



# Illinois Trail Riders

*Dedicated To Keeping Horses On Our Trails*

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*May, June, July 2006*

## **National Trails Day – June 3**

The first Saturday in June is designated National Trails Day (NTD) in the United States. On that day every year more than a million hikers, bikers, equestrians, and others take part in thousands of events nationwide in celebration of America's trails. These events include new trail dedications, workshops, educational exhibits, equestrian and mountain bike rides, rollerblading, trail maintenance, and hikes on America's favorite trails. National Trails Day is organized nationwide by the American Hiking Society, a national nonprofit trail advocacy group based in Washington, DC. All events, however, are planned and carried out at the local level by conservation and recreation organizations, trail clubs, and land managing agencies. Originally established in 1993, NTD has grown to approximately 3,000 events across the country. This year's theme is "Experience Your Outdoors."

### **Goals of National Trails Day**

The objectives of National Trails Day not only include promoting public awareness of and appreciation for America's trails, but also encouraging cooperative efforts among different trail users, including hikers, bicyclists, equestrians, walkers, runners and anyone else who enjoys being on the trail.

### **The National Trails System**

In recent years, National Trails Day has started to make inroads into our national and state park systems, with more and more activities and programs associated with the event taking place each year. Many of these activities highlight America's national scenic and historic trails, some of which are thousands of miles in length. These trails serve as reminders of our rich national heritage before the advent of railroads and the highway system, at a time when people traveled overland on foot, on horseback, or by wagon.

### **How Can I Get Involved?**

Show your support for trails by hosting a National Trails Day event or joining an event already planned. You can register your event in the NTD database, or take a look at the American Hiking Society's list of events already planned. You might also want to contact your local riding clubs which may have events scheduled.

Equestrian Land Conservation Resource (ELCR) would like your group to join in a project for trail maintenance, clean-up, marking or other general work. You can register your project and the names of those who will provide the labor on ELCR's website. Complete information about Trail Trotters' Day (National Trails Day project) and the regional and national awards is available at [www.elcr.org](http://www.elcr.org) – click on Trail Trotters' Day link on the home page. You and your organization could even win a prize.

For further information on National Trails Day, contact the American Hiking Society at (301) 565-6704 or by e-mail at [ntd@americanhiking.org](mailto:ntd@americanhiking.org).

Regardless of your age, interests, skills, or physical abilities, come out and join together with others in your area on National Trails Day this year to help celebrate and promote America's trails.

Every ITR affiliate club should have a project in mind and be thinking of ways to celebrate National Trails Day while demonstrating their appreciation of the land's value.

## **Conservation Forum**

Shared by Sandy Poletti

On Saturday, April 8, 2006, The Illinois Association of Park Districts, Illinois Environmental Council, and Illinois Federation for Outdoor Resources held a one-day Conservation Forum at University of Illinois in Springfield.

I attended representing the Shawnee Trail Conservancy and Gary Hampsmire attended representing Illinois Trail Riders. We were two equestrians among approximately 100 other groups, from hunters, fishermen, trappers, field trialers, bicyclists, hikers, bird-watchers to park and nature preserve employees.

Attendees were divided into several groups to define issues affecting Illinois public land, in particular, those lands managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The final three issues decided upon by attendees were the funding of the IDNR, hiring a qualified IDNR director and reorganizing a new, independent Conservation Congress.

The final issues will be shared with candidates for statewide offices in hopes that these issues will be incorporated into political platforms. Public land users can then use this information for their selection process when they go to the polls in November 2006.

Judy Baar Topinka attended and gave a great campaign speech for her upcoming bid for governor. She told the attendees that that IDNR has "taken more than its share of cuts," reductions that hurt the agency's ability to be a "wise and capable steward for natural resources." She also stated "I will rebuild DNR to be a department that is respected throughout the country," and "And I will hire a natural resource professional to run the department."

I did have an opportunity to talk with Judy about equine trail issues and she did seem to be responsive to our needs and expressed interest in riding on some trails. I gave her Aide some trail information for her to review.

In response to Governor Blagovich's invitation, Sam Flood, Acting Director of the IDNR sent out a response on April 27, 2006 defending the tough decisions that had to be made as the state was recovering from one of the worst financial crisis in its history.

Marc Miller, Senior Policy Advisor from the Lt. Governors office, attended and spoke about conservation projects that his office has been involved with throughout the state.

The day ended with many attendees hoping that this will be the start of a new type of Conservation Congress and that changes will be made within the IDNR.

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## Newsbits

Linda Krutsinger, Editor of *Heartland Horseman*, has been promoting a new magazine. The first two issues have featured many trail stories. She and her staff hope to bring the horse community news of events that will shape our lives with our equine companions. Check it out at 1 800 642-3564. They will cover your calendar and events, advertise, and give readers information they can use and enjoy.

The April issue of *Illinois Country Living* ran a nice article on trail riding in their April issue. There was a great mention of our *Handbook of Trails, Camps, and Services* and website locations for those who search for new places to ride. This publication serves the communication needs of the locally owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives of Illinois.

The Spring 2006 Special issue of the *Trail Rider* "Trail Ride Guide" is a must read for everyone who wishes to see beyond the confines of trail riding in Illinois. There are dream destinations and advertisements for services and products that not only illustrate the economic impact the trail riding industry has across America, but will make your mouth water. Those who subscribe will be delighted with the range and diversity of articles geared to the trail riding horse owner. For more information go to [www.trailridermagazine.com](http://www.trailridermagazine.com).

**American Trails' National Trails Awards Program** - American Trails recognizes individuals and organizations that have developed and been involved in the creation and preservation of trails through a special awards program. Nomination forms are available at [www.americantrails.org](http://www.americantrails.org) and must be submitted by May 31, 2006.

**18<sup>th</sup> National Trails Symposium.** The Quad Cities will host the 18<sup>th</sup> National Trails Symposium October 19 – 22, 2006 at the River Center in downtown Davenport. The Symposium provides an opportunity for greenways and trail advocates, managers, planners, users, and outdoor product providers, as well as conservationists, private landowners, and tourism and business interests to come together to communicate and participate in an educational conference. The Symposium addresses both non-motorized and motorized trails issues. The National Trails Symposium is held every other year and is sponsored by American Trails - a national, nonprofit organization working on behalf of all trail interests, whose members want to create and protect America's network of interconnected trails. The Symposium will feature educational sessions, mobile workshops, exhibits, recreational opportunities and more. Symposium organizers plan to offer 64 concurrent sessions. The Symposium exhibit hall will feature over 125 exhibits representing trail-related businesses, agencies, and organizations from all over the country. The theme for the 2006 Symposium is "Trails for America: Every Where, Every Way, Every Day." Major sponsors are John Deere, US DOT, Federal Highway Administration, and Riverboat Development Authority. A registration booklet and online registration will be available in June, 2006. For information visit the American Trails website at [www.americantrails.org](http://www.americantrails.org) or contact Pam Gluck 530 547-2060.

(Newsbits continued on page 4)

## From the President

The 2006 Horse Fair went off without a hitch. We had our general meeting and then the board meeting. We sold over 100 books at the booth and talked to a lot of people about all kinds of concerns.

Equestrians were gathering information or expressing themselves. Our biggest challenge seemed to be educating and actively involving all of the trail riders who showed interest. Everyone has a role they can effectively fill at some level within this organization.

I was impressed with the number of people who came forward and asked how they could best be involved. My response is always that ITR can help provide the resources and point individuals in the direction of their interests and strengths, but self-motivation and leadership have to come from within each of us if we are to be effective.

After two years on this volunteer labor of love, I have found that I am not the "Lone Ranger" when it comes to trail riding issues. There are many of us doing work in our own way, space, time and location. We should be grateful to those who have donated money beyond their membership dues to help ITR accomplish the tasks at hand.

I feel great when I realize that clubs like Horse Promoters are working with their Forest Preserve District to hold events for National Trails Day or members are organizing clean up and work days at their local trails or that events like the "Equine Experience Wauponsee Glacial Trail Ride" and the "Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom Trail Ride" which raises funds to teach school children the importance of the equine industry are being held.

I am repeatedly honored to be a part of the communication network that will help each of us to get the job done. Toward that end ITR has tried to actively involve many more members in the burdensome task of attending meetings, speaking for equestrians and representing our interests, educating horse owners and non-horse owners alike.

The biggest issue that concerns us all is the Forest Service Plan for the four eastern watersheds of the Shawnee Forest. (See article on page \_\_\_) Everywhere in the United States the Forest Service is undergoing a planning process similar to what is happening in our southern area. No forest from Hawaii to Maine is immune. Back Country Horsemen of East Tennessee is going through similar experiences on Forest Plans in their area. Some forests planned long ago, others have yet to get the job done. The Forest Service Officials in the Mark Twain in Missouri are probably watching Illinois activities with a "Show Me" attitude.

Even when our opinions on various issues differ, we still should express our views in a united chorus that is louder than the opposition. I hope the equestrians can be effective and conscientious, without being combative or offensive.

Future generations will have the benefit of hindsight as they survey the survival and health of public lands and horse trails, while today we will struggle to find foresight and search for the correct measure of management that will accommodate us all.

Have a safe and happy summer on the trail.

Denise

## Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting and Election of Officers was held on Saturday, March 4, 2006, at the Seminar Hall at the Livestock Center at the Illinois State Fairgrounds (during Horse Fair) in Springfield, IL.

Kelly Bland, Judy Griffith, and Gary Hampsmire were elected as new directors. Meet our new directors on page 5.

Re-elected as a directors for an additional term are Denise Maxwell, Jean Greenlee, Lori Kennedy, and Peter Veit.

Continuing their terms as directors are Jerry "Buckwheat" McKinley, Gloria Heggy and Sandy Poletti.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Lyle Behl, Larry Frye and Sandy Wilson, who will not be returning to office, for the contributions they have made to our organization. We know they will still be involved in Keeping Horses On Our Trails.

Our slate of officers for this year are: Denise Maxwell, President; Jean Greenlee, Vice President; Lori Kennedy, Treasurer; and Sandy Poletti, Secretary.

On behalf of the organization, THANK YOU to all our officers and directors for sharing your time, knowledge, and commitment to equestrian trails in Illinois.

Jim Fraley with the Illinois Farm Bureau was the guest speaker at the meeting. Jim is Head of the Equine Round Table and Livestock Program Director. He spoke about current projects such as gathering information relating to horses for the identification of a livestock facilities project. He urged equine owners to register their farms with the Farm Bureau. He spoke about the Farm Bureau's involvement in other issues:

- Supporting equestrians by lobbying legislators on open access to trails issues and others.
- publication of *Horse* which was distributed to 65,000 students last year.
- sponsorship of Ag Round Table which meets twice a year. The next Round Table meeting will be on June 13<sup>th</sup> and ITR will be invited and should bring the top two or three priorities to the table.
- Farm Bureau Trail Ride at 34 Ranch.
- Tour of the Cavel plant to gain first-hand knowledge on horse slaughter issues.

ITR Directors spoke on various matters:

Peter Veit is working on a database of trail riding clubs to be used when quick response to trails issues is needed. He spoke about how previous quick response from equestrians had helped prevent trail closures in Lasalle County. He also pointed out that a one-mile equestrian trail takes less than ½ acre of land and a 100-mile trail covers less than 50 acres.

Caroline Cushman spoke of her involvement with the Shawnee trails designations and the Right To Ride Bill.

Sandy Poletti spoke of her involvement with the Shawnee National Forest/Crab Orchard Refuge Trails and Illinois Federation of Outdoor Resources (IFOR).

Jean Greenlee spoke about the Greenways Council meetings she and Peter Veit attend and their efforts to get across to land managers that horses need to have access to trails and greenways along with the other user groups.

As usual at the Horse Fair, business at the booth was brisk. We met so many people and talked and talked and talked trails, trail issues and horses. What a wonderful time!

The Horse Fair was a huge success, and, of course, the shopping was adventurous with many new items to discover.

Hope to see you there next year!

## Newsbits (continued from page 2)

A new restroom will be built at the **Pere Marquette Equestrian Parking lot**. It is being funded by RTP funds. Construction on the vault pit privy should begin in mid-summer of 2006. The equestrian trails are also getting RTP funding for maintenance. These funds should be released this summer. Please remember to thank park superintendent Dick Niemeyer and his staff for their support of the equestrian trails.

**The Crab Orchard EIS/CCP** is due out later this summer or early fall 2006. We are expecting the River to River Trail to continue going through Panther's Den and into Crab Orchard property as it is now routed. The River to River *may be* the only designated equestrian trail (4.7 miles) within the entire 43,000 acre Refuge. They apparently would like to close all user created trails rather than designate any of them as horse trails.

**Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom** will hold its annual Trail Ride September 29 – October 1 at 34 Ranch, Herod, IL. Funds raised are for charity and benefit the Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom program which teaches Illinois school children the importance of the equine industry and modern agriculture. For questions regarding registration fees, donations, and other general questions, contact the IAA Foundation at 309 557-2230 or [www.iaafoundation.org](http://www.iaafoundation.org).

**Campground Hosts Needed.** Did you ever consider this? Do the horse sites statewide have hosts with horses? Campground hosts are still needed at a number of locations throughout Illinois for the 2006 camping season. Campground hosts assist campers, answer questions, collect camping fees, encourage compliance with park regulations, and report emergencies. Applicants must be at least 21 years old, have a valid driver's license and agree to work 35 hours per week (usually over a five-day period) for a minimum of four weeks. Weekend and holiday duty is mandatory. Compensation is \$1 per day for the days worked. Campground hosts must provide their own camping equipment. Contact the Campground Host Program at 217 785-8129 or download an application though the IDNR web site by clicking on the Camping link on the home page.

**The Old People's Riding Club**, a national organization, is being spotlighted in an article. The only chapter in Illinois is the Stayin' Alive Chapter in Central Illinois. They are active in trail riding and hope to be featured in an AARP article to be written. See [www.equestrianmagazine.com](http://www.equestrianmagazine.com) for more information.

**A Route 66 Trail Council** is being formed. The Council will be comprised of regional representatives from the southern, central, and northern regions, and at-large statewide representatives. There will be three or four people from each region named. The responsibilities will be to attend the Council meetings, probably four per year, and represent all of the four counties within the southern region. The new Route 66 Trail User Guide can be viewed and printed out from <http://www.bikelib.org/route66/index.htm>.

Mark the date. September 22nd will be the bi-annual **Trails and Greenway Conference** for the northern half of the state. This year it will be held at Illinois Valley Community College, Oglesby (this is close to Starved Rock State Park). For the first time in the history of this meeting, the equestrians will have a speaker for all the park and recreational people to listen to on how to accommodate and include equestrians

within their trail systems.

**Forest Preserve District of Cook County.** Their "Live Healthy, Discover Nature" campaign will hold a summer lunchtime event on Daley Plaza to raise awareness of the many opportunities the forest preserves have to offer people who both live and work in the city, as well as to stress the need for individuals to engage in active and healthy lifestyles. The event will be held on Tuesday, July 18th, 2006, from noon to 2:00 p.m. at Daley Plaza. **This would be a great opportunity for lesson stables, horse camps and trail riding facilities/clubs and groups to educate the urban majority on the values of the horse industry and the opportunities that trail riding provides for living healthy and discovering nature. If your group or business wants to participate call Nadine Vidoni, Illinois Forest Preserve, 312 573-5496. Illinois Trail Riders would be glad to provide educational materials to enhance your efforts at events like this.**

## Recreational Liability Legislation Background

Shared by Jeremy Hojnicki, Policy Coordinator, Openlands

Some time in the last eight months, your organization joined 76 others in supporting legislation which will reinstate liability protection for landowners who open their land to the public for recreation. Openlands and a coalition of other conservation organizations, (Illinois Environmental Council, People for Parks and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Illinois Association of Park Districts, Sierra Club and others), are continuing to work on this legislative issue.

Some Background: In 2005, a new law amended the Recreational Use of Land and Water Areas Act to provide additional protection to property owners who make their land available for hunting and recreational shooting activities. However, it also eliminated protection to landowners who open their property to the public for all other recreational activities, such as fishing, hiking, biking, and bird watching. With the changes to the Act, many landowners lost a critical layer of protection which may cause them to severely restrict or eliminate access to their sites.

Our Strategy: To successfully restore the liability protection, we are negotiating with all interested parties. With the support of the sponsor of the legislation, Senator John Cullerton (D-6, Chicago), we are meeting with the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association to reach an agreement. Senator Cullerton has filed a shell bill (SB 2886) which is acting as a place holder while these negotiations take place.

We are also tracking the other House and Senate bills that have been introduced this year which address recreational liability. Some of these bills provide landowner liability protection only for a short list of specific recreational activities. We believe that the Act should be returned to its original purpose and apply to all forms of outdoor recreational activities. An Act that applies to all recreational activities has the best chance of addressing our goal to provide liability coverage to landowners who open their land to the public for recreation.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of this issue. We hope in the near future to ask you to take action to assure this important protection is reinstated. If you have any questions, please contact Lenore Beyer-Clow at 312 863-6264, [lbey-clow@openlands.org](mailto:lbey-clow@openlands.org) or Jeremy Hojnicki at 312 863-6265 or [jhojnicki@openlands.org](mailto:jhojnicki@openlands.org).

## **Meet Gary, Judy, and Kelly – Our New Directors**

### **Shared by Gary Hampsmire**

I was raised in Barry, IL (Pike County) but lived in Springfield most of my adult life. I recently retired from my job as an Information Systems Specialist with the Illinois Department of Transportation.

While I was growing up, my family raised and rode American Saddle Horses, but I stopped riding for over 40 years after leaving home.

Two years ago I was reintroduced to trail riding and remembered how much I loved being outside with horses. I purchased a Spotted Tennessee Walking Horse gelding and I've been riding every chance I can get.

I am very pleased to be on the ITR Board and will do all I can to help ITR preserve and protect our horse trails. I look forward to working with you and the ITR Board.

### **Shared by Judy Griffith**

My husband, Danny, and I have lived in Girard, IL for the past 18 years. I lived in Alton prior to that. I am a retired RN but still work as needed at St. John's Hospital in Springfield. My husband and I have spotted saddle horses and fox trotters now, and we ride the mid-Illinois state parks, Missouri, and Shawnee. We started writing letters in 1994 trying to save the Shawnee trails and years before that for Marquette trails in Grafton. We would like to see all trails preserved and maintained for us and future generations. More personally, I would like to see present trails open to equestrians year 'round or at least January through October rather than close for hunting half the year. Besides ITR, we belong to Macoupin County, EZ Riders, Prairie Trail Riders, Shawnee Trail Conservancy, Missouri Fox Trotting Horse Breed Association, Spotted Saddle Horse Breeders Association, and Equine Ministries.

### **Shared by Kelly Bland**

At 47 years young my dream of owning a horse has finally come to be. I now own a 20-year-old registered Tennessee Walker. For the past four years I have been actively researching and learning the how to's of horsemanship and ownership and sadly also have learned about politics.

My story began by attending the Tourism 101 Summit put on by Representative Bob Flider of the 101<sup>st</sup> District held at Eagle Creek State Park in Shelby County Illinois in 2002. There were over 100 people from around Lake Shelbyville in

attendance including Lt. Governor Pat Quinn. I raised my hand to "help" build a bigger, better financial agro-tourism request only to find politics were the key to bidding on State Concessions.

In April 2005, I received several calls about the horse camp closing at Wolf Creek State Park in Shelby County wanting to know what if anything could be done. I requested a steering committee of seven people from this area to decide and vote on whether we should pursue an effort to get the camp re-opened taking a chance that the camp could be possibly closed forever because of our intentions. The vote was unanimously "yes." I had petitions prepared ahead of time with photocopies of the "closed barricades" and the seven of us had over 3,000 signatures within four days. I also had copies made of state contact names that everyone took, copied, shared, called, and wrote. In only four days I got a call saying the camp will open the following Friday. The main thing I learned from this "episode" was HORSE PEOPLE HAVE A VOICE. The equine market is bringing over a billion dollars into the State of Illinois and that, my friends, is power. Another thing learned was it takes only one person to step up to the plate with a plan to make things "happen." That one person could be "you" next time.

In about May or June I received a call from a gal by the name of Denise Maxwell asking me to share my story with a group called Illinois Trail Riders. She asked a lot of questions including would I like to join the association. I did!

As of last week I sold my golf business of 14 years so that I can move on to other things, mainly the "horse." Ironically, I sold the company to someone who left the horse business for the golf business and who received his college education through rodeo scholarships.

Now here I am a new member on the Board of ITR (thanks to Carolyn Cushman). I am actively serving many volunteer positions in my local community which include: President of St. Isadore Alter Society, President of the Moultrie County Board of Health, member Psi Iota Sorority, Precinct Committeeman of Marrowbone 1 Moultrie County, member MCRCC, Vice President MCRW, member I.T.W.H.A. I am married to Charles Bland, mother of four - ages 22-30 - and soon to be a grandma! I look forward to serving on the ITR Board and working with many talented equine people. My intent is genuine and sincere and I hope to help in some small way.

## ***Illinois Trail Riders Can Help Educate and Encourage Their Community Leaders***

The Southern Illinois Greenways & Trails Workshop planning committee has been busy drafting a program for the September 15 workshop at Rend Lake.

The intended audience for the workshop will be decision-makers and policy-makers; those who can initiate and coordinate trail projects. People who use trails, like equestrians and cyclists, are strong advocates and very important in making projects happen, but this conference will be about developing trails and bringing the benefits of trails to Southern Illinois. Park District and City Personnel, planners, politicians, benefactors and motivators need to hear the message about trails and get to work.

The workshop's goals will include telling people how trails accommodate everyone (even equestrians), how to organize and take the appropriate steps, create awareness, a vision,

cooperation, and create a forum for decisions so that trail projects can be started and pursued is the other major goal.

Mr. Jim Lynch ACOE Rend Lake Manger will be the Welcoming Speaker. There will be a panel discussion on "Heels, Hooves, and Spokes: Developing Trails for Everyone" with land managers representing areas where this is successfully done. Topics such as "Trail Signage: The Nuts and Bolts, Good, Bad and Ugly" and "Putting the Trail Process Pieces Together" and "Trails: More Benefits Than Just Recreation" and "The Visioning Process: Trails for Southern Illinois Communities" are among those being considered.

The Keynote speaker will be Glenn Poshard, President, Southern Illinois University and former U.S. Congressman. Opportunities for a field trip on a multi-use trail will be (continued on page 6)

available, as will displays or table opportunities for those sharing information. The food arrangements at the resort lodge are sure to be excellent.

The education and the motivation of community leaders to create functional multi-use trails that include equestrians is one of Illinois Trail Riders foremost goals. We all need suitable trails close to home, so that we can conserve the gasoline our trucks and trailers consume for those great vacation highlights far away.

**Central and Southern Illinois Trail Riders are encouraged to be sure that the decision-makers and policy makers from their communities have a paid registration and a free ride to this workshop gathering. Save the date!**

### ***A Record Of Decision Regarding The Final Environmental Impact Statement Of The "Trails Designation Project, Phase 1" Was Released By The Shawnee National Forest Supervisor On February 8, 2006***

Shared by Carolyn Cushman and Denise Maxwell

Perhaps you had a chance to stop in at the Shawnee Trails Conservancy booth at the 2006 Horse Fair. If you did, you may have heard about the Trails Designation Project and the Forest Plan. This Trails Designation Project affects the four watersheds of Little Lusk, Bay Creek, Big Grand Pierre, and Eagle Creek in the Shawnee National Forest by restricting horses to designated trails only. This project has been in the planning stages for the last couple of years generating an ongoing concern to residents and equestrian visitors.

This Final Environmental Impact Statement ("FEIS") amends the 1992 Land Resource Management Plan for the Shawnee National Forest. The old Plan had a very generous trail system proposed. Over the years, the United States Forest Service didn't implement the trails in the old Plan. Because the USFS failed to implement the planned trails, over the next 14 years recreationists continued to use their own favorite trails (user created trails). Natural Areas were closed later in the 90's without the planned trails being incorporated into them. The overall history is long, tangled and complicated according to the individuals who have been involved throughout the duration.

During the ITR 2005 general meeting, we heard about "Judge Gilbert's decision" following a lawsuit where equestrians, environmentalists, and Forest Service were involved. You may have sent your personal comments after the draft Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") was released last fall. In February of 2006 many of us received either a CD or a hard copy of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. In March, some of us actually read the document and a few studied the documents very thoroughly. In April, information or opinions regarding our many concerns were shared freely by e-mail among the equestrians. People who commented on the draft EIS were able to appeal the final EIS. The final record of decision was quite a shock to the horse community and generated 42 appeals, which were submitted to the Region 9 Forester, Randy Moore, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, prior to April 20<sup>th</sup>. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> a meeting and teleconference was held.

By law, the Shawnee Forest Supervisor, Allen Nicholas, had to respond to the appellants within 15 days. His response was to hold a meeting/teleconference at the Supervisor's

Office in Harrisburg, IL on Wednesday, May 3, 2006. He hoped to resolve any of the appeals issues through discussion during that time. Allen started by offering to meet with people privately or by phone if they had specific or time consuming issues so that he could address their concerns personally. There was an attempt to address specific concerns during the two and one-half hour discussion that followed. Any issues that cannot be resolved locally will then be reviewed by Randy Moore, Appeals Deciding Officer, within 45 days to see if any policy regulations or laws are being violated. The project (amended plan) could then be implemented as early as June 20, 2006. This Final EIS will be part of the New Forest Plan due out in May of 2006.

There were many appeal points discussed during the May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, but unfortunately none seemed resolved. The biggest question is how and when current trails that are not going to be designated are going to be closed or eliminated. It is a big concern among local riders that the Forest Service is going to close existing trails before the designation, construction, and hardening of the proposed trails are in place. Mr. Nicholas did say he had money allotted, along with contractors ready to get to work on the trails, and the processes of opening the preferred trails and closing the user created trails could be concurrent with each other.

Several appellants felt that the entire planning process with its rules and regulations is illegal. Some were outspoken against the process, the USFS, the science and reasoning of the decisions, the individuals, and the proposed changes to the way the Shawnee Forest is managed. Members of the River to River Trail Society questioned the possible rerouting of this historic and much used route that crosses southern Illinois. Someone expressed concern about the limited federal budget and costs of funding forest trail improvements or maintenance. Specifics were given about the proposed budget for this year's work.

Many landowners with property adjoining the Shawnee may be required to apply for, and pay a fee for a special use permit in order to create a trail segment that would connect their private property to the designated trail system. Cross-country riding on user created trails would not be generally permitted. Someone questioned the enforcement of such a policy. More trailer accessible trailheads and limited stock containment areas at specific scenic areas could be created.

Owners of private horse campgrounds and outfitter guides were in attendance, as were many members of Shawnee trail Conservancy and Illinois Trail Riders.

Since the record of decision was issued, more up to date, scientific information regarding the Least Brook Lamprey (a spawning fish species) has been released. This could cause a supplement to the plan by eliminating the original creek crossing closures from March 15 to May 15, or relocate the crossings.



We haven't heard the last of the Trails Designation Project. As more information becomes available and the process proceeds, we will be sure to keep our members up to date.

Meanwhile, take a great vacation and visit the Shawnee National Forest.

## **OVETS 2006**

Shared by Judy Griffith

The 2006 Ohio Valley Equestrian Trails Symposium was held April 27-30 at Wrangler's Campground, Land Between the Lakes, Cadiz, Kentucky, in a collaborative effort of the Kentucky Horse Council, the Indiana Horse Council, and the Michigan Horse Council. Land Between the Lakes ("LBL") is a 170,000-acre National Recreation Area which offers almost the entire range of recreational activities.

There were three participants, including presenters, mostly from Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Tennessee, and Ohio. There were three from Illinois, but the other two were presenters. People were excited when they found an Illinois person there, but appeared somewhat disappointed when they discovered I was from Illinois Trail Riders and not the Illinois Horse Council. They would like to see the Illinois Horse Council participate as well as more Illinois equestrians.

The sessions featured experts in trail construction, maintenance, and volunteering to educate trail riders on issues surrounding our future on the trails. Most of these people are trail symposium enthusiasts and attend many seminars on trails throughout the U.S.

Jerry Fruth of Indiana and of the American Endurance Riders reported that there are Trail Master Training classes in West Virginia, New Mexico, and Buffalo River in Arkansas to promote trail education and a working relationship with land managers. Eventually, there will be five to seven of these classes around the U.S. with recertification every three years and continuing education. Mike Riter was a name mentioned often during the weekend. He is a leader in teaching certification trail construction. He will be at Brown County in Indiana June 15-18 and at Kickapoo Valley Reserve in Wisconsin May 10-13.

### **Thursday**

The first speaker on Thursday evening was Dr. Greg Jones of the Kentucky Horse Council on "Building Relationships With Land Managers." He stated we first need to figure out who owns the land, identify them, their mission or goal, and who is in charge and what their interests are. While a few places might welcome riders to help keep trails open, others seem to have a deep bias against horse use. People over 55 generally tend to be more horse friendly. Ask: "we know you want this, what can we do to help you?" It is a tendency for another user group to come on aboard to share a horse trail, and after several years, they want the horses out. An equestrian trail was saved at Mammoth Cave in Kentucky recently by equestrians joining forces against bikers who wanted them off the trail that had been used by horses for decades. It was emphasized that petitions do not count for much at all, but 12 or more handwritten letters from one district will prompt interest. Each of us is somebody and we do know something.

Join a formal organization, work for training, agree to do small things, show up when you say you will, comment on issues, get your name out there and get credibility, build a relationship with them. Be willing to learn and adapt. It is not generally constructive to go over someone's head, find a way to work with the "little" people. Horse people need to become politically involved and emphasize the importance of the horse community to the state and national economy.

Horses are the best transportation to the scenic back country. Trail riders are predominantly over 40, include a lot of older women, and riders with serious physical infirmities

such as cardiovascular and pulmonary issues who cannot get to the forest without the horse. By denying us access to scenic sites, these people are discriminated against and denied the most beautiful sites of the forest..

The next speaker was Candace Bourne who moved to Vienna, IL from Alabama (where she was involved in trail construction) several months ago who spoke on educating elementary school children about equine trail riding. In collaboration with students of communication and journalism at Auburn University in Alabama, she has set up a non-profit program called "Trails For The Future" which she has presented with a five minute video to 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> graders to teach them all about trails "while they're young" and how to take care of them "right." The program's logo is "Tomorrow's Trails are at your Feet!" She now wishes to present her program to Illinois schools.

### **Friday**

On Friday evening, there was discussion "From the Land Management Point of View" by Les Wadzinski, Brian Bourne, Bob Monroe, and Randall Mitchell, all of whom work for the USDA. Les Wadzinski is the Recreational Program Manager for the Hoosier National Forest in Indiana. He reported that only 4% of the land base is publicly owned in Indiana and that everybody wants their part of its use: hikers, mountain bikers, OHVers, hunters, fishermen, mushroom hunters, nature watchers, and equestrians.

The FS manual has gone from 42 pages in 1905 to hundreds of pages now, and there are lots of regulations to deal with: National Environmental Policy Act, heritage & archaeological concerns, cave resource act, endangered species, safety, budget, staffing, equipment, timber, wildlife, plants, fisheries, roads, soils, and the philosophy of the particular manager in the particular locale. And of course, everything always costs more on federal lands than in the private sector.

To facilitate our trail projects, we can stay involved and establish oneself as a value and volunteer in various projects. He said the FS does try, but there is "not much wiggle room".

### **Discussion on Shawnee**

Brian Bourne and Bob Monroe work for the FS at Shawnee in Illinois. Brian has ridden horses most of his life and sees things from both sides.

He mentioned the Environmental Impact Statement on the four watersheds and the Record of Decision saying there always seems a loss involved. Jerry Fruth was upset that the public opinions were not included in the Statement manual.

Brian and Bob claimed that the FS will have to reroute better trails, sign them, and develop a map before closing trails and before writing citations. They report \$380,000 is allocated and crew and equipment are ready to begin work on the trails momentarily - as long as the FS is not held up in court.

Brian is the expert in trail construction and says the vast majority of the Shawnee trails should be rerouted, admitting to 75%, but adds that will not happen. They say that the multiple spiderwebbing trails and trail braiding that have been created by users "have to be managed now that they're there" and they plan three or four good trails in an area instead of 20 that go to the same place.

They presented some slides of trail construction, including the Lusk Creek crossing ordered by Judge Gilbert and assisted by the Shawnee Chapter of Backwoods Horsemen where everything had to be done by hand. The whole Lusk

Creek is a protected area and unfortunately, there are “nine horse camps around it” (I didn’t know there are nine, I count five.) Bob says he doesn’t know for sure if the Backwoods Horsemen will assist the FS anymore with the trail construction, but he says volunteers are important!

Randall Mitchell is from the LBL Forest Service and says his area is unique where other FS issues are not particularly applicable. Its primary purpose is recreation and there is not much wilderness. The trail system is not designed but is rather road beds developed into trails by usership, mostly two-track trails. He says those who want to work with managers need to be organized, focused and have a plan. He, as a manager, needs to know what’s going on, and if the volunteers don’t show up, he’s done. He said that “multiuse” is the wave of the future and that unmanaged recreation must end, giving way to designated trails.” Noting that a lot of people don’t want to be told what to do and that some people will go “anywhere,” he suggested that voluntary compliance is important through peer pressure and education because “riders can manage riders more effectively” than the FS or a citation can.

A fellow named Ron Bicknel, who is the head of a county agency in Dayton, Ohio, took over badly maintained equestrian trails which he believed he would have to close, but one woman helped out as a volunteer, clearing trails. Finally, he went to help her and they developed a working relationship. Now, they have well maintained trails. He also advertised for volunteers to patrol the trails for maintenance and compliance, and this has worked well. He has a total of 35 volunteers.

### Saturday

Saturday afternoon, Yvette Rollins, Stacy Riggs, and Greg Hersberger, all of Indiana, had planned to take us onto a trail to perform some real, hands-on trail maintenance. However, due to strong winds and impending rain, they held a simulated demonstration in the sand on watershed erosion and contamination and rolling grade dip.

That evening, Dave Howell of Indiana, who serves with the State Horse Council Advisory Committee, spoke about disaster preparedness and the importance of having a plan. “Plan for worst case scenario and hope for best.” Plan ahead for a trailer accident, a horse injury, a burning barn. Have halters and lead ropes at hand, first aid kit for horse and human. It is well to have a form of horse ID. He said there are presently 1,700 horses not identified in Mississippi after Katrina. It is important to carry waterproof matches and a small thermal blanket on your person to protect against hypothermia in case the horse gets away and leaves you on the trail. And of course a helmet to protect from the devastating head injury. Dr. Jones also mentioned that if the trailer has to be cut apart (DO NOT cut a small hole for the horse to try to poke through) to extricate the horse, to plug his ears with nylon stocking stuffed with cotton and a cotton rope to pull him with. If you are called as a volunteer, take these with you and wear a helmet. The volunteer should be the last person to enter the trailer. Dave also said that when a horse is led from a burning barn, he will re-enter the barn, so do not turn him loose. However, horses are safer if loose when a tornado or a flood is approaching.

Dave Howell went on to talk about the American Horse Council as a federal lobbying group for the horse industry. The State Horse Council Advisory Group discusses and reports to the American Horse Council who monitors many bills. He said the Slaughter Bill needs to have the phrase “for

any other cause” removed because it confuses and hangs the bill up. He also reports that the Right to Ride Bill is stuck in committee. The phrase, “to include the horse,” has been added to the transportation bill and we should now be entitled to TEA money.

Another LBL ranger, Jamie Thweat, spoke about obtaining a special-use permit or authorization with the Forest Service. A Special Use Permit is necessary “if you will need to occupy, use, or build on NFS land for personal or business purposes, whether the duration is temporary or long term; if there is a fee charged or if income is derived from the use; or if the activity involves 75 or more participants or spectators.” The application needs to be submitted as much as six or eight months in advance in order for it to go through all the necessary channels. The FS will compare the application to their standard Special Use Permit screening checklist which may take two weeks, depending on their existing work load. It then goes to the Department Head who requires at least one week to look it over, and then it must be approved by the leadership team. After this it goes to the Schedule of Proposed Actions list (SOPA) to inform the general public of the proposed event to take place on NFS land. It remains on SOPA 30 days for public comment and then a 45-day appeal period.

A negative feedback from the SOPA could stop the event. If the land will be disturbed such as in a cross-country ride, the event might require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment (EA). These are extensive processes and could slow the permit process for months.

After all this, the final application must be signed by the applicant, and then the Area Supervisor requires at least two weeks prior to the event for his approval and signature. If the applicant decides that something must be added, changed, or deleted to the application, the whole process must start over. OVETS had a SUP for this seminar, and the farrier, riding stable, and restaurant all need SUPs for being at LBL.

Lastly, Anne O’Dell of New York, who is chair of the N.Y. Trail Council presented a humorous talk about trail advocacy - “at the level which is comfortable to them” - trail advocacy being “volunteers working for trails.” She advises to find someone you don’t know and recruit them.

Yvette Rollins cautions to be aware of events across the nation as things tend to trickle across the nation to us. She says that horses are not as well represented as other disciplines at the National Trails Symposium because the other disciplines are highly organized and networked. SETC 2006 is in Roanoke, VA August 3-5, 2006, and it is planned for Knoxville, TN in 2007, July 19-21. OVETS 2007 will be June 22-25, 2007, at the Midwest Trail Ride in Norman, Indiana, and plans are already underway for topics and outline.

