



## CONNECTICUT EQUINE ADVISORY COUNCIL

### MEETING REPORT for Thursday, March 24, 2022

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

The meeting called to order at 6:38 pm by Diane Ciano

**Attendance:** CHC: Ruth Strontzer, Danielle Borelli, Diane Ciano, Vevette Greenberg , Meg Sautter

DEEP: Laurie Giannotti CFPA: Eric Hammerling

**Guests:** 0

#### **Excused:**

**Review Meeting Minutes:** The meeting minutes of December 14, 2021 were reviewed. Motion to accept by Ruth Strontzer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Eric Hammerling

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

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

Diane reports that both DEEP Tammy Talbot & Nathan Hale contacted her regarding starting the project for trail improvements and parking from the original grant funding (\$300,000).

They were looking for advice from equestrians regarding footing of the waterway issue on the section of the trail from Rte. 67 to Curt Smith Rd. They will be doing some of the work in-house as weather allows. Need firm/frozen ground to move around machines. It would be more costly to do a covered culvert with continued maintenance. It was decided that it would be fine to have rounded stones for footing. A small narrow trail for pedestrians will be put alongside it.

At that time there was no discussion on improving a small parking area in that area or the possible parking area at the end of Jeremy Swamp Rd..

Nathan's response (*in red*) from other requests that CHC brought up:

##### **1. 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 vehicle 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.

*I looked at Towantic it is steep with ledge, I sent a picture to Support Services asking for their input (jack hammer ledge out or fill) This is a difficult location as it is 15+ feet below the road, improvements would need to be made to make the road hard enough to haul material in to fill the steep ledge area. As of today, no one has looked at it to my knowledge. It is beyond our capabilities for equipment. Other side of the street as we discussed is private.*

**2. 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 to Southford Rd, requires another treacherous climb ending again in a very busy, heavily trafficked, roadway. Some fill here, and perhaps a small clearing at the top, would ensure a much safer crossing. *We could improve this somewhat with fill but again its roughly 20 feet change in elevation. We did go in and remove all the brush from sides leading downhill from RT 67 and also created a landing at the top for horses. Again, it is a difficult location due to high volume of traffic. We have plans to fill it and reduce the climb somewhat but elevation is a fact of the matter here as well. Not sure what we want to do with this.*

### **3. Parking**

**South Street:** We have advocated for years to create a parking Lot on South Street. This is an ideal location to create a large turn around area for horse trailers. This can be done because there is a large amount of land that can easily create an ideal parking area and installing a gate up further where the trail narrows. *Again, not our property, if CHC want to lobby with the landowner for permission to put a parking lot in id say give it a try but as stated I'm not a fan of the location due to the lack of sightlines.*

**Rte. 63:** This is the only parking area on the entire trail that has accommodated horse trailers which it was originally designed for. The Larkin Trail has become more popular, the parking lot fills up and most times trailers no longer have the space to park there. This parking area can be made larger to accommodate more parking. *I went down with our tractor last month, regraded the south end to fit a few more cars in, I also boxed out the sides of the lot to clean it up and make as wide as possible. I also spoke with DOT they said No to extending the lot and changing the exit. So, it seems we are stuck with the dimensions we have. Unless we want to try angle parking and shift cars to one side or the other entering the lot coming southbound on 63 and use the opposite side for horse trailers? We could do this with paint and signage Keeping in mind 1 or 2 vehicles parked on the wrong side can disrupt the horse trailer parking.*

### **4. Gates**

The CHC continues to get reports of illegal use on the trails, especially since last year. Most of our CHC Volunteer Horse Patrol reports of illegal activity were in the Naugatuck and Middlebury areas, where rampant use, motorcycles and ATVs flying past people, breaking down stone walls to access private property, etc.

The boulders do not stop vehicles from entering. The boulders are small and are easily moved by 4-wheel drive vehicles. I had talked with Nathan awhile back regarding putting up gates to help deter access while providing "emergency access vehicles" to get on the trail when there is a need to. Some of the entrances and exit crossings need improvements. Below I listed all the crossings on this 11-mile stretch. *This is a difficult item to address as there are too many access points. I also spoke to John G and Jim B about the fold down bollards, they used them at the Pequannock Valley trail at all crossings and have since pulled them all. I have a call in to the head of Parks and Rec to get a real-world example of why they work or don't work. They went to the half gate system.*

*Lastly Caitlin fielded a call today from an Eileen Richie 860-634-0421 from CHC, she states she was very demanding on us fixing the washed-out section between Curt Smith and Rt 67. Threatened lawsuits etc. and she needs this information for her report. She wants to meet in*

*person and wants a call back from management. I would like to request that Diane Ciano handles her folks and advises them where things stand. I don't want to field multiple calls from the same group over the same issues.*

Diane reports that she did contact this person. She is not a member of the CHC and was not aware of the work that was being done. She said she did not mean to sound demanding and was asking for information regarding the area since it has been in this deteriorating condition for many years.

### **Other Trail Reports:**

#### **Machimoodus State Park / Sunrise State Park:**

Ruth reports:

The park has had "Burn Days" on approximately 15 acres for invasive species. Burn to finish up by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

The CT Trail Rides Association (CTRA) will hold their annual Ginger Memorial Ride on May 15<sup>th</sup>. There will be a \$10.00 donation fee

There will be a Community Service Day at SunRise State Park to clear and prune invasive plants that are choking out natural vegetation on June 14th.

#### **Higginum Meadows State Park:**

Discussion that perhaps a "Burn" would be the way to go to get rid of invasive species, instead of goats.

**Cockaponset State Forest:** Diane reported that there was an inquiry from a Durham equestrian regarding a section of the forest: On the Durham/Higginum line: (Candlewood Rd area Spectacle Meadows? – there are two water bodies. The dam broke on one of them. The second dam is about to break. It is not possible by foot or horse for to walk on the western section. Is there a way DEEP can look at this? Eric mentioned that we needed more details as to where this actually is.

### **Legislation:**

Eric Hammerling reported:

Support an approved Bill 5291 to increase bond authorization to 6 million for the budget on the Recreational Trails that includes Bikeways and Greenways. There are 19 co-sponsors.

Support the State Park Infrastructure in FY23 Budget Adjustments to approved 55 million dollars to DEEP for infrastructure in our state parks.

Senate Bill 117 describes the required procedures for DEEP (at parks) and professional arborists when assessing hazardous trees. This bill came about because of the public concern regarding trees that were considered hazardous and taken down at Housatonic Meadows. Comments to this bill should be by March 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **Old Business: Follow up:**

**Bissell Trail – Windsor:** Diane left message for Stepheny Dumond (Penwood Area) regarding Bissell Trail regarding the Riverfront Recapture on the CT River in Windsor 860.242.1158 [stepheny.dumond@ct.gov](mailto:stepheny.dumond@ct.gov) Laurie said a good person to talk to is Mark Nichol of the Riverfront Recapture. Laurie mentioned we should contact Mark Nichol of the Riverfront Recapture Committee.

Meg has not followed up as of yet. Laurie gave additional contact information:

**Marc Nicol** – Director of Planning and Development, 860.713.3131 Ext. 334  
[mnicol@riverfront.org](mailto:mnicol@riverfront.org). Also, **Martha Connelly** – Park Development Manger 860.796.4513

**Devil's Hop Yard:** Meg's report from last meeting to be followed up on with DEEP Supervisor, Jack Hines: *I have not been back to this area. My last complaint concerned the boulders that block what could be a nice trailer parking area. We have been parking down by the barn, which is wet and narrow. The top spot (where the house once stood and is across from the trail entrance) is dry and partly graveled. Hikers park at a smaller spot up the road. This parking spot gets so crowded the vehicle partially block the road causing difficulties for horse trailer passing.*

Meg Sautter reported that she has not ridden there and has not contacted Jack Hines as of yet.

**Higganum Meadows Wildlife Management Area:**

*Previous discussion from June: 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 rid of the invasive plants.*

The report was sent to Laurie Fortin of the Wildlife Division. There was no response back. Diane called and left message and emailed on 12/13 for a response to Danielle's report: [laurie.fortin@ct.gov](mailto:laurie.fortin@ct.gov) 860.424.3963

Laurie Giannotti suggested to reach out to DEEP Forester, Frank Cervo

**DEEP No Child Left Inside:** This event was cancelled due to weather conditions

**New Business:**

**Trails Greenways Coordinator Update:**

**DEEP Contacts:**

*Brian Wilson -Assistant Director [Brian.Wilson@ct.gov](mailto:Brian.Wilson@ct.gov) or 860-424-3229  
Tom Tyler DEEP- State Parks Director  
Mike Lambert - Chief of Outdoor Recreation*

**Greenways Council:**

Stacey Stearns, CHC Representative on the Council notified Diane that she would like to leave her appointment on the Council. She will stay on and help to look for her replacement.

Ruth Strontzer has been nominated for a CT Greenways Council Award.

**National Trails Day:** Eric reports that CT Trails Day will be celebrated on both June 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>. For events around the state go to [www.TrailsDay.org](http://www.TrailsDay.org)

**EAC Website Up Date:** Laurie Giannotti has updated the site.

**SCORP Update:** Eric Hammerling reports that Mike Lambert, Chief of Outdoor Recreation will be leading the SCORP planning

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 pm by Meg Sautter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ruth Strontzer