



MEETING REPORT – Thursday, December 19, 2024

Call to Order: The meeting was held at Eversource Community Meeting Room, Berlin
The meeting called to order at 6:49 pm by Diane Ciano

Attendance: Diane Ciano, Meg Sautter, Vevette Greenberg, Ruth Strontzer, Kim Bradley (DEEP)

Guests: Denise Ciano, Felipe Villalon

Excused: Danielle Borrelli

Review Minutes: The meeting minutes of September 26, 2024 were reviewed.

Motion to accept by Meg Sautter, 2nd Ruth Strontzer

State Park & Forest Updates:

Diane Ciano Reports:

A CHC member was badly injured in Weber Woods section of the Cockaponset State Forest. A bicyclist came up quietly behind her and her horse spooked. She had broken ribs, a broken jaw and internal bleeding and was in intensive care.

CHC is moving forward to get DEEP to make the signs for THE TRAILS SAFE PASSING PLAN -Stop! Speak-Stand Back - Yield to Horse.

We need someone to make a QR code to be placed on the sign that would bring viewers to the link of a PDF Power Point educating them further. Members have also suggested making less expensive signs to be placed in bicycle shops as outdoor material would not be need.

A letter will be written to the DEEP Supervisor about this situation and to also bring up the foot bridges that are still be constructed in this forest.

Vevette Greenberg Reports:

Naugatuck State Forest: Wednesday November 27th Meg and I rode Mathies Park over to Naugatuck Forest. The section of trail that was washed out appears to have been graded. Possibly material was added. It was so natural it was not apparent the wash out ever happened. The tree is still down on the east side of the lower reservoir.

Roraback Wildlife Management Area-Harwinton: Sunday November 17th Meg and I rode Roraback with Fran Hornick. We met some guys on Quads they had just cleared some large trees that we have been riding around this summer. The trail is in pretty good shape. Except the lower loop that still needs a chain saw to clear the path for an easy trail.

Larkin State Bridle Trail: November 24th. Meg and I rode the Larkin Bridle trail. We rode from Route 63 to Riggs Street. The grade on the northern side of Towantic Hill Road is so washout it is not nice to ride up and we haven't ridden it down in several years. There was a go around that was used on some private land just to the west of the trail. This past summer it was forested by the landowner, and they have blocked the trail. I would like to propose a couple members approach the landowners at both locations and see if they would allow us to bring in material and fix the grade. And or check with the landowner to allow us to ride the trail used for the foresting. I believe we could ride this whole section in the woods above the trail and reconnect at the far end.

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On December 10th a group of CHC members, myself, Meg Sautter, Diane Ciano, Denise Ciano and Randy Olmstead spoke to the owner on the land abutting the trail on Towantic Hill Rd. He has been upset with trail users going onto his property and down his driveway to avoid water and the steep treacherous incline. He has given us permission to have fill put in. We will be raising funding of \$1,000.00 to fix this area.

On December 11th, myself, Diane & Dense Ciano walked from Long Meadow Road toward South Street to the cattle culvert and took pictures. It is clogged with debris and trees. This whole section needs to have fine stone dust topping. The entire length has sharp stones that are terrible to walk on even though it was packed down.

On Saturday the 14th of December Meg, myself and Diane and Denise went to see the landowner on 83 Towantic Hill Rd. They own the top of the grade down to the private part of the trail. Spoke to his wife. Diane and Denise and I returned on Sunday and spoke with Roman Pawelczyk. He told us he was ok, with us doing these improvements, but he would want to have a certificate showing insurance of the group doing the work. It is estimated at \$1,00.00. We will work on getting donations to cover the cost.

Both days we went to 23 Long Meadow Rd. to speak with Todd Gronau, the owner of the private section of the Bridle Trail. He was not home. I did reach him by phone and he did say he was Ok for us to proceed.

We walked the section of Long Meadow Road toward South Street. The trap rock, although packed down is still very hard to walk on with some sharp and loose stones. We walked up to the cattle crossing and took pictures. It is over grown with trees and needs to be cleared up so that if there was any other type of flooding in the future, it would not take down the trail in this section.

Diane then went to DEEP Western District Headquarters and spoke with Tammy about the situation. Tammy said she will be writing a letter in response to the CHC follow up letter regarding the meeting on October 25th. CHC has asked that DEEP continue improvements on the Larkin Bridle trail that is still usable from Rte. 63 to Christian Road. Diane let her know about our recent conversation with the land owner.

Christian St. parking lot. I was able to reach the Secretary for George Temple, the First Selectman. She would like us to email her a proposal of what we have in mind. Include the parcel number. After they receive that, she will get it to George Temple. He can review it and get acquainted with the property. Then set up a meeting with us. She thinks this property may be under a lease.

Meg Sautter Reports:

Friday, October 25th Diane Ciano and I met with Western District Supervisor, Tammy Talbot, Putnam Area Supervisor, Jeffery Dery, and CT Greenways Coordinator, Kim Bradley to get an official update on the trail and work on getting trail improvements and approval for access to the trail from Rte.63 to Christian Road. This section of the trail is open. The rest of the trail will be closed indefinitely until there is a DEEP assessment and plan to reconstruct. It is actively collapsing, Our meeting was to ask that the DEEP list of the Proposed Larkin State Park Trail Improvements of 11/2/2023 before the storm this year be moved forward to improve the trail from Naugatuck parking lot on Rte. 63 to Christian Rd. In Oxford.

CHC had met in person with Tammy on the Larkin in the late spring of 2023 and had requested that gates be put up on each crossing leaving enough room for a horse and pedestrians to pass through. This would hopefully deter any illegal activity and destruction of the trails and abutting private lands and land trust property.

We also asked that the 1¼ inch crushed stone that was put down at the South Street area and up to Long Meadow Road needs to be top dressed with finer stone dust or material as it is terrible for the horses' feet as well as other pedestrians trying to walk or ride their bikes on it.

At our recent meeting it was said that the crushed stone was packed down. Vevette has been out there since and said that the existing surface is still in need of top dressing with stone dust.

We also discussed the two-tiered parking lot at Naugatuck State Forest. We discussed the fact that it can be leveled and expanded to create a cleaner larger parking area that can accommodate horse trailers. We also reported some of the storm damage in the forest with pictures.

We understand that DEEP is understaffed and very busy with the October storm. We do, however, feel that money was allocated previous to the storm and it should be available. We asked that DEEP moves forward with the improvements of this well-used State designated Greenway, considering that a large population of people Statewide utilize it for a variety of uses including running, walking, cycling and pushing baby carriages. And, of course, horses, making this treasured trail deserving of upgrading.

Naugatuck state Forest is also a well-used forest and providing a safe and expanded parking area for users is ideal.

We will also be working on getting parking available from the Town of Oxford. The property is adjacent to the trail on Christian Rd. We are also continuing work with Kim on contacting the DOT on expanding the parking area on Re. 63 in Naugatuck.

Discussion was also to have the parking lot at Roraback WMA Parking lot on South Street in Harwinton expanded.

Also discussed is the CHC would like to have some input on the reconstruction of the trail. We feel that in one case where there is the trail is gone, 80-100 ft it may be more feasible to slope the sides to a safe decline and incline and place sturdy material to support the foot and hoof traffic. *The cattle culvert between South Street & Long Meadow Pond Road should be cleared so fallen trees don't block this passage.*

We also mentioned again about the cattle crossing culvert traveling underneath the section between South Street and Long Meadow Pond road. It is at the about halfway point. This has been blocked with a number of fallen trees over the years. Looking at the devastation that occurred when a culvert was blocked, this should be cleared and maintained.

DEEP Kim Bradley reports: DEEP and engineers have been out on the trail, fences are up to keep people away. Plans are underway on how to fix the trail, depending on funding available.

Ruth Strontzer reports:

Cockaponset SF:

The Pull offs along the side Filley Rd. for cars and trailers are cleared of all the dead falls and branches that have been blocking them. The "Lost Well" was located up in the woods at the far end of one of the old camp site pull offs. This is in one of the areas under consideration for horse camping but needs a lot of clearing

A man was lost in the woods. Approximately 15 riders (VHP and locals) wanted to search and were told no. DEEP said they were not in control and the State Police refused hunters and local riders who wanted to search an area where the main search was not being conducted. We were told they would be arrested. The individual was found deceased in the area the riders wanted to search. Better coordination is needed in searches.

Southern Section – Weber Woods

The unsafe bridges that have been put in this past year have now been posted with No horse signs installed by LCRVHC and purchased by the BPC. Several of them now have broken boards. Serious accident with Mountain Bike Verses Equestrian. The rider was seriously injured. LCRVHC would like to post signage in shops and on trails of the New Sign

Machimoodus Sunrise SP: Most of the trails are in good shape.

The trail leading from the lower to upper vista is being used a lot now that a new switch back section was put in on it. The bridge had a railing installed on one side making it a little difficult for riders to use. The railing has been modified and now is usable. This is the only bridge that is wide enough for a horse. The one bridge rebuilt over the muddy area behind the ponds (orange trail) to accommodate the horses at that crossing was to keep everyone out of the mud but it's not anchored.

Wadsworth Falls SP: Many of the trees that were reported have been addressed. The Vortex trails is being used by bikes hikers trail runners and equestrians still. Martin emailed me back and would like to discuss the 6 signs for mountain bikers have been posted restricting use of some trails. Horseback riders are concerned that DEEP will try the same for horses. I will follow up with him. He is open to a Friends of Wadsworth Falls Group to be an option to care for the trails. However, It appears that no one wants to be held to an incorporated group. Just locals willing to help out.

Rocky Neck SP: The park has some nice trails and pretty little beach. Unfortunately, it caught fire the day we were there and I believe some of the trails were in the area of the fire.

Horse Camping - ** Updated info

**** Sunrise SP:** Either of the big fields or over off the paved road behind the tennis courts. There are 5 wells listed on the property for water. The well at the back of the area now used for camping has been located. I have obtained another copy of the maps I had at the meeting held there.

Cockaponset SF: On Jericho Rd., there is a small sand pit the 4 wheelers have dug up badly. This formerly was used for camping and has a well there. The top of the pipe is now damaged and opened up. It looks like someone hit it with a vehicle.

****Cockaponset SF:** At the top of Filley Rd., south of Jericho Rd., either side Both sides had public camp sites in the past. These areas are now use for car and trailer parking. The "LOST" Well has been located in the woods at the end of one of the pull offs.

**** Cockaponset SF:** The old Youth horse camp off of Filley Rd has a well for water. There were three sided shelters there at one time but they were torn down. There is a small parking area near the road that would need to be enlarged, but plenty of room for multiple sites that could be made for pull through. The purple trail leading right past it goes through the woods and joins up to the Quinimay Trail. This has had some trail clearing done on it and is now a nice trail – a little rocky in spots where it was rerouted by DEEP because of downed trees.

Other Reports:

Lost Silver Mine Horse Camp: The pump still has not been replaced

CHC Meetings with DEEP:

An outdoor meeting at SunRise State Park was held on Friday September 27th with DEEP Chief, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation- Mike Lambert, DEEP Eastern District Operations Manager-John Guglielmoni, DEEP Eastern District Supervisor- Ray, DEEP Trails and Greenways Coordinator- Kim Bradley, and Akiebia Hicks to discuss the possibility of a horse camp there and to go over the some of the responses from DEEP on the CHC requests of the April meeting in Hartford.

Discussion on DEEP Meeting Notes: Project: Sunrise State Park Masterplan Development Date: 09/27/24

Discussion on DEEP follow up letter – Kim Bradley 8/29/2024 from Hartford meeting Monday, April 8, 2024:

Discussion on DEEP's response to definition of Passive recreation.

*CHC thinks that the wording is "Word Salad" and DEEP should not define each use and keep separate horseback riding and mountain biking. We ask that DEEP simply state that **Passive Recreation is non-motorized use.***

DEEP Kim Bradley reports: Rewording the proposed definition of Passive Recreation will be addressed further with Lindsay Suhr, Director, Land Acquisition & Management, DEEP.

The meetings with CHC had an impact on the DEEP and plans for camping at Sunrise and additional locations are being initiated to move forward by DEEP Chief, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation - Mike Lambert. Kim will continue to work on a 5-year masterplan for development of campgrounds.

Bluff Point: The lower parking lot will be returned to Marshland.

Recreation Trails Grant Fund There is 10 million dollars allocated every year. *The DEEP is not included in the Bond Commission, but will be later in the year. The Greenways Council will review the Grant Rounds.*

There will be a full-time position for Trails and Greenways

All Terrain Wheel chairs will be available for FREE through Reserve America at the following State Parks: Rocky Neck, Harkness, Dinosaur, Tops Mead, Gillette Castle, Stratton Brook, Wadsworth SP.

Out Reach / Education:

No Child Left Inside Event:

The next one will be Saturday, February 2nd at Burr Pond State Park. From 10am- 3pm. We will be CHC will provide horses for the event.

THE TRAILS SAFE PASSING PLAN -Stop! Speak-Stand Back - Yield to Horse We would like these to be ordered ASAP -100 with QR Code. Kim will start the "in-house" project.

CHC-VHP Annual Meeting: CHC will ask Kim Bradley to be our guest speaker at our March meeting

Old Business / Discussion:

EAC Website: Update of 2023 meeting notes needs to be put up on website along with 2024 meeting dates and location. New Location, address and time needs to be changed. Diane will send to Kim.

Eastern District Supervisor Meeting: CHC will set a meeting regarding the Cockaponset Forest with DEEP Christopher Martin, Director, Forestry Division , DEEP Eastern District Operations Manager-John

Guglielmoni (who unfortunately will be moving from this District to another at the end of January) and Kim Bradley to discuss further the issues of bridges and propose campground locations in the forest.

EAC Appointment: Denise Ciano has not been heard from Senator Bob Duff who we recommended for the 5th District Appointment. No response from his office since her request for an appointment letter was mailed out June 13, 2023. Denise made another attempt on 12/17/24 and left message requesting an in-person meeting with him at his office in Hartford.

New Business:

The 2025 Advisory Council meetings will be on the following Thursdays: March 20th, June 19th, September 25th, December 18th at 6:30 pm. Eversource Community Room, 107 Selden St., Berlin, CT

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 pm by Vevette Greenberg, 2nd Meg Sautter

