



## **DRAFT MEETING REPORT – Thursday, March 21, 2024**

**Call to Order:** The meeting was held at Eversource Community Meeting Room, Berlin  
The meeting called to order at 6:39 pm by Diane Ciano

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

**Guests:** Denise Ciano

**Excused:** 0

**Review Minutes:** The meeting minutes of December 21, 2023 were reviewed.

Motion to accept by Meg Sautter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vevette Greenberg

### **State Park & Forest Updates:**

#### **Larkin Bridle Trail:**

*Vevette Greenberg reports:*

Cross walk on Route 67 in Southbury: Thursday 3/14/24. A meeting of the First Selectman of Southbury was held, and I was able to attend, with Diane Ciano. We met some of the local horse women and had the chance to stand in support for the crosswalk signal. These ladies have been pursuing the Selectmen for a few months and looks like they have the support of all of the selectmen. I arrived early and spoke to a few of the selectman before the meeting. Although there has been some opposition. The only one that was in opposition at first was one selectman, that worried putting up the cross signal may lead to a false sense of security for the pedestrian. Katie Richards, a strong supporter of this cross walk, told a story about how she was crossing at this cross walk. She waited a long time for a car to stop. The only one that did was a Southbury Police car. When it was apparent that the vehicle from the other direction was not going to stop, he flashed his lights and then actually moved his car into the lane of oncoming traffic. I think this is a very good example of the traffic issue here on this busy street. I feel that this is going in the right direction. Although it sounds like they are thinking just a flashing light, not an actual crosswalk signal to stop the traffic. Unfortunately, I wish it was a crosswalk signal.

*Diane Ciano reports:*

An on-line petition was signed by over 500 people in support of a light to stop traffic when there are people trying to cross over this busy road.

Diane asked DEEP Western District manager, Tammy Talbot to write a letter supporting the CHC request for a light at the Rte. 67 crossing. Tammy did so and it was appreciated by CHC.

Richard Donovan, Transportation Planning Director of the NVCOG, sent her a copy of the report that was addressed to selectman Jeff Manville. A copy of the report is available for members to view. In his note to Jeff “ ...Because the request wasn’t made by the Town directly, we have not included any analysis or recommendations in this memo, just data about the existing conditions. We are happy to prepare recommendations with supporting data, however, at your request.

Please feel free to reach out with questions or if you’d like us to look further into this. Thank you,  
**Rich Donovan**, Transportation Planning Director

Dirt Bikes and motor cycles have been relentless on the Larkin Bridle trail, especially in the Middlebury and Naugatuck sections, both on state and private lands. Extensive trail damage and road safety hazard are created when ATV’s and Dirt bikes are out on these trails and reports of several people being injured have also been reported. Letters and extensive reporting as to the days, times with graphs from May 2023 – February 2024 was sent to the Middlebury Police Department, Jennifer Mahr, Selectman, Town of Middlebury, DEEP Western District Supervisors (Tammy Talbot and Nathan Hale) DEEP Colonel Chris Lewis, Director of Law Enforcement Environmental Conservation Police and DEEP Greenways and Trails Kimberly Bradley. Letters were also sent to Senators Joan Hartley & Eric Berthel and Representative William Pizzuto. According to the reports:

“... Peak activity appears to be between 2 PM and 5:30 PM on Saturday and Sunday with a smaller peak between 11 AM and noon. On weekdays, activity peaks around 4 PM to 7 PM. 2 / 22 Bikes are often seen traveling between the high-voltage power lines on Bioski Rd and the intersection of Bioski Rd and Shadduck Rd. The bikes have been observed racing at dangerously high speeds on both sides of the road, which could result in collisions with cars. Tire tracks have been seen on the slope leading up to the Bridle Trail at the end of Bioski Rd, implying that the bikes enter and exit from the Bridle Trail at this point...”

CHC is requesting that DEEP work with the Middlebury police in securing these illegal vehicles, putting up gates at each crossing and boulders to block access points.

**Natchaug State Forest:** Matt Quinn contacted Diane regarding the well. It was installed back in and is working. This summer, they will be replacing the solar toilets with cement structures that look like wood. They will also clear out a few more pull through sites. CHC will hold a trail maintenance day on Saturday, June 1 to replace yellow diamond markers on the 5-, 10- & 15-mile loops. CTRA will host a National Trails Day Ride on Sunday, Some VHP members will be camping there Friday and Saturday night.

**Mohawk State Forest:** CHC was notified of the Timber Harvest to take place regarding the spongy moth salvage (formerly known as the Gypsy Moth) and notified the equestrian community and the CT Trail Rides Association (CTRA) who have a private campground adjacent to the forest. Parts of the Mattatuck Trail is currently closed and work will continue on Toumey Road which will be closed while roadside dead trees are dropped. Diane contacted the forester to ask that certain trees be taken down that are blocking the trails that equestrians use. There were several emails back and forth regarding the forestry plans and whether certain trails and the existing Tourney Rd. would be closed or not cleared because the forestry department is not about trails and their main goal seems to try to keep out ATV’s and bikes. The forester will be writing a draft forest management plan for the next 20 years and will be requesting commenting on this draft plan. DEEP Kimberly Bradley, CT Trails and Greenways Program Coordinator and DEEP Liaison for the CT Equine Advisory Council responded to the emails and offered to support the development of a CT Trail Rides Association (CTRA) Cooperative Trail Maintenance agreement. (Kim is also involved with New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) and other groups, working with Nepaug State Forest to develop a template for a Recreation Trails Management Plan that is envisioned to serve as an appendix to the State Forest Management Plan. The CHC has also asked to get involved with this plan and is seeking equestrians that may want to get involved in this during this planning stage. A copy of the emails is available for members to view.

**Nepaug State Forest:** Diane has contacted a member of CHC who lives near the forest and would like to be involved in getting the yellow diamond markers back up in the forest. We will need a current map of the loop trail as the one we have was done over 20 years ago.

**Roraback Wildlife Management Area:**

*Vevette Greenberg Reports:* Roraback WMA is in good shape; the only place I feel there needs some trail work is on a lower trail that is primarily used by hunters. This trail is on the east side of South Road. Over the past 2 years many trees have come down and I have done work to clear the small stuff to make it passable, but the reality it is not really that great. Work needs to be done with a chain saw. This is a small 6-foot section that we step off the trail to go around. Even these downed trees effect this go around. This section is on a little ridge and there really is not much room for a go around. This section of trail is used because several years ago we stopped using the trail right near the stream because of a large tree hang down from above. Over the years we went under it, it settled each year and became more difficult and we felt unsafe with horses. We have not traveled that piece of trail since we started using this upper trail, which we found that the hunters were using. This trail terminates at South Road and here there is another tree that has been an issue. Someone has cut a small section off the bottom so we are able to walk over it in a twisted way, but it does get us out onto the road safely. This exits onto the road is just north of the bridges near the south road parking lot. There is just enough room for one car to park here and at times, after navigating the hazard at the end of the trail there may be just enough room for us to get around the vehicle parked there. I keep saying we need to go in with chain saws and correct this issue for the safety of all involved.

**Salmon River State Forest:** Diane addressed the DEEP Dept. of Forestry Plan for the Leesville Block and Wopowog Wildlife Management Area. It was noted that the Forestry and Wildlife Management departments often use the term "Passive Recreation" and that horseback riding and bicycling are not listed as they once were. CHC questioned the removal of these two recreational activities from the definition. CHC-VHP member, Diane Morton along with 4 others ( Rick Morton, Jeanne Zirolli, Trish Leonard, and Marilyn Allatin walked the trails in the Leesville section and gave CHC a great report on the trail assess ability for equestrians and her report was also included in the CHC comment. They will continue to walk the Wopowog Wildlife Management Area and add to their report. The CT Horse Council offers its help as the plan proceeds in accessing the trails that are in there now as suitable for horseback riding and to have members of our Volunteer Horse Patrol to help patrol and maintain this valuable public forestland asset. A copy of the report is available for members to view.

**Wadsworth Falls SP:** The Vortex trail is being used by bikes, hikers trail runners and equestrians. The CHC would like to have the issue resolved regarding that this old overgrown trail that was cleared without permission by DEEP and will possibly be closed. CHC would like to have this multi-use trail kept open to help offset the hundreds of users on the one main trail. Question is to know what are the steps to designate this trail as alternate multi-use trail with the DEEP Trails Management Plan was discussed. We will look into a more formal request with the guidelines of the Policy/Procedure # 310 Multiple Use Trail Policy for DEEP Properties.

*Ruth Strontzer Reports:*

The trails are becoming a mess with washouts, and trees down. The red, blue, white and yellow trails have downed trees and washouts. The road leading from the parking lot out to Laurel Brook Rd. has some very bad washouts on it. This is the one that has the beautiful long curving stone bridge on it.

**Machimoodus Sunrise SP:** CT Horse Council Volunteer Horse Patrol members, CTRA & Lower River Valley Horsemen's Club members attended the Friends of Machimoodus State Park Spring Fling. We had 3 horses and a goat there along with a table of information on horses and trail etiquette. The event was well attended and successful with many people stopping to ask about the VHP.

We talked with DEEP Supervisor Ray Knoop and again made him aware of the two bridges that were built that are not suitable for a horse crossing. He said it had already been done and he was not aware of how it was built. We hope to take this up at our Hartford meeting.

***Ruth Strontzer Reports:***

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. 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. These bridges still have not been addressed. The red trail which is I think in Sunrise has numerous trees down.

There will be a volunteer work day – morning May 18<sup>th</sup> in Sunrise – the Park Supervisor hasn't picked the work location yet.

**Cockaponset SF:**

**Webbers Woods:** There will be a clip and ride Sunday in Webbers Woods They will be working on the Quinimay Trail

**Northern Section – Haddam** the section located between Filley Rd, Jericho Rd and Beaver Meadow Rd and bounded by Rt 9 has had some clean up However the orange trail running between Filley road and the yellow Quinimay trail now has numerous new trees down on it still There is a bridge over a small brook on the access trail by the Rt 9 overpasses on Filley Rd that leads to the orange trail. There is debris built up in front of it forcing the water to over flow and wash out the trail and is weakening the bridge itself the boards on top are starting to flex with weight on them of them. The Quinimay (yellow) running from Jericho to Beaver Meadow has a tree down on it. The purple trail running from the youth horse camp on Filley over to the Quinimay has several trees down on it The trail leading back behind the small sand pit on Jericho had a hanger that has now dropped across the trail

**Southern Section – Chester**

The Quinimay Trail (Red Trail) in the area Jericho Rd south to the lake was in fair shape. There are a couple of very large trees down that we made bi-passes around I found several wash outs

**Chatfield Hollow SP** Has a major Paving project going on, At this point they are not keeping up on the trails with trees down on the red trail and the blue-white trail Again there are new foot bridges that are not fit for horses or heavy people. One on the red trail is boards on top of 2 small long I-beams. When I stepped on it the other end lifted off the ground.

**Other Reports:**

**CT Horse Volunteer Horse Patrol:** We are reporting to DEEP through Kim Bradley our hours for 2023 as well as our total hours accumulated for 21 years along with the savings to our taxpayers to pass it along to Hartford.

For 2023 we had a total of **4,692 patrol hours with 2,477 Patrols** that were logged saving the state **\$ 117,300 for 2023 alone!**

**Our 21 years of volunteer hours total 58,197 hours, Saving Taxpayers \$1,454,925.00**

Our Guest speaker was Durham Animal Rescue Team (DART) spoke on their experiences and training with rescuing large animals from all sorts of accidents and how they work with first responders to get them to safety. CHC is encouraging members to get started on CERT and then to join their district State Animal Response Teams (SART). We are looking for volunteers to search the districts and get contact information regarding CERT training (required before a person can volunteer for SART).

**Legislation:**

**EAC Appointment: 5<sup>th</sup> District:** Diane again contacted the office of Senator Bob Duff, Senate Majority Leader for the Fifth District regarding an EAC appointment for Denise Ciano. The office has

not gotten back to us. June will be one year without having him appoint someone to the council, even though we have recommended Denise Ciano for the position. Members will write letters to Senator Buff Duff asking him to appoint Denise.

### **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

Trail markers needed Can DEEP purchase? Kim will check into getting signs and markers.

Goodwin SP: Update needed on parking for trailers. Discussion on possible parking alongside Potter Rd. near the Airline Trail. Kim mentioned that this may be a DOT project?

### **Education:**

Airline Trail SP: Colchester Discussed plans for a bike education event and getting the triangle trail courtesy/ yield signs along with dogs on leash signs up. Set date Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup> at the River Road section. Diane & Danielle will follow up with plans to set a table up on the trail.

Machimoodus / Sunrise SP: Discussed plans for a dog walkers' education when encountering horses and getting the triangle trail courtesy/ yield signs along with dogs on leash signs up. Set date for Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Hurd SP: Discussed plans for a bike education event for Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. Kim will coordinate with local bicyclist.

ACO & First Responder Training: Danyelle & Diane will continue to work on the program. And gather information for presentations.

**CT Forest & Park Association:** Diane notified Clare Cain of the CFPA of the meetings for 2024 and new location. We have not received any response back.

**DEEP – Hartford Meeting:** The CHC sent a request letter on February 2, 2024 for an in-person meeting with leadership of the Environmental Conservation Branch of DEEP that include the three divisions Forestry, Wildlife Management, State Parks & Land Acquisition to discuss horse camps, parking areas, signs, "passive recreation", etc. To date, DEEP has not set up the meeting, stating that they are busy during the legislative session and that it is difficult to get the various members of DEEP altogether at one meeting.

We will create agendas and set up meeting dates with DEEP Supervisors regarding requests for parking, camping, trail issues, etc. after the Hartford meeting

### **Upcoming Events:**

#### **No Child Left Inside Events**

*CHC will promote these events and encourage equestrians to attend:*

- **May 11, 2024 NCLI Families in the Parks Program 2024 Kick-off Event-Family Fishing Day with Fish with CARE @ Gay City State Park** in Hebron, CT from 10 am to 3 pm
- Pop Up event with your group as well as the Friends of Machimoodus to do a pop up event in the summertime. Maybe have an event like this past Sunday with our NCLI Families.
- **August 3, 2024 Dinosaur Day at Dinosaur State Park** in Rocky Hill, CT from 9 am to 3pm
- **August 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>- Perseids Campout** with the NCLI, the Last Green Valley and the Friends of Pachaug State Forest

**Next Meeting Date:**

The next Equine Advisory Council meeting will be on Thursday, June 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm Eversource Community Room, 107 Selden St., Berlin, CT

Other meetings for the year: September 26<sup>th</sup> & December 19<sup>th</sup>

**Adjournment:**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 pm by Meg Sautter 2<sup>nd</sup> Danielle Borreli