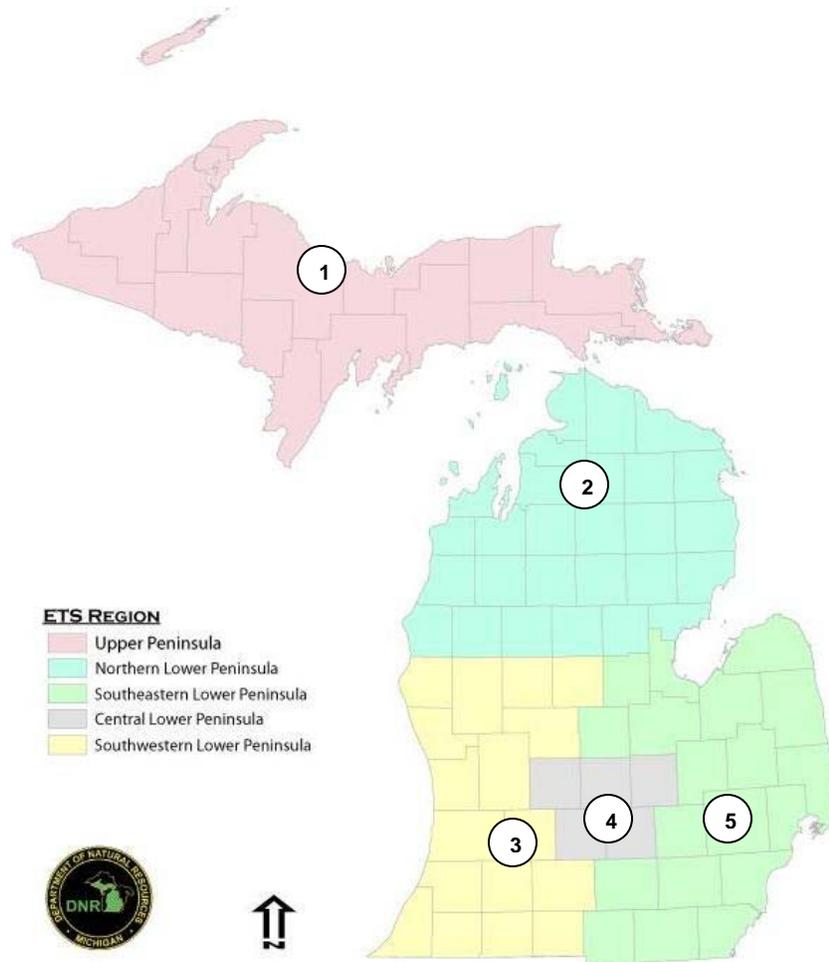


EQUESTRIAN TRAILS FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

A series of Focus Group meetings were conducted in August and September of 2012 to gather information regarding equestrian trails from trail users. A Focus Group meeting was held within each of the ETS Regions (refer to Exhibit 1) and a total of 55 individuals representing various equine associations participated. Information gathered from these meetings was used to define the goals outlined in the Equestrian Chapter of the Statewide Trail Network Report.



Focus Group meeting locations and number of participants per location were as follows:

PARTICIPATION

LOCATION	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
ETS Region 1 - Upper Peninsula: Marquette	15
ETS Region 2 - Northern Lower Peninsula: Gaylord	19
ETS Region 3 - Southwestern Lower Peninsula: Yankee Springs	7
ETS Region 4 - Central Lower Peninsula: Lansing	6
ETS Region 5 - Southeastern Lower Peninsula: Proud Lake	8
TOTAL PARTICIPATION	55

COMMENT CATEGORIES

To better organize the comments collected at the Focus Group meetings, comments were categorized. The following provides descriptions of the categories that focus group participant comments were organized into:

Amenities: describes features include in staging areas, campgrounds, and trails that provide comfort or convenience to users.

Areas of Conflict: describes incompatibilities of activities and situations amongst user groups that have or may occur.

Barriers: describes conditions that hinder trail usage and access. General criticisms are also included in this category.

Communication: describes communication, trail promotion, as well as education and outreach issues.

Expansion: describes opportunities for future growth of the current equestrian trail system.

Funding: describes funding methods that may be employed to improve equestrian trail systems.

Improvements: describes ways in which the current equestrian trail system can be enhanced, and also includes trail preferences.

Model: describes locations, features, and situations that have been helped the success of other equestrian trail systems.

Volunteer: describes all issues that regard volunteer opportunities

FOCUS GROUP MEETING COMMENTS

The following list of comments provides an inventory of feedback that was collected from the Focus Group meetings. These comments are organized based on the categories as described above and also by Focus Group meeting location.

Please understand that these comments are brief notes and are part of a more involved series of conversations. The comments are the expressions of individual participants that may or may not representative of specific groups or associates.

ETS Region 1 (Upper Peninsula – Focus Group meeting at Marquette)

CATEGORY: COMMENT:

Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campgrounds should include access to water and power.• Need more manure bunkers/pits• Need more mounting blocks• Need manual water pumps• Need better access to water resources.• More restrooms• Access to electricity is preferred.• Showers, flush toilets, and other modern amenities are very desirable.• Solar water pumps• Need more manure bunkers/pits. Current bunkers are not being emptied• Bunkers should be located away from camp areas to reduce flies• There is a lack of mounting blocks• Need water every 5 miles on trails
Areas of Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are use conflicts with hunters, fencing (landowners), trucks, ORVs, mountain bikers, and hikers/pedestrians• Bikers, hikers, and skiers are given priority• ATV have no respect for other trail users (heavily emphasized by several participants)• Improper use of facilities by motorized users• Timbering near equestrian trails and resulting poor maintenance• Horse camps are being used by non-horse campers and limiting equestrian camping opportunities
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of trails is leading to over use and diminishing quality of trails• There are almost no carriage riding opportunities. Carriage trail widths allow for EMS and trail clean up equipment access.• General lack of trail availability• Do not like that Oakwood and Thunder Valley are so flat, boring and dry• Motorized vehicles, berms, restricted areas, relationship between DNR and horse community, and a lack of trails and camps• Trails not marked correctly• The DNR restricts use on <u>OUR</u> land• Linear trails are difficult to use.• Prices for facility use has increased with no improvements to trails• Michigan is losing money to Wisconsin as riders are crossing the border to ride there.• Equestrian trail use is overly restricted in Michigan• The closure of Blueberry Ridge left the U.P. with only 6 miles of designated equestrian trail• Gates and berms restrict access on 2 track trails• DNR restricts horses on multi-use and single-use trails• There is public resistance to share trail with horses• Camping fees are too high for rustic facilities• Poor trail etiquette• Bollards at Thunder Valley restrict carts and dogsleds• Trails are too far from home

Barriers

- Dingle Johnson Game Fund restricts limiting horse use
- There is a lack of organization, lobbyists, and advocacy
- CFA exclusion of horses
- Barbed wire and junk on trails
- If you cross the state line a health certificate from the last 30 days is required
- Dispersed riding presents lots of challenges (signage, grooming, attitudes)
- Misconception that horses are biohazards that restrict access
- Need better enforcement of rules

Communication

- Increasing equestrian opportunities for the public is an economic opportunity for the state.
- Work with corporate landowners.
- Legalities should be clarified
- DNR needs to educate the public on the shared use of forest trails.
- There is a need to identify and map existing trails.
- Improvements need to be made to signage and mapping of trails
- GPS data could identify the locations of water, restrooms, camps, etc.
- Camping and riding book needed, similar to the Wisconsin Horse Council's manual.
- DNR communication and partnerships with equestrian groups should be increased
- Volunteer information and opportunities should be posted in a central location (website)
- The DNR should facilitate more meetings with equestrian groups
- There is a need to educate trail users about how to share the trails
- There is a need to educate equestrians about general trail maintenance including proper manure disposal
- Need to create a comprehensive trail inventory. Current on a word-of-mouth system
- There is a need for an online forum for equestrian news, events, volunteer opportunities, and to link groups
- Public education is needed to remedy conflicts with other user groups
- There should be trail building classes for horse use
- There is a lack of education on proper chainsaw use
- Lack of available information on where you can ride and trail markings
- There is a lack of communication and responsive action from the State of Michigan

Expansion

- Need more loop trail camping.
- There could be a connector trail from Thunder Valley to the 2nd ski parking lot
- More trails need to be developed (highest priority).
- Reopen and remark old trails.
- Linking loop trails and linking campgrounds is important.
- Build it and they will come.
- Want more looped trail systems.
- Potential sites for expansive equestrian facilities include Big Eric's Bridge, Trap Rock in North Bessemer, Sagola near Republic and the Porcupine Mountains.
- Need 3 large state trails (east, west, central U.P.)
- Need for equestrian facilities in Marquette city.
- The seldom used SFCGs could become trail camps and would become more heavily utilized.
- Need for trail development in the U.P. This may entail public and private landowner partnerships
- There are very few state designated trails. These should be expanded.
- Need more trails in the U.P.
- Clover leaf trails should be developed

Expansion

- Fox River pathway could be repurposed for equestrian use and remarked. It has an abandoned campground and great water resources. The Stanley Lake site may make a good campground.
- Little Bass Lake campground could be reopened and has opportunities for trail linkages
- There is a lack of state trails in the U.P. (only 6 miles)
- There may be an opportunity to link Blueberry Ridge with Thunder Valley
- Cedar River is under utilized and should be considered for expansion
- Cross country ski trails could be repurposed for equestrian use
- Some ATV trails are under utilized due to changes in terrain. These trails could be repurposed for equestrian use
- Connector trails are needed for access to restaurants and other convenience businesses
- More trails should be added to Crisp Point Trail and Fox River

Funding

- Want more POT and RIF/RTP
- Should offer senior rates
- Bridle tag fee would help fund trail maintenance
- Bridle fees would help get things started.
- Bridle fees in Michigan could work but the state would have to have preexisting facilities to warrant the fee
- Lack of grant funding opportunities for equestrian trails (federal highway)

Improvements

- Need more access to water and more hitching posts
- Trails should have high aesthetic values throughout
- Trails should have access to water
- Looped trails are preferred
- Pine Martin is prized and heavily used because of its campground and loop trails. The facility is showing signs of over use.
- Grand Island middle camp needs more loops.
- Likes wide trails for side by side riding
- Want trails with varied terrain, scenic outlooks, and open areas.
- Want easier trailer accessibility and pull through lots.
- Prefer 200 miles per camp
- Prefer riding on state lands
- More accommodations for those with horse trailers: parking, turn-arounds, pull through sites, etc.
- Minimum trail length of 25 miles.
- Pine Martin needs more parking
- Camping basics: water, outhouses, fire rings, poles with highlines, portable corral opportunities
- A full service campground would be welcomed
- Trails should be a minimum of 25 miles
- Thunder Valley needs more trail miles
- Sites should offer a variety of trail lengths (5-25 miles)
- Confidence marking on trails is poor. More is needed
- Trails could be color coded
- Some signage restricting trail use is outdated and inaccurate
- Road quality is an issue
- There is a lack of adequately sized trailer parking
- Trails should show variety of terrain and be winding for interest
- Trails should be show more openings. There are too many tunnel trails

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| Model | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other states have lower fees, more amenities, senior rates, great customer service, corrals, and the trail system is user friendly. • Michigan Trail Riders take a segmented approach to the 250 mile of trail maintenance and it works well • Boy scout groups empty manure bunkers and sell waste as fertilizer. Cuts cost and supports youth groups • Hartman Creek has good mounting blocks • Kettle Moraine Park in Wisconsin has good rules and mounting blocks • Hungerford has solar water pumps |
| Volunteer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNR could be more receptive to volunteer efforts. Need to share trail maintenance responsibilities better. |

ETS Region 2 (Northern Lower Peninsula – Focus Group meeting at Gaylord)

CATEGORY: COMMENT:

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|-------------------|---|
| Amenities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar powered wells • More solar wells • Better designed outhouses • Fire rings • Some picnic tables • Better signage and access to water • Manure bunkers • Solar power vent fans in vault toilets • Electricity at campsites • Mounting blocks |
| Areas of Conflict | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worried about wandering children • Trails within forest lands are subject to conflicting missions • 4 Wheelers • Mixing regular campers and equestrian campers is unsafe unless a secure area is provided to house horses |
| Barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodcutter debris across trail - Tin Cup Springs Trail • No access into many state forest lands from the road • Only one rig per campsite rule restricts group camping and not enough room • Pigeon River limitations • Restrictions on trails (snowmobile/ski) for equestrians • DNR preventing the development of trails and facilities • Other states' trail systems are far better than Michigan's • The DNR and advisory council • Not enough trails • Trails too far from home • Equestrians pay more for camping and get less • Disorganized groups • DNR/DEQ don't like Equestrians crossing streams • Poor access roads. Need to be graded. • Gravel (large stone size) used on snowmobile trails is not horse friendly • DNR and Pigeon River Advisory Council prevent equestrian access to the Pigeon River Country |

Barriers

- Berming access to roads
- Wetlands and swamps
- Some trails were graveled making them poor for bare footed horses
- DNR upper management resistance to provide EQUESTRIAN opportunities
- Campground bollards
- Campground rules limiting the number of sleeping units on a site
- Not enough miles of trail in the region to warrant camping
- Nothing (existing) in NE Michigan
- Parking lots are not setup well for horse trailers
- The DNR needs to respect horseback riders as tax payers
- Travel distance and gas prices
- Banned from trails that were previously used for years
- No carriage trails
- Turning radius too tight for larger rigs
- Poorly constructed trails
- Too narrow roads for 2-way roads
- Campground roads too narrow for access to campsites
- Rapid River TC has poorly maintained entrance road...destroyed by logging trucks that use it
- Get rid of bollards
- MTRA at their limit now for ability to maintain

Communication

- The DNR is willing to listen but ultimately does whatever they want with our state lands
- Past working relationship with EQUESTRIAN users and DNR is poor
- DNR assistance desired with setting up friends groups
- "Marked" (on map) trails and camps
- Michigan has property for trails that can be promoted to out-of-state equestrians
- Provide more information on equestrian trails online and/or by mail
- Trails Master Program is an education program on how to build a trail (AERC)
- Communication about EQUESTRIAN use from Pure Michigan and DNR
- Education...'Leave no Trace' principles to all users
- Identify connection/impact of EQUESTRIAN use on local economy/business
- Need help from DNR with: (1) provide posts, signs, paint (2) major maintenance (3) technical assistance
- Internet...National Forest Service (Colorado)
- Word of mouth
- Horse and Trail Mule Guide
- Visitor Center
- Appaloosa Association
- Many horse owners are senior citizens. How do we reach the youth population
- Better communicate needs/wish list
- Promote an attitude of willingness to change at higher levels in the DNR
- Put trail maps on the internet
- DNR and associations

Expansion

- Make use of state forests for new trails
- There was a 1998 DNR plan for Alpena County, Norway Ridge, Thunder Bay River Forest, and Devil's Lake but nothing was ever completed.
- Reopen closed trails

Expansion

- 80 miles of trails at Shingleway could be opened up to equestrians (Pigeon River to Atlanta)
- There are miles and miles of two tracks in Pigeon River Forest that have been closed to equestrians. These should be opened as trails because they exist and would be safe
- Possible trail connections between Devil's Lake, Indian Reserve, and Norway Ridge
- Lack of trails west of I-75
- Need more central coordination
- Shingleway (potential for camp)
- High Country Trails (potential for camp)
- EQUESTRIAN trails adjacent to or that have a view of the Great Lakes equals a "Destination" opportunity
- Connector trail between Highland Recreation Area to Proud Lake
- Rails-to-Trails
- Modern CG would be a draw
- Would like to see an equestrian trail system in Rockport SRA.
- Start by GPSing existing trails and seek looped trails from what is there
- West side of the Northern Lower Peninsula needs trails
- Add more connecting trails for multi-day camping experiences
- Central Northern Michigan is okay for trail riding but there is room for more
- Cadillac/Roscommon areas lacking in EQUESTRIAN trails
- Lots of forest land could provide more trails
- Expanding opportunities at Tin Cup Springs might take burden off Hungerford
- Low development native soil surface trails
- Devils Lake, Indian Acres, and Norway Ridge need connection
- Need more off-the-road wilderness trail opportunities
- SE Michigan has too few trail miles. Would like 75 miles for a week-long camping experience
- Need multiple campgrounds and trails to disperse use and reduce travel for users
- Luther area has Huron/Manistee National Forest opportunities
- More riding opportunities near Cadillac are needed. MTRA camp?
- Look at North Country Trail for trail access
- Straw pole vote 'Expand' (develop new) trail/camps (6) or 'Improve (existing) trail/camps (2) if you had to choose one
- Utilize existing snowmobile trails
- Need a modern campground with sufficient trail to draw people in (proximity and connection to existing trails)
- Carriage friendly trails (in N. Michigan and UP for Wisconsin visitors)
- ORV trails are 'iffy'...can be used, but rider beware
- Alpena County trail proposal (Devils Lake Draft Plan)...can we get that back? Also includes a closed campground/
- Expand trails at existing trail camps
- Campgrounds should be centrally located in middle of trails to provide choice...no re-use of trail for access
- Add trail at Gladwin, Section 1 & 2 toward Roscommon/Grayling to connect to Shore-to-Shore Trail
- Lift restrictions on existing trails then start to make connections with adding new trail

Funding

- The DNR should provide materials and money for trail maintenance
- How can we get money to do maintenance?
- Bridal tag - group concurrence that this does not work
- Michigan Horse Council and national organizations offer grant opportunities

- Funding
- Tin Cup Springs Trail can get grant funding for improvements...how can they proceed?
- Improvements
- Roads and campsites need to be larger for larger vehicles and trailers
 - Open all cross country ski trails to horse use in the summer
 - Trails should be looped, high mileage and display variety
 - Enjoy the rustic campgrounds
 - Keep all existing trails open
 - More camping at trail heads
 - Color code loops, increase mapping and increase confidence markers
 - Rustic vs. Modern (camping) fee structure
 - Enjoys dirt, single-track trails for a wild experience
 - Stop closing camps
 - Wells should be added to current facilities
 - Need safe and secure place for horses
 - Allow permits to get vehicles on to trails for maintenance purposes
 - The number of desired miles of trail varies with the rider and the horse
 - Historical interpretive trail at Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore
 - Wildlife viewing
 - Natural resource viewing
 - Scenic viewing
 - Picket posts, good roads, and some trees for shade
 - Rustic camps are adequate if priced correctly
 - Want both single use and multi-use trails
 - Chippewa Hills needs water
 - User created trails on forest land could provide opportunity for designated trails (need trailhead facilities)
 - Views from trails are very important
 - Trailheads need to be developed for horse trailers (larger...more maneuver space)
 - Day Ride distance?...answers varied from 10 to 100 miles...also 45 minutes
 - Signage
 - Need varying widths of trail
 - High Country Pathway not being used because of poor maintenance & signage (now use Shore-to-Shore Trail)
 - Improve what?...signage, water, marketing of the trails, need centralized mapping (web)
 - Shade trees
 - Need varying widths of trail
 - Campgrounds should be shaded, have showers and coffee shop
 - Jordan Valley...no parking or camping (check for connection to Shore-to-Shore Trail)
- Model
- Likes the water feature at Goose Creek
 - Oscoda - one of the best camps for pull-throughs
 - Florida has nice state parks with great riding opportunities and campgrounds with modern facilities
 - Likes the extensive trail systems found in other states
 - South Branch has a solar well
 - Prefer to ride at Pigeon River Country because of the amount of trails
 - Federal outhouses are much nicer and emit less odors
 - Norway and Chippewa Hills...day rides in woods, variety of trail
 - Prefer riding at Mio and Lazerne

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Model | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer riding at Goose Creek and Hungerford • Timbers N Campground' is a private B&B for horses in Newaygo area...different concept |
| Volunteer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any equipment that the DNR could provide (tractor, chainsaws, etc.) would be appreciated • DNR hindering volunteer efforts • A volunteer "wish list" should be posted online so that volunteer groups can better carry out the maintenance goals of the DNR • Willing to help with funds and to coordinate volunteers • Tell us what we can do to help • The DNR does little to support maintenance of trails • Horse use on trails helps to keep remote trails open for other users...keeps brush down • Idea to group together smaller groups under an umbrella association to get 501c3 status...is this possible? • Adopt a campground |

ETS Region 3 (Southeast Lower Peninsula – Focus Group meeting at Yankee Springs)

CATEGORY: COMMENT:

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|------------------|--|
| Amenities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersection - well hand pump • Solar powered well pumps (i.e. Hungerford - hydrant type) • Increase electric and water access |
| Area of Conflict | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generator use by permit can be a conflict with other campers. Need to notify/identify • Biking and horse trails need to be separated • Equity issues |
| Barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campsites are too small • Fort Custer - 1/3 staging area is finished • No place for long rides in the state with electrical and water |
| Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of certified trail builders - construction • Fort Custer - Signage a challenge. Need to communicate uses to keep separate uses. • Fort Custer - Need to know you are on the trail. • Better communication of changes. May be included in signage at staging area. • Better communication regarding Health Department codes, legislation, etc. • Target markets beyond region (MI) |
| Expansion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want more trails in Newaygo, Oceana and Mason Counties and Manistee National Forest with 30 mile+ trails • Need to think bigger. • Would like more campsites; up to 35 sites in the same campground • Want more pull-through sites • Concern for protection of investment by equestrians for and available for equine use (1st priority) • Need to connect facilities and amenities |

- Expansion
 - Create connector trail across 9 Mile Road at Yankee Springs
 - Repurpose decommissioned roads (county) and two tracks as trails. Good base. Ownership may be a concern.
 - 15 miles is not enough. There is a need for longer trails.

- Funding
 - Funding source - land swap
 - Need to explore bridle tag fees and other alternatives for funding
 - Opt-in upgrade on Recreation Passport

- Improvements
 - Yankee Springs Pavilion has no electrical access. Must use generator.
 - Need better maintenance and signage
 - The adjacent Gamelands Recreation Area should include a 2 mile trail around the camp or kids.
 - Snow Lake should include a group camp. 15 sites would be ideal.
 - Loops in the 6 and 9 mile trails (for shorter distances). 6 already has a road for foot only. Baker Lake Rd. (decommissioned?) is used by snowmobilers.
 - Campsites should be larger to accommodate larger rigs.
 - Fort Custer - Would like pavilion for shade
 - Fort Custer - Would like overnight camping (minimum 6)
 - Need to update/upgrade
 - Yankee Springs - open up for larger rigs (clear)
 - Campgrounds should include showers, especially for families.
 - Need for variety and options at a facility location
 - Consider length-footing, trimming, canopy clearance, avoid wet soils and rocks
 - Need reservation system

- Model
 - Other sites have group camps (i.e. Ionia)

- Volunteer
 - Volunteer opportunity improvements needed. The current volunteer process is too involved and should be simplified. Empower at unit/local levels
 - Combine volunteer efforts. Everyone interested in a facility regardless of use. Create synergy
 - DNR should foster collaboration among user groups
 - Need to increase volunteer participation
 - Need for give and take. Volunteers help outside their area of interest.

ETS Region 4 (Central Lower Peninsula – Focus Group meeting at Lansing)

CATEGORY: COMMENT:

- Amenities
 - GPS directions for trail navigation
 - It is often important to have increased amenities for those who may have an extended stay.
 - Corrals or stalls for horses, similar to those found at Brown City.
 - Amenities are expected for those who have traveled 4-6 hours to ride.

- Area of Conflict
 - There are safety issues associated with people hiking through field trial areas while users are training dogs.
 - There are safety issues with other users and field trails that should be addressed.
 - Currently use roads for connectors.

- Barriers
- Brighton equestrian campground water has been turned off while has affected its use. Also no level camp sites.
 - Uneven roads compared to pads
 - Decision to trail ride depends on miles of trail and distance of travel to get there
 - Trail maintenance is an issue. Need certification for chainsaw use.
 - Open more land to equestrian use. There are too many restricted areas/trails in the current system.
 - The check-in/check-out station at Brighton is confusing and difficult to locate. Signage throughout the area needs improvement.
 - Gas prices are a barrier for long range travel.
 - MDOT bike trails are RTP funded
 - The DNR requires safety equipment and training before you can cut on state land.
- Communication
- Communication issues
 - Aging equestrian population points to the need to create more outreach to get youths involved in riding.
 - Michigan has the potential to attract users from other states, but increased promotion is needed.
 - There is a need for a website for equestrian group networking and DNR processes.
 - To become the "Trail State", facilities must be improved and amenities must be increased.
 - Signage is needed for variety of users.
- Expansion
- Want new trails
 - Want connector trails in Brighton to Pinckney
 - The 10 +/- trail system of Sleepy Hollow is not enough and should be expanded.
 - There is a lack of trails in the Coldwater area. There is a need to open/expand trail opportunities in the area.
 - Look at designation of trails at Coldwater or change law.
 - Rail-trails and CSI trails not completely open to equestrian use. May need trail bypasses for restricted areas.
 - Need a connection from Sleepy Hollow to other trail systems.
 - Potential equestrian options: snowmobile trails, cross country ski trails, pathways, etc. Look at MDOT maps for trail listings/maps
 - Rose Lake is not being used, yet has great potential. There are seasonal barriers to consider such as wet areas and insects.
 - Rail-trails (Owosso to Ionia) - only a portion of the CIS trail is open to equestrian use. Connectors are needed to create a more complete trail.
 - There is a need for a connector trail from Bath to Owosso
 - Want to reopen the MTRA trail from Beulah to Tawas.
 - Look at old maps for connection opportunities. May consider in trails on decommissioned county roads.
 - Consider prison facilities for campground options (Brighton, Waterloo, Chilson Pond). These facilities have electric, sewage, area fairly level, and would make excellent campgrounds.
 - Need 3 to 4 modern equestrian campgrounds around the state.
 - Start with a model modern facility.
- Improvements
- 18-20 miles of trails makes a trip worth the effort
 - Offer more choices in campground amenities (rustic to modern)
 - Waterloo has a nice trail system, but it is not marked well. Improved signage is needed.

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| Improvements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-50 miles is the ideal trail length. Does not have to be fancy; can picket to posts, should have trails with shade trees. • Campsites should be larger. • Access roads do not have to be paved but they should be smooth. |
| Model | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy Brighton because of great, challenging trails with variety (terrain, vegetation, trail widths). 20 +/- trail system. • Enjoy field trial riding in locations such as Gladwin, Ionia, and Highland • Kentucky has a strong equestrian advocacy network and is a reason for its equestrian trail success • Michigan campgrounds cost too much for what they offer. Tennessee modern campgrounds cost \$25 per night and offer 250 miles of trails. • Mammoth Caves, KY has great trails, varied terrain, and lots of amenities (showers, sinks, toilets, electric) • Idea: A trailer of maintenance equipment can be taken around the state and used by supporting equestrian groups. This system is utilized in Kentucky and could save the state money. • Brown County, Indiana offers hundreds of miles of trails with varying terrain as well as showers and other amenities to accommodate long stays. • A bed and breakfast offered no food or rooms, but a place to camp and corrals for horses. Far enough away from other horses. May be an opportunity for the private sector. • Waterloo bed and breakfast offers facilities so you can leave your horse for approximately \$20 per night. |
| Volunteer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pruning and tree clearing efforts for trails need more DNR assistance. • Trail clearing efforts are hindered by the "red tape" set out by the DNR • The DNR staff should attend meetings to get to know volunteer groups |

ETS Region 5 (Southeast Lower Peninsula – Focus Group meeting at Proud Lake RA)

CATEGORY: COMMENT:

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|-------------------|---|
| Amenities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showers and modern campgrounds are nice but most found unnecessary • Campgrounds do not need to include "luxuries" |
| Areas of Conflict | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equestrian users avoid mixed-use camping at Highland • Highland shared camping issues - regular campers taking shaded spaces, children's safety due to horse reactions, alcohol use and people petting others' horses • Highland has snowmobile users riding through dog trial fields. Clear education of rules and signage is needed • Runners now use the trails at Pinckney • Mountain bikers are allowed on too many trails. Horseback riders purchase homes and horses near where they ride; it is a lifestyle. Bikers are more mobile and can bike anywhere. • Some horseback riders are not part of associations and are therefore not paying maintenance fees. |

Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lapeer and Holly are not open for equestrian use • Can not ride on Pittman-Robinson lands • Invasive species such as Russian Olive have created a dense shrub mass that has caused trails to be lost (Highland and Proud Lake) • Michigan Horse Council has too strict of involvement requirements to be part of the organization and received grants from them.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of public education about Pittman-Robinson • Education of public on yielding to horses • Pesticide application certification is needed to handle invasive species. The state could host or advertise classes for certification • There is a lack of public education about the proper way to approach a horse • There needs to be more collaboration among user groups (hikers, biker, horseback riders, etc.) so that horseback riders are not doing all the maintenance on a shared trail • The DNR should host more meeting such as this and include more riding groups if possible. • Horseback riding should be highlighted in the Pure Michigan campaign
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to have books on horse trails and how to build. May think of creating a specification booklet for contractors. • DNR should increase communication with equestrian community
Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More trails that are not multi-use • Connector trails from Proud Lake to Highland or to Maybury that is not along roadways • We need both new connector trails and increased maintenance of existing trails. • Should make a connector trail from Highland Oaks to Rose Oaks • Pontiac Lake to Highland connector trail is wanted
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have fundraisers to earn money for maintenance - sell flowers, banquets, raffles, silent auctions, cookbooks, etc. • Annual volunteer training at RAM Center that is hosted by the DNR is a good way to exchange fundraising ideas • May want to charge to use showers
Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails need to be widened and cleared of Russian Olive • Need camping at Proud Lake • The closed campground at Highland could be converted into an equestrian only campground. If the stable is not reopened, the campground should be moved to the stable area • Staging area at Pinckney is too small and needs to be expanded • We need both new connector trails and increased maintenance of existing trails. • Want to keep existing trails open
Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proud Lake lets equestrians have a campout on maintenance day; benefits both parties • The DNR should be in charge of heavy maintenance (tree removal) and trail riders can handle general maintenance
Volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process to work with the DNR is extensive and now trails have to be engineered. The process should be more user friendly and streamlined for increased volunteer opportunities

Additional Information

Group Contacts

- 4-H ... Karen Waite
- Friends of Rockport ... Carol Dodge-Gruhowski (friendsofrockport@hotmail.com)
- Friends of Jordan Valley ... Kevin Rider (PGAskibum@aol.com)
- Friends of Gladwin ... Chuck Fanslow
- Friends of Allegan County
- Elva Horsemen's Association
- Silver Spur Saddle Club of Gladstone (Mary Ann Poe)
- Heritage Hills Horseback Riders (heritagehillshorsebackriding.com)
- Pondhouse Ponies (pondhouseponies.com)
- Great Lakes Distance Riding Association
- Walking Horse Association of Michigan
- Allegan County FACETS
- Rocky Mountain Horses
- Besser Natural Area

Staging Area

What is the number of camper units allowed per site at Pigeon River?

(Answer) Per DEQ Campground Rules, one wheeled camping unit is allowed per campsite in any campground in Michigan.

EQ Plan

What are the next steps in this process?

(Answer) This EQ chapter 'draft' is to be completed by September 30, and along with other trail use chapters, will be merged to form a comprehensive Statewide Trails Network Plan. The target date for completion of that plan is March 31, 2013. There will be public review/input prior to completion of the plan.