

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
EQUINE TRAILWAYS SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS)**

MEETING MINUTES

March 18, 2011

Approved May 24, 2011

**MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health
4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing, Michigan 48910-8104**

PRESENT FOR THE ETS

Sandra Batie, Chair
Michael Foote
Jan Herrick
Richard Kleinhardt
Jane Carmichael (via phone)

ABSENT FOR THE ETS

One Vacancy - Rebecca Thompson Behm (resigned)

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Forest Management Division (FMD)
Annamarie Bauer, Trail Planning Specialist, FMD
Paul Curtis, Park Management Plan Administrator, Recreation Division (RD)
Earl Flegler, Public Lands Specialist, Wildlife Division (WD)

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

Connie Kleinhardt, Back Country Horsemen (BCH)
Therese Kline, Michigan Horse Council (MHC)
Mike James Stinson, Pigeon River and Beyond and BCH
Gabrielle Hume
Melva Parker
Gale Moore

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Batie called the ETS meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 18, 2011 AGENDA:

Chair Batie made one addition to the agenda. **Therese Kline**, representing the MHC, requested to speak during the public comment period. Her presentation will be added under the Marketing and Promotions Effort agenda item. **The agenda was approved as modified.**

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 1, 2011 MEETING MINUTES:

Jan Herrick moved to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2011 meeting as drafted, supported by **Mike Foote**. **The minutes were unanimously approved.**

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION***UPDATE ON REGIONAL ASSOCIATION AND RIDER SURVEYS:***

Chair Batie opened the discussion by suggesting that additional help would be needed to analyze the data and to think about how the data fits into the report. She proceeded with an update on the information she gathered, noting that she had given some surveys directly to the associations to complete (and suggested that surveys be mailed to the association in the future). The ETS agreed that this was an acceptable means to gather information in a timely matter.

ETS Members proceeded to report on their data collection details and progress.

Chair Batie announced that the MHC will help tabulate the survey results and thanked them.

There was general discussion on the possibility of broader distribution and alternative methods such as electronic response. There are associations and organizations that have not previously been identified and should be contacted.

Therese Kline offered to provide lists to Chair Batie.

Chair Batie asked when the surveys should be completed and suggested that it should be included in the appendix of the report. The **ETS** agreed.

Chair Batie reviewed the timeline for providing the report to the MSTAC (due in June), and emphasized the need to begin to formulate and write sections of the report. **Therese Kline** stated that there are over 500 responses already and it will take some time to tabulate.

The ETS set a target date of April 18. Various methods and available resources to process the data were discussed. Information was required to be forwarded to **Chair Batie** who (with permission of the ETS) offered to make an executive decision; the **ETS** agreed.

Mike Foote and **Therese Kline** offered to provide recommendations for the template to record the data.

Chair Batie asked if the DNR could provide any funding.

Jim Radabaugh offered to check and stated that the ETS is in a position to accept cash donations, including private funds. There was discussion about possible grants.

Chair Batie asked if the ETS wanted to ask for donations.

Mike Foote suggested that the volunteer route be pursued first.

UPDATE ON PRC ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN (meeting with the Director):

Chair Batie asked **Mike Foote** to provide a summary overview (attached) of the meeting with Director Stokes and representatives of the ETS.

DISCUSSION ON PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR JUNE REPORT:

Chair Batie distributed the DRAFT Handout - ETS Possible Report/Recommendations (attached) for discussion purposes only.

Chair Batie stated that the ETS could use assistance framing and writing the report, and noted that the ETS is an unfunded mandate. She asked if the ETS could get help. **Jim Radabaugh** advised the ETS to take the report as far as they could first.

A brief discussion was held on various funding mechanisms, including bridle fees and how if such mechanisms were implemented the funds could be dedicated for the purposes of equine trails and facilities.

Mike Foote referenced the Dingell Johnson and Pittman Robertson examples as a possible source for language.

Jim Radabaugh offered the snowmobile and ORV programs as an example.

ETS FORMATIVE DIRECTIONS TO THE DNR STATE EQUESTRIAN TRAIL PLAN PLANNING PROCESS:

Paul Curtis reported that work is and will continue to progress on updating the statewide inventory of equine recreation facilities. **Chair Batie** asked if a meeting could be arranged with the National Park Service (NPS) to seek input and expertise.

Paul Curtis offered to contact the NPS to inquire about any guidance they might have and could provide. He further explained that the initial requested (application) to the NPS for assistance was only for the RD, and that the original intent was latter broadened to include all DNR lands with equine use and facilities. The NPS has a new student intern who is assisting in this process. He explained that there are two areas of data, the actual mapping and the inventory.

Richard Kleinhardt indicated he was optimistic about the work in progress, and suggested that there is a need to tell riders where they can ride and what they can do. He referenced the Wisconsin Horse Book. He also noted that Michigan is absent in the National Trail Riders Magazine.

Gabriella Hume suggested that the Boy Scouts could be a resource for collecting GPS trail data.

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS:

Chair Batie invited **Therese Kline** to make a presentation related to marketing and promotions.

Therese Kline presented two letters (attached), one from the Pinckney Trail Riders Association and the other from the Michigan Horse Council, both in support of the efforts of the ETS. The MHC also offered assistance to the ETS. She provided an overview of the Positive Interactions between the DNR and the Michigan Equestrian Trail Riding Community (attached). This correspondence was prepared by the MHC at the request of Director Stokes, and presented by Therese Kline at the February 11, 2011 Natural Resources Commission meeting. She indicated that Michigan is in the process of updating data and would like to produce something similar to Wisconsin. Efforts are being made to produce official documents providing factual data, as example "why we can't ride here."

There was general discussion about the West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition Trail Atlas (DNR will obtain a copy for the ETS). **Jim Radabaugh** discussed the comprehensive study

developed by the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance "Connecting Michigan a Statewide Trailways and Vision Action Plan."

STAFF REPORTS

Paul Curtis presented information (attached) on the trail separation process for the Fort Custer Recreation Area impacting all trails, and to specifically separate mountain bike and horse use. There was general discussion regarding process and participation.

Earl Flegler provided updates (attached) on the evaluation of "restrictions on access by pack and saddle animals previously imposed by the department" as required by legislation for Lost Nations. There was general discussion regarding the issue of intensity and frequency, the need for dollars to regulate, and the question "what would be possible/what would it take."

Jim Radabaugh reported that Director Stokes requested the DNR to prepare a development grant application for \$300,000 to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) due April 1, 2011. The application will be for an Equestrian Initiative that is supportive of the ETS. Grant fund award announcements are scheduled for December 2011. He gave several examples of types of projects that might be considered, and suggested the application language be broad to allow for greater flexibility. He talked about the competitive nature of the MNRTF, other grant programs, and the potential for receiving donations.

Jim Radabaugh provided an update on the lawsuit concerning the Huron Manistee National Forest planning process. He indicated that the DNR would be providing an official comment to protect the state's recreational interest, and make sure DNR interest is represented since DNR has a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Forest Service.

Jim Radabaugh also discussed the concerns and risk with the "Clip and Snip" practice associated with horseback riding and trimming trees. He advised against it due to the risk of spreading Oak Wilt Disease, informing the ETS that this is a huge forest health issue. Any clearing and trimming by volunteers needs to be coordinated though Ada Takacs, Volunteer Programs Manager, FMD.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

There were no public comments at this time, as Chair Batie allowed for dialogue exchange between the ETS and the public during the meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Chair Batie reviewed and revised the current meeting schedule for the ETS due to scheduling availability/conflicts. Dates and locations have been revised as follows:

April 14, 2011	MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health, Lansing, MI
May 24, 2011	MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health, Lansing, MI
June 16, 2011	Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, Roscommon, MI

Jan Herrick moved to adjourn, supported by **Mike Foote**. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting adjourned at 3:20.