



MEETING REPORT – Thursday, December 21, 2023

Call to Order: The meeting was held at CFPA, Middletown

The meeting called to order at 6:15 pm by Diane Ciano

Attendance: Kim Bradley, Danielle Borrelli, Ruth Strontzer, Vevette Greenberg,
Diane Ciano, Meg Sautter

Guests: Denise Ciano, Gary Rutkauskas

Excused: 0

Review Minutes: The meeting minutes of September 19th 2023 were reviewed.
Motion to accept with correction of spelling of Forester David Irvin by Ruth Strontzer, 2nd
Danielle Borelli

State Park & Forest Updates:

The Preserve, Westbrook: No work done on the bridge LCRVHC has dropped it as of this time. They feel there is too many issues over who's bridge it is. There seems to be "politics" involved - the Land is not owned by the state, different towns own different areas, inland wetlands issues, etc. Also, the bridge that Alex wants to build is unsafe for horses

Natchaug State Forest: Diane contacted Matt Quinn regarding the well that was supposed to be reinstalled at the Lost Silver Mine Horse Camp this spring. Apparently the new company wanted \$6,000 to do it and the DEEP said no, so they are looking to rebuild it themselves.

Machimoodus: Bunny Joseph reported that her and another rider were severely injured at Machimoodus -Sunrise State Park. A dog that was on a retractable leash and tied to a picnic table, bolted out in front of their horses that were grazing and spooked them. This is the second injury reported in this area. We will need volunteers to set up a safety program there to educate dog owners.

Nepaug State Forest: Diane attended the CT DEEP Division of State Parks and Division of Forestry meeting on October 5th at the CT DEEP Pleasant Valley Field Office, Pleasant Valley, CT to review and discuss a trail authorization request for Nepaug State Forest. This was a meeting was to discuss the trail system proposed by the New England Mountain Bike

Association (NEMA) and closing some of the unauthorized trails were built that are not sustainable. One component was to ask the CT Forest & Park Association (CFPA) to allow part of the proposed trail system to use a portion of the Blue Blazed trail. CFPA did not make a decision at this meeting, but there will be ongoing meetings in the future. Diane provided a “lost” map of an approved multiple use trail system that CHC had marked over 15 years ago. CHC has not had any patrols in this forest for a number of years and is not aware of any equestrian usage there presently. We would like volunteers to use this forest land and eventually get trail markers up after the final plans of the forest trails are approved. There is a lot of mountain bike use in this forest, and many of the trails used by them are not the best for equestrian safety. Staying on the main road for now is the best. There is a good sized parking lot that was made off Rte.202 in New Hartford - that can hold at least – 5 rigs (Although this area lot is used by any users to access the forest, so may be filled up on weekends, so plan your ride early if you go there.

Mohawk SF: Discussion on following up with David Irvin and others regarding the email sent on trail conditions reported by Ruth in September. Kim did send an email. Follow up letter/call was designated to Ruth:

David.Irvin@ct.gov, with cc to Jarred.Rice@ct.gov, Tammy.Talbot@ct.gov, Kim.Bradley@ct.gov and members of EAC .

Ruth Strontzer reported on the following:

Cockaponset SF:

Weber Woods: Ruth reported that there have been bridges built there by DEEP that are not multi use and are unsafe They are only two feet wide and not anchored, so they shift and move. They were placed in the crossing areas so it is now hard to get around them

Northern Section – Haddam: the section located between Filley Rd, Jericho Rd and Beaver Meadow Rd. and bounded by Rte. 9 has had some clean up. However, the Orange trail running between Filley Rd. and the Yellow Quinimay trail has 2 new trees down on it still. We cleared 3 small trees. A mountain biker helped us move one of them. The Quinimay (yellow) running from Jericho Rd. to Beaver Meadow Rd. has a tree down on it. The purple trail running from the youth horse camp on Filley Rd. over to the Quinimay has several trees down on it .

Southern Section – Chester: The Quinimay Trail (Red Trail) in the area Jericho Rd south to the lake was in good shape. We cleared several small trees.

Machimoodus Sunrise SP: Most of the trails are in good shape. The carriage trail that runs along the river from the boat launch area over to the old landing strip area has a tree down on it. The trail leading from the lower vista to the upper vista has been reopened by Alex’s trail crew. They installed a switch back section that although is a little narrow in some areas is very nice and avoids the last steep climb up. New bridges have been built on the Yellow trail and the Orange trail behind the pond both on multi use trails but again unsafe for horses only 2 ft wide and not anchored. The one on the trail behind the pond actually shifted and moved when I crossed it with my horse.

Wadsworth Falls SP: Trails are generally in good shape. The Vortex trails is being used by bikes hikers trail runners and equestrians.

Airline Trail SP: Colchester E bikes are still using it. People have no idea on it that dogs need to be leashed and others given the right of way to horse and rider. horse. Ruth asked about posting the triangle trail courtesy/ yield signs.

Salmon River State Forest: There was a report sent to me (regarding the proposed Forest Plan). There are trails there that are used by horses, L&G rides that side as has CTRA as well as local riders I have not been on them yet this year but can try to get over that way if the weather holds.

Goodwin SP: Many inquiries still as when the parking issue there will be addressed

Vevette Greenberg reported on the following:

Naugatuck SF: I rode Naugatuck Forest a couple of weeks ago, our last ride was rained out. The trails seem to be in pretty good shape that day. I did look at both parking lots and there would be extensive work to be done to make either one of them accessible for horse trailers with a truck. The upper lot off Chestnut Tree Hill Rd. would require a lot of grading to get trailers in and out.

Roraback WMA: We also rode Roraback recently, about a month ago. The tree on the main trail was cleared, and we met a crew working on the back side trail and they were doing a great job clearing. The only other spot in question is a trail on the north side of South Street. This trail can be entered just a little up from the south street parking lot. If you are headed back towards town, the entrance is on the right. Right away you find a widow maker that someone has cut a piece off where it comes to the ground and that has made it easier to step over, but it would be nice to see this taken down. If you continue into the trail along the stream. You will come to a fork in the trail. Follow the one up the hill and you will come to an area where a number of trees have fallen. We have done some work to continue thru. But it would be better to get some chain saws in there to make it more easily passable.

Legislation:

Kim Bradley reported that the National Park Grant released the 2023 budget. March 11, 2024 is the deadline to apply for grants. 10 Million for 2024 + 10 million for 2025

Contact Kim.Bradley@ct.gov for information.

EAC Appointment: 5th District: Diane contacted Senator Bob Duff, Senate Majority Leader for the Fifth District regarding an EAC appointment for Denise Ciano. His Counsel to Senate Majority Leader, Aleandra (Alex) Slaney stated that he is looking at other options regarding the appointment.

Discussion:

Are Electric Bikes allowed in state Parks and Forests? Is there a list of locations where they are allowed?

A list of addition parking lots and camping areas from our September list was presented:

1. Northern Cockaponset - Large Sand Pit off Motland, Field across from the ranger station on Ranger Rd. Top of Filley Rd South of Jericho.
2. Weber Woods – expand out towards the road so trailers can see the lot
3. The Preserve – expand existing by moving rocks
4. Bluff Point SP- the road needs to be fixed along with the portion of the lot used for trailers. It is almost unusable.

5. Barn Island only has parking now is at boat launch other location the road is almost impassable with a horse trailer and only big enough for 2 rigs
6. Cheshire – Big D property on Fenn Rd bought with state money? Town said it can't be used for parking because of open land restrictions by the state, according to what I have been told the agreement was if organized parking were to be done it by deed agreement it would be limited to 2 stalls for cars only.
7. Goodwin SP – Parking badly needed
8. Devils Hop Yard – Mitchell Rd. property

Horse Camping

Sunrise SP: Camping can be either the big fields or over off the paved road behind the tennis courts. There are 5 wells listed on the property for water

Cockaponset SF:

1. At the top of Filley Rd., south of Jericho Rd. either side. Both sides had public camp sites in the past. There was a well there that was capped years ago in the 80's.
2. The old Youth horse camp off of Filley Rd. has a well for water. There was three sided shelters there at one time but they were torn down . 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.

Hurd SP: There is a youth camping there already and a large field with a gated entrance, well and outhouse

Mohawk SF: There is youth camping there with 3 sided shelters and Outhouses

EAC members are looking for current names and contact information of park supervisors along with the areas they cover

Old Business:

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): The DRAFT report is up on the DEEP Website :

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/outdoor_recreation/scorp/CT-SCORP-2024-2029-for-Public-Comment.pdf

Larkin Bridle Trail: A letter was sent to NVCOG requesting a crosswalk light and a post that has two activation buttons. (*person and a mounted horse rider level*) at the Rte. 67 crossing in Southbury. CHC has not heard back from NVCOG. Diane will forward the letter to Kim.

EAC Website: Update of 2023 meeting notes needs to be put up on website along with 2024 meeting dates and location. Location will be discussed as EAC is a state council and therefore has no money to pay for CFPA room. Diane will check into new location.

New Business:

Salmon River SF - Leesville Block and the Wopowog WMA:

CHC was contacted by Nathan Piché, state lands forest manager, regarding the draft forest management plan of the 2024-2034 Salmon River State Forest: Leesville Block (777 Acres) and the Wopowog WMA (480 Acres) and asked that we review it and provide any comments and concerns that the CT Horse Council may have. This encompasses a total of 1,257 acres of state forestland within the towns of East Hampton, East Haddam, Haddam, and Colchester. In his letter he states: " State forestlands contain trails that are commonly

used for horseback riding, making the CT Horse Council an important stakeholder in our forest management planning process”. ... and ask that you review it and provide me with any comments and concerns that the CT Horse Council may have. Please respond with any questions, comments or concerns there may be by Friday January 19th.

CT Forest & Park Association: Diane received a letter from CFPA regarding usage of their headquarters for the EAC meetings. In 2024, their policy is that in order to use their community room, Corporate and Organizations will need to pay for their membership to CFPA to support their work: price depending on the room usage (\$100 -.\$175 Diane contacted them that CFPA has an appointed member to the Council. Clare Cain reported back that she is not able to attend our meeting.

They are now going through the process of assigning projects with the new Executive Director, Andy Bicking, who is currently the Director of Government Relations and Public Policy at [Scenic Hudson](#), a conservation organization located in New York's Hudson Valley. Mr. Bicking was a member of the legislative team that ran New York's \$4.2 billion "Clean Air, Clean Water, and Green Jobs Bond Act" campaign, which passed in 2022 with overwhelming support. He has worked on several pieces of legislation related to climate resiliency and land stewardship, and advocated for New York's "30 by 30" law to include urban conservation. He also worked to advance the federal Highlands Conservation Act, and recently helped to reauthorize the legislation. Connecticut is one of four states that benefits from that program.

Education: CT Horse Council:

Discussion at the recent CT Horse Council meeting is that CHC & members of the Equine Advisory Council (EAC) will be setting up programs for ACOs, firemen, police, and other first aid responders regarding handling of horses in emergency situations. Danielle Borelli, who was an ACO has offered to help CHC & EAC in getting this project going and has set up a Power Point program she has made. We would like to see this as a classroom PP and hands on events with horses around the state in several locations where there are large populations of horses, (Bethany, Newtown, Fairfield County, Cockaponset, Gilette Castle, Pomfret, Pachaug and Mashamoquet areas. She would like to have trainings with programs through Vo-ag schools.

Discussion on getting equestrians started on CERT and then to join their district State Animal Response Teams (SART). Looking for volunteers to search the districts and get contact information regarding CERT training (required before a person can volunteer for SART). Meg has a list of contact people for Cert Trainings.

Discussion on updating our CHC list of "Connections" and how we can improve it so that if there is an emergency, emergency personnel could access it and contact us. Diane will be contacting a member of the Durham Animal Rescue Team (DART) to speak at our annual Volunteer Horse Patrol meeting in March.

Discussion with DEEP Kim Bradley and members of the Equine Advisory Council has been to set up an educational Program with mountain bikers in the spring in the Colchester area (Airline). Danielle has also offered to help out with the Presentation.

Upcoming Events:

No child Left Inside Winter Festival Event at Burr Pond State Park on Saturday February 3rd with a Weather Date of Sunday February 4th 2024.

Upcoming Meeting Dates to be set with Agenda:

1. Create agendas and set up meeting dates with DEEP regarding requests for parking, camping, trail issues, etc. Attached is a list that was created at our September meeting.
2. Create an agenda and set up meeting with DEEP Office Director of Land Acquisition and Management Lindsay Suhr and Deputy Commissioner, Environmental Conservation Mason Trumble inquiry about how and where the funding has gone and their policies regarding "Passive Recreation". Issue with well at Natchaug SF
3. Create an agenda and set up meeting with Tammy Talbott, DEEP Western District Supervisor, Teresa Clark, Supervising Wildlife Biologist, Pete Picone of the Wildlife Division's State Lands Management/Wildlife Habitat Program regarding equestrian use of trails in Roraback, possible parking areas of newly acquired lands and opening up parking area on South Street. Also ,address parking at Naugatuck State Forest and trail conditions/ parking at Larkin Bridle Trail
4. Set up plans, locations, dates for training of first responders.

Meeting Dates for 2024 & Location: at 6:30 pm* *new time & location to be determined TBA*

The Equine Advisory Council meetings are on the following Thursdays at 6:30pm
March 21st, June 20th, September 26th, December 19th

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm by Vevette, 2nd Danielle