

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

MEETING MINUTES

June 16, 2011

Approved November 4, 2011

**Ralph A. MacMullan (RAM) Conference Center
104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon, Michigan 48653**

PRESENT FOR THE ETS

Sandra Batie, Chair
Michael Foote
Jan Herrick

ABSENT FOR THE ETS

Richard Kleinhardt
Jane Carmichael
One Vacancy – Rebecca Thompson Behm (resigned)

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Forest Management Division (FMD)
Annamarie Bauer, Trail Planning Specialist, FMD
Earl Flegler, Public Lands Specialist, Wildlife Division (WD)

OTHER AGENCIES

Les Russell, District Ranger US Forest Service

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

None

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Batie called the ETS meeting to order and welcomed everyone. She gave a brief overview of the meeting agenda and topics to be discussed. She emphasized staying on schedule for the completion of the draft recommendations to the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council (MSTAC); due no later than July 15 so they are able to include the report in the July 22 MSTAC meeting packet.

Chair Batie asked about the current vacancy and mentioned Sarah Nicholls as a potential candidate. **Jim Radabaugh** indicated that he had a conversation with Ms. Nicholls and she had expressed interest in serving.

APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 16, 2011 AGENDA:

Chair Batie moved the *Report on the Consultative Meeting concerning the DNR Equine Access Plan for the Pigeon River Country State Forest (PRCSF)* to the first item of business since it relates to the report recommendations and will become part of the broader

discussion. She also mentioned the need to discuss the possibility of a seminar with Gene Woods and the next ETS meeting possibly for mid October.

The agenda was approved as modified.

APPROVAL OF MAY 24, 2011 MEETING MINUTES:

There was one grammatical correction.

The correction was made, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

REPORT ON THE CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH RESPECT TO EQUINE RECREATION AND THE PRCSF:

Chair Batie began by providing an overview of the meeting that was organized at the request of Director Stokes. People in attendance included:

Sandra Batie and Richard Kleinhardt, *ETS*

Peter Gustafson and Kerry Mase, *Pigeon River Country Advisory Council (PRCAC)*

Donna Stine, Scott Whitcomb, Lynne Boyd, Steve Beyer, James Radabaugh, and Conservation Officer Nicholas Torsky, *DNR*

Jim Hodgson (via phone), *United States Fish and Wildlife Services*

Representative MacMasters and Senator Casperson

Scott Whitcomb presented a DNR proposal for improving equine access to the PRCSF. The areas of focus included expansion and improved trails, camping redesign and improvements, and the opening of three dispersed campsites. There was also discussion on trail confidence markers, sustainability, safety, and sensitivity toward the source of funding for acquisition and management. A considerable amount of time was spent discussing Elk Hill Equestrian Campground including potential redesign, resource protection, reservations, and added personnel.

Additional discussion took place concerning dispersed camping and the challenges with enforcement issues, recreation user's lack of knowledge regarding riding and camping in the PRCSF and the need to prepare and implement a communications plan.

The topic of "Leave No Trace" was discussed and Chair Batie offered to contact Rique Campa regarding a study to determine equestrian use impacts on wildlife specifically the elk herd.

Other topics discussed included focusing on lands not impacted by Pittman Robertson and Dingell Johnson funds, development of modern camping facilities, trails from private lands, the quantity of trails and trail loops, the need for accessible mounting blocks, and the proposed trail network including the use of dead-end roads, bermed roads, and county roads. Peter Gustafson and Kerry Mase provided the PRCAC perspective and indicated that the PRCAC could be receptive to the DNR Equine Access Plan Proposal that would fit within their May 2012 timeframe.

Motion by Jan Herrick, supported by Mike Foote to strongly support the general direction and components provided in the DNR Equine Access to the PRCSF Proposal.

Motion approved.

Chair Batie addressed the topic of modern facilities (running water, flush toilets, and showers) by suggesting that a demand analysis might be done for a modern camping facility near the PRC facility and acknowledged that economics, politics, and the Shore-to-Shore Hiking and Riding Trail would all factor into the recommended location. There was discussion on the benefit of inviting Gene Wood (retired Clemson faculty) to Michigan for a presentation on sustainable trails.

REVIEW OF THE DRAFT 2011 ETS REPORT:

Chair Batie began the discussion by calling for a unanimous vote on the decision making process for reviewing and approving the draft recommendation for the 2011 ETS Report. It was proposed that decisions to include recommendations in the June/July ETS report would be made by a majority of those present. There would be no minority reports or footnotes of dissent from the recommendations. There was unanimous support.

Chair Batie began to review the report recommendations (dated June 11, 2011) previously provided to ETS members, section by section. Final recommendations would be offered to the MSTAC as draft recommendations. This use of a draft status would allow the ETS to meet the June 2011 deadline and continue to work on additional details of the plan. She indicated that several areas of the ETS assignment have not been adequately addressed in the recommendations. These include pack animals, carriage driving, and connector trails. These issues can be addressed the following year (2011-2012).

STAFF REPORTS (by exception)

There were no staff reports.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

There were no public appearances.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be scheduled once the ETS member's availability is confirmed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55.