



DRAFT MEETING REPORT – Thursday, September 26, 2024

Call to Order: The meeting was held at Eversource Community Meeting Room, Berlin
The meeting called to order at 6:36 pm by Diane Ciano

Attendance: Kimberly Bray, Diane Ciano, Meg Sautter, Vevette Greenberg, Ruth Strontzer

Guests: Denise Ciano

Excused: Danielle Borelli

Review Minutes: The meeting minutes of June 20, 2024 were reviewed.

Motion to accept by Meg Sautter, 2nd Vevette Greenberg

State Park & Forest Updates:

Vevette Greenberg Reports:

Larkin Bridle Trail: After the flood on August 18th, we rode from the Route 63 parking lot all the way to Riggs Street. The trail is in tack and safe. We met the Oxford Sanitations man driving the section from Long Meadow Pond Road to South Street. We also drove to Pope Road and walked to the old stone bridge which appears to have eroded from underneath and a tree collapsed into the stream below. The arch was intact on the south sides with about a 2 foot of trail above. Unfortunately, this will need to be knocked down for safety reasons.

On Sunday, August 25th, I rode from the Route 63 parking lot all the way to the first washout between I would guess approximately 30' of the trail is gone. With the trees below washed away and one leaning over the side of the trail.

On Sunday, September 15th, we walked the private property with the owner and looked at the washout between Curt Smith Road and Jeremy Swamp Road. My estimate is 80-100 feet of the trail washed down through the private property below towards Southbury. This damage appears to be related to the small culvert that was clogged with debris from the waterflow and the buildup exceeded the trail's capacity to hold back the water. Then it was like a dam that broke. The sand continues to collapse down and will do so until it reaches a slope that it can maintain. *I think the only feasible fix is to slope the sides to a safe decline and incline and place sturdy material to support the foot and hoof traffic. This may be the solution in all the three cases, but the other two locations are not as wide and may do well with a large culvert and fill. The cattle culvert between South Street & Long Meadow Pond Road should be cleared so fallen trees don't block this passage.*

Foot note: There is a cattle crossing culvert traveling underneath the section between South Street and Long Meadow Pond road. It is at the about halfway point. This has been blocked with a number of fallen trees over the years. Looking at the devastation that occurred when a culvert was blocked. I think this should be cleared and maintained. Historically this was in place so the cattle could run under the tracks to the fields above the Railroad tracks.

Note: Diane Ciano and Meg Sautter will be meeting with Western District Supervisor, Tammy Talbot and CT Greenways Coordinator, Kim Bradley to get an official update on the trail and work on getting trail improvements and approval for access to the trail from Rte.63 to Christian Road. The rest of the trail will be closed indefinitely until there is an DEEP assessment and plan to reconstruct. It is actively collapsing, dangerous and closed. Fences are being put up to stop public access. CHC will also be working to get parking on Christian Road and asking DOT to expand the Rte. 63 parking area. Discussion will also be to have the parking lot at Naugatuck State Forest improved and expanded. Roraback WMA – South Street parking to be expanded.

Naugatuck State Forest: On September 19th, I rode from Mathies Park in Beacon Falls and crossed over Pines Bridge Road to enter the forest. This is a very bad corner with poor visibility. We rode down the main trail down to the reservoirs, turned right and across the bridge to the left. The far side of the lower reservoir was blocked by a big tree and I could see more debris a little beyond that tree. I used the wooded trail. I believe it is marked Purple but it could be red. We did have to work through the woods in one place where there was debris down on the trail. We were able to continue up the eastern side of the next reservoir. We passed to the left to the western side of the reservoir, and there we found a washout with large 3–4-inch stone exposed. From there the flooding ran down the trail and created a 4–5-inch-deep washout and about 2+ foot wide running the length of the trail for most of that reservoir and part of the next one.. We did not have enough time to ride the upper reservoirs that evening.

Mohawk State Forest: I have camped and ridden the trails twice this summer. Bear Swamp Road was cleared very nice from last year. This year there is a larger tree leaning over the trail. The large “Widow Maker” tree that was on the trail from Wampum and the boat launch is now down and pushed to the side. Thank you.

Ruth Strontzer reports:

George Dudley Seymour SP: The unmarked Valley trail that comes out on the old paved road has numerous trees down on it the one at the brook crossing is problematic there is a very large tree trunk that is too big for the horses to step over. The only way around it is very muddy even hikers and mountain bikes are having an issue at that spot.

Higganum Wildlife Management Area: The meadow was brush hogged last year but even though there is more grass in some areas it has grown back heavily with grape vines weeds fern Russian Olive bushes It may need a control burn, The beavers are flooding out more of the southern end of the meadow. It's getting very muddy

Cockaponset SF: Northern Section – Haddam There is a bridge over a small brook on the access trail by the Rte. 9 overpasses on Filley Rd that leads to the orange trail. There was 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, at least 2 need to be replaced and are starting to flex with weight on them of them. The top of the bridge is covered with sand so the rest of the boards can't be seen to judge the condition of them. The purple trail running from the youth horse camp on Filley over to the Quinimay had trees cleared. The Pull off areas along the side Filley Rd for cars and trailers are cleared of all the dead falls and branched that have been blocking them.

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

Machimoodus Sunrise SP: Most of the trails are in good shape. The red trail which is I think is in Sunrise has numerous trees down on it, including a widow maker that people have been riding and walking under.

The trail leading from the lower to upper vista is being used a lot now that a new switch back section was put in on it has a bridge that now a railing has been installed on one side making it a little difficult for riders to use. This is the only bridge that is wide enough for a horse.

The carriage road leading up from the field by the river to the yellow trail has some trees down on the sides and the bank on the up side of the trails is collapsing into it. Carriages can't use it anymore and this was a main trail they had used in the past.

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 as they are only 2 ft wide and not anchored. These bridges still have not been addressed the one bridge rebuilt over the muddy area behind the ponds (orange trail) to accommodate the horses at that crossing was to keep everyone out of the mud but it's not anchored.

Wadsworth Falls SP: Trails are becoming a mess with washouts, and trees down The red, 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 appears to have been repaired and washed out again in the same area. Last count I have pictures with locations 14 down or hanging window makers have not been addressed.

The Vortex trails are being used by bikes hikers trail runners and equestrians still.

There were 6 signs posted for mountain bikers restricting use of some trails and there are now concerns that they will try the same for horses.

Discussion on the best way to communicate with DEEP to support trails at Wadsworth concluded that an option would be to create a Friends of Wadsworth Falls Group. Ruth will follow up with people who may be interested in doing this

Mohawk SF:

Bear Swamp Road had been cleared but now has a couple of trees down on the top of the road. The connector trail that runs from Bear Swamp to State Forest Road has several large trees down on it on the State Forest Road end.

The hanger on Hubble Rd between Wadams Rd and the pond is down now and moved off to the side.

Di'Dominicus Property – Cheshire:

All the trails are in good shape It looks like the owners of Butterworth Farm has been taking care of it

Horse Camping Area proposals:

SunriseSP: Either the big fields or over off the paved road behind the tennis courts There are 5 wells listed on the property for water.

Cockaponset SF: There are 3 locations within the forest that we would like to propose for horse camping:

1. Jericho Rd there is a small sand pit the 4 wheelers have dug up badly. This formerly was used for camping and has a well there. The top of the pipe is now damaged and opened up. It looks like someone hit it with a vehicle.

2. At the top of Filley Rd south of Jericho Rd either side Both sides had public camp sites in the past. These areas are now use for car and trailer parking. There was a well there that was capped years ago in the 80's

3. The old Youth horse camp off of Filley Rd has a well for water There was 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 plenty of room for multiple sites that could be made for pull through

Hurd SP: There is a youth camp there and has a large field with a gated entrance, well and outhouse

Mohawk – There is a youth camp there with 3 sided shelters and Outhouses

Other Reports:

Lost Silver Mine Horse Camp: Diane Ciano reported the Nationals Day Ride-Campout and Trail replacing the well with a new one, rather than trying to repair the old one. He will be opening up 2 new pull through sites and enlarging some of the existing ones.

Mono Pond – Lebanon/Columbia: Kim Bradley reported that this 600 acre area is moving along with working with MBA Trail Solutions that will connect to the Airline Trail.

Devil's HopYard State Park: Kim Bradley reported that the DEEP Mitchell Road area and East Haddam Commission is working on a multi-use trail connecting the two properties. Discussion on providing parking area the CHC has requested in the field and also moving the boulders along the road for parking.

CT Greenways Trails Symposium: Kim Bradley gave information on the Symposium to take place on Friday, October 4th at Manchester Community College.

CHC Meeting with DEEP – An outdoor meeting at SunRise State Park is scheduled for Friday September 27th with DEEP Chief, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation- Mike Lambert, DEEP Eastern District Operations Manager-John Guglielmoni, DEEP Eastern District Supervisor- Ray Knoop and DEEP Trails and Greenways Coordinator- Kim Bradley to discuss the possibility of a horse camp there and to go over the some of the responses from DEEP on CHC requests of the April meeting in Hartford..

Out Reach / Education:

No Child Left Inside Event:

August 3, 2024 Dinosaur Day at Dinosaur State Park in Rocky Hill, CT

Meg Sautter attended with her horse. It was a very hot day and there were lots of people in attendance that enjoyed her horse.

July 24, 2024 – Court Support Service Division and DEEP State Parks Outreach Team Wadsworth Falls State Park. CT Horse Council was asked to provide a horse to meet them. Meg Sautter and Diane Morton brought their horses and educated them on and how to care for them. There were approximately 30 teens with their mentors there that enjoyed the program.

Hurd SP: The Bike Education was cancelled due to weather conditions. A new contact volunteer for Stage 1 Cycling Juniors Team is James Pulaski who will help out with future events.

THE TRAILS SAFE PASSING PLAN -Stop! Speak-Stand Back - Yield to Horse CHC has adopted this plan and would like to apply for a grant. DEEP Kim Bradley asked Diane to send her the picture of the sign and she will have them done. Diane asked for starting with 100. They will be placed on the Airline Trail, Hop River Greenway, Wadsworth Falls SP, Hurd and the Preserve

CT Forest Plan Management Plans:

Diane Ciano reported that she has reviewed the state forest plans management plans for Goodwin and Pachaug. CHC Comment to the plans will go out shortly.

Goodwin SF

Diane spoke with Forester Dan Evans on the Goodwin plan and is pleased to know that there is a plan to create a linear parking area away from the conservation center for horse trailers and near to the Airline Trail access.

Pachaug SF Diane reported that she has tried to contact local riders of Pachaug for any comments but has not gotten any feedback. She will address forester Michelle Wood on the plan.

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.

EAC Appointment: Denise Ciano has not been heard from Senator Bob Duff who we recommended for the 5th District Appointment. It has been over 2 years. Discussion was to make an in-person Appointment with him at his office in Hartford.

Next Meeting Date:

The next Equine Advisory Council meeting will be on Thursday, December 19th at 6:30 pm Eversource Community Room, 107 Selden St., Berlin, CT

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 pm by Vevette Greenberg, 2nd Denise Ciano