.

The point was brought up that BBR was a ski trail and horse use was not anticipated.

If BBR were closed to horses, the State Land Rules allows off road trail use for horses.

DNR does not have the money, yet it cannot accept money from fees – that is a limitation.

Has the DNR internally identified lands for horse use concerning soil/topography? Not specifically.

Is it possible to designate State land for horse use only? Extremely remote at this time.

If a D.O. bans a user group because BBR is designated a ski trail, could the horse group improve other trails on State land? Idea is good. We must work within the system – trail proposal, layout, and how it would affect other uses.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25pm

Respectfully submitted by Monica Weis

June 21, 2005

Public comment meeting

Seven DNR staff and 54 citizens attended

Question and answer period followed by comments from the public. Several questions focused on trail funding, e.g. how are trails funded, how can more funds be generated, what about user fees?

Public comments

Twenty-seven people gave public comments during the meeting. Comments were divided between those in favor of some form of horse use at BBR and those opposed. Many comments were in favor of a multi-use trail system with users working together. Other comments advocated a separate trail for horses. Erosion, soil damage and rough, uneven surface from horse hooves were the primary complaints against horse use at BBR. There was general consensus that trails for runners, bikers, horses must be off limits to motorized recreation. The meeting ended with a recommendation that a small committee be formed of people representing the various view points to work together on a mutually acceptable solution.

July 11, 2005

First meeting of Blueberry Ridge ad hoc committee on trail user conflicts

The committee consisted of the following:

Mike Paluda, DNR	James Kidder, skier, runner
Bill Brondyke, DNR	Janet Koistenen, runner
Jane Carmichael, equestrian	George Miller, biker, equestrian
Joan Duncan, equestrian	Debby Muskovitch, skier, runner
Dave Kallio, Sands Twp	Laurie Neldberg-Weesen, equestrian

Opinions among committee members were mixed as to what was the best solution for BBR. The committee considered the following three alternatives:

- separate loops for horse riders/bikers
- parallel trail system to the existing one to be used by horses
- separate trail somewhere else for horses

Members of the committee were evenly split between creating a separate trail for horses and keeping horses at BBR but on separate, parallel trails or loops.

Sept 13, 2005

Third meeting of Blueberry Ridge ad hoc committee on trail user conflicts

Attendees were:

Michael Paluda, DNR	Janet Koistenen
Bill Brondyke, DNR	George Miller
Jane Carmichael	Debby Muskovitch
Joan Duncan	Laurie Neldberg-Weesen
Jim Kidder	

The committee reviewed the Director's Land Use Order issued Aug 22 closing the trail to all summer users until the spring of 2007. Discussion followed about the proposed new equestrian trail on State Forest lands nearby, south and east of BBR. A lengthy discussion followed with the committee ultimately reaching consensus supporting the development of a separate trail at the proposed location (T47N-R25W, sections 26 and 36).

Blueberry Pathways Working Committee, July 11, 2005

Present: Mike Paluda, Bill Brondyke, Jane Carmichael, Joan Duncan, Dave Kallio, James Kidder, Janet Koistinen, George Miller, Debby Muskovitch, Laurie Neldberg-Weesen

Introduction

- Mike thanked everyone for taking their time to be a part of this work group
- The ultimate decision on what will be done on Blueberry Ridge (BBR) Pathway will be made by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- The charge of the group is to come up with a solution that will be acceptable to the DNR
- Everyone introduced themselves indicating what their interest is in the BBR trail system
- Mike stated that cross-country skiing was the reason BBR pathway was developed.

Comments

- Janet K. indicated that there is a difference between recreation horse riding and training of horses. She also presented a proposal from Dr. J. Cox and B. Muehrcke to help establish an equestrian trail near Gwinn in the Anderson Lake area.
- Mike P. related a horse/pathway issue in Cadillac, Michigan where user conflict resulted in a land use order of the Director banning horses on that trail.
- George M. would like re-routes on the BBR trail so horses could avoid the steep slopes.
- Jane C. indicated that out west, trails are separate for hikers/horse uses in high soil erosion areas.
- Laurie N-W indicated she would like some solution to keep horses at BBR
- Debby M. indicated that she would like separate trails for bikers/horses
- Mike P. suggests there are three options:
 - separate loops for horse riders/bikers
 - parallel trail system to the existing one to be used by horses
 - separate trail somewhere else for horses

Responses to the three options

- Janet K. would rather see a separate trail somewhere else for horses (not a parallel trail system at BBR)
- Jim K. would rather see a separate trail somewhere else for horses (not a parallel trail system at BBR)
- Debby M. would rather see a separate trail somewhere else for horses (not a parallel trail system at BBR)
- George M. felt that parallel trail system at BBR was possible.
- Jane C. Parallel trails and specific loops for horses at BBR
- Laurie N-W. felt part of BBR should be open to horses but keep horses off sensitive areas.
- Joan D. felt that there should be separate loops for horses/bikes at BBR to keep these users off steep slopes.
- Dave K. felt that horses should be kept off BBR on a separate trail system somewhere in a different area, but near BBR.

Next meeting to be held July 18th at the Marquette DNR Operations Service Center Office starting at 6 pm.

For the next meeting:

- Bill try to prepare a soil stabilization plan for BBR
- Should loops be closed for this work – which trails?
- Bill bring photo of adjacent area – particularly in Section 26 & 35
- Assignments made by Mike for individuals to look at specific locations

Blueberry Pathways Working Committee, July 18, 2005

Present: Michael Paluda, Jeff Noble, Bill Brondyke, Dave Kallio, Jane Carmichael, Joan Duncan (late), Laurie Neldberg-Weesen, George Miller, Debby Muskovitch, Janet Koistenen, Jim Kidder

Jeff Noble introduced himself.

Comments on trail – prior assignment

- Jim K. trail condition not getting any better
- Dave K. didn't think another parallel trail within the existing Blueberry Ridge (BBR) trail system for horses was possible
- Janet K. started to run the entire trail but, after the Husky Loop, she quit. Trail has had major changes for the worst since May.
- Debby M. Wolverine Loop difficult to run or bike
- George M. hills on Wolverine Loop need to be by-passed. Stressed the need for compromise at BBR to allow some use of the area for horses
- Jeff N. made comments on condition and stabilization plans for the trail system. Will have to close loops for up to 18 months.
- Mike P. presented a conceptual mapping of a parallel equestrian trail within the present BBR trail system
- Laurie N-W. any equestrian trail would need to be at least 6 – 8' wide
- Mike P. proposed that for restoration purposes, that the BBR trail system be closed to all users (except for winter skiing) until the Spring of 2007. Supported by all committee members

Comments on parallel horse trail within BBR trail system

- Dave K. wants horse trail in a separate location, not at BBR
- Janet K. concerned about concentrating two trail systems in one area. Feels it would denigrate the area.
- Debby M. wants to delay decision on where the horse trail will be until later date, not enough information for her to decide
- Janet K. wants other members of the ski/hiking community to help decide if parallel trail system at BBR would be ok

- Jim K. wants separate trail system for horses away from BBR trail
- Laurie N-W. in favor of parallel trail system for horses at BBR
- Jane C. in favor of parallel trail system for horses at BBR

Comments were presented that a horse trail system could be established just to the south east of BBR in Sections 26 and 36 of T47N R25W.

Bill will show these areas to those interested. Tentative date July 29th.

Closing

Next Committee Meeting will be in September to discuss location of equestrian trail.

Mike P. - the Department of Natural Resources will do a news release with information regarding the closure of the BBR trail system (except winter skiing) until Spring 2007.

Blueberry Pathways Working Committee, September 13, 2005

Present: Mike Paluda, Bill Brondyke, Jane Carmichael, Joan Duncan,
Laurie Neldberg-Weesen, George Miller, Debby Muskovitch,
Janet Koistenen and Jim Kidder

Absent: Dave Kalio

Review notes from July 18, 2005

Review Land Use Order of the Director regarding the temporary closure of Blueberry Ridge (BBR) to specific uses

Review BBR restoration plans/progress

Discussion regarding the new location for an equestrian trail

- George M. – Proposed location of new trail ok. Felt that the duplication efforts of a new parking lot would not be fiscally efficient and would prefer a separate horse trail to be at BBR
- Janet K. – Felt that the horse trail should not be at the BBR location. The addition of a horse trail with the 10 crossing points would be too confusing, wants new trail in separate location.
- Laurie W. – Was satisfied with the proposed location in Sections 36 and 26. Good potential for a horse trail in this location. Concerned about the amount of volunteer time needed to complete the trail and the motorized use in this new location. But it would be a place to have a separate horse trail in a new location.
- Joan D. – Was concerned about access to the new proposed trail location. The road, although mostly paved, is not in good condition. It is bumpy – which could be hard on trucks and trailers. Would like to have an investigation into looking for better access to the new trail location in Sections 36 and 26, something that could link the County Fairgrounds would be a big plus.
- Jim K. – Not in favor of a horse trail in the current BBR trail system.
- Debby M. – Not in favor of a horse trail in the current BBR trail system.

After much discussion, all agreed that the new trail location will be in Sections 36 and 26 of T47N, R25W

Bill B. will do a trail proposal

Next meeting to review proposal will be in December of 2005.

Appendix E. Directors order to close Blueberry Ridge, July 21, 2005

Memorandum to the Director:

SUBJECT: Order to prohibit all uses, except official Department of Natural Resources (DNR) use and cross-country skiing, on the Blueberry Ridge (BBR) pathway from date, to May 15, 2007

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, authorizes the Director to issue orders to implement land use rules.

Discussion and Background:

This order would prohibit all uses of the BBR pathway, except official DNR use and winter cross-country skiing, in order to complete trail restoration.

The BBR pathway was originally constructed as a cross-country ski trail. Unrestricted summer uses including: hiking, jogging, horse back riding and mountain biking have caused the sandy soils to degrade, especially on slopes. At the present time, soil stabilization needs to be implemented to prevent further deterioration of the trail system.

During this restoration period, it is critical that summer uses cease to allow the new soil stabilization seedings to establish themselves.

After May 15, 2007, the trail system will be reopened. Also, at that time, a Land Use Order of the Director (LUOD) will be sought to prohibit mountain biking and equestrian use on the existing trail system.

Currently, an alternative trail system is in the process of being established to accommodate mountain biking and equestrian uses. This new trail system will separate these uses from the BBR pathway system.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the attached LUOD be signed and approved to prohibit specific uses of the BBR pathway from date to May 15, 2007.

Lynne Boyd, Chief
Forest, Mineral and Fire Management

Alan Marble, Chief
Law Enforcement Division

Kelly Smith, Chief
Fisheries Division

William Moritz, Chief
Wildlife Division

Arminda S. Koch
Resource Management Deputy

Proposed Land Use Order of the Director

“A person shall not enter upon the Blueberry Pathway for any use, except official Department of Natural Resources use and winter cross-country skiing, for a period extending from date to May 15, 2007.”

Location: Sections 22 and 27 T47N R24W Marquette County

Blueberry Ridge Pathway Public Input



Forest Mineral and Fire Management
Division
6-21-05

Mission of MDNR

- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the State's natural resources for current and future generations*



Role in Managing State Owned Lands = "Balance"

- Timber Production – Manage the state forests and oversee unique, controlled uses of the lands, balancing the demands of the forest industry and other forest users*

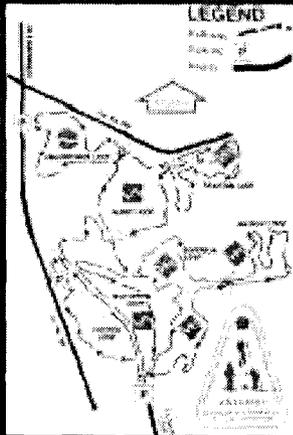


Role in Managing State Owned Lands = "Balance"

- Recreation – Provide recreation opportunity and access to land, water, cultural and historic assets within the 3.8 million acres of State Forest land*



Blueberry Ridge Trail Map



History of Blueberry Ridge

• Key Points

- Designed and built solely as a cross-country ski trail in 1977
- Originally constructed on west side of M-553
- Started out as two loop trail totaling five miles groomed by MDNR with Alpine Snowmobile and Track setter



History Continued

• Key Dates

- 1986, Trail moved to East side of 553 with three loops constructed totaling 5.7 miles
- 1987, Fourth loop constructed to accommodate more advanced skiers
- 1988, Began to groom for skate skiing on south loops
- 1990, Purchase of Pisten Bully groomer
- 1990, Donations pick-up substantially
- 1993, Lighted ski loops constructed
- 1997, Summer use of Trail starts to increase, trail evolves into year around multi-purpose trail



Interesting Blueberry Facts

• Data

- Average skier visits per year = 22,500
- Average total donations = \$4,700
- Now grooming 29 kilometers of trail
- Noquemenon currently grooms trail in winter under contract with MDNR



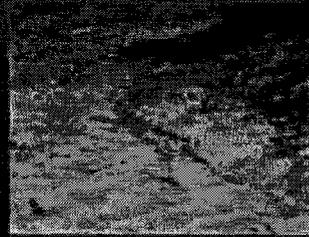
Seasonal Use

- **Winter Management**
 - There are currently no problems with the trail that are impacting skiing or grooming
- **Summer Management**
 - There are resource damage issues occurring that are impacting the condition of the trail



Resource Damage Issues

- Erosion is occurring on slopes as a result of summer usage



Condition of Trail

- Yellow points indicate documented erosion sites



Soil Stabilization Issues

- Blueberry is located on very sandy soil
- Substrate is not well suited for high impact recreation
- Stabilization alternatives-
 - Gravel
 - Wood chips
 - Limestone
 - Other
- Logistics and Expense
 - Money wouldn't be immediately available
 - Costs may be available through grant programs to restore and possibly resurface trail



Diversity of Users

- **Summer Use**

- Bikes
- Hiking
- Horses
- Dog walking
- Jogging

*MDNR is starting to see conflicts between user groups

- **Winter Use**

- Traditional skiing
- Skate Skiing
- Snowshoeing



Management Options and Alternatives for Summer Use

- 1) Leave open to all - do nothing
- 2) Close trail to specific uses
- 3) Establish certain loops for specific purposes
- 4) Establish separate trails for specific uses

*Currently there are no restrictions on the use of the trail so long as the use is non-motorized



Dogs at Blueberry Ridge

- Currently there is a Directors Order banning dogs on the trail from December 1st – April 1st
- Should we be looking at ways to control dogs in summer months?
 - Alternatives:
 - No dogs
 - Dogs must be on 6' leash, with the leash around a persons wrist
 - Do nothing



Public Input

- MDNR is seeking public input on matters relative to usage at Blueberry Ridge
- MDNR makes management decisions based on resource needs and to best serve the recreating public
- Your comments are important to us



Ground Rules for Public Input

PLEASE:

- *Keep your comments to a maximum of three minutes*
- *Stand up and identify yourself when called on to speak*
- *Keep your comments constructive and insightful— tell us what you want, and why*
- *Be respectful of others*
- *There are forms available at the sign in desk for submitting written comments*

Thank you



www.michigan.gov

Appendix G, Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail Development information

From: Joan Duncan
To: William Brondyke
Date: 02/09/2006 2:18:07 PM
Subject: TVHT

Hi Bill, well it wasn't as easy as I had hoped to get the mileages, partly because my cursor was sticking and that added some error to the process. But in light of getting started, here are my guesstimates of the proposed loops. (I reserve the right to correct these at a later date. :))

Loop #

- 1. = 1.8 ml.
- 2. = 0.9
- 3. = 2.2
- 4. = 2.6
- 5. = 2.2
- 6. = 1.7

I tried to measure these with each loop "closed" and doing it this way there seems to be a total of 11.3 miles. However, that is not the way anyone would ride, and the total perimeter distance is about 8 miles. If Dan sends me the updated map, I will run these numbers again to match the new map.

Joan E. Duncan
Land & Water Management Division
Phone: 906-346-8557
Upper Peninsula District Office
420 5th Street
Gwinn, MI. 49841

CC: Daniel Nathan

From: Kay Fisher
To: Daniel Nathan; Jerry Maki
Date: 10/05/2006 8:10:05 AM
Subject: Fwd: Thunder Valley Update

>>> William Brondyke 10/05/2006 8:08 AM >>>

>>> [REDACTED] 10/02/2006 8:25 AM >>>
Hi Bill,

Terry asked that I give an update of what the volunteers accomplished on Saturday. Please let him know that we completed the southern aspect of loop 3 up to the place where the new trail meets the 2-track road.

Sunday I rode all three loops. It was a beautiful day. It will be nice when the confidence markers are in. Even with the map, I got turned around a bit but no big deal. We had 9 volunteers out there for close to 3 hours. We took a photo up near the backhoe. I will forward it on to Ann Wilson for use in future PR if she wants.

Thanks again for championing this project. It is going to be really nice.

[REDACTED]

This e-mail and any files contained in it are confidential and intended for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. Please notify the sender immediately by e-mail if you have received this e-mail by mistake and delete the e-mail from your system. Any unintended review, use, distribution or disclosure is strictly prohibited.

From: Aaron Johnson
To: Brondyke, William
Date: 12/16/2008 11:03:25 AM
Subject: Fwd: Re: DNR Sign Request off of M-553 south of the crossroads in Sands TWP

Thanks Bill. Will do, I'll let you know when they are up.

Aaron

>>> William Brondyke 12/16/2008 11:01AM >>>

Aaron, we have a funding source, complete work on the signs and send bill to me here in Gwinn.

Bill Brondyke
Gwinn Unit Manager
Forest Mineral and Fire Management Division
410 W M-35, Gwinn 49841
906-346-9201 Ext 11
Fax 906-346-9681
Cell 906-250-0759
Brondykw@michigan.gov

>>> Aaron Johnson 12/03/2008 12:13 PM >>>

We'd be able to fabricate and erect and then bill the DNR once the work is complete. I'll wait to hear back from you.

>>> William Brondyke 12/3/2008 12:00PM >>>

Checking, will advise. Thanks

>>> Aaron Johnson 12/03/2008 11:33 AM >>>

Bill,

A heads up...we are preparing to fabricate two new Trail-Horse symbol signs, one from each direction for the Thunder Valley trail. Unfortunately I'm being told the DNR will have to pay for the fabrication and erection of the signs, and the price would be \$590.00.

Please let me know if this will be fine, and I'll give them the nod to go ahead and fabricate. Our central office will take care of the billing, I'm not sure exactly how that will work but I think it will all take place between our departments in Lansing. It seemed unnecessary to me for one dept. to charge another, but I guess that is how it has to work.

thanks,
Aaron

>>> Dawn Gustafson 12/3/2008 11:20AM >>>

If we are still using our sign cost estimate sheets it would be a symbol with no poles, 2 hrs, \$590.

Linda & Debbie,

Are we still billing the agency first or do we wait for a final bill?

dawn

Dawn Gustafson, P.E.
Superior Region, Traffic and Safety Engineer
1818 3rd Ave. North, Escanaba, MI 49829

>>> JEFF CHERNACH 12/3/2008 10:46AM >>>

are we charging them and if so i will to know how we charge to them and coding?

approx cost will be for 2 rl-110 signs and 2 m6-1 arrows as i can place on top of existing co rd nd signs.

$2 \times 4 \text{ sft} + 2 \times 2.25 = 8.5 \text{ sft} \times 15/\text{sft of sign} = 187.00$ for the signs

labor would be 38/man/hr in marquette co per terri reid @ 2hr of work x 2 men =152.00

equipment time would be 2 hr x 25/hr= 50.00

total cost for 4 signs erected by marquette co rd comm 187 + 152 + 50= 389.00

>>> Aaron Johnson 12/3/2008 9:04AM >>>

thanks. LET'S GO WITH JUST THE HORSE RL-110, ONE FROM EACH DIRECTION.

>>> JEFF CHERNACH 12/3/2008 10:02AM >>>

this is is the last email i have on this issue, i am writing work orders need answers

>>> Dawn Gustafson 11/3/2008 9:49AM >>>

Aaron, what did you want to do here??

Do you think we can get away with just the horse RL-110? They could address the other uses on their side. Most people would assume if you could horse you could walk. The next question will be, can we add a bike? I would prefer just to do the horse. What do you think?

>>> Aaron Johnson 10/10/2008 2:59PM >>>

Dawn,

I recommend placing signs for this DNR request. I verified they have good follow on signing on the county roads, it is a brand new place with adequate parking, well established trails, outhouse facility. It is multi-use non-motorized. Could we place *RL-100 (hiking)* and *RL-110 (horse)* signs at this location? That would be 4 signs, two from each direction on M-553.

Please let me know if you have any further questions or things you need to know, or any other comments you have. If you agree with placing the signs I'd like to try to get them in soon.

I can get milepoints for Jeff.

Below are a couple of the trailblazer signs off trunkline as you go out to the site. It is 1.6 miles off of M-553.

thanks,
Aaron

This is an official MIDNR facility. There is a parking lot and the trail was intended for equestrian users but can also be used for hiking, biking; anything non-motorized.

Official name "Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail"

The signs, if approved by MDOT should go up either side of county road ND on M-553 by Mattson Auto. Trail to the east and is in T47N R25W section 36. Contact me for any other info needed.
Thanks

AY 06
 Index Local
 PCA 44901
 Expires 09/30/2008

RIF Grant 2006

Project	Phase	Title	Award Amount	Cumm Expenditures	Balance
216379	06	FMFM RIF 06-05 FMFM GOOSE CK TRAIL CAMP REDEV & RESTORATION	80,000.00	43,981.82	36,018.18
216380	06	FMFM RIF 06-07 FMFM GAYLORD MACK HAWK RAIL TRAIL DESIGN	30,000.00	30,000.00	0.00
216381	06	FMFM RIF 06-09 FMFM MACKINAC HAWKS RAIL TRAIL SIGNAGE	25,000.00		25,000.00
216383	06	FMFM RIF 06-20 FMFM BLUEBERRY HORSE TRAIL DEVELOP	20,000.00	12,947.76	7,052.24
216384	06	FMFM RIF 06-28 FMFM GAYLORD MACKINAW TRAIL SURFACING	25,000.00	20,800.02	4,199.98
216385	06	FMFM RIF 06-29 FMFM XC SKI GROOMING & PATHWAY SAFETY PROJECTS	125,000.00	91,918.79	33,081.21
216388	06	FMFM RIF 06-36 PRD 7 LKS ST. PARK HEADWATERS TRAIL ENG. TRAIL IMP.	100,000.00		100,000.00
216390	06	FMFM RIF 06-38 PRD LINEAR TRAIL MAINTENANCE	100,000.00	47,569.36	52,430.64
216393	06	FMFM RIF 06-11 FMFM CHEBOYGAN TO ALPENA SURFACE IMP.	55,240.00	55,240.00	0.00
216397	06	FMFM RIF 06-52 PRD WHITE PINE PAVING PROJ. FRED MEIJER	100,000.00	108,086.52	(8,086.52)
216398	06	FMFM RIF 06-53 IMPV BASS, BIG TOMAHAWK CAMPGROUNDS	23,000.00	25,825.00	(2,825.00)
		Sum:	683,240.00	436,369.27	246,870.73

Short Term/Seasonal Worker's Payroll Only

3/15/2008

From: William Brondyke
To: Brenda Curtis
Date: 11/29/2006 11:44:52 AM
Subject: Fwd: TVET map files

Here are the files needed to prepare a map of the Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail. Not sure you are the person to get these, but possibly you could forward to the correct person.

Also, since we will be needing to requesting signs be made for this trail, approval for the naming of this trail would be needed.

We have been calling it the Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail. Not sure if this is consistent with names for other horse trails in the state. Would you see if the name we have been using "Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail" is the official approved name, or would your section prefer something else, thanks.

>>> Daniel Nathan 11/02/2006 1:24 PM >>>

Here are the gps files for the horse trail to send to Lansing. Hopefully they will be able to open them and make us a nice map. Can you please forward them to who they need to go to. Thanks ---Dan

Dan Nathan
Forest Fire Officer
Gwinn Field Office
(906) 346-9201
(906) 346-9681 fax
nathand@michigan.gov

CC: Daniel Nathan; Terry Popour



THUNDER VALLEY BRIDLE TRAIL

FOREST, MINERAL and FIRE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

