



P.O. Box 57 Durham, CT 06422-0057 13th

DRAFT Meeting Notes for Thursday, June 17, 2021

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

The meeting called to order at 6:42 pm by Diane Ciano

Attendance: CHC: Meg Sautter, Ruth Strontzer, Danielle Borelli, Diane Ciano and
Vevette Greenberg (by phone)

DEEP: Laurie Giannotti CFPA: Eric Hammerling

Guests: 0

Excused: Ron Hocutt

Review Meeting Minutes: The meeting minutes of December 17th, 2020 were reviewed.

Motion to accept by Meg Sautter, 2nd Ruth Strontzer

State Park & Forest Updates:

Natchaug State Forest: Lost Silver Mine Horse Camp. Diane spoke with Eastern District Manager, Scott Dawley. To date, clean up from the Timber harvest has not been completed. There is no camping allowed, but riders are welcome to park there. The well has been closed as well as the solar toilets. DEEP will notify the public when everything has been cleared and camping can be resumed.

Vevette & Meg report: Both Meg and Vevette met with DEEP Supervisor, Mathew Quinn at the campground. They reported 6 squatters living at the camp. Matt had them leave. The grass was chest high in the campground and downed trees were covering some of the camp sites and blocking some access to the trails. Toilets and water pump for horses is still shut down. Matt said he will have portable toilets installed and a crew out there as soon as possible. They also reported 6 squatters living at the camp. Matt had them leave.

Bissell Trail: Meg – No report – will check on the trail

Cockaponset State Forest & Chatfield Hollow State Park: Ruth reports trails that are washing out: The Orange Trail, and part of the Quinimay Trail. She also mentioned trails at Chatfield Hollow State Park – Cedar Lake Road & Buck Road in the Chester Section of Chatfield Hollow State Park. . Ruth will write out a detailed report on the trails and roads that have been washed out and send it to Laurie and Alex. Laurie said there may be some funding left from FEMA left after the 2019 tornado.

Sunrise State Park: Ruth reports most trails are in good shape and tat DEEP Supervisor, Jack Hines is doing a great job, especially in clearing the vista of the river. The CT Trail Rides Association has scheduled a volunteer clearing day on July 10th of the field for their 8/27 – 8/29 camping plans. Ruth is also on the Board of Friends of Machimoodus

Devil's Hop Yard: Meg reports that the large boulders on Mitchell Road are blocking trailers from parking there.

Roraback Wildlife Management Area (Harwinton): Meg reports there are large pine trees down at the South Street Gate. They cleared as much as they could to make it passable. Most trails are in good shape.

Larkin Bridle Trail: CHC continues to get reports of illegal use on the trails. The boulders do not stop vehicles from entering. Vevette reports that trails are in good shape.

Gay City State Park: Ruth reports trails in good shape.

Other Trail Reports: Laurie reported the Pomfret Horse & Trail Association is working with the DEEP to improve crossing Rte. 44. A bridge was built but not suitable for horses.

CHC VHP Report:

The CHC-Volunteer Horse Patrol had their annual meeting June 5th at the Reddington Rock Riding Club's private campground in Stafford.

Diane reported the Volunteer Horse Patrol Statistics for 2020:

For 2020, there were **2,052 patrols** out in state parks, forests, town, land trusts and private lands.

Members recorded **3,663 Patrol Hours** logged saving the state and other land owners) **\$91,575.00** for 2020 alone !

The total of 18 years the Patrol Program has operated, it has provided at total **47,096** Patrol and Trail Maintenance Hours with **24,000** patrols! A savings of **\$1,177,400.00** in volunteer service hours.

CT Greenways Council: Laurie reports DEEP Chief and Deputy Commissioner are working for the Greenways Plates Funding to go back to what is rightfully funded for.

Laurie also reported that there is a On Line Greenways map App that is being worked on.

CT Greenways Council Annual Awards - Took place on June 4th at the Brookfield Town Hall outdoor band shell. In attendance was Bruce Donald, CT Greenways Council Chair, Mason Trumble, DEEP Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Conservation, DEEP Greenways & Trails Coordinator, Laurie Giannotti. Several Awards were given out to recognize town and community efforts in building and promoting Greenways. CT Horse Council member, Vevette Greenburg was awarded recognition for her volunteer work patrolling, maintaining and promoting trails.

Equine Advisory Council Appointment: Vevette Greenberg was appointed March 23rd by House Republican Leader, Representative Candelora, as the equestrian representative of the 4th Congressional District.

Legislation:

Eric Hammerling reported that the DEEP will be losing 35-40% of its full-time employees working on Parks, Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, and Trails issues. He also noted that the \$14/hour cap for the most experienced seasonal park maintainers (which has been the upper limit for ~10 years) has made it VERY difficult for DEEP to recruit seasonals this year, and this will only get more difficult next year when the State Minimum Wage is increased to \$14. Eric encouraged advocates to be ready to advocate strongly for replacing people when they retire AND that the number of staff overall for State Parks (83 FTE) is wholly inadequate to meet public needs and maintain public health and safety. More information on this issue is available on CFPA's website here: <https://www.ctwoodlands.org/public-policy/2022-retirements-loom-large-for-deep>

Eric also mentioned that now \$9 million has been authorized for the state's Recreational Trails & Greenways grants program. However, the Governor still needs to convene the State Bond Commission to release at least \$3 million of these funds, a level which has also been supported in the state budget. January 2019 is the last time that DEEP announced grants from this program after an RFP was issued in Fall, 2018.

The Passport to the Parks program is currently supporting 35 Full-Time employees in the State Parks division as well as 500-600 seasonal workers each year. Despite the important contribution the Passport makes to State Park sustainability, there continue to be significant unmet needs. Capital improvements to buildings and other Park infrastructure are also lagging behind, and Passport funds are not used for these kinds of projects.

Old Business:

Update: Hop River Trail /Bolton Notch– Stacey from the CHC & CT Greenways Council is working on getting information as to who the local riders are and will address any local barns in the area regarding the manure left on trails. CHC has also put in numerous articles regarding trail etiquette on horse manure on well used Greenways.

New Business:

George D. Seymour & Hurd State Parks & Higganum Meadows Wildlife Management Area

These three abut each other along the Connecticut River (see attached PDF). Ruth Reports that George Seymour SP has two large trees down. Horses are able to get over them.

The Higganum Meadows are overgrown with invasive species that have changed the entire meadows. We discussed getting a report together to propose that the DEEP get these fields mowed back to their original way and/or suggest using sheep or goats to help get with rid of the invasive plants. Ruth and Danielle will work on the report and bring it to our next meeting. Laurie suggested that this report and future meetings be with the Wildlife Division and to contact Lori Fortin.

Next Meeting Date: September 16th

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn the meeting by Diane, 2nd Danielle at 8:14 pm