



P.O. Box 57 Durham, CT 06422-0057

Meeting Minutes for December 13th, 2012

Attending:

Amy Stegall, Diane Ciano, Ruth Beardsley, Jan Collins, Judy Beliveau, Laurie Giannotti, and Leslie Lewis.

Excused: Meg Sautter

Guests: Ginger Tullai (CHC), Waneta Lenk (CHC)

Call To Order:

The meeting was held at the Northeast Utilities Building in Berlin. Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM by Amy.

Review Meeting Minutes:

Meeting minutes of September 13, 2012 were reviewed. A misspelling of the word "sign" was noted under the Salmon River State Forest Report. Motion by Leslie to accept as corrected.

Ruth 2nd, Motion carried.

Web Page for EAC Update:

Laurie archived all past minutes of the EAC meetings on the EAC page. It was noted that CHC needs to link the multi-use yellow diamond trail maps for Shenipsit, Pachaug and Natchaug from DEEP website.

STATE PARK & FOREST Updates:

Lost Silver Mine Horse Camp Update:

Diane reported that she acquired Landon Lumber, a local plumbing and paint store for project supplies. She is waiting on Landon Lumber for final bill and to set delivery date. She will be submitting RTA papers for reimbursement of the grant as soon as everyone is paid. Discussion was on the scope of work needed to complete the project, as DEEP still will have to build the toilets with the material supplied. There may be a need to extend the deadline or contract.

GOODWIN SF Update:

Jean has started to mark the 15 mile trail. She has been in contact with Steve Broderick. The Blue/White Trail was approved to be marked. More trail markers need to be purchased.

SHENIPSIT SF

Jan provided a report with the current Shenipsit trails that also included the Land Trust Whitaker Woods trails that she and Ann Moses (CHC-VHP) and the Land Trust folks have been working on. Jan indicated on the first SF map where Whitaker Woods connects via a Somers town trail. The Shady Brook trail on the Whitaker map is now marked and connects to the town trail, however there still needs to be work done on the town trail especially south of Mtn Rd. up to Shenipsit, to make it more easily horse accessible. This will probably get started on in the spring. Ann & Monty Moses (CHC-VHP) have been appointed co-stewards on Whitakers by the Land Trust and also plan to help get the connecting town trail fixed up. Jan has also been working with Laurie on the status of Sykes Rd (on the second SF map) at its southern end where it

apparently crosses private land and the landowner has recently closed it off. The closure does not impact the CHC trails as they are all farther north on state land but historically the road was always open to multi-use traffic. As the situation exists now with the private landowner, he may be within his legal right to close off the road. Skyes Road in Ellington is believed to have been built by the CCC. Amy will check the Land records and Laurie suggested that CHC team up with the Town, as DEEP will open the gate.

SALMON RIVER STATE FOREST UPDATE:

A meeting was set by Laurie at the Comstock Bridge on September 24th with DEEP David Buckley, Park Manager, David Boone (CFPA) and several members of the CHC (Diane Ciano, Meg Sautter, Ruth Beardsley, Bunny Joseph, Ginger Tullai, Waneta Lenk, Also in attendance was State Representatives, Linda Orange and Debra Lee Hovey.

The discussion on the covered bridge access was that it not only barred horses from crossing over it to get to trails on both sides of the forest but that it apparently was also not handicap accessible. The width of the opening was only 33". The suggestion was to have the wall block open to 48" that would allow wheel chair access as well as a horse to get through. The overhead barway would also need to be removed to allow a rider on a horse to get through. DEEP Park Manager, David Buckley will follow up on this.

The Salmon River Trail was discussed regarding access to the multiple trails in the forest and the continuation to use the trail. Since then, CHC members met with David Boone (CFPA) and an agreement was reached to utilize the trail to access the other trails in the forest and that CHC would put up yellow diamond signs directing equestrians off the trail at certain points.

Continued discussion on the No Horses signs that CFPA has been putting up on trails around the state. Laurie noted that it was DEEP policy not to put up "NO" signs as it encourages vandalism and will confer with Claire at CFPA. The question was brought up as to who approved the signs and posting of "No Horses" by CFPA on state land.

Attached below is Comments from Jan Collins regarding the Salmon River S F, Comstock Bridge and in particular the blue-blazed trail usage restrictive signs in general.

LEGISLATIVE DISCUSSION:

Discussion was on big cuts in spending to take place on both the state and federal funding. The legislative Session is a long session this year and starts on January 9th. There was discussion on the Community Investment Act (CIA) (2005) involves a fee Levy on property. The money goes to the state for open space, agriculture, farm land preservation, dairy, affordable housing and historic preservation.

The CIA is currently being eyed by lawmakers as a permanent piggybank for unrelated programs. The budget submitted by Governor Dannel Malloy proposes to divert, permanently, \$4 million a year from the CIA to fund the CT Department of Education's Healthy Food Certification Program, which has always been funded through the state's General Fund and has no nexus to the CIA.

The proposal would raid nearly 20% of the CIA's annual revenue stream, significantly reducing the CIA's annual investment in farmland protection, including the state's new community farms program.

EAC members were asked to contact their state senators and representatives regarding this matter.

OLD BUSINESS:

TRAIL SURFACE STUDY:

Ruth typed up all information gathered and will work with Leslie to create a report and power point.

NEW BUSINESS:

DEEP

Laurie provided the Council with an updated list of all the DEEP Areas and their Supervisors.

Cockaponset SF

Laurie reported to the Council that during her walk in the forest she had come across an excessive amount of horse manure along a trail in the forest that is for foot traffic only. She was informed that it was a group ride and was given the organization's name. Jan will research the ride activity and report back to the Council.

Storm Sandy Damage

Discussion on the storm damage throughout the state. Diane reported large downed trees on the Larkin Bridle Trail. Nathan Hale was contacted and he is working on the trail. CHC-VHP offered to help clear what we could, but much of the damage requires heavy labor due to the size of the trees blocking the trail.

2013 MEETING DATES:

Dates were set for the New Year. Quarterly meetings will be held on the 3rd Thursday at 6:30 PM at the North East Utilities Complex, Berlin. Ruth moved to approve the 2013 meeting dates. Leslie 2nd. Motion carried.

The 2013 dates for the CT Equine Advisory Council:

Thursday, March 21st – 6:30 PM

Thursday, June 20th – 6:30 PM

Thursday, September 19th – 6:30 PM

Thursday, December 19th – 6:30 PM

ADJOURNMENT:

8:15 PM. Motion by Leslie, Ruth 2nd, and Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted:

Judy Beliveau

Equine Advisory Council Member

Jan's notes regarding "No Horses" Signs Sept. 21, 2012 attached

Jan Collins' (CHC, VHP, and EAC member) comments regarding Salmon River SF Comstock Bridge equestrian status in particular and Blue-blazed trail usage restrictive signs in general:

Regarding the status of equestrian use of the Comstock Bridge:

I am not intimately familiar with this area or the historic use of this bridge, but have been told it was used for many years by equestrians for access to the many trails in the Salmon River SF and Day Pond SP and Airline Trail on both sides of the river in this forest. If, indeed the bridge has been multi-use for many years, eliminating the need for unsafe equestrian travel along busy Route 16, I am wondering what process was followed to now make it off limits both physically and signage wise to equestrians. Was this a decision involving the internal DEEP trails committee and how did DOT get involved in rebuilding this bridge into a single use facility which is somewhat in conflict with DEEP's latest trail policy of promoting multi-use trails wherever possible. I would hope, after reviewing this bridge in the field, a compromise could be reached by the involved parties, whereby the bridge is modified to accommodate equestrians and whatever trails leading up to and away from the bridge be multi-use until other multi-use trails could be accessed to avoid the Blue-blazed trail where it is Foot Traffic Only.

Regarding the CFPA signage restricting Horses, Bikes, and ATVs:

I am familiar with this signage issue from my involvement with the trails in my home area of Shenipsit SF in Somers. Approximately a year ago these signs, No Horses, No Bikes, and No ATVs, began appearing on stretches of the CFPA maintained Blue-blazed trails in the Shenipsit forest, occasionally on trails used historically by equestrians and also on new trails. As in the case of the same signs in the Salmon River SF, they are confusing and not consistent in their usage.

In general, as is stated on the DEEP web maps of the State's forests and parks, the Blue-blazed trails, on state land, are foot travel only. However, delving deeper into DEEP policy, they are foot travel only EXCEPT where on a road or where other compatible use coincides. Since this is already a stated policy, it is confusing to now see one or two or sometimes all 3 of these signs appear on one particular trail section but then not appear or only one or two appear on other sections.

For example, the No ATV's sign: It is already DEEP policy that ATV's (except licensed dirt bikes) are illegal on any state land. So to have a sign restricting them on a blue-blazed trail would imply that they are OK in other parts of the forest.

In the Shenipsit, the No Horses, No Bikes signs are used in one part of the forest but then the No Bikes, No ATV's signs in another part. This would imply horses are now allowed on this other part.

In light of existing policy these signs seem totally unnecessary and promote a lot of hard feelings among the user groups due to the blunt language and inconsistent use. Foot Travel Only or Foot Travel Recommended promotes a much less confrontational reaction if indeed it is deemed necessary that any signs are needed.

It is unclear from discussions with DEEP, CFPA, and EAC members just who approved the use of these signs and who is responsible for their consistency. Were they approved by the DEEP trails committee as were the trail markers that the equestrians use to mark their multi-use yellow diamond trails, or were they implemented by CFPA without prior discussion with DEEP? As these signs now seem to be popping up in more than one State forest, I would like to see the issue revisited by the DEEP trails committee with the above comments considered so a uniform policy and consistent use can be implemented.