



MHHC UPDATE

mdhorsecouncil.org

TRAILS & GREENWAYS COMMITTEE

Wet Out? Then Stay OFF the TRAILS

...a look at the problem of trail damage at Fair Hill

by Louisa Emerick

“Horses are damaging the trails.”

Now there's a statement that will bring the horsepeople to their feet in loud protest!

And living adjacent to and riding Fair Hill's 5,000 acres for 40 years, I was certain that the horses could not be responsible for the erosion and washed out trails I have witnessed over the years. Surely, I was convinced, bikes do more damage. I would take umbrage when park rangers complained about the damage done to the trails by horses. However, I recently had an unfortunate epiphany.

One day, after we had endured yet another torrential downpour the night before, I ventured out, the trails wet and soft. What did I see? Two groups of about 20 trail riders each (that is 40 horses) head across a field directly into the woods on what DNR calls a “single track trail,” a trail that is just wide enough for a single horse or bike to pass. It hit me that just maybe the park superintendent might have a legitimate concern.

I immediately—and with some contriteness—made an appointment to meet with Fair Hill Superintendent Wayne Suydam to try to understand these concerns instead of summarily dismissing them as unfounded.

Horse people are their own worst enemy

“If they would just stay off the single track trails when they were wet,” Suydam explained, “there would be no problem. You could ride on this place the day after a hurricane and not do significant damage if riders would just stay off the trails through the woods and other soft places. We put up signs asking that trail users stay off the trails when they are wet. This applies to all users, not just the equestrians.”

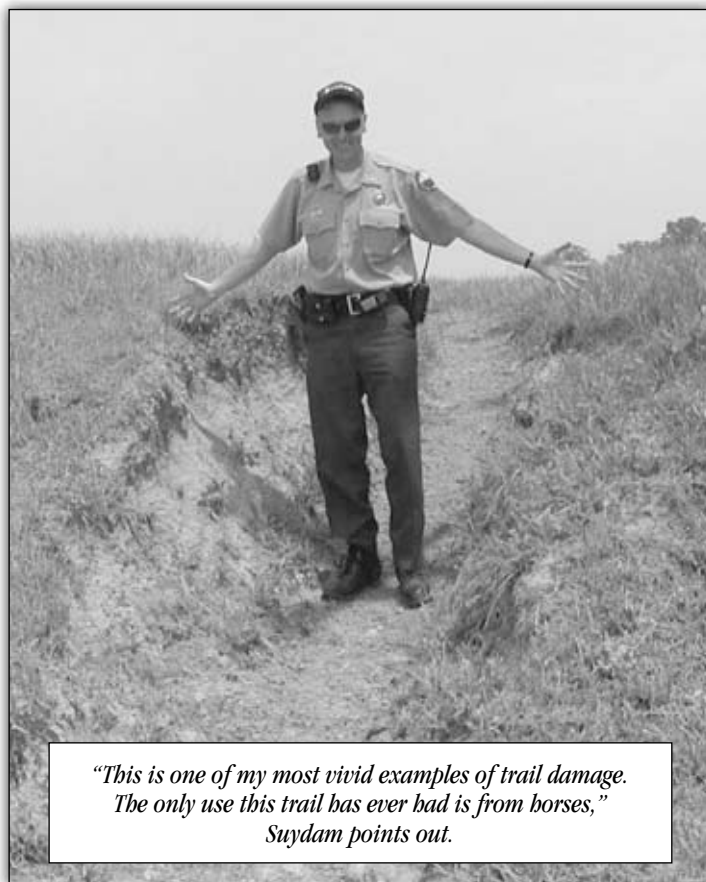
Unfortunately, Suydam recounts that he has had more than one equestrian user tell him “that there had always been horses on the grounds, it was meant for horses, and that they would ride whenever and wherever they pleased.” Some of the mounted volunteer rangers who patrol the grounds and help out at events have reported similar experiences. Of course, such attitudes do nothing to endear the equestrian population to management officials.

The widespread belief that the Fair Hill grounds were either sold to or donated to the state for equestrian use by the duPont Family is simply not true. The ground was bought with open space funds provided through federal funding. There were no arrangements or commitments as to the use of the grounds much less any preservation of rights as an equestrian use facility. Foxhunting and the steeplechase racing continued, but there are no guarantees provided for their future in any sales agreement.

Getting worse

There are approximately 50,000 equestrians using Fair Hill trails every year. That works out to about 137 horses per day on the trails. There has been a dramatic increase in equestrian use over the past 5 years due in part to the closing of other facilities in nearby states.

Suydam, a jogger and biker enthusiast, stresses that he had no prejudice for or against horses when he took over the position several years ago, but finds



*“This is one of my most vivid examples of trail damage. The only use this trail has ever had is from horses,”
Suydam points out.*

himself becoming more and more frustrated with the trail damage and the failure of too many equestrian users to take responsibility for the trail stewardship. Mr. Suydam is quick to give credit to the segments of the horse community which have been helpful, both financially and with the donation of equipment and materials. Trails are mowed in part by two foxhunting groups, and The American Driving Society Pleasure Driving Weekend and various individuals have made generous donations to Footprints Only, Inc, which benefits the Fair Hill trail stewardship program. Suydam notes that some organized trail rides refrain from riding in soft areas on rainy weekends. All of these efforts are greatly appreciated, but have fallen far short of preserving the trails in part due to the constant rains of this spring.

The problem could easily be solved if riders would practice simple trail stewardship by staying off wet trails. “These damaged trails will heal, given time, but I have to close them for up to a year for that to happen. I don't want to have to keep closing trails.”

Charles Benner (who is paid by a separate fund supported by biker dollars) works 3 or more days a week strictly on the trails. I have found “Chuck” to be interested in learning how best to ensure the safety of both saddle and carriage horses on the trails. He has been invaluable in keeping trails equestrian and carriage accessible! He started as a part of a local bike group, The Delaware Trail Spinners, who meet one Saturday every month to identify and fix problem areas. It is clear that the main goal is to keep the trails enjoyable for all users.

continued on the next page

Fair Hill Natural Resource Management Area is a multi use facility, but Wayne reports that he is hearing increased complaints and demands that horses be prohibited from using the trails. He is quick to make it clear that he has no intention of pursuing any such actions but notes that when trails become "roto-tilled" by equestrian use it virtually blocks the bikers, hikers and other pedestrians from using the trails.

"We call it 'roto-tiling,'" Suydam explains. "The horse's hoof pounds a 4-6" hole into the soft ground. Each step the horse's hoof digs up and rolls over the mud hence the same effect as a roto-tiller. Each hoof print collects water and slows the drying; horses then tend to walk around the muddy spot and then widen and punch more holes in the ground until the trail is gouged to a width of 10-12 feet for up to 100 feet in length. The trail will heal given time but it takes a year or more for a severely damaged trail to recover"

"If we allow this damage to continue, and we continue to have bad weather, the wonderfulness of Fair Hill (as a multi-user facility) will be gone," concludes Suydam.

This is a problem that can be solved. The riders must stay off the soft trails, support the Footprints, Only Inc. funds, and consider organizing work parties to provide the needed manpower to repair damaged areas. If the Fair Hill horse community continues to ignore these warning signs, they may someday find the same "No Horses" signs that have closed other public lands in surrounding states.

To find out how to become a good trail steward, join the MHC Trails & Greenways Committee Internet Group!

FARMS & STABLES REPORT

The Manure Meeting by Harry Ketts

MHC Farm member Harry Ketts attended the Maryland Nutrient Management Summit on August 5. Harry and his wife Marilyn own At Last Farm in Aquasco.



The Summit was convened by our new Governor for the purpose of collecting recommendations that will help streamline the Nutrient Management program and improve its implementation and effectiveness in meeting Maryland's water quality goals.

The Nutrient Management laws were enacted as a response to the pfysteria scare of a few years ago, and because of an increasing concern about the levels of nutrients, or nitrogen and phosphorus, in the Chesapeake Bay. Because farmers use fertilizer and because livestock leave manure, farming was seen as the culprit. Exempt from the regulations are homeowners, landscapers, golf courses and other fertilizer friendly endeavors. The poultry industry was seen as the largest culprit, but they have since found ways to recycle chicken manure into fertilizer pellets highly prized by orchid growers and other exotics, who are also, incidentally, exempt from these laws. This leaves primarily crop and livestock farmers, including horse farm owners.

The current nutrient—manure—management laws require testing of soil and water, manure management plans, detailed fertilizer plans and extensive record keeping and a stamp of approval from an approved government agent.

It was recommended that farmers, nutrient management consultants (and they do not mean nutrition specialist; "nutrients" refer to the levels of nutrient—nitrogen and phosphorous—in your soil as a result of either fertilizer or manure from livestock), elected officials, those with agricultural concerns and those with an interest in environment and water quality protection. There were slightly over 300 participants with many farmers and those with agricultural concerns. To the best of my knowledge, I was the only horse farm owner in attendance.

The Summit opened with a ten minute speech by the Governor, followed by one from the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. We were then assembled in groups of 12 to 15 and charged with the task of brainstorming ideas on the following aspects of the program:

- 1) WHO NEEDS OR SHOULD HAVE A PLAN
- 2) ENFORCEMENT/RIGHT OF ENTRY
- 3) NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANS—CONTENT & UPDATES
- 4) RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS & PAPERWORK.
- 5) INCENTIVE PROGRAMS
- 6) CERTIFICATION, TRAINING AND APPLICATOR VOUCHER PROGRAMS
- 7) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

At the end of the day we reassembled in Plenary Session, heard and voted on those recommendations to which we all agreed, while assembled, should be forwarded to the Maryland Department of Agriculture for incorporation in a revised Nutrient Management Program/Law.

What came out of these sessions that I felt affected me, as a horse farm owner are as follows:

A) If you have water flowing through or alongside your farm make sure that you know the quality of it as it comes into your farm. If the water is tested after it leaves your farm, and the test is high for nitrogen and phosphorus you are automatically the culprit. The assumption is that the nutrient washed from your land after you applied too much for the ground and grasses to absorb, or the nutrient value of your manure is too high. My recommendation is that

JOIN THE Maryland Horse Council Trails and Greenways Internet Group

Ideas about trail planning, maintenance, and lobbying issues can be discussed electronically. We hope to be able to use this group to disseminate information rapidly and to be an on line resource for people that wish to become proactive on behalf of the equestrian community. As more and more trails are closed or developed out of existence, it is becoming increasingly more important for all of us to get involved.

Benefits of joining our free Yahoo!® group:

- Messages can be read in your email inbox
- Calendar for relevant events
- Links for parks and other equestrian resources
- Photos section
- Files section for documents

You will need to establish a Yahoo!® identity and get a password in order to join the group. *It's free.* You can create a mailing address within Yahoo!® and have your group messages delivered there.

Here's the address:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MHC-TG/>

See you there!

we spend a bit of money by running annual tests on the nutrient value of water before it enters our land, and after it leaves our land. Also, test your manure annually, from random samples throughout your paddock. Keep the samples separate! And keep all these test results for two reasons: first they will keep the vultures off your back and second they can be combined with the results held by other horse owners (farm, riding stable, etc.) when we have to go testify before the legislature. We all know that a scapegoat is needed, and since the poultry farmers have already performed a beautiful CYA, we need to watch out—because it could be us.

B) Continue to abide by the Nutrient Management Program law, BUT DO NOT SIGN THE RIGHT OF ENTRY FORM. It is blatantly unconstitutional. If the NUTRIENT POLICE want to see your records, do not refuse, but make them give you at least two weeks notice. Also, you may choose where you wish to meet them; you may choose to allow them on your farm to inspect your records, or you may demand that they meet you on neutral grounds, such as a restaurant.

C) We, that is the farmers in attendance, do believe in nutrient management programs in general. Farmers have voluntarily created nutrient management plans for years, for several reasons. First, because a good farmer is a good steward of the land, and second because no farmer wants to waste money over fertilizing. The problem is that we have had a few knee-jerk reactions because of some high profile problems, and the State needed someone to point the finger at. For example, in the Aug. 7 Washington Post, there is an article about the lack of oxygen in the Bay, and whom do they point the finger at - the farmers for putting too much fertilizer on their fields during a wet spring/summer, and the livestock owners for having too much manure on the ground. In August, *The Equiery* reported that some officials with DNR were specifically accusing horses of polluting the Bay.

What we must do is come together, abide by the Nutrient Management Law and show that what is honestly needed is a level playing field, and that the suburbanites and golf course caretakers need to be more responsive, along with the farmers.

I believe that the Summit did in fact accomplish something and that the politicians, the State employees, the scientists and environmentalists working on this program now have their work cut out for them. Hopefully we'll see some very noticeable changes by this time next year.

Annual General Membership Meeting August 10, 2003

Thank you to MidAtlantic Farm Credit, Southern States and Tischer Porsche of Silver Spring, for sponsoring the great meal and fantastic door prizes.

Thank you to Potomac Hunt Club for donating the use of the club, and to Monica Breland for organizing.

Thank you to Farnam, Maryland Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse, and Pfizer for lots of great giveaways.

Election of Directors-At-Large

Individual members elected 4 individual members to represent their interests on the Board of Directors: Beverly Raymond, Sol Goldstein, Greg Gingery, and Elizabeth Madlener.

Business and farm members elected 3 members to represent farm and business interests on the Board: Billy Boniface, Crystal Kimball, John Nunn.

The Board of Directors re-elected the previous year's officers and elected a new Recording Secretary for Board Meetings.

The New 2003 Board of Directors

President, LuAnne Levens 301-421-1252 ..levenslk@aol.com
 Vice President, Michael D. Erskine, DVM .. 301-854-5689 ..mikedvm@aol.com
 Treasurer, Keith Willis 410-838-4242 ..kwillis@midatlanticfarmcredit.com
 Secretary, Crystal Brumme 410-489-7826 ..secretary@mdhorsecouncil.org
 Recording Secretary, Doreen Hill

Dir. at Large for Businesses & Farms Billy Boniface
 Dir. at Large for Businesses & Farms John Nunn
 Director at Large for Individual Members..... Beverly A. Raymond
 Director at Large for Individual Members..... Greg Gingery
 Director at Large for Individual Members..... Sol Goldstein
 Director at Large for Individual Members..... Elizabeth Madlener
 Director at Large for Youth Darryll Ann Buschling
 Carroll County Equestrian Council Carolyn Garber
 Chesapeake Plantation Walking Horse Club Jacquelyn Cowan
 Cloverleaf Standardbred Owners Association Sharon Roberts
 Days End Farm Horse Rescue, Inc. Kathleen Schwartz
 Elkridge Harford Hunt Albert J.A. (Jay) Young
 Equine Rescue and Rehabilitation, Inc. Debbie Rollins Frank
 Fair Hill International Lou Morris
 Howard County Iron Bridge Hounds..... Pamela Bussard
 Humane Society of Carroll County Nicky Ratliff
 League of Maryland Horsemen Cauleen Orr
 Maryland Association for Wildlife Conservation Roger Scullin
 Marlborough Hounds..... Christy Clagett, jt-MFH
 Maryland 4-H Foundation..... Robert Cooper
 Maryland Combined Training Association Nancy Morris
 Maryland Dressage Association Judith Provençal
 MD Equestrian Foundation/ Rosaryville Conservancy..... Dorothy Troutman
 Maryland Farriers Association Tim Streaker
 Maryland Horse Breeders Assoc. Cricket Goodall
 Maryland Horse Shows Assoc. Street Moore
 Maryland Jockey Club..... Tim Capps
 Maryland Standardbred Breeders Assoc. Felicia Hilleary
 Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Assc. Christine Bricker
 Mid-Atlantic Saddlebred Assoc David Turner
 Pasadena Horse & Pony Club..... Charlene McCraith
 Plantation Walking Horses of Maryland Sandy McCann
 Potomac Hunt Club Monica J. Breland
 Potomac Valley Dressage Association..... Jane Seigler
 Trail Riders of Today President Gale Monahan
 Tuckahoe Equestrian Center Royce Herman
 Washington International Horse Show Gina dePasquale
 Wicomico Hunt Cindy Wood



Maryland Horse Council

2003

Serving the
Industry
Serving You

- 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 _____

If Assoc., Representative to Serve as MHC Board Member _____

Phone _____

Alternate _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Website _____

Fax _____

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

QUARTERLY MEETING

Open to All Members & Guests
To Be Held in Conjunction with the
Maryland Horse Industry Board Agenda

Rabies: Do We Legislate Mandatory Vaccinations For Horses?
Tuesday, November 18 at 7 p.m.

MD Department of Agriculture
50 Harry S Truman Pkwy., Annapolis
Directions, please call: 410-841-5700

visit: www.mdhorsecouncil.org or www.marylandhorseindustry.org