



Illinois Trail Riders

Dedicated To Keeping Horses On Our Trails

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August, September, October 2006

Summary of Equine Roundtable 2006

Submitted by Carolyn Cushman, ITR Director, Written by Jim Fraley, Livestock Program Director, Illinois Farm Bureau

The Equine Roundtable met on Tuesday, June 13, 2006, to discuss each organization's key issues and to prioritize them. The organizations that submitted priority issues for discussion included: Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Harness Horsemen's Association, University of Illinois, Equestrian Land Conservation Resource, Shawnee Trails Conservancy, Illinois Appaloosa Association, Horseman's Council of Illinois, and the Illinois Farm Bureau®. The following issues were discussed and prioritized as the top ten issues for the 2006 Equine Roundtable:

- Create an equine census which would include the economic impact of the equine industry on the State of Illinois.
- Work together to maintain trails and open access for equine enthusiasts.
- Educate the public on issues regarding humane horse harvesting.
- Improve communications between the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the Equine Industry (owners, vets, etc.) to better provide information, such as electronic health papers and applicable regulations, to the entire industry.
- Educate the equine industry of the issues concerning Premise ID and the National Animal Identification System.
- Amend the Recreational Use Act to cover equine riders.
- Provide insurance alternatives for equine owners.
- Develop an Equine Marketing Program in Illinois which would help bring equine-related activities to our state.
- Increase development and support of youth organizations such as Future Farmers of America, 4-H, breed associations, young riders, etc.
- Urge the Illinois Department of Agriculture to contact county governments about the Livestock Management Facilities Act and the equine industry.

Several of us in attendance at the meeting will be working on these key issues. I will pledge to provide regular updates on these issues as progress is made on them.

This is an annual meeting and I urge all to try to attend next year to get your concerns heard. If you have any comments about a way we can make this meeting more available to associations please contact me.

Thank you all for your interest and input into this process.

Shawnee Update

Researched and Shared by Denise Maxwell

Most trail riders know that there has been something afoot in the Shawnee National Forest for many years now. Rumors and misinformation have abounded. In truth, the forest is not closed to horses, tourism has suffered a little but seems to be increasing with advertising and articles that promote the region's scenic trails and friendly horse campgrounds. Yes, there has been a flurry of activity by the US Forest Service to plan for and better protect our natural resources for the future with their limited budgets and short staff. Yes, there has been attempts by environmentalists, equestrians and other trail users, campground owners, local businesses which benefit from the tourism, and private landowners bordering the forest to protect their interests and influence the governmental planning efforts. There have been public meetings, private meetings, research efforts, junk science, name calling, harassment, hurt feelings, legal efforts, political efforts and everything else that evolves from conflict and mediation when so much is at stake. No one involved has been immune and every group has had extremists.

The Trails Management Plan for the four western watersheds of the Shawnee went into effect on June 24th of 2006. One hundred fifty-five miles of new trail has been designated within this area (some for hikers only) and equestrians have been asked to avoid Natural Areas and respect various rules within the forest.

In July, Representative Shimkus, several trail users, and the Forest Service Supervisor Allen Nicholas had a brief meeting to make sure that everyone was on the same page with the new Trails Designation Project. The meeting agenda centered on questions regarding "how the plan will be implemented and how or when new regulations would be enforced." This meeting caused a small flurry of gossip after someone called in the media.

Brian DeNeal, a writer for the Harrisburg Daily Register who did not attend the meeting, reported on July 8th about the meeting. DeNeal wrote "Sam Stearns, representing Friends of Bell Smith Springs, said he gave a video and newspaper stories to Shimkus when the Congressman arrived for the meeting." Stearns, who also did not attend the meeting, said of the video he gave Shimkus, "This video contains evidence of complicity of horse campground owners with vandals who illegally spray paint trees in the Shawnee National Forest; deliberate campaign of deceptions, distortions and lies by the Shawnee Trail Conservancy and horse campground owners; damage to federal property on public land by illegal equestrian activity."

Needless to say, this put a few horse owners' noses out of joint, but others passed it off as just another way for one individual to twist the truth in an effort to gain personal attention for an individual cause. The (continued on page 4)

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Newsbits

IFOR is having a raffle on a Tucker Buffalo Model #270 Saddle. Tickets sell for \$5.00 each or 5 for \$20.00. If you would like to purchase a chance on this nice saddle with a comfortable gel seat, contact Sandy Poletti at sandypoletti@sbcglobal.net or 618/656-4712. The drawing will be on 8/26/06. Thanks to McKinney's in Marion for donating the saddle.

JEPC Horseback Riding: A new horseback riding and trail ride vendor is providing equestrian opportunities for visitors to Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area near Chandlerville in Cass County. K and K Trail Rides is based at the Questing Hills Campground, the equestrian camping area located on the north side of Jim Edgar Panther Creek SWFA. K and K Trail Rides offers individual horseback riding, wagon rides, pony cart rides, birthday parties, and individual horseback riding lessons. For more information or reservations, phone 217 899-4801. Jim Edgar Panther Creek SFWA offers 26 miles of equestrian trails.

You are invited to join the U.S. Forest Service and Midewin's many friends and partners in celebrating **Midewin's** 10th Anniversary Thursday through Saturday, August 24-26, 2006. Friday - Symposium: 10 Years of Progress in Restoration and Research at Midewin, University of St. Francis, Joliet, IL, 9 am to 4:30 pm. Friday - Tour: Prairie Restoration at Midewin, 10:00 am to 3 pm, departing from and returning to Midewin Headquarters; Celebration Reception, 5:00 pm to 8 pm, Midewin Headquarters. Saturday - Open House and Exhibits: 9 am to 4 pm. Midewin Supervisor's Office • Raptor Exhibit • Snake Exhibit • Landscaping with Native Plants • Nature Games for Kids • Smokey Bear and the Junior Ranger Program • Photography Exhibition • Horse-Drawn Wagon Rides • Midewin Volksmarch • Tours: Ten Years at Midewin, 9:30 am and 12:30 pm • Twilight Bike Ride, 6:00 pm • Volunteer Restoration Workday: 9:00 am to 2:30 pm. For more details, consult the Midewin website at www.fs.fed.us/mntp or call 815 423-6370. (See article on page 7)

Illinois Trail Riders must work with local trail advocates and land managers/owners to prepare **grant applications for trails which include equestrian components**. Without involvement by you and other members of the equestrian community we will not see additional trails made available to horse owners. Federal and State money is available for horse trails in your community but the projects have not been forthcoming.

Lake Le-Aqua-Na State Park will be rehabilitating it's multi-use trails in Stephenson County. Installation of signs and resurfacing will take place.

The US Forest Service (USFS) is current conducting a review of their proposed **National Trail Classification system (TCS)** including the Trail Class matrix and Design parameters, and proposed implementing directives. The USFS is accepting public comments through September 1, 2006. This is an opportunity for you to inform the USFS of your concerns regarding how the TCS affects trails access, closures and other management issues that affect the riding community (see article on page 6). Written comments should be sent to: Jonathan Stephens, National Program Manager for Trails and Congressionally Designated Areas, USDA Forest Service, Recreation and Heritage Resources Staff, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Stop 1125, Washington, DC 20250, FAX 202 205-1145.

From the President

This summer has been different although still very full. While most horseowners are trying to fit in a good ride between bringing in the hay, doing rain dances in the pasture, and packing for vacations. I, for the first time, am trying to host a North American Trail Ride Conference event in the Shawnee National Forest.

Hosting a large planned trail ride is no easy feat. There are both similarities and differences between the ride I am managing and the larger/longer events such as Nine-Day Trail Ride, the One Horse Gap, the Farm Bureau Fund Raiser, or the River to River ride. The smaller, occasional rides, where family, friends or saddle clubs gather to share time in the saddle and around a campfire require even less, but still careful planning. The trail horse sport and competition rides such as Mounted Orienteering, Endurance, or Competitive Trail riding add special challenges for the planner. There have been many things to do from planning and buying food and meals (ice supplies too), checking that toilets are in place and clean, gathering donated awards and prizes to locating, hauling and distributing horse and human water for Pulse and Respiration points or camp. We have to hire the judges, guides, or entertainment, find volunteer workers, and accommodate them throughout the event. Imagine the effort it takes to hold a party a graduation or a wedding and then multiply it by many people, many horses, many trailers and a scattering of tents over acres of land accessing miles of trail. Visualize mowing and weed control, setting up picnic tables, dealing with trash and manure removal, finding generators, electricity or alternatives for lights or appliances, building confinement areas or tie-ups for horses, insuring safety with first aid and on-call vet or ambulance services. Throw into the mix a population of trail riders (all who may differ in expectations, lifestyles or personalities). Lastly, there could be any number of people who test our careful plans by showing up at the last minute without the reservation or RSVP.

We are utilizing a US Forest Service facility rather than a private campground or an Illinois Department of Natural Resources site, but the logistical work is the same.

The Johnson Creek Campground, Kinkaid Lake Trail System, and Murphysboro Ranger Station are approximately 100 miles from my house. The travel involved in planning this event has been a costly challenge. We have managed to jump through the hoops and have obtained the required permit for our special recreational event. It took a several consultations to get the wording right on the operating plan and the permitted activities section. While we worked on that, there was a review process and the Shawnee quarterly published notice of our intention so that other members of the public had time to comment, complain, applaud or "whatever" on this specific use of public land. We had to send the permit check (money) to a USFS office in California, so I hope it comes back to our Shawnee area in the form of improved horse trails and increased staffing for trails and campground construction.

The Forest Service Personnel have been most helpful to me. I have been lucky so far in communicating with honest and realistic federal employees, who are working to assure that my event is successful while doing their job to protect public resources. Sometimes public land managers are less than accommodating and add greatly to the stress of the ride planner. I have met to discuss details of the ride, routing of the 30-mile trail, mapping and logistic issues I have with the

management of this event. Members of the Forest Service summer trail crews were assigned to "fix up" the designated trails which we are using for the event. The Forest Service crew determined the mileage, cut out deadfall, and one employee even hand rolled a mileage wheel for the longest trail segment (5.6 miles) when normal maintenance vehicles could not access it. Volunteers could have been utilized to do some of the work, but they may have been less dependable or less trained, and someone still would have had to manage their work. Volunteers did easier jobs like trimming branches away from the trail and identifying trail problems or verifying trail mileage and times.

Now it is my job to make sure my event does not negatively impact the campground, trails, land management, or the community. A week before the ride I will set up camp and begin to flag the trails with the removable clothes pinned flagging ribbon markers and paper plates that the trail riders will follow. I will create the maps and chart the mileages for the competitors. I will have to identify the points for my volunteer crews and judges to access the trail riders and figure the timing with precision.

Registrations have started arriving in the mail for our ride and each will need an entry packet stocked with information and goodies. We have to arrange for the radios and communication equipment, the numbered vests and the ride sanction and reporting forms to arrive. Phone calls from prospective participants, media people and service personnel have kept my answering machine and caller ID busy. Will we break even on this adventure? Will we make a profit to donate to a worthy cause as they do for St. Jude's and Cancer fundraiser rides? Will enough people come? Will too many show up?

Will everyone leave happy, healthy, and with good things to say? Will I survive this event? Whatever will I do with myself when it is all over? Ask me later.....I'M BUSY!

Denise

It's All About Horses

Shared By Frank Bowman, President, Horseman's Council of Illinois

Due to the general state of the Illinois economy and rising fuel prices, many events and shows are seeing fewer participants this year as we all have to make necessary choices on how to stretch our discretionary funds.

In addition to the economy, we find ourselves defending the equine lifestyle more and more as the number of urbanites continues to swell, farmlands and open space become suburban nightmares where your new neighbors complain to the authorities about flies and manure piles and legislators seeking election from the most populous districts forgo historic and common sense solutions to these issues in lieu of voter approval and large campaign contributions.

The old adage "Money Talks" rings truer than ever in election years. Contrary to popular belief though, most horse owners are not wealthy landholders or huge political donors. Many of us are just able to keep our head above water, some aren't doing that well. Yet, in order to be heard, horsemen need to participate in this year's election process to the fullest extent possible. While we can't always just throw our horses in a stall and go to a meeting or pass lots of money around in order to influence legislation, the equine community needs to do everything we can or be content to become relics on the (continued on page 6)

Shawnee Update (continued from page 1)

actions of individual riders are often used to portray an untruth about an entire group of equestrians or one misdeed ruins it for everyone. "Don't let the bad apple be you" was the advice of one person familiar with this incident.

Shimkus has been promoting Right to Ride legislation, which calls for permitting horse traffic on public lands. Shimkus was pleased with the meeting.

"I think it went really well." Shimkus said. "The forest is large enough so we can protect it and encourage people to enjoy it and to use it. There were no raised voices." Other attendees such as Dick Manders (Bear Branch Campground), Bob Buchanan (One Horse Gap Trail Ride) and John O'Dell (River to River Trail) had mixed feelings about the outcome of the meeting, but all felt that some of their concerns had been answered honestly.

Here is what Shawnee Trail Riders should know:

Forest Service Permits that had been issued prior to the Plan implementation (such as those for special event rides and campground owner/patron access to the forest) will be honored as written and will be in effect until they come up for renewal. So don't cancel your plans to ride in the Shawnee.

The Forest Service is going to be phasing out and brushing in old trails as they get new ones up and running. Summer trail crews are in the process of working on heavily used trails such as those in Lusk Creek Wilderness Area. They are signing and posting five creek crossings in the Lusk Creek Area that do lend themselves to a looping trail rather than an out and back. Lusk Creek and the Garden of the Gods are the only wilderness areas with major trails that are heavily used by hikers and horses. The watering of horses, or wading and swimming of humans at areas not designated has already resulted in tickets and fines.

All of the maps telling riders where the trails are open have yet to be released and will vary each year as the total Trail Plan is implemented. Federal budget permitting, there will be improved maps, signage and maintenance for the forest trail system in the future. Riders who aren't exactly sure where the designated trails are should check with campground owners or the Forest Service.

Biologists and volunteers have painted yellow leaves on the trees that border natural areas to show the boundary to trail users. Horses are now excluded from these areas. White diamonds painted on a tree mark many of the designated trails that spring from the backbone of the River to River Trail. White diamonds with blue "i" have been painted to show the River to River trail routing which has symbolized this trail since it's beginning. Some of these marks are as old as the trail, so they may be faint with age. Taking note of the painted trees can reassure riders and keep them from becoming lost or getting onto an undesignated trail.

The Forest Service will set up confinement areas or picket lines in areas where horses should be tied while riders travel on foot to scenic spots such as Indian Kitchen, Salt Peter Cave or Secret Canyon. After a few hours in the saddle a quick hike might feel great if the horses are properly secured and supervised.

Only groups of 10 people or less on horseback will be allowed into the Wilderness Areas. There is still confusion about what to do when one group of 6 riders encounters another group of 5 riders on a Wilderness Trail. If caught together, apparently, all 11 riders could receive a ticket for breaking the law. The two groups must part company

immediately and travel in different directions lest they be viewed as a "large group."

There will be no camping with livestock in designated Wilderness Areas (even though John Muir always did so). The wilderness boundaries are somewhat difficult to determine. Camping with livestock will be permitted in other parts of the forest unless posted otherwise.

Ignorance is no excuse to break the law, so there will be patrols by Forest Police who can write tickets to wayward equestrians and hikers. Treat Conservation Police with the same respect as any law officer and you should be fine. Perhaps they could even give you information and guidance if you ask the right questions.

Some concerns that linger:

Are items such as video cameras and watches illegal in the wilderness areas because they are mechanical devices?

Many private landowners still have concerns about how to access the forest from their land, which may actually border the forest. Each of these individuals will have to speak to the USFS employees who are responsible for permits and may be required to pay for this privilege, if it is granted.

Trails in each watershed do connect forming a contiguous trail system, but often they connect along roads and highways. It may not be easy to travel longer distances without using a horse trailer and having to leave a legitimate equestrian campground to find a trailhead or roadside which is safe enough and large enough to accept a horse trailer.

What can be done to correct the configuration of the River to River Trail to avoid dangerous and narrow roadways with no shoulder, where humans and horses have no access to water or a safe place to ride?

Can the Forest Service and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources work together as land management agencies? Can they agree on similar land management plans, especially in regards to the River to River Trail/American Discovery Trail so that seasonal closings are limited or non-existent throughout all sections of the trail? Uniformity along this 160-mile corridor would improve its nature and the tourism it attracts to the area. Could they be encouraged to pool their resources so that equestrians could utilize State DNR horse camps to access the federal lands throughout the year and trail use could be dispersed rather than concentrated in high impact areas?

Remember that the Shawnee National Forest is more than 300,000+ acres in area.

Only 240 acres would be used if equestrians had access to 500 miles of 4-foot wide trail. If trails were dispersed and riders were educated there would be no chance of this resource rich, environmentally important piece of public property being put at risk in the future.



Attend a Trails Conference and Make A Difference!

Greenways and Trails Workshops

Sign up for one of these two Greenways and Trails Workshops sponsored by the Illinois Greenways & Trails Council. (Encourage your local land managers, trail planners, city officials and others involved in trails to attend!)

The cost for either workshop is \$20.00 and includes a full day of sessions starting at 8:30 am and workshop materials. Lunch is included.

Southern Illinois Greenways And Trails Fall Workshop

September 15, 2006 at the Rend Lake Conference Center in Whittington, Illinois

This workshop will feature: Heels, Hooves and Spokes: Developing Trails for Everyone; Putting the Trail Pieces together; Trail Signage; More Benefits Than Just Recreation; Trail Visions and Possibilities for Rural Illinois Communities. The Keynote Speaker will be Glenn Poshard, President of Southern Illinois University and former U.S. Congressman. ITR director Sara Rhoades has been serving on the Southern Region Workshop Planning Committee.

Northern Illinois Trails and Greenways Workshop

This workshop will be held September 22, 2006 at Illinois Valley Community College, Oglebsy. It will feature: Trail User Perspectives; Development of Greenways and Trails: From Beginning To End; Liability and Risk Management of Greenways and Trails; and a Trail Design Demonstration.

ITR directors Peter Viet, Jean Greenlee and Joanne Gernant have served on the Planning Committee for this workshop and Frank Bowman, President of Horseman's Council of Illinois, will speak for equestrians at the workshop on our trail issues.

For additional information contact IDNR at 217 782-3715 or email greenway@illinois.gov.

Submit \$20.00 along with your name, address, phone and which workshop you wish to attend to Illinois Trail Conservancy, P.O. Box 10, Capron, IL, 61012 or just go to illtrails.com and click on the registration icon on the left side bar.

18th National Trails Symposium Quad Cities

Plan now to attend the 18th National Trails Symposium in the Quad Cities on the Mississippi River, October 19-22, 2006. This National Trails Symposium is held every other year and is sponsored by American Trails with state and local sponsors.

The Symposium provides an opportunity for greenways and trails advocates, managers, planners, and users, outdoor product providers, as well as conservationists, private landowners, and tourism and business interests to come together for an inspirational and educational conference.

The Symposium addresses both non-motorized and motorized issues and our vision for trails and greenways nationwide.

Check out the extensive website www.americantrails.org.

Major sponsors are: The Illinois and Iowa Departments of Natural Resources, John Deere, the US DOT Federal Highway Administration, Bureau of Land Management and the

USDA Forest Service. The National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and a multitude of businesses, which serve the trail industry and trail-using public, are major contributors. City, county and state governments, non-profits, trail user groups and tourism Bureaus are all playing a role.

ITR has paid for a smaller Kingfisher sponsorship. Only one full registration is included, but many of our members will be able to volunteer to work in the exhibit hall if we turn in the names before the conference. (Call now to volunteer – 618 656-2591)

Our organization will join the more than 125 exhibits with an 8x8 booth that will need at least 4 volunteers every day. On Saturday, October 21, there will be a Horse Trails Caucus between 7:00 am and 8:45 am so that all of the equestrian partners can meet, greet and strategize. Our former President, Kande Haertel, will be coordinating this through ELCR.

Other registered equestrian sponsors include: Arizona State Horseman's Association Back Country Horsemen of America, Equestrian Land Conservation Resource, Iowa Horse Council, United States Eventing Association, and The United States Pony Clubs Inc.

There will be trail building workshops and training classes. Poster presentations, trail talks, educational sessions, general sessions and celebrations.

ITR director Joanne Gernant has arranged two of the many mobile workshops. One is a tour along the Hennipin Canal, the other a trail ride at a local Girl Scout Camp.

Our panel discussion, Equestrian Trail Rider Diversity – Trails for all Americans, was accepted as one of the many concurrent sessions. This panel discussion highlights the diversity of equestrian trail groups and individuals who will add support to any multi-use trail project.

Gain exposure to and appreciation of the variety of equestrian trail users, their diverse viewpoints, needs, and reasons for becoming involved in trail activities. Attract, accommodate and encourage this diverse group of trail users by understanding their needs, thereby reducing confusion/conflict/misunderstanding.

Multi-use trails can be enjoyed and shared whether urban, suburban, wilderness or destination in nature by forging better alliances with equestrians. The positive involvement of equestrians increases the strength of an all-inclusive community of trail enthusiasts.

The moderator will be Denise Maxwell, President, Illinois Trail Riders. Speakers will be Yvette Anderson-Rollins, Director, Indiana Horse Council; Doreen Portner, North American Trail Ride Conference Trails Chairperson; Bonnie Davis, Consulting Editor *Trail Rider Magazine*.

If someone is interested in manning our booth, they do not have to register for the conference. We can have as many staffers as we like. You will only be able to man our booth though. We are asking for all of the names of the booth workers and are making name tags for all so they are able to enter/exit the exhibit hall as many times as they want. Call Denise Maxwell at 618 656-2591 to volunteer! Let us know what day you would like to work.

If anyone would like to volunteer to work at sessions within the Symposium, they may do so by calling Amy Madigan at 217 782-3715. Volunteers working within the Symposium for four hours may attend a session for free.

It's All About Horses (continued from page 3)

pages of history and confined to riding around in circles in arenas. There's no room to complain if you don't act.

Many of us may be able to volunteer some time towards working on the election campaigns for our local candidates, get out to functions and talk about horses with legislators or even invite them to go on a trail ride at your favorite area in their district. Most legislators have a golf outing to raise funds; I see ads for them in the papers all the time and I'd bet that some of you still have time to play a round or two. You know, I've yet to hear about a benefit trail ride and barbecue for a candidate - would that be a possibility?

Recently, HCI has joined forces with Illinois Trail Riders to produce and distribute a legislative questionnaire asking candidates for office about their understanding of the issues facing Illinois horse owners. The results of this effort will be published in the next edition of the HCI Courier and posted to the HCI website.

Please take some time and visit with your legislators on the phone or in person and let them know the issues you face, but make sure to remain constructive with your criticism and positive about the future. If you act defeated, you soon will be.

HCI Urges Caution, Mutual Respect At Illinois Equestrian Campsites

In response to a new state policy allowing non-horsemen to use equestrian campsites on an overflow basis, the Horsemen's Council of Illinois (HCI) is alerting horsemen to be especially cautious and is urging respect from both sides.

On June 20, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, through its Office of Land Management, put into effect a new policy for the camping section of its operations manual.

"Campgrounds designed for and built for equestrian users may be used as over-flow camping areas for non-equestrians ONLY when the primary site Campground(s) is (are) full AND the non-equestrian camper is ready to set up AND OCCUPY the camp site," the policy reads. "Non-equestrian campers should be located at a camp site as far away as possible from campers with horses, site stables, and away from any centralized manure depots," the policy continues. Non-equestrian campers may not "reserve" an equestrian campsite. Non-equestrian campers may not utilize camp sites over the Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends, over the 4th of July Holiday, or during any equestrian activity authorized by an Activity Permit, UNLESS the Site Superintendent is reasonably sure that the equestrian campground will remain underutilized during these time periods.

"We're concerned for the safety of both horse and non-horse owners," Bowman said, "especially for the children of non-horse-owning families who could run up to horses or fly kites or ride bikes, unwittingly putting themselves in harms way or causing injury to horses or riders."

BCHA Forest Service Trails Classification Lawsuit

As many of you are aware, Back Country Horsemen of America recently filed a lawsuit challenging the Forest Service's development of a new trail classification system (TCS) which will be implemented in a way that we believe will reduce our access to trails on the National Forests. BCHA's

concern was that the new trail classification system would make it extremely easy for Forest Service personnel in the field to downgrade trails, with no public input much less notice, and thus end up keeping stock off these trails. Despite exhaustive efforts to work with the Forest Service amicably to resolve our issues, the agency simply refused to insert safeguards into the new system and assured us that our predictions of reduced stock use were unjustified. We then reluctantly concluded that our only option to protect our interests was to bring the matter before a judge by filing a lawsuit.



Our fundamental argument to the judge was that developing a new trail classification system was something that the public had a right to be involved in and it should not be left solely to a handful of selected agency personnel who may not have our interests in mind.

In response to our suit, the Forest Service aggressively argued that the TCS was an internal agency matter that did not affect us. The agency misleadingly portrayed the TCS as merely taking "inventory" and that it involved administrative decisions on how best to apply the limited agency budget. In other words, it was none of our business. The problem was that the TCS would *also* serve as the active management guide for how trails would be maintained. Moreover, the TCS created a new trail class that was exclusively for hikers, and would allow field personnel to easily slip trails into this class, especially trails in wilderness areas, with no public involvement.

The judge agreed with us that we have a right under federal law to be involved in decisions such as the issue involving the trail system. This holding is a critical development in establishing our rights with respect to our trails. Being informed of and having a right to have input in an agency decision is critical to protecting our rights, and before this holding the Forest Service was able to operate behind a curtain. Given her holding, the judge ordered the Forest Service to comply with the law and involve the public in its decision-making process *before* it made a decision. The Forest Service has indicated to us that, in response to the judge's order, they intend to issue a notice of their intended action and provide for full public comment on the new trail classification system and its impacts.

The key now is to ensure that our concerns are heard and addressed. We have engaged lawyers to successfully enforce our rights to be involved (which the Forest Service wanted to deny us), and now it is our turn to make the most of our rights. To do this, it is very important that, through our formal comments and any other communications that we can make, the Forest Service officials who repeatedly tell us that they support stock use, truly understand our concerns. We will use this opportunity to fight for safeguards in the process that protect against secret agency action and unjustified limits being imposed on our use of our trails.

In addition, we as individuals must continually ensure that any re-classification of specific trails is done through a *public process*. The first step you can take is to find out the classes which are currently assigned to the trails in your area and inform your local District Rangers and Recreational Managers that you want to be told of any changes in those classifications. To ensure that you are kept informed, periodically

ask for the current trail classes so that the agency knows you are staying on top of the issue. In the event a trail in your area is downgraded, you must actively lobby your Forest and local Congressman or Senator and fight that decision.

For further questions, contact BCH of America Chair Merlyn Huso, hlazym@usfamily.net or Steve Didier, BCHA Legal Committee Chair, steve.didier@gmail.com.

Northern Illinois Horse Fest

The Northern Illinois Horse Fest is just around the corner - August 26 and 27, Belvidere, IL. What a great opportunity to catch some clinicians as you're in the riding season and possibly having some problems. John Lyons is the headliner this year. Clinicians Kathy Findley, Jimmy Driver, Michael Gonzalez, Tracy Porter, July Realy, Shawna Karrasch, Terry Tryon, Mary Vanderloop, Don Smith, K. C. LaPierre, Dan Grunewald, Dr. Tom Tweeten, Ben Eyster, and Dr. Dan Moore will also be in the spotlight.

It's also a good time to stop by vendors' booths and pick up those items that need replacing. And don't forget the breed demos, horse sale and competitions.

Visit www.illinoishorsefest.com for more information.

Illinois Trail Riders will have a booth next to the Horse Council of Illinois. Look for us and stop by to chat

If any of you would like to rest a while, give Jean Greenlee a call and she will reserve a seat for you in our booth for an hour or so - 815 292-3010.

Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie

Shared by Lori Kennedy

Midwin is located about 45 miles SW of Chicago on the north edge of Wilmington, IL. It was formerly the Joliet Arsenal Property. Ten years ago, the United States Army turned the property over to the U.S. Forest Service to manage. The size of the entire piece is somewhere between 19 and 20 thousand acres. Some of the property is still being "cleaned up" by the army and will be turned over for Forest Service use as soon as the army determines that it is safe to do so.

Some trails (approximately 6 miles) have been opened for equestrian use. They can be used without a guide during daylight hours. A large gravel parking lot is available for trucks and trailers.

Recently, more land on the very south boundary of the Midwin was turned over to the US Forestry Service. Since the local equestrian community has established a good working relationship and a great rapport with the managers of the Midwin, they decided to open up the new parcel for four guided trail rides to take place once a month during June, July, August, and September. The guided ride takes approximately one and one-half hours to complete. The June riders saw coyote, deer, turkey and hawks. The trail goes through grazing lands for cattle, calves and bulls.

Now, for the exciting part! On the July ride, the cattle let us know that we were invading their space. The lead rider, who was on a horse that was frightened of cattle, was actually chased by a cow. At the time of the incident she was out a bit ahead of the rest of the riders and the path that we were on would have physically split the herd in two. The thinking is that's what upset the cow, and in addition, the cow may have sensed the fear the horse was feeling. The horse and rider made a quick getaway, pulling off a front shoe in the process. At that point, we made the wise decision to skirt the herd, and

the rest of the ride was made without incident.

The rides do go out early with a meeting time of 8:00 am and a ride out time of 8:30 am. These times were thought by some to be designed to torture those who do not like to rise from slumber at very early hours. However, after the ride, it was agreed by all that the early start time was necessary due to the extreme temperatures.

The remaining dates for the guided rides are August 19th and September 16th. Please call Julie Sacco (Midwin Volunteer Coordinator) at 815 423-2148 to reserve your spot.

Recreational Trail Development Grants

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich has awarded more than \$700,000 in grants for recreational trail development projects in four Illinois communities, helping them meet the growing demand for improved trails and outdoor recreation facilities.

Funding for the grants is supported by the federal government's Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which provides up to 80 percent of the cost of the trail projects. Local sponsors provide the balance of the funding for the projects. RTP grants may be awarded for the acquisition of land from willing sellers, for trail construction and rehabilitation, restoration of areas damaged by unauthorized trail uses, construction of trail-related support facilities such as picnic areas, parking and restrooms and for educational programs. The program is administered in Illinois by the Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).

The projects receiving grant funds were recommended by the Illinois Greenways and Trails Council, which includes representatives of statewide motorized and non-motorized trail user organizations, statewide agency organizations, organizations with expertise in greenways and trails, and metro-area greenways and trails coalitions.

FY 2006 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant recipients/projects

Clark County Park District (Clark County), \$244,800 to further develop a 150-acre off-highway vehicle (OHV) area within the 2,600-acre Mill Creek Park near Marshall.

Kane County Forest Preserve District (Kane County), \$156,200 to develop at Pingree Forest Preserve approximately 3.5 miles of equestrian/hiking/cross-country skiing trails, two parking lots, two toilet facilities, a picnic shelter, informational kiosks, a 40-foot long boardwalk, a 40-foot long equestrian bridge, and a well and pump for equestrian use. Pingree Grove is located 4.5 miles west of Elgin on U.S. Route 20.

Kane County Forest Preserve District (Kane County), \$112,600 to develop at Burlington Forest Preserve approximately 4.5 miles of equestrian/hiking/cross-country skiing trails, two parking lots, two toilet facilities, a picnic shelter, informational kiosks, an 80-foot long boardwalk, and a well and pump for equestrian use.

City of Shelbyville (Shelby County), \$192,000 to continue development of a four-mile, multi-use trail. The finished trail will be 10-feet wide with a limestone surface with two-foot shoulders.

Communities interested in applying for the next round of recreational trails grants should contact the IDNR Division of Grant Administration, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL, 62702-1271, phone 217 782-7481. The annual application deadline for the RTP grants is March 1.