



## CONNECTICUT EQUINE ADVISORY COUNCIL

### MEETING REPORT - Thursday, June 15, 2023

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

The meeting called to order at 6:15 pm by Diane Ciano

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

**Guests:** Denise Ciano, Kristine Kestermont-Pierce, Stefenie Shaw

**Excused:**

**Review Minutes:** The meeting minutes of March 16<sup>th</sup> 2023 were reviewed.

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

**State Park & Forest Updates:**

**Ruth Strontzer reports on the following parks and forests:**

**The Preserve: - Westbrook** –Wooden bridge was made out of plywood is rotting away and dangerous it has worsened and is now dangerous. The Westbrook foundation also offered they might be able to provide some funding, but if so, it would not happen this year because their grant application thing is in October.

LCRVHC would like to schedule a work day in Aug to re-build it Tom Elliot isn't getting any younger and before they lose his knowledge and help they would like to get it done Contact Melissa or Liz Kennedy Peggy is gone for over a month on cross country vacation

**Cockaponset SF:**

**Webbers Woods:** Tree down on the Magenta trail but there was a man that was out there on trails day that said he would try to take care of it but no conformation on that yet Someone was retagging a portion of the Quinimay Trail in WW and appeared to have included a portion of the white trail. The incorrect tagging issues was addressed and corrected on trails day we may have missed a couple but plan to go back out in a couple of weeks

**Northern Section - Haddam:** the section located between Filley Rd., Jericho Rd. and Beaver Meadow Rd. and bounded by Rt 9 is a mess. The Quinimay Trail, orange trail, orange red trail

and the Blue Red trails have multiple areas of downed trees and wash outs to the point hikers are having issues getting through some areas on the orange trail never mind riders This is the area I reached out to Alex about and offered to meet him and was shut down as he said he didn't have the man power or money to deal with the issues and couldn't send guys to just follow trails. I forwarded the email to Diane and his reply as of about 3 weeks ago.

**None of the downed trees have been addressed.**

**Southern Section**– **Chester:** The Quinimay Trail (Red Trail) in the area Jericho Rd south to the lake was in good shape about a month ago .

**Machimoodus - Sunrise SP:** The Bar way has been repaired on both sides down by the river. The new Supervisor for the Gilette Castle Area is Ray Knoop. He has meet with me at the last meeting of the Friends of Machimoodus and has agreed to try and continue mowing the tree lines behind where the controlled burns were done last year. A lot of riders and dog walkers are using them to stay away from the foot traffic on the main trails. Also, the bridge over the muddy area behind the pond on the trail, he agrees should be built to handle horses when it's done.

Trails in Sunrise are in fairly good shape a past storm has caused some wash out of the old carriage road leading up from the river to the red and yellow trail. However they seem to be stabilizing and not worsening The Red trail has some new trees down on it and people are making bi-passes around or over them at this point.

The new Supervisor Ray Knoop is meeting me over at Sunrise 9 am Fri to see where he would like the work done this year.

Following a survey supported by a UCONN professor show massive support for a horse camp there and in Cockaponset SF. The Park Supervisor and the Eastern District Manage were both in support of the project and then Covid hit. Numerous times when riding there I still get questioned if the plan will be moving forward. Ray has been made aware of this and did show some interest

**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

**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.

**Old Tourney Rd.** that goes from the tower to Wadhams Rd is barely passable with wash outs and a lot of exposed ledges.

**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 if could finish breaking off and drop. This needs to be addressed by someone with a chain saw **Still there**

**Wadsworth Falls SP:** Trails are 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 which 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 the overhanging tree issue on the white trail is still there.

There is a great bike trail in the park that is heavily used by equestrians and Bikers This trail allows them to stay off the main trail where the general public and dog walkers are. Bob Srickland who has been tending the trail for the past 10 years or so was told that it may be shut down. The bike trail was made from an old trail, a portion of it was on an old DEEP map and it was re-opened and worked on over the years slowly opening it a little at a time . He had just finished reopening the final portion of it. It is not a marked trail but follows the old trail

which crosses the orange, then crosses the red and blue trails looping up from the orange and back down to it. He spoke to a Kirsten Gonzales who led him to believe she is the new park supervisor for Wadsworth Falls reporting to Martin. She told him they might be shutting it down After talking with her, someone removed the Vortex trail from Trail forks Maps. Bob is willing to meet with someone about this as am I since it's a great trail and avoids a lot of the public on the orange trail . Alex apparently knew he was out there clearing and working on it for the last 10 years but never went out or sent anyone out to talk to him about it. He did the work himself wasn't sure if it was alright to do but since he was following an old trail and no one over the years stopped him he thought it was ok. It's become a favorite and is heavily used now.

**Hurd SP:** There are 2 trees down on the white trail. One you can get around the other is huge and needs to be addressed. 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.

**Haddam Meadows SP:** The trails around the perimeter are in good shape. In 2 locations along the river, the bank has collapsed into the river taking a portion of the trail so the trail has been moved over by heavy foot and equine traffic. They are now mowing the back trail and taking very good care of it There is a large tree that came off the railway bank in the loop portion of the back trail but you can get around it.

**Higganum WMA:** They did some brush hog work in there over the winter and It now has native grass coming up in those areas. More of the Meadow need to be addressed as well as the field up near the old granite foundation, that now has small trees in it. 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.

**Lamentation Mountain SP:** Trails some of which are more like old logging road are very washed out and getting worse. There are some very large trees down but people have cut bi-passes around them so you can get through. Lots of large rip rap type rock coming to the surface. There is no parking for trailers we had to park at a private location and ride in.

**Valley Railroad SP:** This runs alongside the Haddam Meadows. A short section from Haddam Station to Arnold Station is used by hikers and riders. It's in pretty good shape and is a fun little add on since there are trestle bridges both north and south of the Meadows that are out and no trains can cross.

**Airline Trail SP: – Colchester** Is in good shape but E bikes are still using it. People have no idea on it 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.

**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.

**Gay City SP:** As with many of the state parks and forests there are wash out areas but I found the trails to be in good shape and fairly well maintained.

**Goodwin SP:** Many inquiries as when the parking issue there will be addressed.

**Tyler Mill Preserve:** – Wallingford. A new Trails crew made up of bikers 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. The trails crew got the approval to do so. Now some of the old trails are stabilizing because they are being use 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 reports on the following parks and forests:**

**Mohawk State Forest:** Vevette reports that much trail work has been done by members of the CT Trail Rides Association (CTRA), but there continues to be a few large trees on Bear Swamp Road. One on the way down the hill which riders have created a go around. There are a few going up the other side after the stream crossing. There is still the “widow maker” tree from last year that is too large for club members to attempt to clear safely on the trail between Wadhams Road and the boat launch road.

**Kim Bradley (DEEP)** advised that no new trails be made and/or some of the trails are not “authorized” trails. CTRA and other organizations should apply to get trail authorized and let her know.

**Hurd State Park:** Vevette reports a giant tree down on the white trail at the opposite end of the park.

**Naugatuck State Forest:** Vevette Greenberg reports trails are in good shape, all the trees have been cut, each trail is passable. As well as the trail from Mathies Park in Beacon Falls.

There was discussion on getting signs at the crossing from Mathies Park across to the entrance of the forest. There is a curve in the road at this crossing with little or no visibility for motorists to see people or horses crossing. Motorists travel very fast on this road and it is a safety issue for pedestrians to cross over.

The parking lot is very small and there is plenty of room to enlarge the lot . Kim reported that DEEP forester, Jerry Milne has planted maple trees which are now making this lot even smaller. There is a section of the forest where DEEP can possibly make a larger parking area and add a pull through parking for trailers on Chestnut Hill Road.

**Natchaug State Forest:** Diane Ciano contacted Matt Quinn. There is an approval to put the water pump back in at the Lost Silver Mine Horse Camp. Matt said that there would be money that we would have to come up with and to let Kim Bradley know about this. Kim said she would check into DEEP funding to replace the cost off the water pump ad installation.

Meg Sautter reported that the well pump was not installed as of the National Trails Day weekend.

**Legislation:** Report sent in by Eric Hammerling:

Around 9:30 p.m. on the last night of the legislative session, [Senate Bill 998](#) (“**An Act Establishing a Tax Abatement for Certain Conservation Easements**”) passed. Although there was broad support for the trails portion of this bill, it became very contentious late Friday night/early Saturday morning (after the Greenways Council Awards event) when the House Amended SB 998 by adding [40+ new sections of housing policy](#) that attracted a lot of opposition. If you watched any of the debate, you would notice that the bill was brought-out on the floor by the Planning & Development Committee (where it was initiated in February), but the leadership of the Housing Committee took the reins for the floor debate. Anyway, it did pass, and our trails bill will become law soon (assuming the Governor signs it).

So, starting October 1, 2023, this bill establishes 2 new optional tools for municipalities to help keep Greenways connected across private lands:

- 1) If a landowner places a conservation easement on the trail corridor on their property, the town can abate/waive their property taxes along that corridor. The trail corridor must be a state-designated greenway, must be limited in width to 100', and must allow public access (of course). This is an option for towns (not a mandate) who would have to adopt a local ordinance; and
- 2) The bill clarifies that a recreational trail (that meets the statutory criteria for designation as a greenway) can qualify for the purpose of a town using the Public Act 490 program's "open space" classification to give a property tax break to the landowner. This does not require an easement like option #1 so it might be the tool that gets used the quickest (although not every town takes advantage of the P.A. 490 Open Space classification). P.A. 490 allows farm, forest and open space lands to be assessed by towns at their "current use" value rather than fair market value.

next phase (that you, CFPA, and others) will have to work on, is to let municipalities know about this tool, and encourage them to use it as an incentive to keep trails on private lands connected. Clare and Jeb at CFPA (copied here) will be leading that effort going forward.

All the best, Eric

### **New Business:**

#### **Dog Attack on horses at Machimoodus State Park:**

Kristine Kestermont-Pierce and Stefenie Shaw came to the EAC meeting to explain what happened as there were many stories going around and misunderstandings as to what had happened. They reported both horses were attacked viciously by a dog that was off leash. The owner had said that the dog broke off leash. One horse was badly injured and required veterinary care as the dog latched on to the horse as the horse was trying to get away. One horse ran off and was not found for hours. Both riders fell off and were injured with broken bones and needed medical care. One was taken to the hospital.

This discussion led to CHC setting up programs for ACO, firemen, police regarding handling of horses in emergency situations. CHC has done it in the past and is working on establishing some more educational events in the fall. Danyelle Borelli, who was an ACO and has offered to help CHC in getting this project going.

### **Recreational Trails Funding:**

Kim reports there is money available for yellow diamonds, signs, parking areas. EAC members will make a list of their needs and report back to Kim as to the next steps.

**CT Forest and Park Association:** Eric Hammerling, Director has left the position to continue his conservation career at the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection as Director of the Office of Planning and Program Development (OPPD). Clare Cain will be serving as CFPA's Interim Executive Director/Trails Director to ensure continuity while CFPA conducts a national search for a full-time Executive Director.

**CT Horse Council Report - Volunteer Horse Patrol:** CHC-VHP celebrated their 20-year Anniversary at our annual meeting held on March 18<sup>th</sup>. Several recognition letters from various towns and organizations were sent in prior to the meeting. Tanya Bourgoin of Friends of Machimoodus, DEEP Kim Bradley and Shenipsit Supervisor Marcella Hube spoke at the meeting.

**EAC:** Diane wrote letters on behalf of CHC and EAC regarding Denise Ciano's appointment as the equestrian representative for the 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

**SCORP Update:** CHC Members Ann Moses Diane Ciano and Meg Sautter were on the zoom call and made written comments. The Advisory Committee will be releasing another public Survey.

**Air Line State Park Region Master Plan:** Workshops for the 50 mile corridor were held. CHC members attended zoom workshops and gave their input for the plan. The Master Plan can be found both on the CTRC&D website [Air Line State Park Trail - Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development \(ctracd.org\)](http://Air Line State Park Trail - Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development (ctracd.org)) and the [Home - Airline State Park \(alsptregion.org\)](http://Home - Airline State Park (alsptregion.org)). The new ALSPT Region organization will meet up in Fall 2023 to talk about the next steps for the plan and website, supported by grant funding (\$76, 000) from CT DEEP Rec Trails Program.

**NO Child Left Inside:** Meg represented the CHC-VHP at Salmon State Park

**CT Greenways Council:** National Trails Day Kick off was held on Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hammonasset State Park. Several recognition awards to organizations, town and individuals. The Reddington Rock Riding Club received an award for their promotion, maintenance, and building of trails on town lands, Land Trusts properties and Shenipsit State Forest.

### **Equestrian National Trails Day Events:**

**Lower CT River Valley Horsemen's Club – Bridle Path Conservancy** held a trail maintenance in Webber Woods section of Cockaponset State Forest. The trail maintenance event consisted of replacing rotten planks at 2 pedestrian bridges, replacing/updating trail markers, clipping/trimming trails. They also had a formal dedication of the multi-use bridge built by the groups and volunteers last year.

**Reddington Rock Riding Club** held a Pancake Breakfast, followed by Blessing of the Mounts and Trail Ride in Shenipsit State Forest

**CT Trail Rides Association** held a Campout at & Ride and the Lost Silver Mine Horse Camp in Natchaug State Forest.

**Old Business:**

**Larkin Bridle Trail:** CHC contacted Richard Crowther of the Naugatuck Valley Council of Government (NVCOG) to see if we can get crosswalk light and a post that has two activation buttons. (*person and a mounted horse rider level*) at the Rte. 67 crossing in Southbury which is very dangerous. NVCOG will work with the Town of Southbury and DOT to possibly get the light installed. They have placed a motor vehicle counter at the sight. They are awaiting a letter from CHC for this request.

Kim mentioned there is discussion within DEEP on improving the trail and possible parking area for trailers

**Pachaug State Forest:** Need update on status of bridge to be repaired (seasonal help?). Kim will check into this further.

**Devil's Hop Yard State Park:** Discussion on getting parking on Mitchell road for horse trailers and possible camping

**Goodwin State Forest:** A follow up letter to Kim Bradley should be sent.

**EAC Website Update:** Kim said that she forwarded all past meeting notes and they will be posted on the website

**Upcoming Events:** Ruth reports that there is a trail clearing scheduled for Sunday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at Sunrise State Park

**Next Meeting:** - Thursday, September 21<sup>st</sup> - at 6:30 pm\* **Note: Time change**

**Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 pm by Meg, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vevette

