



ONE COMMON BOND—THE HORSE; ONE COMMON VOICE— MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL

MHC UPDATE

mdhorsecouncil.org

MHC TRAIL BITS

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DNR's Wildlife Management Areas

What is a Wildlife Management Area? The mission of the WMA system is "to conserve and enhance diverse wildlife populations and associated habitats while providing for public enjoyment of the State's wildlife resources." There are 37 WMA in the DNR system (see list), and DNR has made it clear that WMAs are not parks.

Who owns and manages them? WMAs are state-owned lands. They are managed by the Wildlife and Heritage Service (an agency within the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.) The DNR can acquire, by many means, lands "suitable to protect, propagate, or manage wildlife or for hunting purposes."

Do our taxes buy these lands? No. Funding to acquire these lands comes from a federal excise tax on ammunition and guns. The proceeds of this tax are dedicated to state wildlife conservation efforts, including the acquisition of public lands such as WMAs.

Don't I have a right to ride on these lands because don't our taxes pay for the management and maintenance of these lands? No. Once purchased, the land operations and management costs are funded in part by the excise tax noted above. The other source of funds is the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund, which receives 95% of its revenues from the sale of Maryland hunting licenses.

This doesn't seem fair. Trail riders need to remember that one the goals of the WMA system is to provide public enjoyment of wildlife through hunting and other "wildlife-dependent recreation" In a directive from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, there is guidance offered as to what types of recreational activities are allowed on lands managed with Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program funds. Director's Order No. 152, Section 5 states: "[the] agency is prohibited from allowing recreational activities...that would interfere with the purpose for which the land was acquired or developed...Sport fish or wildlife dependent activities (e.g. hunting, fishing, wildlife photography, or viewing platforms) would be associated with the purpose for which the land was acquired. Recreational activities and related facilities that are not sport fish or wildlife dependent (e.g. bicycling, swimming, rock

Trail Riding in DNR's Wildlife Management Areas is a privilege, not a right.

climbing, kennels, stables, horseback riding, weddings) may be allowed if it is shown they will not interfere with the purpose for which the land was acquired or developed, or is managed."

"Wildlife dependent" recreation refers to activities where interaction with wildlife is the primary goal, such as hunting, bird watching, fox chasing or wildlife photography.

"Wildlife enhanced" recreation, such as horseback riding, refers to those activities where the presence of wildlife enhances the recreational experience, but is not the primary goal of the experience. These activities do not have to be permitted within the stated goals of the WMA.

WMA budgets are typically small, since their primary function is to provide wildlife habitat; they don't have money for capital improvements for such marking and maintaining trails and creating maps to help people stay on those trails. Sensitive wild lands can therefore be negatively impacted by riders who are thoughtless about remaining on trails.

There have been increasing confrontations between hunters and riders. The hunters have, in fact, real justification for having the right to be in WMAs, since funding comes from the taxes they pay for hunting gear as well as the purchase of hunting licenses. The DNR makes it clear that a WMA is not a state park and has no obligation to maintain multi-use trails.

It is therefore the logical civic and moral duty of trail riders, if we want to have access to any of the 37 Maryland Wildlife Management Areas in the future, to practice voluntary restraint when it seems reasonable to do so. When hunting days are published, we might want to refrain from riding on the first day of dove hunting season, for instance.

Is anything being done to ensure good relationships between the equestrians and DNR in regards to the WMAs?

On Sept. 9, DNR's John Moulis held the first of several meetings of the Idylwild Focus Group to develop a working relationship between the equestrian community using Idylwild Wildlife Management Area (WMA), and the WMA managers. Although it began to study the Idylwild area, MHC T&G Co-Chairman Royce Herman has noted that the focus group seems to be laying down the foundation for strong relationships at all 37 WMAs. Compromise solutions will be identified as the group works through issues now, and in the future.

Stay tuned for more news!

To view a map of DNR's Wildlife Management Areas, go to <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wmamap.html>

MHC Trails & Greenways Upcoming Meeting: December 3, 2003

Featured Speaker: Fred Shaffer, MNCPPC... "How to Construct Horse Friendly Trails"

The December Meeting will held be at: Girl Scout Camp Woodlands • Annapolis MD

Please call Location Coordinator Jacquie Cowan at 410-923-6157 for directions

If you would like to host a future Trails & Greenways Committee meeting, please contact one of the following Committee Coordinators:

Location Coordinator: Jacquie Cowan at 410-923-6157 • **Meeting Secretary:** Peggy Bree: bree@riva.net

Meeting Manager: Royce Herman: 410-758-2081 or raherman@dvm.com

2004 Meetings will be the first Wednesday of alternating months (Feb., Apr., Jun., Aug., Oct., Dec.) • Meetings start promptly at 6:30 p.m.

DNR's Wildlife Management Areas

Central Maryland

Dierssen WMA
Earlville WMA
Gwynnbrook WMA
Hugg-Thomas WMA
Islands of the Potomac WMA
Mckee-Beshers WMA
Strider WMA

Southern Maryland

Bowen WMA
Cheltenham WMA
Chicamuxen WMA
Myrtle Grove WMA

Western Maryland

Billmeyer/Belle Grove WMA
Dans Mountain WMA
Heaters Island WMA
Indian Springs WMA
Mt. Nebo WMA
Sideling Hill WMA
Warrior Mountain WMA

Eastern Maryland

Cedar Island WMA
Deal Island WMA
E.A. Vaughn WMA
Ellis Bay WMA
Fairmount WMA
Fishing Bay WMA
Idylwild WMA
Isle of Wight WMA
Johnson WMA
LeCompte WMA
Linkwood WMA
Maryland Marine Properties WMA
Millington WMA
Nanticoke WMA
Pocomoke Sound WMA
Sinepuxent Bay WMA
South Marsh Island WMA
Taylor's Island WMA
Wellington WMA

QUARTERLY MEETING

*Open to all members and guests
to be held in conjunction with the
Maryland Horse Industry Board*

Tuesday, November 18 at 7 p.m.
Maryland Department of Agriculture
50 Harry S Truman Parkway • Annapolis, Maryland

Featured Topic & Discussion:
**RABIES: is it time to legislate
mandatory vaccinations for horses?**



Guest Speaker

Dr. Phyllis Cassano, D.V.M.

Maryland State Veterinarian and Chief of Animal Health

*Dr. Cassano will be available for a short Q&A on
West Nile following the rabies discussion.*

Business Agenda Includes

Maryland Horse Industry Board Report
Trails & Greenways Committee Report
Racing Committee Report on Slots
Equine Welfare Committee Report
Proposed modification to Manure Management Laws

**Come early to enjoy a Meet & Greet
Networking Reception**
sponsored by
Maryland Association of Equine Practitioners
and
Maryland Farriers Association

www.mdhorsecouncil.org
www.marylandhorseindustry.org



Maryland Horse Council

2004

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- Association—\$100/year
- Farm/Business—\$50/year
- Youth Club—\$10/year
- Individual—\$25/year

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP—\$1,000 one-time fee

Institutional Membership: open to any private entity, corporation, or for a state, county or other municipal agency, department, service or office that wishes to support the Maryland equestrian industry. Membership shall be a one time fee of \$1,000. Payment shall entitle the institution to designate one or more individuals to serve in an advisory (non-voting) capacity to the Council.

Name _____

(Assoc./Business/Farm/Youth Club/Individual)

Phone _____

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Phone _____

Alternate _____

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Address _____

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Email _____

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Mail w/ check payable to:
Maryland Horse Council
P.O. Box 233
Lisbon, MD 21765

MHC Letters

The following two letters are very typical of the types of inquiries or concerns received by the Maryland Horse Council. MHC encourages all Maryland horse people to become involved, get active in these issues. The MHC Trails & Greenways Committee is an excellent resource for networking.

Reader Protests: "Horses Were At Fair Hill First, Then The Bikers Came In"

Hi Louisa:

I just read your article in the Equiery (MHC Update, p. 21, September 2003 issue of The Equiery) about the condition of the trails at Fair Hill.

I have been riding at Fair Hill at least a dozen times a year, on and off for over 20 years. The first time I rode there it was with a large group that still has their ride there every year... the Bill Mills Ride the first weekend in October. It was in the early 1980's and as of then I recall only seeing horse related activities going on most of the time. I very rarely saw bicycles. If you were riding there then you may recall the same. The trails were great but I have noticed in the last few years that the trails have become rockier, etc. due not just to horses but to bicycles as well. Fair Hill is not the first place I have ridden in the last 25 years that has noticeable trail erosion in the last few years. It just upsets me that now all of a sudden the erosion problem is due to horses and it seems that if the conditions do not improve they will prohibit horses on the trails.

The horses have been at Fair Hill as long as I can remember and no one ever complained about the trails until the park has become multi-use. I just wanted to express my opinion and what I have noticed over the years. I thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Diana, Oliga Farm

The author, Louisa Emerick, replies:

I have lived adjacent to Fair Hill (riding, foxhunting, and driving my horses) for the past 25 years and ridden there almost every day for even longer.

When the property was used exclusively for horses, it was mainly foxhunting, the annual Bill Mill Trail ride and the races. I hunted with Foxcatcher, and we would hunt a totally different area each day (Fair Hill is over 5,000 acres). The average field size was about 20 riders. The season went from Oct to April with some cubbing (usually just staff and a few diehards like me from July to Oct.). As this was the sum total of the equine usage of Fair Hill, trail damage from horses was minimal to nonexistent.

Additionally the duPont family maintained all trails (regardless of usage, trails still need to be maintained because weather affects them, as does natural growth) and the property was pristine. The land was then purchased by the state, but remained in open space program. In other words, Fair Hill was not open to the general public so there was still minimum usage of trails.

But that has changed. Fair Hill is owned by the citizens of Maryland, and, as such is open for multiple uses. According to DNR records, there are about 140+ horses on Fair Hill trails every day! With 140 horses, the most popular



trails do suffer, it is inevitable.

Believe me I said all the same things you are saying; I used to blame it on the bikers as well. Then one day, I took about 4 hours to study the trails with Fair Hill Superintendent Wayne Suydam. The photo we used to illustrate the article is used only by horses.

It is true that bikes do cause erosion, but—and this is a big BUT—the bikers groups have been out doing trail repair for years!! The bikers have scheduled regular monthly work repair groups and have done so almost since the park was opened to the bikes. Have the horse people done so? No. Additionally, the bike people have also kindly repaired the horse trails that were very damaged. It is time we thanked them, and it is time that the horse people start participating in taking care of our own trails.

And we horse people do need to be conscientious of other users, and aware of their needs and challenges. For instance, we can ride through 7 inches of mud and not think about it...but bikers and hikers can not go through the same areas as easily. Is it fair for us to not be concerned about that?

The most important thing is rather than pointing blame we need to fix the problem and any conceptions or misconceptions that result.

On the good side there have been several work parties that have accomplished a lot for the trails and for the equestrian PR with the state. I agree with you, Fair Hill is too valuable to horses to be lost...but the reality is that there are more non horse people using the grounds than horses on a daily basis, but the horse people can and do cause a significant amount of damage. If the horse people do not start taking responsibility for our part of the damage, we may find ourselves on the outside looking in someday, after all, this is publicly owned land. I emphasize that the current management has NO intention of doing that at present.

Thanks for your thoughts, and I invite you to join one of our work parties! To find out more, visit mdhorsecouncil.org and go to the Trails & Greenways section.

Maryland Horsewoman Wants To Know How She Can Save a Farm From Development



Dear Maryland Horse Council:

Mill Run Farm/Stables in Welcome, MD will be coming up for sale, pending resolution of the deceased owner's estate.

The farm has approx. 300 acres (50-100 of which are wetlands on the eastern border of the property only), an indoor riding arena, outdoor riding ring, completely board fenced, 3-4 hay barns and numerous out-buildings.

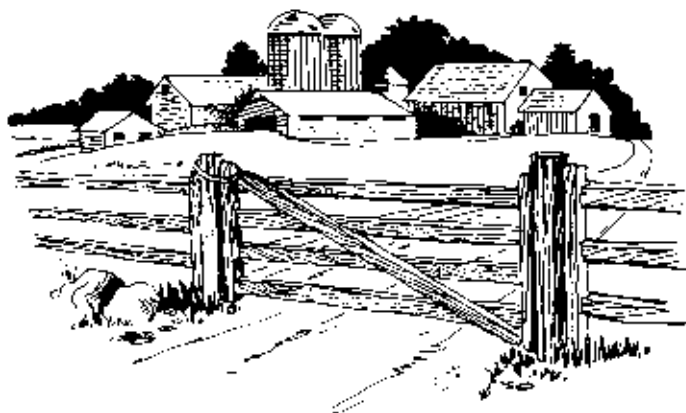
The Welcome area is zoned Ag and does NOT have public water or sewerage facilities. I have been informed by the heirs that the property will be sold to whomever offers the highest price, but that the initial asking price will be \$1M-\$2M.

I'm very concerned that developers will purchase it for subdividing it into "lots". The "lots" would be from 3-5 acres or more depending upon "perked" sites.

It would much better if either an individual or organization were to purchase it so that it would remain an equestrian center.

Cberyl E. Thomas

Welcome, MD



The MHC Secretary replies:

Dear Cheryl:

Thank you for contacting the Maryland Horse Council. Many horse people have had success working within their particular county to have their county department of parks somehow acquire the land. There is often state or federal funding for such an undertaking, but it is not a quick process (and is currently further challenged by Maryland's fiscal issues).

You would first need to find either an elected official or someone in your parks department or the State DNR who shared your vision. Once you have the necessary "powers-that-be" behind you (and an elected official is really a "must"), then the process of acquiring the funding begins, and your elected official (a.k.a. "champion") is critical to this. This process can often take years, but it can happen.

This is how most of our equestrian parks through out Maryland have been acquired, from Fair Hill and Rosaryville to Wheaton Park Stables, Potomac Horse Center and even the P.G. Equestrian Center. All were once privately held operations and now are owned by State agency. Some are then operated by that agency for the public's use; some are then leased out to private operators. Another property that is still in the process of being converted from private to public land is called Woodstock, 700 acres in upper Montgomery County.

"We have followed ELCR's recommendations to the letter, from organizing the Friends of Callithea Farm, a nonprofit corporation, to planning and executing an option to purchase the farm from a "friendly owner" who is besieged by developer's offers. We are drafting long term management plans which complement the objectives of the local conservation and recreation communities, and preserve the integrity of the adjacent National and County Park lands... I'm glad that ELCR is out there to help protect the future of our equestrian way of life."

—George Sengstack, vice president, Callithea Farm, Inc.

Another option is to put together a private organization to purchase the land, a nonprofit or a trust of some sort. Shawan Downs is a very successful example of this approach. Sometimes grants are used for the purchase of the land, but there have also been cases of private entities harnessing the power of the people, and having multiple people contribute by buying stock in the private entity which purchases the land. If the land still has its development rights, sometimes the private entity will then sell those development rights to a national trust and recoup some of their investment. The Equestrian Land Conservation Resource has an excellent article on this entitled: "Another Tool: Purchase of Development Rights."

The bottom line is: your vision can be accomplished. It takes time, dedication, resourcefulness, and—above all—tenacity. Unfortunately, the equestrian community does not have any "White Knights" who ride in to save farms. We have to do it ourselves. However, there are many others who have accomplished what you hope to accomplish, and they can give you lots of advice! And that is what MHC is all about!

We invite you to attend our November 18 meeting, 7 p.m., at the Maryland Department of Agriculture, where you can network with others and learn more about this process of preserving farms and parks.

MHC Trails & Greenways Co-Chair Peggy Bree replies:

Farms are rapidly disappearing everywhere. Most of us don't like it, but we can't save them all. Perhaps you can identify a need to preserve this specific farm—Gov. Erlich did say that he wants to protect more property along the Chesapeake Bay, and you mentioned that it preserves a scenic view.

Perhaps you can't save the entire property, but maybe they would like the idea of putting part of the property into some form of conservation to shelter some of their taxable profit. There is a group called the "Scenic River Land Trust" that works with property owners to protect waterfront properties.

At the very least, even if you are not able to keep the property out of development, you can ensure that equestrian easements going through the property are maintained! But you have to start now. ELCR has an excellent publication to get you started on this, called "Easement Guide for Equestrian Use."



Other Sources of Information

Equestrian Land Conservation Resource
815-776-0150
www.elcr.org
Equestrian Land Protection Guide, a step-by-step action plan with practical suggestions for developing the appropriate team to make a conservation project possible, developing a manageable plan, maximizing both financial and manpower resources, negotiating various types of agreements, building landowner relations and planning for the future to keep what is achieved.

National Park Service
"Rivers & Trails: Tips For Your Locally Led Conservation Efforts"
www.nps.gov
215-597-1787

The Trust for Public Land www.tpl.org
Chesapeake Field Office: 202-543-7552

Montgomery County Lands Trust, a non profit Pennsylvania conservancy
www.mclt.com or 215-513-0100
"Saving Land Saves Money" brochure