

SENATE NATURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEE
REPORT ON EQUESTRIAN TRAIL RIDING ACTIVITIES!

March 6, 2019

Hello Chairman McBroom and Committee Members! It's an honor to talk with you today. My name is Dick Kleinhardt, President of Back Country Horsemen of Michigan and the Northern Lower Michigan Equine Trails Subcommittee Representative. I also am a member and past president of the PRCEC (Pigeon River Equestrian committee) which was appointed by then Director Rodney Stokes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on some of the topics, challenges and opportunities that the equestrian trail riding community faces today. It's refreshing to be included as a stakeholder in the subject of trails that directly impact our love of what we enjoy doing in the great outdoors of Michigan with our horses. By way of background I need to take you back about 10 years to cite what was a vindictive and egregious act by the DNR to basically disallow trail riding in the Pigeon River Country basically just allowing road riding. The hundreds of trails which my family and I have enjoyed riding for 40 years were gone with the stroke of a pen. Despite our plea to offer a one year moratorium and try to work things out the ultimate answer was no. The reason I bring this up is that we as trail riders had no representation. Back Country Horsemen of Michigan, Pigeon River and Beyond was formed to become a member of Back Country Horsemen of America with now 31 states in our National group. We are proud to be members of this group as we quickly learned that they had all the right tools in their tool box. In Michigan we now have members from all over our Great State including the Upper Peninsula. When I learned of BCHA's mantra which is "misstatements are perceived as truths however unless challenged" that said it all! Our members include virtually all of the riding associations, and clubs from around the state. We serve as the umbrella organization for all groups with the sole intent and desire to promote the retention of all our trails and to safeguard against the removal of such trails. We are a 501©3. In the Pigeon the department accused us of churning up the soil and causing erosion at the same time logging everything in sight; also we were falsely accused of invasive species propagation, disrupting endangered species, roping the elk and harassing other

users and the list goes on. We knew that we had to defend ourselves so we methodically knocked down their erroneous claims and went directly to our elected officials to strive for "Right to Ride" legislation. Of the 7 hearings we were involved with the legislators were awestruck with the numbers in attendance. Jam packed overflow rooms with 250 folks in attendance. In 14 months we got every vote in the house except one and every vote in the Senate. On April 10th 2010 Governor Granholm signed it into law. In my view there were two reasons we were successful: 1) we challenged and won each and every argument with sound science and 2) they failed to realize that half of the trail riders were republicans and the other half were democrats with maybe a couple of independents. We had great bi-partisan support!

I would now like to talk about some positive news as a result of our efforts!

As a result of our "R to R" legislation an equine trail subcommittee was formed which is comprised of 5 equestrians from across the regions of the State and a tourism representative. I'm proud to say that of the 5 horse reps, 3 that I know are members of Back Country Horsemen of Michigan. As a result of our legislation it reignited the formerly known MSTAC (Michigan Snowmobile Trails ATV Committee) to now be known as MTAC (Michigan Trails Committee) which meets regularly. We now have a seat at the table of this committee. Many positives have come out of our Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) including reviewing what works and what doesn't in regards to camping policies. This committee was also very much involved in helping construct the Comprehensive Trail Plan for Michigan. This gives all user groups a blueprint of what is expected and how we need to go about achieving those goals. We know that Governor Snyder wanted Michigan to be known as a trail state and that's great; he also talked about trail towns but, the challenge is: how does one ride to various trail towns if you do not have the ability to traverse certain lands to get there legally? This is one of our main goals that is laid out for our committee to research and find more areas that would be suitable for expansion. WE NEED HELP in accomplishing this goal. The hurdles are huge!

SAFETY AND EDUCATING OTHER USER GROUPS: Signage of trails in regards to rider safety is a very high priority of ours. Horses are a prey animal and all users must yield to riders on the trail. Our ETS committee has been discussing this important issue and are encouraging the use of standardize signage to be used in all campgrounds to help educate the different user groups and also at trail heads. BCHA has made available a poster that denotes what a horse sees thru their eyes and it is very enlightening. There are two different posters one for hikers and one for bikers. I have included a sample of them. Our biggest challenge is the never ending threat of losing our established trails to mountain bikers and ATV's. With the passage of PA288 this has caused many concerns. We were taken by surprise when this bill was passed into law much without our knowledge to be able to raise awareness of the dangers. Now our latest threat is losing a part of our famous Shore-to Shore trail in one area to Mountain Bikes. We recently were notified that there is a proposal by the Mountain Bikers through the USFS for a 13.25 miles of trail to be constructed for them. 7.25 will be reopened closed trails and reconstructed trail but the remainder 6 miles would be part of our famous SHORE-TO SHORE hiking and horse trail. This trail was built and maintained for over 50 years by MTRA and other EQ trail groups and it is a very coveted trail by other states. This trail has had national attention and we cannot afford to have it be in jeopardy. This is a real threat and we feel that there is more than enough forest for all users to share-but please we need to keep these users separate from each other to protect each from possible dangers.

EXPANSION OF TRAILS AND CAMPGROUND FACILITIES: A short time after our committee was formed, which is about 10 years ago now, we oversaw the disbursement of \$300,000 of NTF monies throughout the state for equestrian campground improvements also the beginning development of a state wide GPS mapping of all equine trails in Michigan. We then prorated part of that money to help with upgrading two of the equine campgrounds in the Pigeon River State Forest, Stoney Creek Campground north of the Pigeon and also at 4 Mile Campground near Gaylord. A total remake of 4 Mile Camp was accomplished after it was almost totally harvested due to Oak Wilt. New restroom facilities, picket poles for high lines, picnic tables and fire rings were purchased. Lots of excavation was done at Stoney Creek Camp to help level off some of the uneven sites to encourage larger rigs. With the remainder of what was left, we were able

to reopen a once closed State Forest campground east of Lewiston that is known as BIG OAKS. A complete reconfiguration made it one of the most beautiful equine campgrounds in Northern Michigan. This was once managed by FRD and PRD did the renovations.

Back Country has led in the promotion of a new equestrian campground in the Luther area. I worked directly with former Senator Booher on getting the ball rolling on this project. It's called the "Tin Cup Springs" Campground and it's going to provide recreational opportunities to Lake County, the poorest county in the State. It's in the very final stages of approval at the State level. There has been an established 20 mile loop for equestrians in this area for over 20 years and has been maintained by just a small handful of volunteers. This campground is very much needed and would provide revenue in this area.

I would like to encourage the powers that be to once again consider NTF monies for our camping facilities and trail expansion.

VOLUNTEER VALUES: Another topic that we are focused on is the monetary value that we bring to the table in terms of volunteer hours. As you know we are responsible for maintaining our trails system. Without these efforts our trails would completely disappear because of lack of help from the department. Through programs that are recommended by the DNR and Parks and Recreation many campgrounds have been either adopted in the **ADOPT A CAMP** or are overseen by **FRIENDS GROUPS** who have formed MOUs. These have been very successful at being able to work with these departments and have opened communication with what needs to be done to help and assist the land managers with maintenance and trail cleanup. We as ETS members are responsible to report all volunteer hours and related values for such work. It is astounding as to the value. In 2017 ETS requested all trail groups please report to them their volunteer hours. Only about 6 groups responded but, it was astounding to tally up those few group's numbers and be able to report them.

Ionia Horse Club: \$17,000 with labor and equipment-built pipe corrals on 7 campsites.

Sleepy Hollow Trail Riders: \$13,728 with 624 vol. event hours and 62 hours on work bees \$1,364 labor and material

Yankee Springs: \$25,500 with 32 volunteers donating 1055 hours including equipment and materials.

Ft. Custer Horse Friends: \$26,367 with 1,198.5 hours

Back Country Horsemen-Pigeon River: \$49,038.11 with 21 volunteers. 400.25 hours with labor and equipment and materials donated.

MTRA: \$159,478 with 84 volunteers with 1,354 hours. This includes equipment and materials.

GRAND TOTAL: \$292,475

This is just a drop in the bucket and would be doubled if all groups would tally and report their hours donated! Just another reason that we are very against the so-called **"Pay to Play"** talking point for bridle tags. **We do pay dearly in sweat equity.** 2018 figures are just in for **BCHMI totaled \$88,000+.**

WHAT CAN WE ALL DO TO ENCOURAGE EQUESTRIAN TOURISM IN MICHIGAN?

The answer to this question seems easy but tackling it is extremely expensive and time consuming. While we have many ideas it takes money to see them completed. As the old saying goes, "Build it and they will come!" does hold true but we need to get the word out through advertising and promotion of our trail system and welcome those from out of state to come to Michigan and enjoy our beautiful state.

1. **Brochures at rest areas-truck stops to include the UP areas as well**
2. **Updated State website and make it user friendly**
3. **Expand trail mileage at the campgrounds that we do have to encourage longer stays.**
4. **Upgrade a few rustic camping facilities with electric to entice those who enjoy this aspect.**
5. **Promote the building of new campgrounds in areas that are lacking**
6. **Open up areas where restrictions have been placed such as State Game areas and allow for seasonal riding. We can no longer tolerate land name classifications that exclude recreational use; also that purchasing of new lands that exclude recreational use.**

7. **Encourage Shoreline riding at specific times of the year. This is one thing ETS and BCHMI has tried to promote sponsoring 6 Pilot rides this past year. We have the most shoreline of any state.**
8. **Make more NRTFs available for equestrian projects**

ECONOMIC VALUE OF EQUESTRIAN INDUSTRY: We are very proud to be able to state that our love of horses is extremely valuable to Michigan's economy. Very little of these facts and figures go unnoticed so I have attached the results of a 2017 study showing just how they are broken down. Below is just a few to list:

Horses: 188,865-Making it the 12th largest state in terms of horse population!

\$1.6 Billion-total value added to Michigan's economy

30,739 jobs-total employment impact

22,068 jobs-direct employment impact

\$893 Million-Direct Contribution to GDP

30.5% of all households or 1.2 million in Michigan contain horse enthusiasts

628,000 acres of land in Michigan used for horse related purposes

50,000 number of volunteering their time for horse related activities

It's quite a challenge to give an overview of the past 10 years on this topic in a matter of minutes.

I'm very grateful for the opportunity to work with Director Creagh and the previous administration. We've made some real progress! I look forward to working with Governor Whitmer and Director Eichinger and hope that continued progress can be made.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dick Kleinhardt

989-386-2910



WHAT
THE
HORSE
SEES

HORSES ARE A PREY SPECIES

ANYTHING MOVING FAST

QUIET AND OR ABOVE THEM

IS A POTENTIAL PREDATOR

When meeting horses on the trail please stop, if possible,
on the low side, beside the trail, and *most importantly,*

TALK TO THE RIDER

TRAIL SAFETY IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF IDAHO

WWW.BCHI.ORG

Copyright 2011 Backcountry Ranch Productions

A woman wearing a blue shirt, sunglasses, and a large backpack is walking on a trail. In the background, a large brown bear is roaring with its mouth open. The background is a close-up of a horse's face, showing its eye and part of its nose.

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Economic Impact of the Horse Industry

IN MICHIGAN



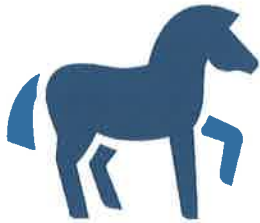
Total Value
Added to the
Michigan
Economy:
\$1.6 billion

Total
Employment
Impact:
**30,739
Jobs**



Direct
Contribution
to GDP:
\$893 million

Direct
Employment
Impact:
**22,068
Jobs**



188,865 horses in Michigan- making it
the **the twelfth largest state** in
terms of horse population

Horse Ownership, Equine Institutions &
Profit Making Organizations, and Tourism
Spending by Participants and Spectators
combine for a



**\$2.6 billion
economic impact**

In total, **30.5%** of
households—or
1.2 million in Michigan—
contain horse enthusiasts.

50,000



Number of Michigan residents
volunteering their time for
horse-related activities.

628,000

acres of land in
Michigan used
for horse-related
purposes.



ECONOMIC IMPACT The Racing Sector



supports
3,946 jobs



adds **\$252 million**
in value to the
state economy



Racing Sector
Total Economic
Impact of:
\$389 million

ECONOMIC IMPACT The Competition Sector



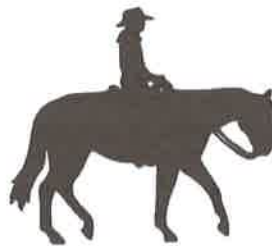
supports
11,942 jobs



adds **\$591 million**
in value to the state
economy

Competition
Sector
Total Economic
Impact of:
\$1 billion

ECONOMIC IMPACT The Recreation Sector



supports
6,677 jobs



adds **\$321 million**
in value to the state
economy

Recreation Sector
Total Economic
Impact of:
\$539 million

ECONOMIC IMPACT Equine Therapy



supports
196 jobs

adds **\$8.43 million**
in value to the
state economy



ECONOMIC IMPACT Equine Rescues & Sanctuaries



supports
17 jobs



adds
\$700,000
in value to the
state economy



Information provided by
the American Horse Council
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