

Minutes of the Equine Trailways Subcommittee February 20, 2013

The regular meeting of the Equine Trailways Subcommittee (ETS) was called to order by Chair Sandra Batie at 1:20 p.m. February 20, 2013. The following members were present:

*Sandra Batie, Chair
Jan Herrick
Michael Foote
Sarah Nicholls
Richard Kleinhardt
Joni Gleason*

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff were present: Jim Radabaugh, Debbie Jensen, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), Earl Flegler, Wildlife Division, and Donna Stine, Executive Office.

WELCOME

Chair Batie welcomed everyone and reviewed meeting protocol; introductions followed.

AGENDA

Two items were added to the Agenda: *Back Country Horsemen of America Celebrates 40 Years* by Richard Kleinhardt and *The 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan* by Sarah Nicholls.

ACTION ITEMS

Two items were added to the Agenda: *Back Country Horsemen of America Celebrates 40 Years* by Richard Kleinhardt and *The 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan* by Sarah Nicholls.

Approval of the November 28, 2012 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Mr. Kleinhardt moved to approve the November 28 Minutes of the Equine Trailways Subcommittee. The motion was seconded by Ms. Nicholls and it carried unanimously.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Mr. Jack Gillies, Highland Trail Riders Association, reviewed the history of the 2006 trail proposal submitted to the DNR for the Highland Recreation Area; *Attachment 1*. The proposed trail would serve as an east-west link connector in the Oakland Country trail network. The DNR notified Mr. Gillies (via correspondence dated February 4, 2013) that the proposed equestrian trail will not occur at this time. Mr. Gillies asked the ETS for their guidance and assistance to move the trail proposal forward. Chair Batie advised Mr. Gillies to ask what resources are required for the trail and to keep the conversation with the DNR going. Chair Batie also advised the DNR to provide clearer responses on the reasons why a trail proposal is rejected.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Presentation of Equestrian Related Grants for ETS Purposes

Mr. Radabaugh reviewed a handout of the equestrian grants that have been issued and their balance status; *Attachment 2*. He indicated that there has been good progress on completing some of the grants; some have evolved from their original scope of purpose and should be lapsed, and some need the ETS to determine project priorities to focus on. There was discussion about the Elk Hill campground and group camp and the need for vault toilets and solar powered well.

Mr. Radabaugh also reported that the PRD grant request from the Recreation Trails Program (RTP) for Highland Recreation Area Regional Trail Connections, in the amount of \$570,000, was approved by the DNR Steering Committee. This project includes 1.25 miles of 9-foot wide grass equestrian trail, 2.5 miles of 12-foot wide crushed limestone multi-use trail, and signage.

MOTION: Mr. Foote moved to lapse the unexpended grant balances in RTP 11-11 (Elk Hill Expansion Study) and RTP 07-20 (Goose Creek Trail Camp) back to the RTP fund for future allocation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kleinhardt, and it carried unanimously.

Discussion of ETS Grant Priorities

Chair Batie offered the planning priority needs for discussion: (a) new looped trails, (b) trail connections, attached to (up to) five campgrounds north of Clare (including Stoney Creek); (c) two Shore to Shore trail extensions near Tawas and Beulah need to be researched and funding needs identified; (d) Clear Lake State Park equine campground and trails on adjacent state forest lands that could connect to the Shore to Shore; and (e) Gladwin area needs trail clearing, expansion, and connection for enhanced riding opportunity. Discussion on the planning priorities took place.

Mr. Foote suggested that the ETS recommend to the DNR that the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant for development by used where needed for trail and facility improvements for the following plans and projects:

- Pigeon River Country State Forest Elk Hill campground and trails
- Equine trail tread on the Fred Meijer CIS Trail
- Clear Lake State Park equine camping and trails
- Gladwin parking and trails

MOTION: Mr. Foote moved to prioritize the MNRTF 11-133 Statewide Equestrian Initiative development grant as outlined above. The motion was seconded by Ms. Herrick, and it carried unanimously.

Ms. Herrick suggested that the ETS recommend to the DNR, working in collaboration with the ETS and the Michigan Trail Riders Association, to use the Recreation Improvement Fund (RIF) planning grants to identify up to five campgrounds in the Lower Peninsula (including Stoney Creek) and the Upper Peninsula for the purposes of providing looped and marked trails from the campground for day riding and connectors to existing long distance trails.

MOTION: Ms. Herrick moved to prioritize RIF 11-10 and RIF 10-58 for statewide equine trail and facility planning as outlined above. The motion was seconded by Ms. Nicholls and it carried unanimously.

Chair Batie discussed the compiled list of equine associations that was recently updated by PRD interns. She also mentioned the 'asks' that came out of the ETS listening sessions in the fall of 2012, such as the ideal number of miles of trail in the recreation area would be 10-20 miles. Chair Batie offered to start a list of the 'asks' for the ETS. She also distributed a proposed 'ask' list of trail connectors gathered from the ETS listening sessions around the state, and suggested a review and ranking of the list from high to low on feasibility of implementation. Discussion followed; Clear Lake to the Shore to Shore was added to the list.

Mr. Kleinhardt motioned to support the review and ranking of trail connectors for feasibility of implementation, including:

- Brighton to Pinckney to Waterloo
- Pontiac Lake to Highland to Proud Lake
- Sleepy Hollow State Park to the Fred Meijer CIS Rail-Trail
- Bald Mountain recreation Area to Addison Oaks to Paint Creek
- Cranberry Lake to Polly Ann Trail
- Gladwin to Midland to Mackinaw Trail
- Iron Ore Heritage Trail
- Clear Lake State Park to Shore to Shore in the Pigeon River Country State Forest

Discussion continued regarding the surface materials used for the improved trail and inviting the local equine groups into that discussion of proposed surface materials before the trail is built.

Ms. Herrick moved to amend Mr. Kleinhardt's motion by adding that the DNR should consult with the appropriate trail users or friends groups when making surface material choices for the connector trails.

MOTION: To review and rank the identified connector trail opportunity, and to consult the local trail users on trail surface materials used on the connector trail was seconded by Mr. Foote, and it carried unanimously.

Ms. Gleason mentioned her positive conversation with the USDA Forest Service about Pine Marten and interest to collaborate on equine improvements at the site.

Chair Batie lead the discussion on the need for trail mapping and suggested the RIF 12-05 might be used to develop an inventory of gaps in the current digital map inventory of each trail, campground or park, and that could then be linked to a new 'map' column in the facilities database sheet. A suggestion on use of QR codes displayed on kiosks to get trail maps for the technically savvy was discussed. Ms. Stine indicated she would work with Chair Batie on a proposal.

MOTION: Mr. Kleinhardt moved that ETS and the DNR should develop a proposal for mapping equine based facilities by April 10, 2013. The motion was seconded, by Ms. Nicholls and it carried unanimously.

Letter (Draft) to Chief Olson Regarding the PRDPRD's Trail Proposal Process

Chair Batie distributed the subject letter. Discussion followed and edits were offered.

MOTION: Mr. Foote moved for Chair Batie to send the edited letter on behalf of the ETS the following business day. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kleinhardt, and it carried unanimously.

Discussion of Pathways Open to Equine Use

Chair Batie highlighted the work Ms. Brenda Curtis initiated to survey local state forest land managers as to the actual conditions of state forest pathways and bridges able to sustain equine riding to understand if natural resource conditions (slope, soils, wet conditions) or if infrastructure such as bridges or boardwalks were designed for pedestrian foot traffic. Most state forest pathways are permissive in their use and technically are open to equine use, with a few exceptions statewide. Results from the survey will be serve a future discussion on pathways that are able to be designated for equine use and those that may not be able to be designated for equine use.

Equine Workgroup Response to Public Comments Related to the Equestrian Chapter of the MSTAC Comprehensive Trail Plan

A February 18, 2013 handout with public comments, "Proposed EQ Workgroup Response," was distributed for ETS review and comment; *Attachment 3*. The ETS agreed with language changes identified under comment #4 and under #14 on the handout.

Discussion of MSTAC Comprehensive Plan

Chair Batie will not be able to attend the March 13, 2013 MSTAC meeting, Mr. Foote will carry the ETS message on her behalf.

Friends Group Formation for Potential Trail and Campground Expansions

Discussion about formation potential of friends group and looking for an existing local trail organization that is registered non-profits that could act as the umbrella organization for the new friends group. Ms. Gleason stated that she is exploring this business relationship with the Iron Ore Heritage Trail (IOHT) Association.

UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Kleinhardt provided a handout, a February 19, 2013 handout, "Back Country Horsemen of America Ccelebrates 40 yYears,," as information for the ETS; *Attachment 4*. The Back Country Horsemen will be sponsoring a work bee at Elk Hill April 26 to 28. He also gave updates on local meetings at Clear Lake State Park and Pigeon River Country State Forest (PRCSF) Elk Hill Campground; he is optimistic about working together with local PRD staff for positive outcomes. Mr. Kleinhardt mentioned his visit and ride with Director Keith Creagh in the PRCSF and good progress being made.

Chair Batie announced the DNR will be posting information on the 2012 fall equine focus groups feedback and survey results on the ETS webpage at:

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-39002_56382---,00.html

Ms. Nicholls provided a December 2012 handout, "The 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan, Vision, Goals and Objectives," that she prepared for Travel Michigan, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the Michigan travel Commission; *Attachment 5*. She reviewed the eight themes and highlighted the product development. Next step is the design implementation plan. Subcommittees will be established to help carry out the goals and objectives to fulfill the vision of "Michigan is one of America's favorite four seasons travel experiences." Ms. Nicholls will be speaking at the April Governor's conference on Michigan Travel and Tourism.

Ms. Nicholls also reported out data from a student research project on review of other state fees associated with equine riding. Five states had equine riding fees; all but one is per person.;

- Georgia Georgia \$10 day, \$60 annual
- Indiana \$29 per horse, \$36 annual
- Minnesota \$5 per day, \$21 per person annual
- New Jersey \$27 per person annual
- Pennsylvania \$15 per day, \$50 annual

Ms. Gleason gave an overview of the multi-use IOHT in the Marquette area. Twenty two miles south of Ishpeming is open for equine trail use. Local discussions have been working towards loop trails around IOHT where the trail corridor is narrow and equine use won't be allowed. Ishpeming is discussion on equine trail use within the city.

Ms. Gleason said PRD staff contacted her and that she has been working with Mr. Doug Barry on the Thunder Valley Equestrian Trail regarding site improvements including parking and trail expansion.

Chair Batie reported that an offer has been made on the Trolz property in southeast Michigan.

ETS Agenda Items for April 10

Chair Batie requested that the ETS send agenda items to her and ; she suggested the following:

- Connector TTrails in Upper Peninsula and eElsewhere – Ccontinue the dDiscussion
- Letter RResponse from Chief Olson
- Map pProposal, by Chair Batie and Ms. Donna Stine
- PRD Park Planning Process, by Ms. Debbie Jensen
- Trail Proposal Process, by Mr. Jim Radabaugh
- Friends Group Discussion, by Ms. Maia Stephens

The meeting adjourned at 4:34 PM.

The next ETS meeting will be April 10, 2013 at the Doherty Hotel, Clare, Michigan.

List of the 5 attachments should go here and attachments should be included in the posting.
Attachment 1 Highland Trail Riders Association
Attachment 2 Equestrian Trailways Subcommittee, Equestrian Related Grants
Attachment 3 Proposed EQ Workgroup Response, Equestrian Comments Summarized

Attachment 4 Back Country Horsemen of America Celebrates 40 Years

Attachment 5 The 2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan, Vision, Goals and Objectives