



CONNECTICUT EQUINE ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING REPORT - Tuesday, September 19, 2023

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

The meeting called to order at 6:11 pm by Diane Ciano

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

Guests: 0

Excused: 0

Review Minutes: The meeting minutes of June 15th 2023 were reviewed.

Motion to accept Ruth Strontzer, 2nd Meg Sautter

State Park & Forest Updates:

Ruth Strontzer reported on the following:

The Preserve, Westbrook – No work done on the bridge as of yet .
There was a discussion on this and Kim Bradley will follow up.

Cockaponset SF:

Webber Woods Work Party from LCRVHC on Sept 17 worked 4 hrs. making a single-track on the verge of the Muck Rock trail so hikers don't have to slog through the mud and cleanup of downed small trees and branched getting ready for the hunter pace there

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. I haven't explored all the trails but I can confirm that 2 trails are now completely open again after having been closed for at least 2 yrs. About a dozen trees have been cut up and removed from the trails. I will be checking more of them over the next couple of weeks. A new Deer stand has been found on a back trail behind the youth horse camp. A new unmarked trail has been made from this deer stand to Turkey Hill Reservoir.

Southern Section – Chester

The Quinimay Trail (Red Trail) in the area Jericho Rd. south to the lake was in good shape as of Sunday. We cleared one small tree. There is another large tree down, but there is a bypass for the horses.

Machimoodus Sunrise SP — Most of the trails are in good shape even though there was heavy flooding from the river and run off. I have been told that the old switch on the trail leading from the lower vista to the upper vista has been reopened by Alex's trail crew. I haven't checked this out because of a bee report by the bridge on the Purple Trail closest to the pond, near a downed tree

Mohawk SF Trails are in pretty good shape now after a lot of trail clearing by CTRA members including a trail work crew. There still needs a lot of work to be done

There was a discussion on all reports listed below.

Kim Bradley will follow up with the forester, David Irvin David.Irvin@ct.gov

- **Bear Swamp Rd.** has a tree down. We were able to Make a Bi-pass around it. It is too large for anyone's handsaws to deal with. Up past the dip there are about 3 trees down that are very big and have it closed off.
- **Old Turney Rd** that goes from the tower to Wadhams Rd. is barely passable with wash outs and a lot of exposed ledges. Question was asked, if CTRA put a trail alongside of it.

Kim Bradley will follow up with the forester, David Irvin.

- **Hubbell Rd.** The section going from Wadhams Rd.to Mohawk Pond. Just a short distance in from Wadhams Rd. there is a large tree broken off about 12 from the ground and it is still partially attached to the tree but hanging down across the trail. Riders and walkers are going under it but at any time it could finish breaking off and drop. This needs to be addressed by someone with a chain saw. It is still there.

Discussion that this is a paper road. Kim will follow up with forester, David Irvin.

Tracy Road Tracey is a horseshoe shaped dirt road. Coming in from Rte.4, the first entrance to Tracy a short distance in is a tree down.

- **Tornado Road** This road has a few trees down on it. The end closest to Clark Rd. is the worst. We were able to get through but it needs clearing,

Ruth asked: Can you park a pickup at that end of the Tornado Rd since it is inside the gate for Pinnacle Farm?

Kim will follow up.

Wadsworth Falls SP – Trails are generally in good shape.

The blue trail that starts at Laurel Grove Brook and the yellow trail junction and goes up hill to the red trail is washed out and very rocky. Walkers and hikers are finding the loose rocks an issue as are riders. Bikers try to avoid it but it leads down to another trail they like. It has been nicknamed the "Cobblestone Trail". The overhanging tree issue on the white trail is still there. The tree down on the Red - the one section that goes from the parking lot end up to the junction of blue – red – and white trails. There is one on the Yellow trail leading from Orange to the Rockfall land sections. Since Bob isn't in there clearing there are more trees down to get around. The Vortex trails is being used by bikes hikers trail runners and equestrians.

Hurd SP There is a tree down on the Red trail leading up from the river towards the Orange trail going up to the overlook. I have not checked on the 2 trees down on the White trail. You can get around; the other is huge and needs to be addressed - (see Map). There is a large tall tree leaning towards the main road looking like a good wind will take it down. It's located on the left side just past the bar way entrance to GDS.

Higginum WMA The beavers are taking over the southern end of the meadow. The far southern end of the meadow is still being used as a DEEP camping site for kayakers and canoeists and it is getting more difficult to get to that end of the meadow. DEEP has even been forced to move where they drive in the meadow because of the mud.

Airline Trail SP – Colchester Is in good shape but E bikes are still using it. People have no idea on that dogs need to be leashed and others given the right of way. Several bikers came up fast behind the horses and stated ringing a bell on their bike. They had been told that was the correct way to pass a horse. They were informed they were wrong after one horse almost took the guy out kicking.

Discussion that DEEP, EAC and NEMBA will do an Educational Event on this section in the Spring. To be further discussed at our next meeting in December.

Salmon River State Forest – There are a lot of washouts. The Yellow Diamond marked horse trail leading up from the Comstock Bridge has quite a bit of washouts scattered along it. One of the worse parts being the hill going by the dogs, however it is still passable.

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

Discussion that this will be on the list of needed parking areas

Tyler Mill Preserve – Wallingford. There is a new Trails crew made up of bikers that are putting in new trails to get around washed out areas. I attended a meeting in Wallingford held by the zoning commission and another town group with 3 other riders over the establishment of new trails and they got the approval to do so. Now some of the old trails are stabilizing because they are being used less with more bikers and riders using the new trails, however the new trails have not been marked yet and are a work in progress.

Vevette Greenberg reported on the following:

Roraback- A tree is across the main road up from south street. Beside the first pond. This tree is leaning on a branch for support. That branch is cracked and many are walking under this tree. As we meandered down the trail, the main trail was good. Although we deviated on a small trail to the left after the reservoir, so we didn't travel on part of the main trail. We crossed the stream and headed up to the trail from the Swimming hole road barway. As we went down this section, we found a number of trees down and made our way over or around them. Until we got to one downed tree, we could not get around, and we had to dismount and do some cutting. When we were done, we were able to get over it, but there is still more that needs to be removed and the rest was too big for us, and our little hand saw and clippers.

Kim Bradley will follow up.

Mohawk Forest: There is a trail which is a paper road from Wadhams Road down to the boat launch and then on to Camp Road. This was reported last year and we were told (by Kim) that she did not think it was a sanctioned trail. It is in fact a paper road. The map I looked at did not have a name but a local told me it was Holder Road. I think. And it continues across Wadhams

and down to Eli Bunker Road, and that side has a different name. I don't remember the name of that one.

Naugatuck Forest: The last time I road there it was in pretty good shape. There was a tree down up near the fourth Reservoir, but the next time I went thru there someone had cut a section out so it was passable. I think more clearing is needed but it works for now. Mind you it has been a couple weeks since I was there.

Larkin Bridle Trail: They did a big job clearing and putting down 1 1/4 inch crushed stone down at the South Street area that was once discussed for a parking lot. I came upon it while they were still in the middle of the job and reported to Meg, that they were working on the area for the parking lot. I guess they brought way too much stone, because they ran it all the way to Long Meadow Road. This stone is terrible for the horse's feet. I hope they are planning to top dress this with a better/finer material. When the sewer line went down the trail years ago. It was coordinated with the Oxford Horse and Livestock and Southbury Horse and Livestock. It was agreed that the cinder from the old railroad bed, or something equivalent would be replaced for the surface. It looks like it is prepped for Black top. I hope this is not the case. As horse people we don't like Black top because it really is not safe to move out on. And it does not absorb any concussion for the horse. We always try to get, a 4-foot path, next to any trail that is going to be black topped, to make a safe place for the horse to ride. Black top stands up well and may be good for a car or bicycle, but really not the best for horses or pedestrians.

Kim Bradley will follow up

Meg Sautter reported on the following:

Bissell Trail, Windsor – Both attempts at riding/walking the Bissell trail were blocked due to flooding. I am not sure on the condition now. Prior ride/walks here showed evidence of tremendous tree fall with obvious go arounds. The worst part of the trail is a river crossing where a large tree has fallen blocking the crossing spot. Much of this particular area is always muddy and the overgrowth is VERY high. This is an area very near the Loomis Chaffee property line..

There was a discussion on this and Kim Bradley mentioned to contact the Riverfront Capture Committee again. Meg has done this before and said they were of little help.

Devil's Hop Yard State Park- Mitchell Road area – I have not been back to this area. My last complaint concerned boulders that block what could be a nice trailer parking area. We have been parking down by the barn, which is very wet and narrow. The top spot (where the house once stood and is across from the trail entrance) is dry and partially graveled. Hikers park at a smaller spot up the road. This parking spot gets do crowded that the vehicles partially block the road causing difficulties for horse trailer passing.

There was a discussion on this and we have added this to our list request for horse trailer parking.

Roraback WMA – My last ride at Roraback was in the Spring. We spent a few hours clearing this trail due to a wind storm knocking down many trees. It was passable on my last visit.

Larkin Bridle Trail – The Larkin Bridle Trail is a 10.5 linear trail starting in Naugatuck (Rte. 63) and ending in Southbury. The trail has a total of 14 street crossings:

Allerton Rd.	Towantic Hill Rd.	Strongtown Rd. (Rte. 188)
Shadduck Rd.	Riggs St.	Southford Rd. (Rte. 67)
Wooster St.	Christian St.	Curt Smith Rd.
South Rd.	Hawley Rd.	Jeremy Swamp Rd.
Long Meadow Rd.	Pope Rd.	

There are basically 2 very dangerous crossings. ***The first is at Towantic Hill Rd.*** Heading south from Long Meadow (a private section of the trail), the Towantic Hill crossing is VERY steep and rocky on both sides. From Long Meadow, the hill climb onto Towantic is steep and treacherous and dumps you immediately onto the street at a curve with very poor sight lines for oncoming traffic. Crossing the street and heading down to the trail is narrow, rocky and treacherous. Approaching from either side of Towantic, you must climb a very narrow, steep, rocky hill. From either direction, the sight line is poor and you are immediately in the roadway. With fill on either side of Towantic Hill, you would be able to pause at the top of the hill without being in the roadway, and could then access the possibility of crossing the street safely.

The second dangerous crossing is Southford Rd. (Rte. 67). I have not ridden this section in quite a while. However, heading south from Strongtown Rd. (Rte. 188) to Southford Rd. (Rte. 67), requires another treacherous climb ending again in a very busy trafficked, roadway. Some fill here and perhaps a small clearing at the top would ensure a much safer crossing.

This is where the CT Horse Council has asked the NVCOG to put in a crosswalk light and a post that has two activation buttons. (person and a mounted horse rider level)

Danielle Borelli reported on the following parks:

Moosup Valley State Park Trail: Starts in Sterling/Plainville to RI border. It is a link in the ongoing assemblage of the East Coast Greenway This 5.8-mile trail is part of the planned East Coast Greenway, an off-road path that will eventually run from Calais, Maine, to Key West, Florida. I did the first 3 miles and turned back. It is flooded and a disaster. The ATV and motorcycles have made “humps” in the trail.

Farmington Canal Trail: This is in good shape.

Chatfield Hollow State Park: The main trail was in good shape. The Green trail was very rocky.

Hop River Trail: In good condition. The E bikes go by very fast.

Gunntown Passive Park & Nature Preserve: Oxford. T This is a diverse 44-acre area. There is no signage identifying this Preserve. There are two loop trails.

Machimoodus State Park: I was on the Purple trail. There were a lot of unleashed dogs

Legislation: No discussion

New Business:

Ruth asked about 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.

Projects for Recreational Trails Funding: Kim reports that DEEP is waiting on The Bond Commission for 10 million. They will be meeting September 29th.

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

Horse Trailer Parking at the following Parks & Forests

- **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** – South street parking can be expanded by moving the boulders. Also, consider DEEP Western District Field, an there is 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 t 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** – currently little or no parking availability. Discussion that a parking lot on Scott Hill Rd. Kim mentioned that a neighbor is complaining about this. And that it really would not affect the issue she is complaining about.
- **Pachaug State Forest** currently little or no parking availability 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 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 are 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.

Other New Business:

Ruth asked Kim if there was an updated list of Park Supervisors and District Head Quarter Supervisors with contact information.

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 ideal 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 will relay this message to the President of Cheshire Horse Council and also ask 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".

SCORP Update:

Diane Ciano reported a few of the results of the SCORP surveys:

CHC members Diane Ciano and Ann Moses were on the Advisory committee and represented the horse community in their comments to several of the surveys. Top needs of the horse community were trailer parking to access to our state parks & forests, more camping areas for equestrians, better maintained trails, signage, etc.

The goals of the SCORP:

Goal 1: Provide equitable & sustainable access to outdoor recreation in Connecticut.

Goal 2: Protect, conserve, and manage Connecticut's natural, cultural, and historical resources as they support outdoor recreation.

Goal 3: Enhance visitor experiences with clean, safe, well-maintained outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

Goal 4: Foster awareness and relevancy of the benefits of participation in outdoor recreation, while promoting the significance of historical, cultural, and natural areas.

A few of the results of the surveys:

Out of 51 activities of outdoor recreation activities:

- Horseback riding came in 6th out of 5,210 responses at 4%
- Horse camping came in 17 out of 5,108 responses at 1.6%
- 2,031 responses to questions regarding if people's needs were not completely met in trail related issues:
 1. Limited/Lack of Access – generally or legally
 2. Trail Related Issues – need more, limited access, damaged, etc.
 3. Land Issues – need more for hunting, biking, and other activities
 4. Maintenance Issues – vandalism, poor upkeep, dirty facilities, etc.
 5. Limited/Lack of time

Old Business:

EAC: Diane wrote letters on behalf of CHC and EAC regarding Denise Ciano's appointment as the equestrian representative for the 5th Congressional District. CHC & EAC recommendation letters were emailed along with Denise's request letter to the Senate Majority Leader, Senator Bob Duff. Hard copies will also be mailed. To this date there has been no response from Senator Bob Duff

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.

Upcoming Events: Discussion on Multiple Use Etiquette Educational Program to be planned with DEEP, CHC and NEMBA for the spring with a location on the Airline Trail in Colchester

Next Meeting: - Thursday, December 21st - at 6:00 pm*

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:14pm by Meg, 2nd Vevette