

**Minutes of the
Equine Trails Subcommittee
March 10, 2017**

The regular meeting of the Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) was called to order by Chair Foote on March 10, 2017 at 1:18 p.m. at the MSU Diagnostics Center in Lansing. Members present were: **Chairman Foote, Dick Kleinhardt, Janet Holmstrom, Gabrielle Hume, and Kristie Walls.** Sarah Nicholls was absent.

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff was present: **Ron Olson, Paul Yauk, Nikki Van Bloem, Anna Sylvester, Barbara Graves, and Earl Flegler.** The following staff joined via phone: **Jeff Kakuk, Paige Perry, and Stuart Neils-Kraft.**

Business Items for Discussion

Dick Kleinhardt moved to approve the corrected January 25, 2017 meeting minutes. Kristie Walls seconded and it carried unanimously.

Gabrielle Hume moved the motion to approve the amended March 10, 2017 meeting agenda. Kristie Walls seconded and it carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Gabrielle Hume - Southeastern Lower Peninsula Report:

- She contacted Dr. Campa concerning some errors in the *Elk Responses to Recreational Use and Habitat Potential in Michigan* report. Dr. Campa sent her a replacement page for the tables on page 4. Barb Graves will replace it in the 1/25/17 minutes. She would like to make sure that everybody pays attention to some of the studies and reports to make sure they are reflecting what they should be reflecting.
- Highland Trail Riders had a total of 600 hours in 2016. So far this year, 100 hours. They are looking to add three new hitching posts at Highland: at the Ford historic gate house, the horse staging area, and where the trail meets the bike staging area. They are working with Bill Althoff to put in one or two culverts and there are a couple places of erosion that they need to work with the DNR on.
- Gabrielle went over the workshop survey responses. The overall satisfaction was: DNR 83%, equestrians 94%. Items liked: good speakers, substantial preparation by speakers, Consumers Energy was there, location, networking, timing of agenda, valuable information, etc. A couple people responded that they wanted more staff training on the trail database, GPSing, trail improvement, and invasive species training, a show and tell section for groups to share project ideas and bring photos, and a website for all EQ groups to communicate events. A few others asked about who at the MDNR they send information to on members, more information about event agreements, and to explain budgets in more detail.

Janet Holmstrom – Upper Peninsula Report:

- DNR and MI-TRALE (local multi user trail group) are going ahead with the planning of the Pike Lake EQ campground. It will be a couple of campsites to begin with, and there is plenty of room for marking out some trails. We will be working with the DNR on that.
- MI-TRALE has submitted a letter to the USDA/Ottawa National Forest recommending opening up a few campsites at the Courtney Lake campground to horses. They have taken it under consideration and are reviewing their data on their prior decision not to include horses there.
- Joan Duncan in Marquette has submitted her proposal of a connector route. It would connect Superior trailhead with Marquette Co. fairgrounds. This connector route would be 30.5 miles in length.
- I met with Jeff Kakuk on 2/10/17 to discuss expanding the Courtney area trails onto DNR property on the North side of M-38. This would add an additional mileage to the 14 miles in the Ottawa National forest. We also discussed the Pike Lake project and the addition of trails there. We will do more on these 2 projects once the snow melts.
- A member of the Ontonagon County Recreation Planning committee stated horses must yield to hikers on trails. My understanding is the reverse, is this codified as a state law or an accepted practice? Paul Y. indicated it is not codified, but is the accepted practice; hikers yield to horses.

Dick Kleinhardt - Northern Lower Peninsula Report:

- The PRCEC is meeting next week, the 16th. One item of discussion will be the campground policy regulations. They are tentatively talking about a work bee in the Pigeon.
- Elk Hill River Camp work bee will be the third week in May, if it works with everyone's schedule. It will be the "Eco-Friendly Work bee", where they will advocate people to bring their horses. They will enjoy a little riding while also doing clean-up work.
- A big discussion item in their last BCHA "Presidents Call" was land swap. He suggested Googling "South Dakota Land Grab" which is a battle that just took place in South Dakota. The president there, along with many others, had to fight off a lot of pressure from the state wanting to do a land swap with the federal government. Yvette Rollins from Back Country Horsemen's Association said Colorado and Wyoming are going through the same problem right now.
- A national bill was passed last November that allows more volunteer groups to go into the back country for trail maintenance so it sounds like they will have more opportunity to access the back country through their help. Yvette Rollins from BCHA in Indiana asked about the new chainsaw and crosscut policy that is in effect right now across the nation. Because of the backlog in trail maintenance it was very crucial to have the chainsaw crosscut policy in place as well as the training to allow them to do it. Only certain people are allowed to use crosscut in the wilderness areas. Anna Sylvester said they do periodic trainings with staff here, but they would have to see what is included in the USFS training. Paul asked the committee to pose

the question to the DNR and they will ask Kristen Thrall of the USFS on the policy for federal lands.

Kristie Walls – Central Lower Peninsula Report:

- Marsha Putnam - SHTR is relieved with the master plan that is in the final stages of approval, and that the single use equestrian riding is going to stay single use. However, a campground, staging area expansion, and new trail mileage are not going to be realized. They accept the final plan and will continue to work with the DNR. Their spring work bee will be to fix the access road; bring in gravel and perhaps a culvert. They are grateful that they can continue to hold special events. They have a full itinerary of events to enjoy this summer. In October they will have an open house at the rustic cabins that they donated \$8,000 for and hopefully a special trails project.

Action Items

- Discuss Goals of the Trails Plan – Nikki said they discussed at the last subcommittee meeting to pick a goal or two to focus on for the next year. Before the next meeting, everyone should pick three goals and prepare to discuss at the next meeting.
- Teleconferencing Capabilities – After lengthy discussion on teleconferencing, Gabrielle Hume moved a MOTION to have all the subcommittee meetings face to face, with the option to teleconference available to those who cannot attend but would like to participate. Dick Kleinhardt seconded and it was unanimously approved.

Updates

- Draft Equestrian Camping Policy – there were no updates to the policy made. Nicole Toman will make sure it is presented to the ETS before it is moved forward for approval.
- Great Lakes Shoreline Access for Equestrians – Paul Yauk reported that he met with operations staff and asked Ray Fahlsing to look at all of the state parks on the Great Lakes and that Ray had some thoughts and comments on what sites would and would not be appropriate. Paul asked Jenny Cook if she would be willing to work with a park manager to do a pilot at one of the parks prior to opening season. Jenny Cook thanked the committee and the DNR for putting this on the agenda and the opportunity to partake and she would be happy to do a pilot and have it documented and go from there. Paul said they have a list that he can share of parks that they don't think are appropriate, mostly because of habitats. He will get back with her to discuss.

- Mapping Updates – Stuart Neils-Kraft updated the committee on the mapping project. In 2015-2016, they worked on all of the equestrian parks in Southern Lower Michigan and the first drafts are ready for review. Pontiac Lake (pilot location) had about three drafts before they settled on a final product that everyone was satisfied with. Each park will be different. He would like to get all 2015-2016 drafts out for review by April 15 at the latest. Caryn Robinson from PLHA said there are a lot of people to talk to and a lot of layers on the maps, so you have to be patient. Stuart said their plan is to work on the Shore-to-Shore this summer. He met with members of MTRA in January and received some valuable input from them on the sort of features that they would like to have mapped. They also offered support for the project in the form of guidance on the trail and transport on horseback for sections that are not two-track. He is excited and looks forward to working with them. If you want to be included in the drafts of these maps, please send him your email address.
- Workshop Locations – Anna said that between Janet, Jeff, herself and other U.P. staff and stakeholders, they can figure out a location. Anna would recommend, since Janet is the committee member for the U.P., is to have her lead an effort where she can meet with some of staff and some of the U.P. constituents and get together to have a small meeting, via conference call, and talk about what they want and some of the things they want there; maybe even do an electronic survey.
- Orion Township Land Swap – Paul Yauk said because there is some federal land involved it has to go through federal review. Once everyone is on board, then it goes to the state. It is moving forward.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

- Don Packard, President of the Michigan Horse Council, gave an update on the PSA partnership with the DNR. The safety PSA is directed towards the general public and can be found on YouTube by searching “Michigan Horse Council”. They are also in collaboration with the DNR and MSU for PSAs on trail riding in Michigan. The target audience would be the general public of the state of Michigan, the second audience would be equestrian personnel in the outstate areas; Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin. The third target zone would be within their own industry. One focus of theirs will be the Shore-to-Shore ride, and they will seek input from the MTRA.

Don said there has been a lot of interest in the economic impact study. He is not sure when it will be complete, but is hoping soon.

There has been more interest for future legislative days, and he is hoping the results from the economic impact study come in prior to. He stated that as an equine community they have to be one voice, not individual groups, of a united equine industry and present the study to show how much they contribute. He stressed the

need to be positive-thinking people going forward. He is going to take the responsibility for the legislative day and he promises them that he will do it if everyone unites going forward.

- Joan Duncan suggested they add as a goal of the trail plan to look for free parking areas across the U.P. for people with horse trailers. She thinks this will bring in more riders as they will have easier access to the trail system. She got approval for a parking lot by Lake Superior. It has been scaled back because the original estimate was \$214,000. As she worked with the Chocoley Township Planner to discuss applying for a grant for the Lake Superior Trailhead, she needed to get an estimate from a contractor on the cost for the parking lot. The estimate she received was for \$54,000. Anna Sylvester said there might be DNR staff that could do some of the work a lot cheaper and recommended they work with Doug Rich, Western U.P. District Supervisor. They may be able to find crews to help out which would greatly reduce costs. Jeff Kakuk could help them apply for any trail grants.
- Marsha Putnam asked about the rail trail project between Owosso, Ovid and St. Johns. She repeatedly gets asked about it and knows there are a lot of people that would ride it. She wants to know if the project is dead, and if the CIS group is willing to have the horse idea come back. Nikki responded that the project is not dead and she doesn't know how the friends of the CIS will view an equestrian path as she hasn't had a specific conversation with them. They are pursuing it, and it has been in the works for a while with an MSU class to do some of the planning and engineering for them. She will reach out to Mary Nardo, their planning manager, for an update.

Gabrielle Hume moved the motion to adjourn. Kristie Walls seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.