

Connecticut Horse Council

October 3, 2023 Minutes

Health & Welfare: - Follow up on discussion as to what happened with the people that were hurt at Machimoodus State Park by a dog attack. Diane reported that the two women came to the Equine Advisory Council meeting and told their story. Because there is a lawsuit that is going on, they were limited as to what they could say:

Kristine Kestermont-Pierce and Stefenie Shaw came to the EAC meeting to explain what happened as there were many stories going around and misunderstandings as to what had happened. They reported both horses were attacked viciously by a dog that was off leash. The owner had said that the dog broke off leash. One horse was badly injured and required veterinary care as the dog latched on to the horse as the horse was trying to get away. One horse ran off and was not found for hours. Both riders fell off and were injured with broken bones and needed medical care. One was taken to the hospital.

This discussion led to CHC setting up programs for ACO, firemen, police regarding handling of horses in emergency situations. CHC has done it in the past and is working on establishing some more educational events in the fall. Danyelle Borelli, who was an ACO has offered to help CHC in getting this project going.

Legislation: No report

Website: Rebecca updated the website: Officers & Board of Directors, Newsletter, new VHP logs, cleaned up old news, Additional updates needed on links, calendar and supporting businesses.

Discussion:

Steve Mazeau asked about recognition to equestrians regarding their volunteer hours. Diane brought up that the members of the CHC Volunteer Horse Patrol receive certificates for their hours at the annual VHP meeting and that CHC recommends a volunteer and/or organization for the CT Greenways Awards every year.

Equine Advisory Council: Diane reported on the EAC meeting of September 19th: All members gave trail condition reports of various areas around the state. Kim Bradley followed up on reports and has contacted the Forester David Erin regarding Mohawk State Forest condition of trees down. We are awaiting his response and the follow up on the tree down in Roraback WMA(see below).

The main goal was to come up with a list of projects that the equestrian community has asked for many years. Kim Bradley reported that DEEP is waiting on the Bond Commission meeting for approval of 10 million for Recreational Trails Funding. This meeting (9/29) was on the rescheduled for later this coming week.

Camping, parking and signage areas that the equestrian community wants to see happen on DEEP lands. Kim Bradley DEEP Trails and Greenways will help us to follow through with these proposals and help to schedule meetings this fall to meet with Ray Knoop, DEEP Gilette Castle Area regarding Devil's Hop Yard and Machimoodus/Sunrise State Park. We will also set up a meeting to meet with the Cockaponset Supervisor for that area.

There was discussion on trail clearing at Roraback Wildlife Management Area and Kim forwarded our request. The response from the Supervising Wildlife Biologist Teresa Clark was a bit alarming as they "**...don't generally maintain "trails" on WMA properties other than our access roads"... Therefore, any tree clearing will need to be decided by Pete Picone before anyone hikes into the property with a chainsaw to remove the tree. If it is found that the trail is one of the maintained paths or necessary for access to the area for fish stocking we will take care of it as soon as we are able to redirect staff resources to the site.**"

Upon hearing this message, CHC will also be setting up a meeting with Western District Supervisor Tammy Talbot, Wildlife Biologist Pete Picone, Teresa Clark to further discuss their stance on this since Roraback property does allow horseback riding per the gifted deed. We will also discuss several parking areas that could be made available to horse trailer on DEEP lands.

CHC will also be contacting the Land Acquisition and Management Office Director, Lindsay Suhr and Deputy Commissioner, Environmental Conservation Mason Trumble: regarding how the monies from SCORP and other funding is distributed to various agencies. It was noted that The Land Acquisition Department has removed horses and bikers as passive recreation use. It was noted that in the past, many of the land acquisitions from other funding have gone under different departments such as Forestry and Wildlife Management Areas that restrict uses of multiple uses, repairing trails and creating new trails. Diane brought up that she wants to research further into how and where the money is spent.

Meetings will be set up with DEEP regarding equestrian camping at Cockaponset SF, Sun Rise SP and Devil's Hopyard SP. Also, on expanding or creating parking lots:

Trails, bridges, parking, camping, signs: EAC Members submitted a list of projects:

- **Goodwin State Forest** -currently little or no parking availability
- **Cockaponset State Forest** – Webber Woods – there is room to expand the small parking area
- **Northern Cockaponset** – Large sand pit off Motland, field across from the ranger station on Ranger Rd. Top of Filley Rd. South of Jericho
- **Naugatuck State Forest (West Block)**. There is little or no parking for trailers. There is a small lot on Rte. 42 Chestnut Tree Hill Rd. that can be expanded and improved. There is also one on Pines Bridge Rd./Rte. 42 (Both in Oxford)
- **Larkin Bridle Trail** – Little or no parking for trailers. Rte. 63 lot could be expanded if negotiations are made with DOT. South Street – See report above.
- **Devil's Hop Yard State Park** – Mitchel Road – boulders can be moved. There is a field across the road that can be made into a campground State Forest (East Block). There is little or no parking for trailers. Boulders can be moved to create a parking area.
- **The Preserve** – Parking area can be expanded by moving Boulders
- **Roraback WMA** – South street parking can be expanded by moving the boulders. Also, consider DEEP Western District Field, and their newly acquired land off Swimming Hole Rd that is pretty level land. Question is what DEEP plans to do with the Western District land when they move to their new facility at Black Rock State Park
- **Nathan Hale State Forest** – Need parking areas to access the forest
- **Niantic State Forest** – Need parking areas to access the forest
- **Becket Hill State Park Preserve** – Need parking areas to access the park
- **Mooween State Park** – Need parking area to access the park
- **Pachaug State Forest** – Need parking areas to access the forest in the Lebanon area

Horse Camping:

- **Devil's Hop Yard State Park** – Mitchel Road –There is a field across the road that is ideal for a campground. We were told there is also electricity across the road that can be hooked up by the previous supervisor.
- **Sun Rise State Park** – There are the fields or over the paved road behind the tennis courts. There are 5 wells on the property
- **Cockaponset State Forest** – at the top of Filley Road, south of Jericho Road: 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
- **Cockaponset State Forest** – The old Youth Camp off Filley Road has a well for water. There three side shelters there at one time but they were torn down. Small parking area near the road that

would need to be enlarged, but there is plenty of room for multiple camping sites that could be made for pull through.

Signage:

- **Naugatuck State Forest:** is not identified on Rte. 42. There is a need for signage to motorists about the crossing from Mathies Park to the entrance of the forest. This is on a very bad dangerous curve for pedestrians crossing. Also, a painted crossing additionally will help.

Bridges:

- **Pachaug State Forest:** Need update on status of bridge to be repaired
- **The Preserve:** The Lower CT River Valley & BPC have offered to rebuild the bridge

There was discussion that Alex Sokolow's trail team would do it, but The Lower CT River Valley Horsemen's Club and Bridle Path Conservancy has offered to do it material is supplied. They have made great outstanding bridges in the Cockaponset Forest that are very well built.

Cheshire Horse Council: Discussion on update of Cheshire Horse Council and talking with town officials regarding the recent purchase of land abutting the Open Space, DiDominicus Property. This is a large open field that would be idea for parking to access the trail system, as there is no official parking entrance except for on a residential street. The Cheshire Horse Council met with town officials and were told that they could park horse trailers there, but that it could not be "Officially" made into a parking lot since monies to purchase the land was from the state. Kim said that this is untrue and that creating parking access is allowed.

Ruth Strontzer relayed this message to the President of Cheshire Horse Council and also asked them to check into the "rules" of the DEEP Land Acquisition and to check into why they took out horses and bicycles as a "Passive Recreation".

Nepaug State Forest: The CT DEEP Division of State Parks and Division of Forestry will meet on October 5 from 1:00-2:30pm at the CT DEEP Pleasant Valley Field Office located at 117 West River Road, Pleasant Valley, CT to review and discuss a trail authorization request for Nepaug State Forest. Currently, there are miles of unauthorized trails in this forest and this trail planning effort will reduce unauthorized use but add approved multiuse trails to our official trails map.

The DEEP Division of Wildlife has been involved in the planning process, and they would like to include interested hunting groups in the trail authorization process. Other recreational and regional groups, will be participating in this group to address recreational activities, specifically this approved trail system, in Nepaug State Forest. Diane will attend this meeting.

Trails: - *Note: There are many trail reports that are reported at the CT Equine Advisory Council meeting where representatives from the 5 congressional districts meet with DEEP and the CT Forest and Park Association. Some of the current trail reports are listed below that were mentioned at the meeting.*

Larkin Bridle Trail: Vevette reported that the DEEP put down large 1/2 to 3/4 sharp granite stones on multiple sections of that trail that is not suitable for horses, bikes or people.

Devils Hopyard State Park: Meg Sautter reported that DEEP still has not moved the boulders on the side of the Mitchell Road and it is very difficult for trailers to pull in.

Natchaug State Forest: Meg reports the well still has not been installed.

Friends of Machimoodus: Ruth Strontzer reported there is a meeting coming up and that she will mention to the new supervisor regarding a possible campground. A meeting will be set up to discuss this with DEEP.

Outreach & Education:

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Plan (SCORP): Diane continues to attend zoom meetings regarding the plan and providing comments to it. Pictures of horses on trails were sent to the SCORP Advisory Committee for inclusion in the final SCORP Plan.

CT Equine Advisory Council: Danielle Borelli, member of the CT Equine Advisory Committee will head up an educational program for ACO's and other first responders. In the past CHC has done this and we provided halters and lead ropes. This will be a project in which we will ask all horse organizations to participate in some way and possibly ask them to help sponsor these educational classes, once we have the basic program in place. We are looking for volunteers to help get this project going for the spring.

Members of the Equine Advisory Council will also be working with Kim Bradley on an educational program regarding education of trail users. It is planned for the spring in the Colchester area of the Airline trail, where most equestrians have experienced bike riders that are not educated in passing a horse & rider safely. Discussion at the EAC meeting was also on the policy of electric bikes in our state parks and forests. Kim Bradley reported that electric bikes are allowed on "improved trails such as greenways but not on single track dirt trails or road.

Nonnewaug Vo Ag: Rebecca Harnish reported that Nonnewaug Vocational Agriscience High School is looking for volunteers to set up an Education Program. Contact is Marrison Bedron, Equine Science Teacher Mbedron@ctreg14.org We will need volunteer to help set up this program. Please contact Diane Ciano if you can help

Old Business: CT Greenways Council: CHC is looking for someone to replace Stacey Stearns as an equestrian representative on The GREENWAYS Council. The council meets at 9:00 am on the 2nd Tuesday of each month

New Business:

CHC will have our booth at the Equine Affair. Carol Birdsey will be asking for help to be there at the booth.

Meg Sautter brought up for discussion to change the time for CHC Meetings to be earlier 6:00 or 6:30 pm instead of 7:30. We will discuss this further at our December meeting for possible time change in 2024.

Upcoming Meetings:

CT Horse Council Meeting: Tuesday, December 5th – 7:30 pm

CT Equine Advisory Meeting: Thursday December 21st – 6:00pm.

The EAC meets at the [Connecticut Forest & Park Association](#), 16 Meriden Road, in Rockfall, CT The public is welcomed.

Adjourned at 9:00pm Meg 1 Ruth 2nd

Respectfully submitted

Denise Ciano

Acting Recording Secretary