

Virginia Horse Council

Committee: VHC Trails Committee

Report by: Sally Aungier

Date Submitted: 10/24/2008

Committee Members:

Sally Aungier, Chair

Karen Corl

Anne Wohlleben

Amanda Bourne

Melody Scalley

Nancy Watson

Sue Wakefield

Deborah Sensabaugh

Carol Dawson

Committee Charge:

- To act as an advisory group for trail issues throughout the state and provide input into the state and community planning processes.
- To serve as liaisons between the equestrian community and land managers to educate users, stimulate volunteerism, and improve trail access.

Objectives:

- Maintain a Trails Committee comprised of representatives for geographical areas of the state that will work to ensure trails access for horses is improved and developed in our public facilities.
- The Committee works with the public facilities, equestrian clubs and individuals to promote trail development.
- The Committee endeavors to foster a spirit of volunteerism by encouraging its peers to support their local trails both physically and financially.
- Committee members become familiar with regional plans in Virginia that may impact trails development and other equestrian resources.

Summary of Activities:

- Developed Equestrian Trails Tourism Survey with Carol Kline, Assistant Professor, Hospitality and Tourism Administration, North Carolina Central University. The study was conducted for the Virginia Horse Council to gather information and impressions on the state of trail rides within the state of Virginia. We all know that the equine industry is a large economic force in the state and in the nation. Trail riding and the travel associated with it is one facet of that industry.

Participants were asked to help us understand the current state of trails in Virginia by telling us what is available in their county, their travel habits, and providing other information that will assist us in growing equestrian tourism in an economically, socially and environmentally lasting way. Responses are being kept completely confidential and reported in aggregate form only.

The information obtained from these questions will be used to gain a local and statewide understanding of the existing resources used for trail riding and the

issues surrounding the expansion of this exciting industry niche. Additionally, the information gathered in this survey will help secure funding for the development of supporting programs.

- 822 Responses received.
- Preliminary data was presented by Dr. Kline during the Virginia Governor's Conference on Trails and Greenways held in Richmond October 7-9, 2008. The session was well attended and the Q&A session was enthusiastic. Dr. Kline anticipates having the full analysis of the data completed in early 2009.
- Sought community input on the new equestrian campground at Occoneechee State Park and summarized feedback for the State Parks.
- Co-hosted a VHC trail ride at Ingleside Plantation on September 28, 2008.
- Sally Aungier continues as a member of the Virginia Outdoors Plan Greens and Trails Task Force where she is focusing on the development of the James River Heritage Trail.
- Sally Aungier was selected as a winner of the American Trails national Trails Advocacy Award, to be formally announced during the Annual Symposium in Little Rock on November 15-18. The nomination was submitted by staff at Virginia DCR.

Planned Activities:

- Deb Sensabaugh is holding a Leave No Trace Trainers Weekend, Oct. 30-Nov. 2 at Lost Creek Farm in Buena Vista, VA.
- Two meetings on National Forest planning are being held this month. Riders are being asked to make an effort to attend.
 - George Washington National Forest Planning Workshop/meeting--
Subject: Road and Trail Access.
Wednesday, Oct. 29, 7 to 9 p.m. at the National Guard Armory, 451 Hoover Rd. in Woodstock, VA
 - Thursday, Oct. 30, 7 to 9 p.m. at Rockbridge County High School, 143 Greenhouse Road, Lexington, VA.

For more info on the Forest Plan Revision Workshops visit: www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj or call the FS at 540-265-5100

- Goal to complete new edition of trails guide by May 2009.

Issues for Consideration:

- Should the VHC continue to host trail rides in 2009 and if so should more formal guidelines be developed so that we have consistency from event to event? This will be necessary if we continue to seek out co-hosts.
- How can the success of these events be measured?
 - Increased membership
 - Increased awareness of VHC
 - Financially beneficial