



# WISCONSIN STATE HORSE COUNCIL, INC.

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*A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF HORSES AND HORSEMEN IN WISCONSIN*

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## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, JANUARY 9, 2007

### **SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP: TRAILS GROUP, DNR WORK TOGETHER AT NORTHERN UNIT OF THE KETTLE MORAINES STATE FOREST**

CAMPBELLSPORT – In 2002, Mike and Joann Schill saw a need for a group to help preserve and maintain horse trails in the Northern Kettle Moraine State Forest, and invited other like-minded riders to a Jan. 25, 2003 meeting.

They had no idea that 72 people would show up, eager to help with plans to improve and maintain the horse trail system. In just 15 minutes, the group developed 57 suggestions for projects.

From that first meeting evolved the Northern Kettle Moraine Horse Trail Association. The group is still going strong, and the trail system – and the trail riders who use the system – is still benefiting from that enthusiasm.

The pride of the Association is the 41-mile trail system that runs through the Kettle Moraine State Forest in Fond du Lac, Sheboygan and Washington Counties, between Kewaskum and Glenbeulah. The system's horse campground is just east of New Prospect. Trail riders like the variety the trail system offers, with gentle hills, steep hills, meadows, woods and lakes.

The mission of the Association, says founding member and current president Joann Schill, is “to provide area equestrians an opportunity to make an impact as part of a group working cooperatively with the Department of Natural Resources toward preserving, improving, and developing equestrian facilities in the Northern Kettle Moraine.”

Jim Lawrence, Campbellsport, was one of the people at that first organizational meeting, and he's still active in the Association. The trails in the Northern Kettle Moraine are worth preserving, he said.

“It's very scenic. The Kettle Moraine area is a remnant of the Ice Age, so there are all the glacial features there, lots of variety,” he said. “We live about 6 miles from the Northern Kettle Moraine. It's sort of our home base, and we really enjoy the trails.”

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The Association meets the second Tuesday of each month, has regularly scheduled work days, and hosts fundraising events to help finance trail projects. The biggest event is a dinner, dance and silent auction held the second Saturday in November. The Northern Kettle Moraine Horse Trail Association is a non-profit group, and donations are tax deductible.

Since the group started, the Association has dedicated more than 900 volunteer labor hours and contributed more than \$10,000 toward trail system and campground improvements and maintenance.

One of the group's first projects was to install lighting in the 48-stall horse shelter and at the pit toilets at the equestrian campground, to make the campground safer for horses and humans. Other projects included construction of three manure pits and increasing the height of stalls in the shelter, to prohibit horses from reaching into the center aisle. The Association has purchased cleanup tools, so visitors at the equestrian campground can help keep the park clean.

This year the DNR is renovating the New Prospect Horse Rider's Campground. The design process was completed in fall 2006, and officials relied on comments from members of the Association and other trail riders, according to Jerry Leiterman, forest superintendent for the Northern Kettle Moraine State Forest.

"They're a great sounding board when we're managing facilities related to horseback riding," he said. "They give great ideas. They provide great feedback. We really value that."

Construction of the campground is scheduled to begin in June; it is anticipated that campers will not be able to use the campground after May. Although the campground will be closed for most if not all of the 2007 riding season, the new facility will be designed "to meet the needs of today's equestrians," Leiterman said, and should be a good addition to the trail system.

"This is just one example of the strong, cooperative working relationship between the DNR forest management and members of the Northern Kettle Moraine Horse Trail Association, Plymouth Trail Riders, and Kin Krest Saddle Club, resulting in improvements to equestrian facilities," Schill said.

The Association's improvements can be seen the length of the trail system. The group installed "You Are Here" signs along the trail and replaced the pointy-edged snowmobile trail markers with safer, "horse-friendly" signs. The trail has mile markers and road crossing signs along the main linear trail, thanks to the Association's efforts.

Specific sites along the trail have been improved, too. The group secured funding for and installed a hitching rail and bench on a scenic overlook on the Crooked Lake Trail, purchased and planted 15 shade trees around a

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picnic area on the Jersey Flats, and installed hitching rails and mounting blocks at five rest areas along the trail. The Association has purchased picnic tables for the five rest areas, and they'll be set in place in spring 2007.

Less visible – but perhaps even more important – are the hours of trail maintenance club members donate. More than 15 people showed up for a trail work day last June, Lawrence said. Club members also maintain the trails on their own, stopping to move dead branches or pick up litter as they're trail riding. It's all part of keeping the trail system in good shape for riders.

Other groups also help maintain the trails. The Plymouth Trail Riders, for example, have adopted 9.4 miles of the 41 miles of trails in the northernmost section of the forest. Members maintain the trail or notify authorities when the trail requires equipment-assisted maintenance.

Several organizations have helped finance projects, including the Distance Riders Association of Wisconsin, Upper Midwest Endurance and Competitive Ride Association, and the Wisconsin State Horse Council. The Association has received several WSHC Trails Committee grants, according to Dan Catherman, chair of the committee.

"There have been trails in the Northern Kettle Moraine State Forest for probably 40 years, and the quality of the trails and facilities has really improved because of the work of the Northern Kettle Moraine Horse Trail Association members," he said. "They've been successful in getting grants from the WSHC and other sources because they have good ideas, a good working relationship with the DNR, and a great core of dedicated volunteers."

The Northern Kettle Moraine Horse Trail Association will be applying for another WSHC Trails Committee grant this year, Schill said. The WSHC offers grants of up to \$3,000 for projects to improve existing trails, and \$4,000 to create new trails. The deadline for applications is March 1.

This time of year members of the Northern Kettle Moraine Horse Trail Association are looking forward to the opening of the horse trails in April, and scheduling the work days and activities that will help maintain the trail system for everyone.

"It's a lot of work, but the more people who help out, the easier the job becomes," Schill said. "We welcome new members."

For more information about the Northern Kettle Moraine Horse Trail Association, contact Schill at (920) 477-5782 or email her at [schill@dotnet.com](mailto:schill@dotnet.com). For information about the WSHC trail grant program, visit the Web site at [www.WisconsinStateHorseCouncil.org](http://www.WisconsinStateHorseCouncil.org).

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