



One Common Bond | The Horse
One Common Voice | The Maryland Horse Council

Mr. David E. Pullen
County-Wide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board
Montgomery County Recreation
2425 Reddie Drive, 10th Floor
Wheaton, Maryland 20902

October 18, 2021

Re: Wheaton Park Stables

Dear Mr. Pullen:

The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is the trade association for all segments of the Maryland horse industry, at the state and local level. MHC has been representing the Maryland horse industry for over 35 years. We are writing in support of the Wheaton Park Stables (WPS) at the Wheaton Regional Park.

WPS has been a fixture in Wheaton for almost 60 years. It is a family-oriented riding stable that conducts group lessons, pony pal lessons, summer camps, and trail rides. It is also home to an equine-assisted therapy program called The Cura Personalis Project (CPP).

WPS differs from most other equestrian programs in Montgomery County because it is within walking distance of a dense suburban population that is dominated by a demographic that does not typically have access to horses, horse farms, riding lessons, or any exposure to agriculture or rural life. It is also one of the most, if not the most, affordable riding programs in lower Montgomery County, or, indeed, anywhere in the Washington metropolitan area.

In addition, The Cura Personalis Project is critically important to residents of Wheaton because it provides vocational training to children and adults with developmental disabilities. CPP participants receive riding lessons and horsemanship training, and they work in the stables and on the grounds, all of which helps them develop the functional life skills necessary to reach their full potential. Interaction with horses has well-researched and well-documented benefits in teaching self-confidence, self-reliance, responsibility, and problem-solving skills. Equine-assisted therapy programs are also such demonstrably valuable aids in treating psychological trauma that the Maryland State Veterans Administration has recently made equine-assisted therapy available to veterans under the Animal Service Program.



One Common Bond | The Horse
One Common Voice | The Maryland Horse Council

WPS is the type of recreational program that Maryland needs more of, and that Montgomery County needs to support. Indeed, it is the policy of both Governor Hogan and the General Assembly that Maryland needs to do a better job of making outdoor recreational activities available to a wider cross-section of our population. For example, last August, the Maryland General Assembly created the State Park Investment Commission to study, among other things, “the extent to which State parks and associated recreational opportunities are adequately accessible to all populations of Marylanders, including low-income Marylanders, those who lack access to a car, and Marylanders with disabilities.” See Press Release, *House Speaker and Senate President Announce State Park Investment Commission* (Aug. 6, 2021). Although this commission is focused on state parks, the issues of equity and accessibility apply to local parks as well.

Finally, equestrian programs are a huge economic driver in Montgomery County and in the State of Maryland in general. As the data in the attached graphics show, there are 3,300 direct equine jobs in Montgomery County, and equine businesses account for over \$23 million in Montgomery County capital expenditures each year. The horse industry also supports hundreds of jobs in related industries, such as veterinary care, construction, fencing, retail tack stores, farriers, hay farmers, transportation, and technology. At the state level, the horse industry generates \$78 million in tax revenue.

For these reasons, we urge you to do everything in your power to make sure that Wheaton residents continue to have access to the many benefits offered by the Wheaton Park Stables. Now is not the time to take away important outdoor recreational activities or equine-assisted therapy programs. Nor is it fair to deprive Wheaton residents of the opportunity to experience the magic of horses in an affordable and accessible way.

Sincerely,

Kimberly K. Egan
CO-PRESIDENT

Maryland Horse Council

cc: Jane Seigler, *Chair -- MHC Government Relations Committee*

Attachments

Montgomery County, MD Horse Industry

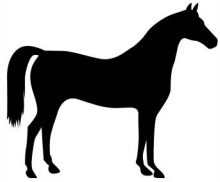


Horses and the horse community play an integral role in Montgomery County's agricultural viability, economics, quality of life and land preservation.



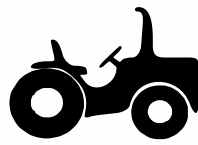
HorsePower: Montgomery County Equine Statistics

16,000
Total Horses

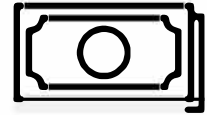


\$52 million
value of horses

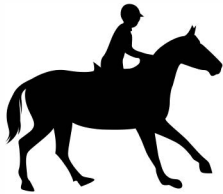
\$510 million
Total Value of
Equine related
Assets



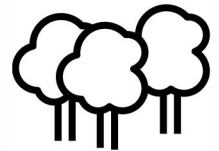
\$23+ Million
Total Annual
Capital
Expenditures



30+
Equine
Disciplines



15,000 +
Total Equine-
Related Acres



3,300
Direct Equine
related jobs



1,500
Equine places
(farms, stables,
etc.)



163 Hay producing Farms
8,385 acres to
produce 21,158 tons of hay primarily
for the local equine industry



Equine industry supports hundreds of jobs in related and support fields such as veterinarians, construction, fencing, retail tack stores, farriers, hay farmers, transportation and technology.

Sources: 2010 Maryland Equine Census & "Preserving our Agricultural Heritage" Montgomery County DED, Agricultural Services Division

Sample of equestrian sports & activities families and visitors enjoy in Montgomery County:

Trail Riding, Dressage, Show Jumping, Pony Club, Polo, Horse Shows, Fox Hunting, Steeplechase, Mounted Games, Jousting, Barrel Racing, Gymkhana, Team Penning, Rodeo, Riding Lessons, Thoroughbred Racing/Breeding, Carriage Driving, Eventing, Pony Rides, Polocrosse, Endurance Riding and High School Equestrian Teams.



**For More Information
Please Contact:**

The Maryland Horse Council
www.mdhorsecouncil.org
info@mdhorsecouncil.org
844-MDHORSE (844-634-6773)

THE MARYLAND HORSE INDUSTRY

Economic Horse Power

 **\$78M**
Tax Revenue

28,000
Industry Jobs

 **\$1B**
Spent by Participants

Maryland is Horse Country

 **16,000**
Horse Farms & Stables

10.5 
Horses per square mile!

Making Maryland **#1** state in terms of the number of horses per square mile!

200 Equine Orgs. Statewide


35 Different Equine Disciplines

40 Breeds of Horses


101,457
Horses in Maryland


Thoroughbred & Standardbred horse racing & breeding ♦ trail riding ♦ steeplechase ♦ sport horse competitions ♦ rodeo ♦ carriage driving ♦ therapy programs ♦ recreation ♦ rescue and more

Major Agricultural and Environmental Partner

 **\$80,000,000**
on feed, hay and straw

Horse Farms make up **10%** of Maryland land

 **25%** of the State's agricultural land

 **88,000** equine acres preserved forever as farmland

705,000
ACRES 

Pastures are among the best filtering devices to protect the Chesapeake Bay from harmful runoff



From Local to Global



10,000 Youths served by MD's Educational Programs
1,500 4H Horse Projects
750 Licensed Riding & Boarding Stables
55 High School Interscholastic Teams
28 Horse Discovery Centers
22 Pony Clubs
12 College Equine Teams & Clubs

51.8%
of households
in MD
contain horse enthusiasts



MD is home to International gems:
Triple Crown Race
the Preakness since 1873
International Maryland 5-Star
at Fair Hill in 2021