

**Minutes of the Equine Trails Subcommittee  
June 19, 2019**

The regular meeting of the Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) was called to order by Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf on June 19, 2019 at 1:17 p.m. at the MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab in East Lansing. Members present were: *Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Dick Kleinhardt, Jenny Cook and Kristie Walls. Janet Holmstrom* was not present.

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff was present: *Paul Yauk, Jill Sell, Greg Kinser, Jacklin Blodgett, Scott Pratt, Kriss Bennett and Anna Sylvester. Jeff Kakuk* joined via telephone.

Guests: *Connie Kleinhardt, Back Country Horsemen and Chad Simpson, Waterloo Horsemen's Association.*

**BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Kristie Walls moved the motion to approve the amended June 19, 2019 meeting agenda with the addition of Equine Campground Policy under Updates. Jenny Cook seconded, and the agenda was approved unanimously.

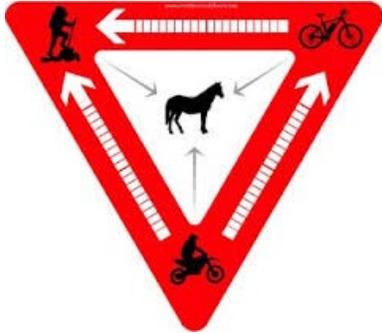
Kristie Walls moved to approve the March 27, 2019 meeting minutes. Jenny Cook seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Committee Member Reports**—Reports are attached.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Leave No Trace Trail Etiquette template**—





4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.

#### Suggestions:

- May want to make prohibited signs one color and trail usage signs another.
- Worry about having trail etiquette signage at staging areas where only horses and hikers are allowed. Bikes may think they are allowed and equestrians and hikers may expect that bikes are allowed on trails.

	Bike/Horse Trails Intersect	Shared Use Trail	Leave No Trace Signs	Bike Trail Etiquette Signs	No Bike Signs	ATV trail Etiquette signs	No ATV signs
Brighton			x		x		x
Fort Custer	x		x	x	x		
Highland	x		x	x	x		x
Ionia			x				
Lakelands Trail	x	x	x	x			x
Maybury	x		x	x	x		x
Ortonville			x		x		x
Pinckney			x		x		x
Pontiac Lake	x		x	x	x		x
Proud Lake	x	x	x	x			x
Sleepy Hollow			x				
Waterloo			x				
Yankee Springs			x				

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf shared some proposed sign designs to start the Leave No Trace and Etiquette signage discussion. She also shared a spreadsheet she put together with additional details on locations where signs are needed and what types of signs may be needed. Paul Yauk said Trails Section can get a list together of all equestrian facilities statewide, so we have a complete inventory of the signs needed. We also will need quantities for each sign. Paul feels the focus should be on kiosk signage rather than signage on the actual trails. Trails can also look at doing some trail etiquette educational posts on DNR website and social media sites. Kriss Bennett added that consistency in message and design statewide is important. Anna Sylvester also mentioned that we need to be aware of ADA approvals and guidelines, some colors can't be used. Greg Kinser shared that a good starting point would be to decide what message do you want to convey and where is the best place to convey that message? Kriss Bennett added that we should also think about how people read signs and let that help drive the content and level of detail that the signs include. Jacklin Blodgett shared that forming a signage workgroup would be beneficial to keep the conversation going and to come up with a proposed signage array. The workgroup should include Park Supervisor(s), Trail Specialist(s) and a couple equestrian subcommittee members. Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf and Jenny Cook volunteered to be part of the signage workgroup. Other workgroup members still to be determined.

## UPDATES

**DNR Budget**— Jacklin Blodgett, Assistant Chief for Parks and Recreation Division gave a presentation detailing Parks and Recreation Funding.

**Great Lakes Shoreline Riding**— Jenny Cook shared her June 2019 shoreline horseback riding report.

### Shoreline horseback riding June 2019 Report

Equestrians are thankful for any and all Great Lakes shoreline horseback

riding opportunities. 9-13-17 Muskegon State Park - Private pilot ride  
12-1-17 Silver Lake State Park -  
Private pilot ride 9-22-18  
Muskegon State Park - Public  
pilot ride 11-3-18 Silver Lake  
State Park - Public pilot ride

4-28-19 A limited number of equestrians rode the Lake Michigan shoreline at Indiana Dunes National Park. Equestrians enjoyed their visit and hope for more opportunities during the extended seasons (after Labor Day and before Memorial Day).

St Clair 4H is planning a fall event at Lakeport State Park at the Lake Huron shoreline.

We are planning fall events at Muskegon State Park and Silver Lake State Park similar to our Fall 2018 Special Use Permit rides.

Rangers from both Manistee National Forest and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore agree we are within our boundaries. We are scheduling fall meetings to discuss our possible options.

Throughout the equestrian and tourism community there is an abundance of positive interest in this activity.





**Statewide Trail Plan Update**— Jill Sell gave an update on the RFP for the Statewide Trail Plan update. All the final documents for the RFP are on their way to Purchasing. The RFP should be posted in the next couple weeks with a tentative October kick-off meeting with the chosen consultant. The Trail Plan update process is expected to take about 18-20 months and will include ample opportunities for subcommittee and public input.

**PRD and committee vacancies**— Paul Yauk provided an update that the new Trails Section Administrative Assistant will likely start in mid-July. A tourism representative from Grand Valley State University has been chosen to fill the vacancy on the subcommittee. The recommendation is currently being reviewed by the Governor's office.

Paul also distributed binders to subcommittee members that will be useful tool for them. It includes the previous State Trail Plan, procedures, etiquette, work group directives, member information, Comprehensive Plan, PRD Strategic Plan, etc.

## **PUBLIC APPEARANCE**

Chad Simpson from the Waterloo Horsemen's Association shared that they had a good banquet where they raised over \$4,000. They had over 100 riders for the Green Lake ride. The new pavilion at Waterloo is almost complete and the connector trail is done with signage installation in progress.

## **NEXT AGENDA**

The equestrian campground policy is currently in the process of being updated. Subcommittee members would like to discuss the equestrian campground policy at their next meeting in August.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

1. Introduce Michelle Coss to the group
2. Media coverage June 29- Ionia Forbidden Ride
3. Link up Bob Wilson with articles/education
4. Signage (education) discussion with Park Supervisors/Managers
5. Website contact link to committee members
6. Establish criteria for parks/camping/trails – involve Park Supervisors
7. Follow up with Bass River Rec Area on trails – Scott
8. Get predator signage on the website/trail etiquette ADA
9. Establish workgroup for signage (ADA) to be used, # of signs, involve trails specialists, Kim Kennedy and park supervisor
10. Link to maps and budget presentation—sent today
11. Populate online library—Sharepoint for the committee
12. Add equine campground policy to the next agenda
13. Kriss Bennett will send out capital outlay list to the group

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

### ***Central Region Report (Submitted by Kristie Walls)***

Weather has been a huge issue in lower trail and campground usage so far this year.

Trails at Sleepy Hollow and Ionia are a muddy mess. From what I hear Waterloo is not as bad, given its large amount of gravelly and sandy trails.

Sleepy Hollow, has had 2 work bees this year – hours are compiled but not shared.

Ionia has had 4 organized work bees plus one other day of work improving the parking at our host / pavilion site. Roughly \$18,000 has been contributed so far this year without using the higher hourly rate for equipment operator hours, of which there have been plenty. The Equine Confidence Course had a ribbon cutting ceremony with the Ionia Chamber of Commerce on May 16. It garnered the front page of the local paper's weekend edition, and the course has received lots of positive feedback from users.

Waterloo had its annual Green Lake Ride in April. It's a huge fundraiser for the group featuring an 18 mile round trip ride on what is normally a bike trail. I don't have details on it, but all indicators from web publications show a large turnout and a successful event.

All three of these parks have provided estimated counts for signs they would like to order, which I will provide at that point in the agenda.

### ***Northern Lower Peninsula Report (Submitted by Dick Kleinhardt)***

Pigeon River update: The work bee was held May 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup>. Work bee was very successful with 41 volunteers that showed up and worked very hard to clean trails, remove branches and trees along with painting outhouses etc. The area where the Pavilion is going to be located was cleaned out as well with a huge amount of firewood that was placed at campsite fire rings. Also gravel was placed on geo-tech going down to the river as well as aggregate placed by picket poles where needed. We were pleased with the turnaround time for approval of our building permit from the State of Michigan. One week to be exact. Pretty amazing. As a result of this approval BCHMI went forward and paid the necessary \$10,000 to the builder so he can order the lumber. It needs to be kiln dried so that will take about a month. When material is on site Back Country volunteers will be staining the wood on the ground ahead of it actually being built. Connie spoke to the builder and he thinks that's a great idea. We are currently waiting on Scott Whitcomb and Kelly Kinser to give the "green light" as to the exact location for the structure. They want to be sure that will have minimum impact for tree removal.

Big Oaks update: Work bee was held on April 27<sup>th</sup> with 10 volunteers showing up. That was the number that was requested as the campground was in pretty nice shape. We did take the posters that BCHA promotes that show what a horse sees and they were placed in the kiosks and a few other places as well.

BCHA update: Connie and I attended the BCHA National Board Meeting the first part of April. There are a couple of common problems going on right now throughout the Country. 1) Many campgrounds designed for equestrians are being utilized by non-equestrian campers. These folks represent a growing number. 2) There is growing pressure from bikers all across the country on equestrian trails. The big reason they cite is that the fat tire bike can handle loose

sand and many horse trails are sand. The U.S. Dept. of Transportation does not recommend horses and bikes on the same trail when building new trails. It is simply too dangerous.

Update on Grand Island Bay de Noc trail issue in U.P. The U.S. Forest Service held a meeting in Trenary in the U.P. on April 16<sup>th</sup>. This trail, located in the Hiawatha National Forest, is about 40 miles long and is currently being invaded by mountain bikers who claim that they would like to use this trail. The trail was built and designed as an equestrian trail. Equestrian folks outnumbered bikers about 9:1. Connie and I traveled 300 miles to express our opposition for such trail sharing. The President of Wisconsin Back Country also attended this event. The reason we attended is that if allowed to be a shared trail it would establish a very dangerous precedent which could have a domino effect on all equestrian trails. I also had a cover letter from BCHA expressing their concerns as well. This was a “wake-up” call to the equestrian community in the U.P. Apparently our efforts were not in vain. The forest service got the message and they will commit to the sole intent of trail classification and designation for equestrians.

Update on Tin Cup Springs: I contacted Scott Slavin to see where we are at with this project. He told me we are now waiting for wildlife and law enforcement to sign off on it. I don't understand the hold up on this.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dick Kleinhardt

### ***Southeast Region Report (Submitted by Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf)***

#### **ETS Report - SE – June 2019**

**Brighton Rec** – Trails do not intersect with bike trails. However, they have more bicycle activity on the horse trails now. In fact, at the work bee in April, a whole group of bikers in spandex rode right past the sign which says “No Bikes” at the entrance to the campground and up onto the horse trails. They were moving too fast and we were too far away to confront them. I have also seen cars with bike racks parked along the roads at horse trail entrances while riding recently. Brighton needs clear, stand-out, “NO Bikes signs” throughout the entire trail system, staging areas and one at the campground which does not use the same color and lettering as the rest of the signage. Is there a plan to deal with illegal trail use on the trails?

So far in 2019, Brighton has held a very well attended banquet along with Pinckney, a well-attended work bee to clean up the staging/campground/brush overgrowth and downfall, a spring ride/annual meeting, and their first camping weekend is coming up the last weekend of June.

**Highland** – Highland trails do intersect with bike trails, trail etiquette signs would be useful on the trails and staging areas.

Highland had a full camp for their camping weekend, a great weekend and a great turnout. They will be continuing work on their trail improvements and many projects if and when it ever stops raining.

**Maybury Trail Riders** – The Maybury equestrian trails do intersect with bike trails at the park, trail etiquette signs would be useful on the trails and staging areas. At one of the recent work bees, the president of Maybury Trail Riders and the park manager drove around and stuck No Bike signs to the

temporary delineator posts as the park is seeing so much bike usage of the horse trails. One sign has already been ripped off a post.

Maybury is planning to apply for grants for the directional signage needed at the park as their park manager has told them there is no money for signage at this time. Proper signage is needed to ensure riders can navigate the trails without getting lost and to differentiate the horse trails from the bike trails. They plan to use colors to mark the various loops and trails at the park, similar to how Proud Lake marked their trails. Maybury has successfully held a couple of work bees already this spring and also a destination ride where they served lunch out on the trail.

**Ortonville** – Ortonville equestrian trails do not intersect with bike trails. They do think No Bikes signs would be helpful. They do have ATV's and dirt bikes on the trails at times so signage addressing this may be helpful also, as well as at some of the other parks too.

Their new trail proposal seems to be under active consideration and they are hoping for approval soon so they can start developing the new trail this year. This proposal will put them at about 11 miles total reaching the DNR's goal for parks to have at least 10 miles of trails for equestrians to enjoy. They are considering applying for a grant in 2020 which could help cover the costs for new trail development and fund materials needed to repair poor drainage areas on the existing trails.

**Pinckney** – The Pinckney equestrian trails do not intersect bike trails, we do get occasional bikes on the trails, "No Bikes" signs would be useful at the staging areas and roads. The equestrian trails connect with the Lakelands trail which is a non-motorized, shared use trail and the both forms of the trail etiquette signs would be useful throughout this trail. From my experiences on the Lakelands trail, it does seem like the word is getting out and more bike riders are doing as trail etiquette dictates, but the casual bike riders who don't necessarily read biking publications still need more education and these signs would be very helpful for all.

Because of frequent illegal dumping of trash and vandalism of equestrian trail markers, PTRA purchased signs that were approved by the park manager which state "Due to recent vandalism, parking area and trails are under surveillance. If you see suspicious activity, please call <park office number>."

Pinckney had a very successful work bee clearing overgrowth and downfalls in April with 30 volunteers joining us to work on the trails. We also held the banquet with Brighton in the early spring and our Blessing of the Horse Benefit ride was successful with 50 riders which raised over \$1000 for NAMI to continue their local community outreach Suicide Prevention programs which visits schools and other facilities in the area. We added three mounting blocks to the trails to assist riders who choose to ride the trails near or to Hell, the trails wander through a gorgeous white pine forest and resemble those usually seen in more northern Michigan. We will finish signage throughout the trails and in this area soon as the trails dry out.

**Pontiac Lake** – Pontiac Lake equestrian trails do intersect with bike trails so trail etiquette signs at intersections and staging areas would be helpful. They also do see some bike usage of the horse trails, No Bike signs are warranted.

Pontiac Lake had a great turn out at their camping event in June, all sites were full with a waiting list and they had 119 riders at their potluck dinner. It was a great weekend and they got the festivities in before the rain on Sunday.

**Proud Lake Trail Riders** – Proud Lake had their camping weekend this past weekend and unfortunately, the obstacle course planned for Sunday was rained out. But they had it set up all weekend, so campers did get to do the obstacles on Friday and Saturday. Proud Lake held a two-day work bee recently and were able to get the trails marked with directional letters and arrows, plus address downfall and overgrowth. They did fund the signage themselves which cost \$1700 for the letters and arrows, they funded and installed the posts and spray painted the colors for the trails last Fall. Once they receive the maps from the DNR, they can finish marking the trails. Properly marked trails will help bring more riders to the gorgeous Proud Lake trails as many people are not willing to ride where they may get lost. The other main reason I hear from riders on why they choose to ride at other parks instead of Proud Lake is that the equestrian and bike trails are shared. We are hopeful that new bike trails can be created soon so the two user groups can be separated for the safety of all. With the blind hills and curves throughout the Proud Lake trail system, it is in the best interest for the safety of everyone to separate use. I know of multiple near accidents or actual accidents which have happened and I myself have almost collided with a bike at Proud Lake. It was no one's fault, it was a blind hill for all and thankfully there was enough time to stop the horse and bike before contact and the horses didn't spook.

That said, as it stands now, Proud Lake could use Trail Etiquette signage throughout their entire trail system and all staging areas for horses and bikes.

#### **Trail Towns –**

**Southeast Michigan Trail Group Events Facebook Group** – All events are being advertised on the group and hopefully this is bringing more riders to events and also awareness about our parks and all the work our volunteers do.

#### ***Upper Peninsula Report (Submitted by Janet Holmstrom)***

**Pike Lake (Houghton County)** This proposal will be discontinued due to the scope of the projects needed to make this happen. Ongoing maintenance of the trails are also a factor.

**Simar trail (Ontonagon Co):** no change. Plans are to work on proposal and gather data this summer.

**Courtney Lake Campground (Ontonagon Co):** Ottawa National Forest (ONF) has approved 6 campsites for horses. MI-TRALE will be working on providing high lines.

**Headquarters Lake** held a trail clean up on June 15<sup>th</sup>. I will request volunteer hours.

**Pine Bowl (Chippewa Co.):** I have not had any updates on the status of this proposed parking area.

**The Marquette Co. fairgrounds connector trail to Thunder Valley:** the brushing and signage have not yet been completed.

**Connector trail from Lakeland to Marquette Fairgrounds:** No changes.

### ***Southwest Region Report (Submitted by Jenny Cook)***

#### **ETS Report - SW - June 2019**

**Bass River Rec** - Trails intersect with bikes and ORV's. Many of the horse trails are not labeled well. Several posts have rotted wood and have fallen over. There is not an organized volunteer group to maintain the trails consistently, but some riders do carry clippers and trim as they ride. The horse trails, more than any others, could use a weekend of hard work to get them up to condition. All user groups share this space and every year there is more activity by ORV users. This causes the horse staging area somewhat dangerous for equestrians and horses at times as several ORV drivers (and others) use the staging area as a place to spin out repeatedly.

**Ft Custer Rec** - Many riders from Indiana and Michigan really enjoy Fort Custer Recreational Area trails and would like to camp here as soon as it's available.

There were approximately 60 people for the camp out this spring.

Fort Custer Friends Group appreciates DNR Tony Trojanowski for encouraging equestrian opportunities at the Park.

The WIP for the campground was approved in February. The next step is to get the DEQ Campground Permit approved. Staff shortages have prevented Tony from making a sketch and completing the DEQ application. This is near the top of his priority list.

**Kal-Haven Rail-Trail** - During the Spring MTAC meeting we were informed the Kal-Haven rail trail will have new brochures omitting horses.

**West Michigan Trail Riders Facebook Group** has over 4200+ members, providing sound advise for equestrians, horse care, events and trail updates.

### ***MTAC Report (Submitted by Jenny Cook)***

#### **4-17-19 MTAC Meeting**

##### **Subcommittee Reports**

- Support from Jessi Adler (ORV Representative) lack of camping facilities especially bathrooms, water and electricity at the equestrian campgrounds across Michigan. (She's blogging about visiting all 103 Parks.)

- Support from Jason J Rolling (Non-Motorized /UP resident) jrolling@bankmbank.com (Has 20 horses, his wife is a horse trainer) travels out of the Michigan always, because there's no modern amenities available and he cannot fit his rig (30+ foot /seven place horse trailer) into most of Michigan campsites.

- Support from Chairman John Matonich (wife owns 2 horses) - there should be more spots for equestrians to travel with overnight camping, amenities/showers. People are traveling across America by horseback.

- Support from Bill Manson (Snowmobile Representative) that equestrian trails are not on the County Road maps, but all other user trails are noted. The DNR mapping portals are available if Counties would like to reference them.

- Support to use an established map app so State funds are not used, when a very good mapping system exists already. From Jason J Rolling
- Support from Bob Wilson (Bike Representative) for an “Equestrian Trail Day” (every other trail group has a demo day already scheduled) to invite Senators and Representatives to participant in a trail ride and dinner. Trail rider Dug Jordan (231)229-4509 would like to help organize a ride SE of Traverse City at Ranch Rudolph and ride part of the Shore to Shore.
- Also on Trail Day, September 26, in Lansing, Bob Wilson would like to show a strong presence of trail support.
- Bob Wilson had 3 million approved for paving trails through Legislation. Check Natural Resources Trust Fund pathways for support.
- Bob Wilson is planning a bike ride event on a 275-mile shared use trail “Lake to Lake Trails Route #1” starting from South Haven (Kal-Haven Trail) to Lake Huron September 12-19, 2019 limited to 150 riders. Register at [www.greatlaketolaketraills.org](http://www.greatlaketolaketraills.org)

### **Staff Reports**

- According to DNR Gregory Kinser, Tin Cup Springs has two reviews remaining.
- Nikki Van Bloem would like each of the groups represented to review the current Comprehensive Trail Plan and give updated information. She would like a dedicated person/ persons working on this from each Subcommittee.
- Paul Yauk said our Equine Tourism Representative, Patty Janes, resigned.
- also from Paul, when we designate a Trail Town, Pure Michigan will advertise, so the town may kick in money for amenities and programs due to the advertising. Also “Trail Town” signs will be put up like “Tree City” have been done, which. cities and townships will support.
- Paul announced there will be a new staging area at Lake Huron on the Shore to Shore Trail.
- Kenny Wasczyk says National Trails Day is June 1st. There will be a trails celebration in Bellaire Michigan from 8 different States. Volunteers are honored and awards given.
- Paul Yauk mentioned that bridges are now costing up to \$500,000 - \$800,000. Jason R Rolling asked why so expensive? Maybe the bridge could be built for \$250,000, with different specifications. Check prices.
- Jill Sell, SW Trail Specialist says the updated Kal-Haven rail trail brochures will not include the equestrian trail due to significant safety and maintenance concerns.