

**Minutes of the
Equine Trails Subcommittee
March 8, 2018**

The regular meeting of the Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) was called to order by Chair Foote on March 8, 2018 at 1:17 p.m. at the MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab in Lansing. Members present were: **Chairman Foote, Dick Kleinhardt, Kristie Walls, Janet Holmstrom, and Amy Scharmen-Burgdorf.** Sarah Nicholls was absent.

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff was present: **Nikki Van Bloem, Barbara Graves, Anna Sylvester, Jacklin Blodgett, and Earl Flegler.** Paige Perry joined via phone.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Dick Kleinhardt moved to approve the January 24, 2018 meeting minutes. Kristie Walls seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Janet Holmstrom moved the motion to approve the March 8, 2018 meeting agenda. Kristie Walls seconded and the agenda was approved unanimously.

Committee Member Reports

Janet Holmstrom - Upper Peninsula:

Pike Lake (Houghton County)/Simar trail (Ontonagon Co): MI-TRALE (local multi user trail group) is currently writing up the proposals for both trails. Would the ETS board consider writing a letter of support? A sample was sent to the board last week.

Courtney Lake Campground (Ontonagon Co): This project is moving forward despite the snow! Our USDA/Ottawa National Forest (ONF) contact got back to us on the timeline for completing the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) for the Courtney equestrian campground proposal:

The NEPA review by specialists is due October 19, 2018. There are 6 other projects that take priority over this one, so the timeline is the best everyone could do. It gives us (Ottawa Forest/MI-TRALE) time to get together on site this summer and really look at the campground and see what sites are best suited for horses/trailers. A few of the specialists want to have a field trip to look at the sites together, it would be a good opportunity for all of to go together if possible. Currently the campground is under 200" of snow.

Our ONF contact said she didn't hear any major concerns for the project except from their botanist. She asked about requiring weed free hay and it was explained to her the issues around that- it's not required in MI, it's not readily available or affordable here, and it's not a requirement to ride our trails, so why require it to camp. We think she will be OK with not requiring it, but time will tell. She was just concerned over Non-native Invasive Species establishing in the campground, so that's something we can talk about this summer and see what MI-TRALE would be willing to do.

So the earliest the area would be open to horses is summer 2019, which gives us time to get everything planned, installed, and publicized this fall and winter.

Pine Bowl (Chippewa Co.): No updates

The Marquette Co. fairgrounds connector trail to Thunder Valley: No work being done on the trail at this time. Snow is too deep; come Spring the goal will be to get the brushing and signage completed.

DNR Workshop: The DNR/USDA National Forest Equestrian Workshop will be held on 3/17th at the River Rock Lanes and Banquet Center in Ishpeming. It is on track. I have posted info and the agenda on as many "FaceBook" pages as I could. It has also been shared numerous times, so I am hoping for a good turnout.

Pony Express Trail Ride across the UP: The UP MTRA trail ride across the UP runs May 12 – June 30, 2018. This project is well on track and 25 riders have signed up already!

Dick Kleinhardt – Northern Lower Peninsula:

I've been in communication with Deputy Director Bill O'Neill concerning the request for the remaining 6 connectors to be approved in the Pigeon River Country along with access to Inspiration Point. The PRAC is good with whatever USFWS and the Director come up with. Also, conveyed is our need for a Pavilion at group camp area. The work bee in the Pigeon will be hosted once again by Back Country Horsemen, PR&B the third weekend in May; May 18th-20th.

Our next PRCEC meeting will be held March 15th at the Roscommon Field Office. Chuck Fanslow was elected as our new chairman last meeting.

Prior to our February reorganizational BCHMI,PR&B meeting I was contacted by a couple of folks regarding the feasibility of a campground in the area surrounding Luther, Michigan, an area of State Land that has been used both by equestrians and ORVs for over the past 20 years. There are at least 20 plus miles of horse trails in this tract of land which included two tracks and a variety of single track trails. Endurance riders have enjoyed this area for many years now. It is known as "Tin Cup Springs" which is located in Lake County which has the dubious distinction of being the "poorest county" in Michigan. It is located about 5 miles southwest of Luther and south of Carrieville State Park or northwest of Reed City. We talked about this at our Back Country meeting and virtually everyone was in favor of us looking into the feasibility of asking the DNR about developing an equestrian campground in this area. Because of this interest, we travelled over to this area on February 26th to see for ourselves. It is a beautiful area with diverse tree populations including red oak, white oak, black oak, poplar, white pine, red pine, jack pine, and soft maple. We drove around the forest which is I would guess to be approximately 5 miles in width and 7 miles in length. As ETS members I think we should seriously consider supporting this possibility as it fits into our mission to expand riding opportunities and trails in the state while at the same time serving as an economic generator to the folks in Lake County. I placed a call to Scott Slavin, land manager of

this area out of the Cadillac Office and he seemed very up-beat about the prospects of this idea. Also talked with Senator Darwin Booher who represents this area and he is “all in” on the idea of promoting an equestrian campground in this area.

After soliciting the volunteer hours report from the work being done in my region it is quite amazing as to the work that has been done and the associated value to such work. To date for last year’s work it is as follows:

Back Country Horsemen MI., Pigeon River and Beyond	Total value of	\$	49,038.11
MTRA	Total value of	\$	159,478.36
Gladwin Outback / M62 Secord Road	Total value of	\$	4,409.68
Big Oaks	Inconclusive		?
Alpena	Inconclusive		?
Gladwin Field Trail area	Inconclusive		?
	Total	\$	212,926.15

Respectfully Submitted,
Dick Kleinhardt

Dick suggested a “fast track” option of going through legislators. Dick is looking for a sanctioned approval from this committee to explore the possibilities.

MOTION: Kristie Walls moved a motion that the committee write a letter of support for a campground around the Tin Cup Springs area providing that they can supply the plans to present to the legislature for a budget proposal. Janet Holmstrom seconded and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Dick moved a motion that the ETS compose a letter of recommendation to support putting in trails at Pike Lake and Simar. Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf seconded and it carried unanimously.

Mike Foote – Southwestern Lower Peninsula

Chair Foote asked who they would talk to about to arrange longer trail connections for a one day or long weekend event. Nikki referred them to the Trail Specialist in the area of interest and that it would be a permit process. Depending on what trails and land, he/she will be able to guide them through the process.

Chair Foote asked who to contact to be able to use carts on trails. Anna Sylvester said to work with the Unit Manager or Trail Specialist, put a proposal in, and they will get it going through that process.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf – Southeastern Lower Peninsula:

Recording Volunteer Hours:

One of the board members from Pinckney Rec, Dianne Martin, revised the volunteer hours spreadsheet provided by Kristie Walls. It allows for incredibly easy recording of

the volunteer hours and the conversion of these hours and equipment usage to dollars. We can easily change the rates each year when they are released by the state of Michigan. The spreadsheet has been distributed to all the Southeast groups and I hope they will utilize this tool going forward. I have tried to contact each group individually, to see if they were able to use it or to get ahold of another board member who may be more familiar with spreadsheets. For Pinckney, we found it easiest to upload to Google Sheets and anyone who has been invited can log into their account and enter their hours as needed. I personally have found this to be very helpful in remembering to record my hours immediately after attending to administrative work for the groups.

We also have a version of the spreadsheet with the 2017 rates and I have asked the Southeast groups to convert their 2017 hours so we can compile this information for the whole state of Michigan. Most have said they will be able to do so by the end of March, with one saying more likely early April. Only one group had converted their hours to dollars prior to the spreadsheet.

Ortonville's:

The value of OREA's documented volunteer hour, travel mileage, stock use/hauling and power equipment donation for the 2017 calendar year totaled in excess of \$12,350.00. Volunteer hours given for the benefit of the equestrian park were 538.

Trail Towns:

I was able to talk with Pinckney Trail Riders Association about the possibility of Hell becoming a trail town and we were supposed to meet with Chuck Dennison, DNR, who is the Pinckney Rec and Lakelands Trail manager 3-7-18 but cancelled due to the weather. Our meeting is rescheduled for 3-14-18 and he mentioned that I will need to get involved in some already ongoing talks about trail towns between the village of Pinckney, and Putnam and Hamburg townships. I am looking forward to learning more about this at the meeting next week.

Kristie Walls - Central Lower Peninsula Report:

She has nothing new on hours from the last report. She did tell her groups that volunteer hours are required so they can report them back to MTAC. She wants to do one of the flyers for the Equine Legislative Day, compiling the whole state's contribution so they can use it to help get the attention of the legislature.

ACTION ITEMS

Discuss Goals of the Trail Plan – Provide Top 3

The committee concluded that their top four goals are:

Goal 1 - Develop Sign Guidance for EQ Trails

Goal 2 – Expand Trails to a Minimum of 10 Mile Loops

Goal 3 – New Riding Opportunities in SLP

Goal 4 - Reopen or Repurpose Forest CG to provide more EQ Camping opportunities

The committee discussed their desires for equestrian trail signage with department staff. Nikki stated that Goal 2 and 3 are discussed during management planning across all parks and recreation areas, and the department is already addressing trail expansions. Goal 4 – Anna Sylvester says this refers to the U.P. and that there is a state park in the U.P. called Indian Lake near Manistique that has minimal use at one of its campgrounds and they have been looking to expand equestrian opportunities there.

Mike said his intent is to have a list at the next meeting of trail expansion wants. The list will contain the can's, cant's, and why not's.

Trail Town contacts – Would be the Park Managers and Supervisors and then Nikki as a second contact. Dick suggested giving the managers a heads-up; Nikki will send out a note.

Jacklin Blodgett introduced herself as the new Assistant Chief for Parks and Recreation. She hopes to make it to more meetings to meet everyone officially.

UPDATES

Staff Updates

Nikki reported that Emily Meyerson, the Northern Lower Trails Coordinator is leaving the DNR on 3/16 and they will be posting the job soon.

P.A. 288 - Anna reported that they are having stakeholder meetings in the UP in April, and three public meetings will be in May. ETS will be invited to the stakeholder meetings for both UP and SL. The stakeholder meetings for the SL are set for May 29 and May 30 at the Demmer Center in Lansing. Four or five public meetings will be in June at Golden Township Hall in Hart, Allegan, Lansing, and Novi so far. They will still ask that public comment be put on line. The September NRC meeting is in Ontonagon and they will be introducing the UP proposals, which will be open for comment. The October NRC meeting in Lansing will be when they present their second draft of opened roads based on public comment. Then it will go through another second comment period. www.michigan.gov/forestroads for more info.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Leigh Kuhn provided maps and comments on the proposed equestrian campground in the area surrounding Luther, Michigan known as “Tin Cup Springs” that Dick covered in his committee report. She thanked the committee for letting her speak and for all they are doing to support the idea. Anna thanked her for coming forward with the concept so they can maybe provide more equestrian opportunities in that area.

Jenny Cook said it continues to be a pleasure working with everyone on the Great Lakes equestrian shoreline pilot rides. She believes Elissa Buck was working on more pilots, but is not sure where it stands. Nikki said Elissa was not able to make the

meeting, but she will get an update from her. Jenny asked if there was a tourism contact that she could be in touch with. Nikki reported that they are looking at a broader spectrum of options in the search for a Tourism representative to fill Sarah Nicholl's vacancy. Anna said they will look at universities that offer tourism and equine programs, as they benefited from Sarah's connections in those arenas.

The next meeting is July 25, 2018 at MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab.

Kristie Walls moved the motion to adjourn the meeting. Dick Kleinhardt seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:13 p.m.