



Connecticut Horse Council

"Horsemen United in Leadership, Service and Education"



2026 SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Thank you to all who have renewed their membership and to all our new members. We are a non- profit volunteer legislative advocacy group representing all horse interests in CT.

The CHC, Inc., can only be as strong as its membership. Please join us and work together to protect your interests for today and tomorrow! See pages 32-33 for a 2026 application.

- ***There is an important meeting coming up in September regarding the damaged portion of the Larkin Bridle Trail***

The meeting will be held at the Town of Southbury's Town Hall Meeting room for a Public Design Progression Presentation for the Larkin Bridle State Park Trail on **September 8th** from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM." Here is the link for those who cannot attend in person:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/218183922462256?p=xQPNOFVEDB0CzFW2IY>

*Our Trails Report is quite lengthy as it includes meeting notes from the CT Equine Advisory Council which meets DEEP and the CT Forest & Park Association. CHC was quite busy this year, addressing the 10 year Forest Management Plans **2026-2036** for the **Nathan Hale State Forest** and the **Westwood-Killingworth-Winthrop (WKW) Blocks** - a section of **Cockaponset State Forest**) on behalf the equestrian community. Our main concerns were parking access and bridges. A copy of the letters is included in the Trails report. I feel it is important for the trail community to know how the CHC addresses these issues on state plans as we have done so for many years. Unfortunately the state is and the other divisions within DEEP such Wildlife and Forestry Plans are not always on the same page and CHC strives to educate and promote horses on trails. Please do your part in helping to promote trails and trail etiquette.*

Thank you for your continued support. Happy Trails

Diane Ciano, President

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What's New with The Connecticut Horse Council



We are now accepting membership payments on PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, debit or credit cards from our website: www.cthorsecouncil.org

We have great information on all aspects of the horse industry on our website and we continue building this site. We have done many updates, posting highlights of our meeting notes for members that can't make our meetings and updating our publications. Our educational brochures are printable. If you want hard copies, we can provide them to you. Please check out the info we have there: www.cthorsecouncil.org

There are power points that you can use for training/education:

- **Zoning - "Horses Make Good**

Neighbors" (under State Councils & Laws) along with links to the Equine Land Conservation Resource

<http://www.cthorsecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Horses-Make-Good-Neighbors-redo-2025.pptx>

- **CT Horse 911 - "Large Animal Emergency Preparedness"** (under News & Alerts)
- **Members will receive the Community Horse – Free Digital Subscription** by email.



***FYI** - Additionally, Community Horse offers free Community Horse Youth Awards for every equestrian competition in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Learn more at communityhorse.org/youth-awards.*

Our next CHC meeting is Tuesday, October 6th– 6:30 pm at our new location:

Newington Human Resources Building - 200 Garfield Street, Newington, CT – 6:30pm

We hope you will join us in person! We will be offering zoom links for our meetings on "Microsoft Teams" The Link will be posted on our CT Horse Council Facebook Page.

- **Save the Dates for the Equine Affair and visit our CHC booth November 12-15, 2026, at the Eastern States Exposition in W. Springfield, MA!**

Your CHC Representation around the state...



State Representation

Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

CT State Trails Plan

CT State Forest Plan

SCORP – State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan



Our Mission – Our Vision

The Connecticut Horse Council, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving all aspects of the horse industry in Connecticut

The Vision of the Connecticut Horse Council is to be recognized as the leader in all issues concerning the Connecticut horse industry

Legislation We are a non-profit volunteer legislative advocacy group that informs the community of horse related legislation issues.

Education - Outreach We provide information on our website, brochures, newsletters, Facebook page. We participate in DEEP No Child Left Inside Events and other similar local events. We promote horseback riding through our Volunteer Horse Patrol Program.

Emergency & Disaster – CT Horse 911 We provide information on our website. Lectures, demonstrations and workshops are available on Barn Fire Safety and Emergency Disaster Preparedness for both horse owners and first responders

Trails CHC educates and promotes the public on the trail riding community through our Volunteer Horse Patrol Program and attending other public events. CHC represents equestrian interests addressing the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Plans, representation on the Connecticut Equine Advisory Council and the CT Connecticut Greenways Council. We comment on Forest Plans.

Road Safety CHC sponsored legislation that enacted state statutes that are printed in the instruction manual for motor vehicles operations for safe riding and driving of horses, and the public's responsibility when encountering horses on the roads. Pamphlets are available

Zoning We assist individuals and local governments with educational materials pertinent to horses and farms with extensive information on our website.

We Want Your Support

We are a group of volunteers working for the equestrian community.
Volunteers are wanted to help on committees to promote the horse industry.

Legislation
Outreach / Education
Website & Marketing
Volunteer Horse Patrol
Trail Maintenance
CT Horse 911

Legislation Goals:

- Encouraging all equestrians to be aware of monitoring legislation involving horses, and farmlands, etc. and report to CHC so that we can bring this information to our members.
- We are looking for volunteers to Chair this Committee to help in getting the information out quickly.

Outreach / Education Goals:

Promoting and Supporting the Horse Industry through Education and Community Service

- Encouraging equestrians to join in on the Volunteer Horse Patrol Program and participate at educational events such as the DEEP No Child Left Inside programs
- Encouraging Horse Organizations around the state to periodically set up educational tables at trail heads, educating users about horses, dogs on leash and bicyclists regarding trail etiquette and how to pass a horse safely. CHC will provide material.
- Encouraging Horse Organizations to plan on holding a trail event once a year on National Trail's Day Weekend (*1st weekend in June*). *It can be a "Meet & Greet a Horse" educational event at a Trail head, Trail Clearing, organized trail ride for members, etc. or any event promoting trails and horses.*

WE would love to have horse events around the state, celebrating and promoting horses on trails! A full, searchable list of past events is available on [**trailsday.org**](http://trailsday.org)

Your CHC Representation around the state...



**CT Horse Council
Volunteer Horse Patrol**



We always welcome new members!

Join the CHC-VHP and be a part of promoting equestrian use on trails while providing a community service while having fun and riding your horse!

Our volunteer hours are reported to DEEP through the CT Equine Advisory Council whose members represent the 5 congressional districts of this state.

CT Horse Council has promoted multiple-use trails on public lands for many years; addressing the DEEP Recreational Trails Plan, Forestry Plans and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and Forestry Plan.

Contact Diane Ciano for application and more information.

In the 23 years since, the CT Horse Council's

Volunteer Horse Patrol Program has provided
\$1,596,225.00 in volunteer service hours.

This was accomplished through **63,849** hours
of patrol and trail *maintenance* throughout the
State of CT in our state parks and forests,
land trusts, open spaces, town lands,
city parks and private lands. *Total # of patrols: 32,779*

This program helps to promote horseback riding,
protect and preserve the trails in the state.

Your CHC Representation around the state...

CONNECTICUT EQUINE ADVISORY COUNCIL



The Connecticut Equine Advisory Council was established on May 22, 2007 by **Public Act 07-42** to assist the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection with issues related to the preservation of equine trails in the state.

Membership: The council consists of the president of the Connecticut Horse Council and five representatives from organizations that serve the horse industry within each congressional district statewide in addition to one member of the Connecticut Forests and Parks Association, appointed by the minority leader of the Senate.

The mission of the Equine Advisory Council and is to promote equestrian use on public lands, creating, preserving, maintaining and restoring trails.

The CT Equine Advisory Council's website and link to the **Multi Use Trail Surface Study** and the **CT Horse Council's Volunteer Horse Patrol Trail User Study** can be viewed on: <http://www.ct.gov/deep/eac> under "Links" and on our CHC website. These studies can be used to educate and promote multi-use trails and surfaces for planners of trails who may play a role in maintaining or implementing trail systems including town planners, recreation committees and Council of Governments throughout the state.

CT Horse Council President – Diane Ciano 2023 (*Appointed 2009*)
 1st Congressional District – Meg Sautter (*Appointed 2008*)
 2nd Congressional District – Ruth Strontzer (*Appointed 2019*)
 3rd Congressional District – Danielle Borelli (*Appointed 2020*)
 4th Congressional District – Vevette Greenberg (*Appointed 2021*)
 5th Congressional District – Denise Ciano **Acting Representative*
 CT Forest & Park Association – Kristin Connell
 DEEP Liaison – Kimberly Bradley

2026 Meeting Schedule:

The EAC meets at the **Newington Human Resources Building**
200 Garfield Street, Newington, CT. from 6:30-8 PM on the following Thursdays:
 March 19th, June 18th, **September 24th** & **December 1st**

The public is welcomed. Zoom or Conference calls are available.

Please contact Diane Ciano for current updates or changes

Trail News: State Park & Forest Trail Reports / Updates:

These reports are from our CHC meeting 6/2/26 & CT Equine Advisory Council Meeting on 6/18/26

Meg Sautter reports:

Roraback WMA: 04/28 Rode with Vevette. Trails were great, parking still is not adequate for horse trailers. on South Rd at the bridge

05/11 Rode Roraback with Vevette

Sprague Preserve 05/08 I rode. Trails were great and well-marked. We did a 2hour circuit and got back just before the rain.

Larkin Bridle Trail: 05/10 ride with Vevette. Our improvement still holds off Towantic Hill.

Devil's Hop Yard: 06/01 Rode Mitchell Road area with Diane Morton. Obviously this area is not highly trafficked. The entrance, across from the house property, has a new log across it. It is VERY overgrown. We managed to get around it and found the 'road' was terribly overgrown AND had a significant number of downed trees. We followed the deer path out to the 'road' on the opposite side. We connected to The Lena Preserve and discovered new markings. We followed red (Lena) to green (East Haddam Land Trust). We followed the green to purple and white, which turned out to be Walls Way (East Haddam Land Trust). This brought us to Tater Hill Rd where we discovered another preserve across the street. Miller Farm Preserve is across from Walls Way. Due to time constraints, we were unable to ride this section. In Walls Way, we noticed lots of markings and clearing. It appears the trails are going to be extended. What a wonderful discovery! Looking forward to a return trip! I hope the DEEP will clear the downed trees for us.

Mohawk State Forest: Started at the ranger station and cleared trails

Denise Ciano reports:

Mattatuck State Forest & Army Corps of Engineers /Hancock Lake, Plymouth: Cory Iacino, Amie Olmstead and myself cleared trails in this area so that they are passable.

Ruth Strontzer reports:

Machimoodus Sunrise SP:

On May 16, 2026 a community work day was held in the rear end of the large field at Sunrise where equestrian events have been held for the last 9 yrs. In attendance were members from CTRA, Officers and members from LCRVHC and the Bridle Path Conservancy, a member of Pony Club as well as some local equestrians that came out to help there were approx. 18 people who worked in the area that Park Supervisor Ray Knoop selected. The selected area was completely cleared and the work crew even cleared the bridge leading from the field towards Machimoodus. The huge brush pile has since been cleared. Ray had requested that members of the VHP ride the trails and report back to him. He had received reports of numerous downed trees. The Friends of Machimoodus- Sunrise SP have organized a group called the Trail Trolls to monitor the trails and report back. Several VHP members including myself have offered to be in the group and report on what they find. The day of the clean-up myself and another VHP member rode and dropped pins and took pictures of 8 downed trees some had closed trails completely. On June 16th myself and another VHP member road the trails again and found that all the trees had been cut and the trails reopened. However, one bridge on the orange trail was found to be loose enough to shift and move when crossing it, A report has been sent about it to the Park Supervisor. Ran into a lot of dogs off leash there again.

A Special Use Permit has been issued and this weekend will be the 9th Annual CTRA Camping event and fundraiser for the park, with 3 organized rides. At this time RSVP indicate a good turn out for camping and the rides.

Wadsworth Falls SP: Currently the trails seem to be in good shape. Approx 6 weeks ago a patrol was held in the park by myself and 3 VHP members. Several trees were found down on the trails, the

locations had pins dropped and pictures taken and a report was given to the seasonal working that day and asked to be sent along to Martin Torresquintero the park supervisor. 3 weeks later myself and another VHP member went back and the trails had been reopened. Ran into a lot of dogs off leash there again.

Chatfield Hollow SP: The trails and dirt Roads seem to be in good shape. Buck Road still has some washed out areas on the upper end heading towards Tower Rd. Ran into a lot of dogs off leash there again.

George Dudley Seymore SP: What trails I was able to ride seemed to be in good shape when I was there mid-May with another VHP member. However, Eversource has a major work effort going on with the high-tension powerlines running through the park. Massive wooden decks have been constructed to support the construction equipment. Helicopters are air lifting material in. The 2 main dirt roads have been redone with large stone to support the equipment being used This work effort is more massive than the work done there about 4 or 5 yrs ago. I suspect that may have been prep work for this current project. I recommend that riders avoid that park while the work is being done.

Higganum WMA:

On the same day we rode GDS SP we rode down to the Meadow and was very pleasantly surprised to find that the entire meadow except for one small marshy area had been brush hogged and it was wide open once again. It looked amazing. I hope that they will continue to maintain it.

We rode down to the far southern end of the meadow to the site that DEEP has established as a camp site for their recreational program allowing the public traveling the CT River by canoe or kayak to camp along the river. In the past there was an old trail that went further south and dead ended. It appeared someone has been using it a lot and opened it up. We followed it and according to All Trails just as we reached the boundary of private land, we could see a permanent campsite located in a sandpit area where someone appears to be living. Because the trails are on WMA land and the campsite on from what I can tell private land I'm not sure who if anyone should be notified about the camp. There were also a game camera and a sign alerting to the fact that the site was monitored. We did not approach the camp and turned back immediately.

Haley Farm SP Groton:

The trails seem to be in very good shape. Although some are very rocky. The wooden bridge on the old trolley path leading to the trails on the backside of the park has a bad board on the left side that should be repaired

Bluff Point SP:

I was there after April 1st so could not check out the beach but the trails in the park that i did travel appear to be in good shape. We used the pedestrian bridge over the AMTRAC train track and rode the trail next to the track to access the park coming from Haley Farm. The bridge and the trail there are in good shape a train went by while we were on it and it was wide enough so there was no problem, Side note the VHP member I was with caught the train passing us on his GoPro.

Salmon River SF:

Leaving the Comstock Bridge and following the Yellow Diamond horse trail up the hill the bottom entrance to the trail was so overgrown it took us about 45 minutes just to clear a way through it. The long hill has become so washed out that it appears that hikers have a new unmarked trail running alongside of it. We rode it and it has better footing and is less steep and farther away from the dog pen at the bottom so actually better for the horses.

Airline Trail SP:

We rode the section from East Hampton over the Lyman Viaduct up to River Rd in Colchester. The trail was in good shape. We removed 2 small trees that were down with our hand saws and opened it up.

Cockaponset SF Haddam – Chester Section:

Over the course of several weeks in May the Red, Yellow Purple, Blue-Red and Orange and the Quinimay trails were worked on. Numerous small trees and over growth was removed from the side of the trails and the trails themselves. The portion of the Quinimay that runs between Old County Rd and Jericho Rd is badly washed out in areas.

The dirt roads in this section came through the winter in very bad shape. The hill on Filley Rd leading into the Forest in Haddam was badly washed out with huge ruts. Old County Rd, Jericho Rd and Motland Rd had some wash outs as well. I sent an email to the Park Supervisor Martin Torresquintero asking if there were any plans to address the condition of the road since several groups of Equestrians have started using the pull offs on Filley to park trailers instead of at the lake all the time. Martin contacted the crew at Central Services and they did a great job regarding the roads and installing new material in some of the washed-out areas. An email of appreciation was sent to Martin thanking him for his quick action in addressing the problem and commending the crew from Central Services for doing such a great job. They are dirt roads and will wash out again but they are 100% better than they were and the repairs were done in a matter of a couple of weeks.

Kim Bradley reports: DEEP is doing an internal evaluation of the Preserve trails which are on state land and Old Saybrook and Essex town land. DEEP is looking for user input.

Diane will find equestrians that use the trail for input on the best trails to keep open and get back to Kim. It was noted that the parking lot on Rte.153 is small, has an island which is not designed properly for horse trailers. CHC would recommend removing the island and possibly make the parking lot deeper if they cannot lengthen it.

Diane Ciano reports: Paugussett State Forest, Newtown – Boat Launch – Trailer Parking: A letter was sent to Yolanda Cooley CT Dept of Energy and Environmental Protection - Navigation & Safety Boating Program Specialist and Infrastructure. The response was that the parking is designated for boating only.

Forest Plans: CHC addressed the state forest plans of a Nathan Hale and a section of Cockaponset on behalf of CHC. Our main concerns were parking access and bridges. A copy of the letters is below.

May 12, 2026

3Nathan Piché Forester, State Lands Management Program

Cc: Kim Bradley

Hello Nathan,

Thank you for contacting the CT Horse Council (CHC) with the opportunity to comment on the Forest Management Plan 2026-2036 of the Nathan Hale State Forest to ensure that all interests are represented in the planning and decision-making processes. It was great to talk with you, about concerns, asking questions, and getting input in order for me to address this plan.

While looking at the larger picture of this entire forest, covering 1,538 acres and 2 towns and reviewing the plan, the CT Horse Council would like to see this plan address that “big” picture of recreational opportunities while continuing to manage and protect the state’s natural resources/health benefits mentioned in the DEEP State Forest Plan for the next 10 years.

Implementing the plan has many challenges to reach its goals to combat its threats. CHC recommends that the management strategies highly address the recreational aspect of the peoples lands for the safety and health of the forest and its users.

Looking forward CHC believes that while all the departments within DEEP, Forestry, Recreation, Wildlife, etc. have their own missions, it is important that these departments have a unified understanding of

recreational needs on our public lands and address the issues that the horse community has asked for the past 40 years. The 4 largest issues are access parking for horse trailers, bridges, trail etiquette education for all trail users and road/trail surfaces. These issues have been addressed in the CT Recreational Trail Plan of State Park Trails (2021). Our needs are not being met. Every department in DEEP should be consistent with their individual plans to provide safety and access for equestrians.

These are statewide issues and CHC believes that all departments within DEEP can be aware of the recreational needs of the horse community and involve them in their plans of action, prioritizing them for access, safety and quality for the experience of all trail users.

Reviewing the Nathan Hale Forest Plan under **Recreation & Scenic Sites – Trails & Signs**

“.....Parking at the forest is limited to roadside pull-offs and Creaser Park. There are no DEEP authorized trails within the forest However, creating access, parking areas and additional recreational trails is not a goal or objective of the DEEP Divisions of Forestry and Parks as there is deemed to be adequate recreational access to the forest in its current state”.

Parking for horse trailers: Since the Nathan Hale Homestead is not DEEP property it cannot become an official parking lot. During the summer months the Farm Market is open on weekends, which is when most equestrians plan to travel and haul horse trailers and then find there is no parking available is not a good situation. It takes time and money to haul horses long distances there to ride and then have to look for the small pull over areas along the roads which are not ideal or practical for two or three trailers if they are not already taken, then driving a rig around the forest to find one that may be available.

Creaser Park is leased to the town of Coventry and the trails are closed to horses.

A designated parking area for horse trailers is needed and we ask that DEEP consider the Truman Meadows on the corner of Seagrave and South River Road. There are other fields noted on the map of page 3 for consideration: River Rd, Stonecroft Lane and Case Rd and South Rd.

There needs to be signs at entrances to the Forest to make it more user friendly and welcoming. There is no major entrance so Kiosks/signs can be placed where people enter, notifying them of the trails and trail etiquette.

Trails: Forest Ecosystem Health and Diversity- Management Goals: *“ There are no DEEP authorized trails within the forest”.* The map on age 45 shows trails that were made without authorization, perhaps because there were none. The future Forest Plan should include authorized trail systems. It is important to the public so that the people of Connecticut can enjoy the recreational/health benefit opportunities without compromising the forest.

At this point in time, CHC recommends that DEEP evaluate the extensive network and come up with a plan to determine which trails are sustainable and authorize them by mapping and marking them. This would be a priority to do this and stop the damage that is being done. Creating sustainable multi use trails systems with the existing trails that are out there already, marking routes, trail educational kiosk trail etiquette will go a lot further faster than trying to stop the illegal use. This will do more to help the forestry plan achieve its goals than trying to eliminate them and can be part of the Forest Protection Objective.

Providing a variety of choices of trails to user groups will help to stop the illegal use of people creating trails that may be disturbing the forest and wildlife. Having several trail systems and mileage also helps the minimize erosion and trail maintenance caused by years of consistent use.

A larger trail system will spread out the usage and present an opportunity for solitude and wildlife-based recreation. Providing access and connection to a long-distance trail system is important for trail connectivity and building access, reducing barriers to outdoor recreational uses. It will also help in discouraging people from making their own trails or utilizing trails that will be closed.

Also to note: When a forest harvest is planned often the trees are just dropped and left. This practice has often covered existing trails around the state, making trails impassable or unsafe causing trails to be built around the area that may not be as suitable. A more efficient plan for DEEP is to create a plan to maintain or create a sustainable trail when timber harvests go out to bid and clear a path for passage.

CHC will continue to educate all departments of the DEEP to help out the equestrian community to save the historic use of horses on trails in our state. Often times we question the foot traffic only policy of the CT Forest & Park Association on state land. Many of the trails were old cart roads or trails that were historically used by equestrians. In recent years as the blue-blazed trails are relocated, our trails are lost to the “foot traffic only” and question whether or not these trail relocations are actually “authorized” by DEEP and without consideration as multi-use trails. There are over 825 miles of blue-blazed trails in this small state. We need our trails to be multi-use to accommodate everyone.

Bridges: There are so many bridges that are continually being built in our forests that are not safe for horses crossing over water. These bridges in many cases are built over the safest part of a water crossing for horses without consideration. They are often made without the appropriate wood or proper framework structure of holding weight (no center underboard, kick rails and narrow width). Horses that have gone over these bridges have either gotten seriously hurt or the bridge was broken. All DEEP divisions need to be consistent with approving safe bridge construction that will accommodate horses on it and placement before they are authorized to be placed down and/or allow water crossings for horses where possible that can be designed with minimal impact.

Surface Material: In some cases around our state sharp gravel rocks are put down which is unfavorable for the human foot, hooves of horses and bicycles. While this may be necessary, in some cases, there should always be a natural top dressing to create a smooth surface for walking, biking and horseback riding.

Education: Education and signage are an important key to good stewardship and safety for all. This can be done with signs, programs and getting a group of local people and organizations that utilize the forest involved in helping with an informal “Friends of Nathan Hale” to make this forest user friendly and safe.

Wildlife Habitat: For the record of our correspondence, attached is a link to an environmental study that has been with horses and wildlife for future reference in case that any questions arise about horses and wildlife and/or wetlands. Environmental Aspects of Horses on Trails, along with CT State Title 22a Chapter 40. Permitted operations and uses...Livestock. permitted in wetlands and watercourses, as of right of way.

...Horses are prey animals and leave the trace scent of an herbivore on the trail, whereas humans, dogs and cats are predators and as they walk, they leave the trace scent of omnivore on the trail that can impact wildlife. Horses are recognized by wildlife as prey animals, even when a person is sitting on their back. An approaching horse passing along a trail provides sound rhythms in the cadence of a four-footed hoofed prey animal to wildlife, which informs wildlife of a non-threatening presence...

Economic Benefits: We also wanted for the record, everyone to be aware of the CHC-Volunteer Horse Patrol 14-year study of trail users in our state parks and forests. <http://www.cthorsecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CHC-VHP-Trail-User-Study.pdf>

Collected data shows a large number of horses utilize state, town, and private lands, and work to patrol and maintain trails 27.7% of trail users recorded were equestrians shows, a percentage that was very close to walkers at 28.3%

The 2023 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE HORSE INDUSTRY IN THE USA of the American Horse Council <https://horsecouncil.org/economic-impact-study/> shows that there are **6.65 MILLION** Horses in the United States that added to the Economy **\$177 BILLION**, Total Economic Impact of 2.2 MILLION

JOBS, 12.5 MILLION - Acres of land owned or leased for horse related purposes, and **2 MILLION** Industry Volunteers.

Public Involvement: All volunteers and organizations play an important part on public lands in maintaining trails and the education of trail etiquette for all user groups.

The Connecticut Horse Council partnered with DEEP in 2003 to create the Volunteer Horse Patrol (VHP) to ride and serve in State Parks & Forests, helping to patrol and provide assistance to the DEEP staff and public visitors, promoting safety on the trails among all trail user groups. In a 14- Year Trail User Study data collected from logs show that 27.7% of trail users recorded were equestrians very close to walkers at 28.3%

<http://www.cthorsecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CHC-VHP-Trail-User-Study.pdf>

Public Involvement: Page 47 does not mention the CT Horse Council or the CT Equine Advisory Council <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Outdoor-Recreation/Equine-Advisory-Council/CT-Equine-Advisory-Council> (CHC meets with CFPA & DEEP Kim Bradley is the Liaison) It would be greatly appreciated if both were acknowledged on this page with the other organizations.

Management Goals: Among the goals of the Forest Plan: "Support sustainable levels of and high-quality recreation" and "Repair and maintain existing forest infrastructure, including roads, catch basins, and culverts" - CHC has addressed our need for horse trailer parking, bridge/water crossing and trail surface uniformity to improve the quality of our forests.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address the Nathan Hale Forest Plan. There is a lot of planning and work to be done and we commend the time that has been put into this plan.

Our comments are statewide issues and CHC believes that all departments within DEEP can be aware of the recreational needs of the horse community and involve them in their plans of action, prioritizing them for access, safety and quality for the experience of all trail users. Education and signage are an important key to good stewardship and safety for all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Diane Ciano
President, CT Horse Council, Inc.
Trails Chairperson, Supervisor, Volunteer Horse Patrol
DianeMCiano@Gmail.com 203.910.9919

Forest Management Plan 2026-2036 of the Westwood-Killingworth-Winthrop (WKW) Blocks

May 11, 2026

Alexander J. Amendola, Forester 1, Forestry Division
18 Ranger Road, Haddam, CT 06438

Cc: Martin Torresquintero, Kim Bradley

Hello Alexander,

Thank you for contacting the CT Horse Council (CHC) with the opportunity to comment on the Forest Management Plan 2026-2036 of the Westwood-Killingworth-Winthrop (WKW) Blocks the Cockaponset State Forest to ensure that all interests are represented in the planning and decision-making processes. The future trail management decisions for these sections are important to the public so that the people of Connecticut can enjoy the recreational/health benefit opportunities without compromising the natural resources of the forest.

While looking at the larger picture of this entire forest, the second largest and most fragmented in our state (over 17,000 acres) and reviewing the WKW plan, the CT Horse Council would like to see this plan address that “big” picture of recreational opportunities while continuing to manage and protect the state’s natural resources/health benefits mentioned in the DEEP State Forest Plan for the next 10 years. Looking forward CHC believes that all the departments within DEEP, Forestry, Recreation,

Wildlife, etc. have their own mission, it is important that these departments have a unified understanding of recreational needs on our public lands and address the issues that the horse community has asked for the past 40 years.

This is a Forestry Plan that will be in place for the next 10 years and in doing so, has many challenges to reach its goals to combat its threats. CHC recommends that the management strategies highly address the recreational aspect of the peoples lands for the safety and health of the forest and its users.

We did contact local equestrians who previously addressed your plan from the Lower CT River Valley Horsemen’s Club (LCRVHC) and Bridle Path Conservancy. This community has maintained trails for over 60 years and are great stewards of the lands of the forest trails.

What was not noted is the problem of equestrian access to the forest and the bridges that were placed there. Most of the members ride the Weber Woods section where horse trailer parking is no longer feasible due to the increased number of other trail users that utilize that parking area. The horse trailers cannot get in and turn around to get out if there is no parking available. We asked the park supervisor to look at state land that would allow a separate entrance and parking, but was told it was not feasible due to line of sight.

The CHC asks that DEEP departments work with each other to provide horse trailer parking for the Weber woods section and other areas of the Cockaponset forest.

Bridges: There are so many bridges that are continually being built in Cockaponset that are not safe for horses crossing over water. These bridges in many cases are built over the safest part of a water crossing for horses without consideration. They are often made without the appropriate wood or proper framework structure of holding weight (no center underboard, kick rails and narrow width). Horses that have gone over these bridges have either gotten seriously hurt or the bridge was broken. All DEEP divisions need to be consistent with approving safe bridge construction that will accommodate horses on it and placement before they are authorized to be placed down and/or allow water crossings for horses where possible that can be designed with minimal impact.

LCRVHC addressed material being put down on roads in the Cedar Swamp area with large sharp rocks. While this may be necessary, in some cases, there should always be a natural top dressing to create a smooth surface for walking, biking and horseback riding.

These issues have been addressed in the CT Recreational Trail Plan of State Park Trails (2021) Our needs are not being met. Every department in DEEP should be consistent with their individual plans to provide safety and access for equestrians.

Also, included (*attached*) is a report from our local CHC and Volunteer Horse Patrol member, Ruth Strontzer, who is a local historian of the equestrian community. While this plan does not cover the blocks of Haddam Chester Section, we feel it is important for you to note this now so as to address this when these sections come up for the next update of the Forest Plan for this area of Cockaponset, as we are looking to meet with the supervisor regarding parking and campgrounds.

Forest Ecosystem Health and Diversity: Under this plan, also to note, when there is a forest harvest, When a forest harvest is planned often the trees are just dropped and left. This practice has often covered existing trails around the state, making trails impassable or unsafe, causing trails to be built

around the area that may not be as suitable. A more efficient plan for DEEP is to create a plan to maintain or create a sustainable trail when timber harvests go out to bid and clear a path for passage.

By determining which trails (*illegal or otherwise*) that are sustainable and building new ones, maintaining them while providing education and adequate access and will do more to help the forestry plan achieve its goals than trying to close or eliminate recreational activities in areas of the forest.

Providing a variety of choices of trails to user groups will help to stop the illegal use of people creating trails that may be disturbing the forest and wildlife. Having several trail systems and mileage also helps to minimize erosion and trail maintenance caused by years of consistent use whereas a larger trail system will spread out the usage and present opportunity for solitude and wildlife-based recreation. Providing access and connection to a long-distance trail system is important for trail connectivity and building access, reducing barriers to outdoor recreational uses. It will also help in discouraging people from making their own trails or utilizing trails that will be closed.

CHC will continue to educate all departments of the DEEP to help out the equestrian community to save the historic use of horses on trails in our state. Often times we question the foot traffic only policy of the CT Forest & Park Association on state land. Many of the trails were old cart roads or trails that were always used by equestrians. In recent years as the blue-blazed trails are relocated, our trails are lost to the "foot traffic only" and question whether or not these trail relocations are actually "authorized" by DEEP and without consideration as multi-use trails. There are over 825 miles of blue-blazed trails in this small state.. We need our trails to be multi-use to accommodate everyone.

Wildlife Habitat: For the record of our correspondence, attached is a link to an environmental study that has been with horses and wildlife for future reference in case that any questions arise about horses and wildlife and/or wetlands, along with CT State Title 22a Chapter 40. Permitted operations and uses. (a) The following operations and uses shall be permitted in wetlands and watercourses, as of right of way: *...Horses are prey animal and leave the trace scent of an herbivore on the trail, whereas humans, dogs and cats are predators and as they walk, they leave the trace scent of omnivore on the trail that can impact wildlife. Horses are recognized by wildlife as prey animals, even when a person is sitting on their back. An approaching horse passing along a trail provides sound rhythms in the cadence of a four-footed hoofed prey animal to wildlife, which informs wildlife of a non-threatening presence...*

Economic Benefits: We also wanted for the record, everyone to be aware of the CHC-Volunteer Horse Patrol 14-year study of trail users in our state parks and forests.

<http://www.cthorsecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CHC-VHP-Trail-User-Study.pdf>

Collected data shows a large number of horses utilize state, town, and private lands, and work to patrol and maintain trails 27.7% of trail users recorded were equestrians shows, a percentage that was very close to walkers at 28.3%

The 2023 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE HORSE INDUSTRY IN THE USA of the American Horse Council <https://horsecouncil.org/economic-impact-study/> shows that there are **6.65 MILLION** Horses in the United States that added to the Economy **\$177 BILLION**, Total Economic Impact of 2.2 MILLION JOBS, **12.5 MILLION**-Acres of land owned or leased for horse related purposes, and **2 MILLION** Industry Volunteers

Public Involvement: All volunteers and organizations play an important part on public lands in maintain trails, education of trail etiquette and....

The Connecticut Horse Council partnered with DEEP in 2003 to create the Volunteer Horse Patrol (VHP) to ride and serve in State Parks & Forests, helping to patrol and provide assistance to the DEEP staff and public visitors, promoting safety on the trails among all trail user groups. In a 14- Year Trail User

Study data collected from logs show that 27.7% of trail users recorded were equestrians very close to walkers at 28.3%

<http://www.cthorsecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CHC-VHP-Trail-User-Study.pdf>

Management Goals: Among the goals of the Forest Plan: “Support sustainable levels of and high-quality recreation” and “Repair and maintain existing forest infrastructure, including roads, catch basins, and culverts” - CHC has addressed our need for horse trailer parking, bridge/water crossing and trail surface uniformity to improve the quality of our forests.

These are statewide issues and CHC believes that all departments within DEEP can be aware of the recreational needs of the horse community and involve them in their plans of action, prioritizing them for access, safety and quality for the experience of all trail users. Education and signage are an important key to good stewardship and safety for all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Diane Ciano
CT Horse Council
President
Trails Chairperson, Supervisor, Volunteer Horse Patrol
DianeMCiano@Gmail.com
203.910.9919

ATTACHMENT:

Cockaponset SF - Haddam/Chester area - Parking for horse trailers and horse camping:

Ruth Strontzer

With a forest management area report being done for the WKW Block of the Cockaponset State Forest, I feel that there are several things that should be taken into consideration during the planning and implementation of the Haddam/Chester area of the forest in the future, so that all DEEP personnel are aware of the request for horse trailer parking and possible camp grounds that were there historically.

Currently there is only one location designated to horse trailers in the Haddam Chester Section of the forest and that is the lot at Pattaconk Lake. During the summer that lot becomes completely filled with cars and can't be used to park trucks and trailers. There are also many trails north of the lake that it takes too long to reach when riding from the lake

There are currently several locations on Filley Road past Jericho Rd that have pull offs on both sides that Equestrians have been utilizing. This is the flat area at the top of the hill area that had formerly been used for public camping on both sides of the road This site would also be an excellent location for overnight horse camping There is also a well located at the site that could be used for the animals. There are trails leading out from this area that are accessed by riders right now that lead to the Quinimay Horse trail. This is a fairly flat area and formerly was known as the sheep fields

Further down Filley Rd heading towards Turkey Hill Reservoir there is the former Youth Horse Camp site on the right There is a small parking area and a well there located right on Filley Road. This area with enlargement would also be suitable for equestrians to park . Should you pass through the barway located there, the former Youth Horse camp site is located on the left. This area is a fairly flat high ground area and could be made suitable for parking and or horse camping again. Directly across is an area that has had tree harvesting and clearing done which could with some work be utilized for horse

trailer parking. The purple trail goes past this location and connects directly to the Quinimay Horse trail and is used by riders as well.

On Jericho Rd there is a small sandpit area that formerly was used as a public camping area in years past. There is a well at that site also. This area has the Quinimay horse trail going right past the entrance. Several other trails that can be accessed from there as well. However, this area would need a lot of leveling due to the fact that 4 wheelers have caused deep ruts and holes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ruth Strontzer

rstrontzer@gmail.com

117 Filley Road, Haddam, CT 06438 475-238-5887

Other Reports:

Kim Bradley DEEP Reports: June 18, 2026 - CT DEEP Recreational Trails and Greenways Updates

Seasonal Resource Assistant:

Jessica Lavoie joined the CT Trails and Greenways Program mid-April as a Seasonal Resource Assistant. She has hit the ground running supporting all aspects of the program, from coordination, events, field efforts including mapping and trail counting, and is beginning to take lead on focused project efforts. She is running a booth at Willimantic Third Thursday event this evening in support of the ALSPT Alliance. You will likely meet her on Teams and in person meetings.

Forest Management Plan Coordination:

As a result of the EAC review of the Nathan Hale SF Forest Management Plan, and identified lack of internal coordination with the CT DEEP Trails and Greenways Program, Assistant Director of State Park Operations sent this email to the Forestry Director of State Lands:

"I wanted to follow up on our discussion from a couple of weeks ago. Since then, I have spoken with all Operations Supervisors as well as Kim Bradley and outlined expectations regarding park feedback that will be incorporated into forestry management plans moving forward.

At this time, the following process will be implemented:

- Kim Bradley should be included on all future plan distributions. If you could please make that a standard requirement moving forward, it would be appreciated.
- Once park staff have had the opportunity to review the plans, it will be the responsibility of the Park Supervisor, pending Operations Supervisor approval, to provide consolidated feedback to your team.
- Any additional clarifying questions from Forestry to park staff should be directed through the PRS assigned to that respective unit.

Although I have not yet had the opportunity to formalize this process through a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), I intend to work on that in the near future. For now, these interim clarifying steps will remain in place to help streamline communication and maintain consistency throughout the review process."

CT DEEP Signage Policy Update:

Close to completion and final review from Division Director, already using draft policy for signage implementation. Working with Jessica on sign requisition.

Park/Initiative Focused Updates:

- **Machimoodus/Sunrise** - Eric Gileau held a meeting on Tue 6/16 about development of a SOW (Scope of Work) to engage a planner of the formalization of a General Management Plan for the properties. The Friends Group will be closely engaged with the process and the effort will include community engagement opportunities.
- **ALSPT Rural Health Transformation Grant** - Project has \$7 million this year to support both minor alterations and improvement of trail conditions (vegetation management, minor drainage restoration, re surfacing, etc.) parking, and Engagement efforts. **This is a beneficial time to discuss parking need at Goodwin State Forest and other ALSPT locations.**
- **Larkin Trail** - Anticipated early September Public Meeting to overview design plans for the Larkin Trail washouts.

Legislation Reports / Updates:

Meg Sautter Reports letters were sent to her representative and to the Democratic Party of Connecticut asking for help in getting Denise Ciano appointed to the Equine Advisory Council.

CT Greenways Council:

Kim Bradley DEEP Reports:

CT Greenways Council: The CT Greenways Council held the 27th annual **Greenways Awards Ceremony** on June 5, 2026 at Charter Oak Park in Manchester, CT. This year's award winners can be overviewed in the Press Release here: <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/news-releases/news-releases---2026/connecticut-greenways-council-to-hold-27th-annual-greenway-awards> There was no new formal CT Greenways designated this year.

The 8th Annual CT Trail Symposium will be held at Southern CT State University in New Haven on October 2, 2026. As the planning develops all information can be found here:

<https://cttrails.uconn.edu/symposium/> ***Diane, Danielle & Ann Marie will work on a presentation***

Recreational Trail Grant Round:

Kim Bradley DEEP Reports:

CT Recreational Trail Grant Updates:

On May 29, 2026, the State Bond Commission allocated \$15 million for Recreational Trail Grant Program. As a result of the CT Greenways Council Grant review committee is in the process of reviewing award decisions. Award recommendations will then move through CT DEEP Leadership Review, anticipating grant decisions late summer 2026.

Outreach & Education:

Diane Ciano Reports:

- **CHC OPEN HOUSE & VHP ANNUAL MEETING:**

The CHC Volunteer Horse Patrol celebrated its 23rd Anniversary Year on March 22nd. We had a total of **2,872** hours reported with 1,575 patrols out on the trails for 2025! Our 23 Years total 63,849 Hours with 32,779 patrols. Total savings to state, private, land trusts x \$25.00 = \$1,595,255.00!!! Our guest speaker was Honor Lawler, the Project Manager for the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit organization that works to connect everyone to the benefits and joys of the outdoors. She gave us great information on the Camp Laurel Project in Lebanon and 2 other projects in CT, which was elaborated on in our CHC Spring Newsletter.

- **NCLI Events:** NCLI Families in the Parks Program 2026 Kick-off Event-Family Fishing Day with Fish with CARE at Black Rock State Park in Thomaston, CT on Saturday May 9, 2026 from 10 am to 3 pm. Diane & Denise Ciano representing the CHC Volunteer Horse Patrol Program were in attendance. Turnout was low due to forecasted rain, but it held off until 3:00. Kids loved the horses and enjoyed releasing the fish into the pond. There were lots of interactive education tables set up from various groups.
- Dino Day at Dinosaur State Park on Saturday August 1, 2026 from 10 am to 3 pm (NCLI Families in the Parks Program Summer Festival).

Kim Bradley DEEP Reports:

Additional Outreach Opportunities:

CRCD Program at Gillette Castle on July 15, 2026.

Our program will ensure placement at Dino Day is more suitable for the horses attending.

Old Business - Follow Up:

EAC Website updates *Diane will send updates to Kim and Jessica Lavoie, seasonal resource Assistant.*

Dates to be set with Kim:

- **Cockaponset State Forest:** Possible trailer parking, campsite to review the area with John G and Martin to discuss trailer parking and camping. Follow up discussion on access to Weber Woods and kick rail boards installed on bridges.
- **Go over CHC Goals presented to DEEP in 2024:** *Where are the CHC requests on DEEP Priority List?*
- Horse trailer parking to accommodate equestrians. Trailer Parking – Gave list of parks and forests that need trailer access.
- **Naugatuck State Forest:** Parking lot to be expanded to allow horse trailer access
Diane will follow up with Kim for meeting with her and Jeff Dery, Unit Supervisor, Jared Rice (Black Rock SP) and cc Tammy Talbot, to look at the proposed parking area to be reconstructed to allow horse trailer parking access. A meeting in September would be better.
- **Goodwin State Forest:** Update needed on parking for horse trailers
Diane will contact DEEP Matt Quinn & Eric Gileau, Eastern District Operations Supervisor
ALSPT Rural health Transformation Grant - Project has \$7 million this year

- **Uniform DEEP Policy for safe bridges** to be built that will accommodate horses/emergency vehicle or water crossings that can be designed with minimal impact.
- **Campsites available to equestrians** in various parts of the state (*Machimoodus & Cockaponset first locations*)
- **Uniform DEEP Policy for proper footing put down for multiple use** (stone dust)
- **“Passive Recreation” definition** does not include horses: (Either list or change to non-motorized)
- **Discussion on DEEP policy on Land Acquisition**
Diane will follow up on the following goals with Lindsay Suhr Land Acquisition and Management Office Director – DEEP . regarding Larkin (Christian Street parking area) and other areas
- **Machimoodus / Sunrise State Park:**
Start conversations of possible dog area with Ray Knoop and Friends of Machimoodus due to ongoing issues with loose dogs. There have been numerous injuries to horses and horseback riders caused by loose dogs. CHC had mentioned in previous meeting that DEEP consider setting aside a large designated area for dogs to be let loose in confined area.
Sunrise - Meadow field (old airplane landing strip) is very overgrown with invasives It needs a controlled burn or to be brush hogged. Kick rail boards installed on bridges.

NOTE: CHC will continue discussion of a possible site for a horse camp and bridges being repaired or new bridges to be built in the future that can also be addressed in the CT Trail Plan that will be revised.

Possible meeting with CT NEMBA

- **UPDATE NEEDED on CT EAC Website:** 2025 Meeting notes and 2026 meeting dates and location to be put up on Website. ***Diane will email Kim and Jessica Lavoie the updates.***

New Business:

Kristin Connel (CFPA) Reports: CFPA has a new Executive Director, Joey Listro. Clare Cain, who has been serving as Interim Executive Director will continue at CFPA as Deputy Executive Director and will continue overseeing the Trails and Land Conservation programs.

Tracy DeGennaro, a guest at our meeting, came to report that she contacted the CFPA to report a bridge on the property that was making a water crossing impossible, as it was not built to be horse accessible, (*in fact not built very well at all*) and that the bridge was placed at the only safe water crossing and blocking her from the other trail systems in the Wilcox Conservation Area. This is town owned property in Middletown. She was upset as to the way she was talked to by the CFPA representative. He was very rude and was yelling at her on the phone saying she was not allowed on the blue-blazed trail. She explained that she is a resident of Middletown and rides her horse from her property and utilizes the trail to get onto other trails in this 126-acre forestland, and has ridden there for many years. The man continued his rude behavior when she told him there were town signs stating the trails were open to not only hiking but mentioned mountain biking and snowshoeing. signs stating what the usage was on the Town signs, and that local equestrians have always ridden there. Unfortunately she did not get the name of this person. She also mentioned that she spoke to another person who she thought might have been a town employee and he said the trails are multiple use. A report from a CHC-VHP member, Joel Conte previous to the meeting confirmed that “...Access to Wilcox,

Lamentation Mountain and Pistol Creek is mostly done through access of public, paved roads and private property granted on an individual basis by the property owners to the local people. The access would only be to people that the property owners personally know. There is no parking for trucks and trailers at Wilcox, Lamentation Mountain and Pistol Creek. Any parking would be roadside. There are no shoulders and several of the roads are very busy with heavy traffic. This is why equestrians have not pursued anything in Wilcox, because there is no parking to be able to access it. The blue trail has been ridden, but only as a connector to the red and white multi-use trails. There are some unmarked trails not on any maps. To my knowledge, local equestrians have been using Wilcox for at least 20 to 25 years, and possibly longer."

Our other guest, Janet Samperi also confirmed that she boards her horse farm in Middletown with other horse owners and they have also used these trails for years.

Diane noted that CHC has had issues with the wording of the usage of the blue-blazed trails for years as many are old cart roads or trail connectors to other systems and that this was one of the reasons that how and why the Legislators decided to create the CT Equine Advisory Council to meet with CFPA & DEEP. Diane recommended Tracy to attend and possibly become a member of the Middletown Conservation & Agricultural Commission that meets every 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm (*sometimes by zoom*). The meetings if held person are at the Municipal Building, 245 deKoven Drive, Room 208, Middletown, CT 06457

Kristin Connel will bring this report to Claire Cain.

Up Coming Meeting: Next Meeting: September 24th, 2026. 6:60 PM
Location: Town of Newington Human Services 200 Garfield Street, Newington.

****ADDED NOTE 7/23/2026: Draft Meeting Notes were emailed out for approval to all members and approved by email: 1. Kristin Connell, 2nd Danielle Borrelli***

Your CHC Representation around the state...



CONNECTICUT GREENWAYS COUNCIL

Members of the Connecticut Greenways Council are appointed by the Governor and the leaders of the General Assembly. Their duties include advising and assisting in the coordination of state agencies, municipalities, regional planning organizations and private citizens in voluntarily planning and implementing a system of greenways; providing assistance to state agencies, municipalities, regional planning organizations and private citizens in the technical aspects of planning, designing and implementing greenways, including advice on securing state, federal and nongovernmental grants; advising DEEP on selection of CT Recreational Trails Program grants; and establishing criteria for designation of greenways. Many Council members have had direct experience with trail and greenway development, and they can provide valuable insight into the development of successful

local and regional projects. [CT Greenways Council](#)

Your purchase of a Connecticut Greenways license plate will make a difference! These plates both raise the public awareness of the importance of our greenways AND provide funding for state and local efforts to preserve, restore and protect our greenways. Greenway systems offer an exciting opportunity to reestablish connections between the State's natural and cultural resource base and its people. It has been said that greenways connect the places we live to the places we love. **Greenways License Plate Applications:**



https://portal.ct.gov/dmv/vehicle-services/get-vanity-special-plates?language=en_US

The CT Greenways Council meetings are open to the public. The Council meets at **9:00 am on the 2nd Tuesday** of each month (*except August, and December*) virtually and/or at the offices of VHB, Inc. located at 100 Great Meadow Road Suite 200, in Wethersfield, Connecticut. Contact Kimberly Bradley, DEEP Trails and Greenways Coordinator, to be added to the meeting announcement distribution list kimberly.bradley@ct.gov.

CT GREENWAYS Report:

Kim Bradley DEEP Reports:

The CT Greenways Council held the 27th annual **Greenways Awards Ceremony** on June 5, 2026 at Charter Oak Park in Manchester, CT. This year's award winners can be overviewed in the Press Release here: <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/news-releases/news-releases---2026/connecticut-greenways-council-to-hold-27th-annual-greenway-awards>

CT Recreational Trail Grant Updates:

On May 29, 2026, the State Bond Commission allocated \$15 million for Recreational Trail Grant Program. As a result of the CT Greenways Council Grant review committee is in the process of reviewing award decisions. Award recommendations will then move through CT DEEP Leadership Review, anticipating grant decisions late summer 2026.

Airline State Park Trail ALSPT Rural Health Transformation Grant - Project has \$7 million this year to support both minor alterations and improvement of trail conditions (vegetation management, minor drainage restoration, re surfacing, etc.) parking, and Engagement efforts.

The 8th Annual CT Trail Symposium will be held at Southern CT State University in New Haven on October 2, 2026. The theme will be Benefits of Greenways. As the planning develops all information can be found here: <https://cttrails.uconn.edu/symposium/>
Diane, Danielle & Ann Marie will work on a presentation

Out Reach / Education:

No Child Left Inside Past Events



Denise & Diane Ciano participated in the **No Child Left Inside Families in the Parks Program 2026 Spring Kick-off Event-Free Family Fishing Day** with [Fish with CARE](#) at [Black Rock State Park](#) in Thomaston, CT on Saturday May 9, 2026 from 10 am to 3 pm . Turnout was low due to forecasted rain, but it held off until 3:00. Kids loved the horses and enjoyed releasing the fish into the pond. There were lots of interactive education tables set up from various groups.

Denise Ciano and Cory Iacino with her horse Go Go participated in DEEP No Child Left Inside Dino Day at Dinosaur State Park, Summer Festival, Rocky Hill



Out Reach / Education: UP COMING EVENTS - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

If any can help out with bringing a horse(s) to these events, please contact Diane Ciano 203-910-9919 or 203-757-1904 Thank you.

No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Events: <https://ctparks.com/NCLI>

AUGUST

- **Friday /Saturday August 14th - 15th** - NCLI Families in the Parks Program with the Last Green Valley and the Friends of **Pachaug State Forest, Voluntown, CT** - Perseids Meteor Shower/Campout - Pachaug State Forest Youth Group Camping Area.
- **Saturday August 22nd** - NCLI Families in the Parks Program in partnership with DEEP Boating -Boating Day Event at **Hopeville Pond State Park, Griswold, CT** from 12 to 4 pm

September

- **Friday/Saturday/Sunday - September 11, 12, 13, 2026** - Girl Scouts Love State Parks Weekend-Campout at **Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison, CT** (*for registered Girl Scouts and their families*)
Saturday September 19th - Bat Appreciation Day at **Old New-Gate Prison & Coppermine, East Granby, CT** from 10 am to 3 pm

Continuing Education:

Horse Owner's Corner: Timely Tips – Air Quality and Your Horse

by Dr. Jenifer Nadeau, UConn Equine Extension Specialist and Education Chair of CHC

Recently in Connecticut, we have had a decline in air quality at certain times of the year. This occurs mainly due to smoke from wildfires in other regions coming our way but can also be a result of particulate matter in the air. It is important to be aware of the danger of this air to your horse.

In the past few years, wildfires have been on the increase. Wildfire occurs when there is unplanned or uncontrolled burning in a natural area like a forest or grassland. They typically start in natural or rural areas and can spread to more populated areas. Wildfires can start due to natural phenomena like volcanoes or lightning strikes, but the most common cause is human activity (89% of the average number of wildfires 2018-2022). This can include burning debris, equipment or vehicle malfunctions, unattended campfires and discarded cigarettes. Wildfires occur all over the world. Places such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Western Cape of South Africa, and Southern Europe are particularly susceptible, since they have forested areas, grasslands and shrublands, especially if the area is experiencing an extended period of drought and high temperatures.

Low humidity and high wind speeds are two ingredients which act to increase fire danger. These two factors combined with drier vegetation are most prevalent during the primary and secondary fire seasons. The National Weather Service states that the primary wildfire season occurs from Feb 1st until May 1st, in late winter and early spring. They say that the lengthening daylight hours increase surface temperature and in conjunction with higher wind speeds, dries out vegetation. Historically, the cooling effect of shade combined with the high moisture content of vegetation leads to the end of the spring fire season, which is when most spring wildfires occur.

The National Weather Service goes on to state that the secondary wildfire season occurs from Sept 15th until Dec 15th. Normally for the midsouth, September and October are the driest months of the year, and cooler temperatures reduce the threat of thunderstorms. The jet stream is also usually located well north of the midsouth. During this time, vegetation begins to dry out, and the growing season is ending, and that can lead to an extended period of fire danger. The number of wildfires is typically less in the fall than in the spring, but some of the largest fires on record have occurred in the fall especially after a prolonged drought (ex. 2007).

Recent data has shown that wildfire season is lengthening, with wildfires starting earlier in the year and lasting well into the fall and winter months. Additionally, average burn time of an individual fire has increased from 6 days between 1973 and 1982, to 52 days between 2003 and 2012. Growth in large fire activity and area burned have been exacerbated by rising temperatures, reduced winter snowpack, earlier snowmelt, reduced summer precipitation and increased evaporation.

Here are some tips to prevent wildfires for you to keep in mind, according to the US Department of the Interior:

- Build a fire in an open location and far from flammable materials (scrape away grass, leaves etc. down to the mineral soil and locate it far from logs, trees, etc)
- Make sure the fire is completely extinguished and cold when you leave it.
- Check weather and drought conditions, which can affect flammability of vegetation (grasses, trees bushes) around your property. Avoid activities that involve sparks when it's hot, dry and windy and always have water nearby.
- Check your tires, bearings, and axles on your trailer. Worn tires, and ungreased axles and bearings can heat up, causing sparks. So can a safety chain dragging on the ground.
- Keep vehicles off dry grass.
- Regularly maintain your vehicle and your equipment (sparks can come from unmaintained lawnmowers, ATVs, trucks, etc) and start a fire.
- Keep sparks away from dry vegetation.
- Carry a shovel, bucket and fire extinguisher in your vehicle to put out fires.
- Off-highway vehicles must have a spark arrester.

Fires can greatly affect air quality. Smoke can affect horses just like humans, it irritates the eyes and respiratory tract, aggravates conditions like heaves (recurrent airway obstruction), and reduces lung function. High concentrations of particulates can cause continued coughing, increased nasal discharge, wheezing and cause increased physical effort in breathing. Particulates can also reduce the ability of the lungs to remove foreign materials, such as pollen and bacteria, to which horses are normally exposed through altering the immune system.

To determine when you should alter your activities due to smoke, you can check the air quality index (AQI); airnow.gov is a reliable site. Here are some guidelines for your horse:

Green (AQI from 0 to 50): Air quality is good; air pollution poses little to no risk. All activities for all healthy horses are appropriate.

Yellow (AQI from 51 to 100): Air quality is moderate. Horses with acute heaves or those recovering from respiratory illness should be limited to slow walks.

Orange (AQI from 101 to 150): Air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups including horses with a history of heaves, even if they aren't in the midst of a flare-up should have limited activity. If smoke is visible, and the AQI is over 100, outdoor physical activity should be minimized. This is to help keep particles out of the deepest part of the lungs. If the horse will have prolonged exposure, you should wet hay. Horses with lung and heart disease have increased risk.

Red (AQI from 151 to 200): Air quality is unhealthy for any horse. Ride only at a slow walk or choose to ride on a better air quality day. If the AQI is over 150, equine events should be canceled. Stop all activity and remain indoors if an AQI over 150 is expected for several days.

Purple (AQI from 201 to 300): Air quality is very unhealthy for all horses. Horses should be kept inside, and any activity should be stopped. Consider using a nebulizer device if an AQI over 200 is expected for an extended period.

Maroon (AQI from 301 to 500): Air quality is hazardous for all horses. Horses should be kept inside, and any activity should be stopped. Consider relocating yourself and your animals until air quality improves if an AQI over 400 is expected for an extended period.

As temperatures continue to warm, we can expect the fire season to lengthen further, especially as drought increases. Fires can occur at any time of the year. It is important to stay educated on wildfire prevention. Be careful and act responsibly. Feel free to call or email with any questions you have: (860) 486-4471 or jenifer.nadeau@uconn.edu. What topics would you like to see in the horse owner's corner next month? Send ideas to jenifer.nadeau@uconn.edu. Thanks, and have fun with your horses!

Sources:

Barakat, C. 2026. What the air quality index (AQI) means for your horse. Equus Magazine. <https://equusmagazine.com/riding/air-quality-index> Accessed 7/16/2026.

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United States Department of the Interior. Blog: 10 Tips to Prevent Wildfires: <https://www.doi.gov/blog/10-tips-prevent-wildfires>

University of California-Davis Weill School of Veterinary Medicine Center for Equine Health. 2020. Wildfire Smoke and Horses. <https://ceh.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/health-topics/wildfire-smoke-and-horses> Accessed 7/16/2026.

CT Horse Council Membership 2026 – Summer Newsletter

If your name is not on the supporting membership list, won't you please consider supporting your state horse council. It is greatly appreciated and needed. Thank you in advance.

* = Volunteer Horse Patrol Members = WELCOME NEW MEMBERS	
2026 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS	2026 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS
Daniel Barnett – Providence, RI *Ruth Beardsley – Bethany John Bennett – Putnam Carol Birdsey – Middletown Mary Bonville – North Stonington Gary Borla – Torrington *Danielle Borrelli – Northford Sally Carter – Nashua, NH *Jean Casella – Higganum *Rain Chocholka – Waterbury *Denise Ciano – Wolcott *Diane Ciano – Plymouth Valerie Clark – Thompson *Susan Crawford – Hampton *Tracy DeGennaro – Middletown Paul DeNio – New Hartford *Arlene Doherty – Stafford Springs Michelle Dubner – West Hartford *Melissa Evarts – Clinton Esther Fiddes – Bethel *Kowboy Ken Forcier – Oxford *Vevette Greenberg – Oxford Kristie Gonsalves – Canton Fran Hornick – Bridgeport *Cory Iacino – Harwinton Valerie Kane – New York, NY Theresa Kennedy – Killingworth *ShawnaLee Kwashnak – Middlebury Kathleen LaTronica – Woodbridge Cathy Latulipe – Torrington Cynthia LeMay – Watertown Andrew Liveten – Bethany Lisa Mazzotta-Ivaldi – Glastonbury Linda McLaughlin – Killingworth *Gina McManus – Clinton *Billie McNealy – Waterford *Diane Morton – Lebanon Jacqueline Mickiewicz – Marlborough Jennifer Nadeau – Andover Debbie O'Donnell – Allenstown, NH	Randy Olmstead – Terryville Carol Parker – New Fairfield Mary Petruzzi – Woodbury Jennifer Reilly – Coventry Katie Richards – Bethel Gary Rutkauskas – Plymouth *Janet Samperi – North Haven Celeste Santos-Rivera – Voluntown *Meg Sautter – Newington Ann Marie Seavey-Cioffi – Danbury Jeremy Serwer – East Woodstock Marcia Sigman – Portland Maryann Smith – Salem *Ruth Strontzer – Haddam *Susan Taricani – Stafford Springs Anna Tardif – Lebanon Aubrey Tarr – Willimantic Bethany Thatcher – Sandy Hook Penny Urbanowicz – Enfield Karen von Bachel – South Windsor Teresa Waitkins – Stafford Springs
	2026 FAMILY MEMBERS
	*Cathy Clouse & Jim – Cheshire *Joel Conte & Joanne – Southington *Holly Ely - Jay & Nora – Granby Roger & Linda Ferraro – Salem Linda Francois – Bethany Ted Hintz – Middle Haddam Carolann Keeley – Wilton *Ed Levin & Patricia – Bristol Carla & Bob Lord – Southbury Nancy & Richard Mangino – Cheshire Alice & Neil Marrinan Family – Oakdale Karen Muller – Bethany Don & Jean Nordell – East Windsor *Nancy Palermo-Lee & John – Westbrook

2026 SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

If your organization is not on the supporting organizations list won't you please consider supporting your state horse council - Contact. Carol Birdsey. membership@cthorsecouncil.org 860-344-1804



www.granbyhorsecouncilct.com



Fairfield Bridge Trails Association
fairfieldbridgetrails.com



Litchfield Hills Driving Club

www.litchfieldhillsdrivingclub.org



**Lower Connecticut River Valley
Horsemen's Club**

www.lcrvhc.org



Middlebury Bridge Land Association

www.middleburybridle.org



Newtown Bridge Lands Association

newtownhorses@gmail.com <https://nblact.com>



Pomfret Horse & Trail Association

www.pomfrehorseandtrail.com



www.reddingtonrockridingclub.com

2026 Business Member Directory

CHC would like to encourage horse owners to use the services of our member businesses. This will help our industry to prosper. If your business does not appear here, consider joining CHC so that we may add your listing as well. This information is made available at our trade show booth and on our website.

Note: Listings in our business directory is a service to our members only, and does not necessarily endorse any individual, business, or product.

**B&H Blacksmith
& Farriery LLC**
(860)-309-4025

Bud Dore, CJF
Hannah Calbick, CF

b.hfarriery@gmail.com

Morris, CT 06763



**Connecticut Horse
Cremation, LLC**

A LOVING & DIGNIFIED
TRIBUTE TO YOUR HORSE

Family Owned and Operated

860-881-7802 Jeff Blaschke

860-881-7823 Ryan Blaschke

Email: cthorsecremation@gmail.com

www.cthorsecremation.com



We are Available
24 Hours/7 Days

DOUG DUBITSKY, ESQ.
EQUINE LAW
860-808-8601

doug@lawyer.com

Drafty Pines Farm

Emily & Daniel Chaplin
70 South Cady Lane
Central Village, CT 06374

860-564-4037

www.draftypinesfarm.com

email: draftypinesfarm@sbcglobal.net

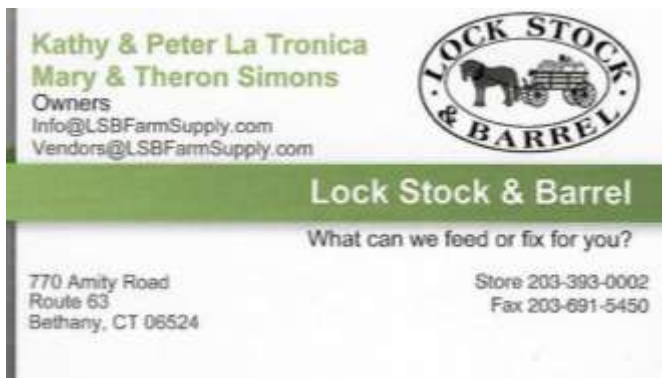
We teach basic riding skills in addition to overall care, health and maintenance of horse ownership. We specialize in beginners that have little or no experience around horses and who would like to discover more about them in a safe, fun environment. Our lessons are designed to help build confidence and self-esteem based on the students' individual skill level and desire to learn.



Horse Programs - Equine Events - Horse Boarding
East Haddam - Victoria Conlin 860-682-0834



Date: _____ (860) 563-7387
Time: _____ www.expressyourpet.com
945 Cromwell Ave., Rocky Hill, CT 06067



Kathy & Peter La Tronica
Mary & Theron Simons
Owners
Info@LSBFarmSupply.com
Vendors@LSBFarmSupply.com

Lock Stock & Barrel

What can we feed or fix for you?

770 Amity Road
Route 63
Bethany, CT 06524

Store 203-393-0002
Fax 203-691-5450

Neigh.com

Boxford MA

Lauren

978- 409-5748

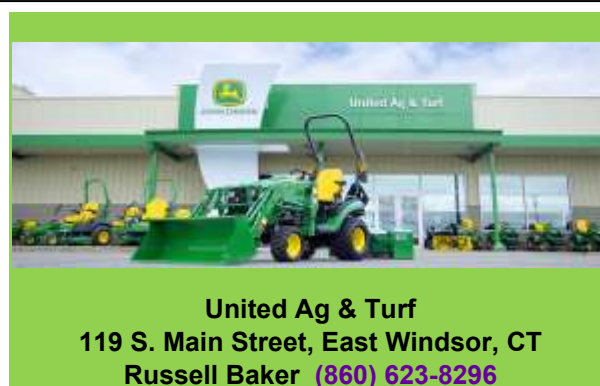
Rebel Therapy

Bovine & Equine Therapy

Cold Fascia Mobilization

Cyro Therapy

Rebecca Baker 860-398- 0831



United Ag & Turf
119 S. Main Street, East Windsor, CT
Russell Baker [\(860\) 623-8296](tel:8606238296)

**PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR STATE HORSE
COUNCIL WITH YOUR BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP**

To advertise on our Website & Newsletter,
please send your business membership to:
The Connecticut Horse Council, Inc. P.O. Box 57
Durham, CT 06422-0057
Send your Business card JPEG (preferred)
or PDF to: Diane Ciano
DianeMCiano@gmail.com

Thank You!

**PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR STATE HORSE
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or PDF to: Diane Ciano
DianeMCiano@gmail.com

Thank You!

2026-2027 Officers and Board Members

The Connecticut Horse Council Officers and Board of Directors are elected volunteers who are dedicated to helping the equine industry grow.

President

Diane Marie Ciano

Plymouth, CT

DianeMCiano@gmail.com

Chairman of the Board

Stewart Beckett, III, DVM

Glastonbury, CT

Committee Chairs:

Animal Health and Welfare

Laurianne Goulet

CTHorse911@cthorsecouncil.org

1st Vice President

Laurianne Goulet

Cromwell, CT

860-997-6434

CTHorse911@cthorsecouncil.org

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Oxford, CT

Vevette Greenberg

Oxford, CT

Gary Rutkauskas

Plymouth, CT

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Danbury, CT

Ruth Strontzer,

Haddam, CT

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Dr. Jenifer Nadeau

Associate Professor

Equine Extension Specialist

Unit 4040, Dept. Animal Science

University of Connecticut

17 Manter Rd., Storrs, CT 06269-4040

(860) 486-4471 phone

jenifer.nadeau@uconn.edu

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Cromwell, CT

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OPEN

Publicity / Newsletter

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Ann Marie Seavy-Cioffi

Road Safe

Diane Ciano

Membership Secretary

Carol Birdsey

Middletown, CT

membership@cthorsecouncil.org

Trails

Diane Ciano

DianeMCiano@gmail.com

Recording Secretary

Carol Birdsey

Middletown, CT

860-344-1804

membership@cthorsecouncil.org

Web Site

Laurianne Goulet

CTHorse911@cthorsecouncil.org

Zoning

Cory Iacino

THE CONNECTICUT HORSE COUNCIL, INC.

2026

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership Classification (Check One)

☐ Individual \$20 ☐ Family \$30 ☐ Student \$15

☐ Business or Professional \$40 ☐ Club \$40

☐ NEW ☐ RENEWAL Membership decal available ☐ Static ☐ Sticker

Check which one you wish to receive with your membership. Additional decals are available for \$1.00 each

How did you hear about the CHC? _____

CLUB or BUSINESS NAME (if applicable) _____

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY / STATE/ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

NUMBER OF HORSES OWNED: _____

AREAS OF INTEREST (Please check all that apply)

☐ Trails ☐ Zoning ☐ Booth ☐ Legislation ☐ Website ☐ Emergency/Disaster Preparedness
☐ Volunteer Horse Patrol ☐ Education ☐ CT Horse 911

I would be willing to serve on a committee of my interest. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ More info, please
 I would be willing to have my name listed with CHC **Connections** as a person to contact in an emergency involving horses, or for emergency resources. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ More info, please

Please describe resources/services you would be able to provide on the back of this form.

I wish to join The Connecticut Horse Council, Inc.

_____ Date _____

Signature

Make checks payable to: The Connecticut Horse Council, Inc.

P.O. Box 57
 Durham, CT 06422-0057

www.cthorsecouncil.org
 Telephone: 860-344-1804

Connecticut Horse Council **Connections** is a volunteer network being developed to provide assistance and resources to our fellow horse owners in the state during times of natural or man-made disasters, or emergency incidents such as fires, loose horses, or trailer accidents. When there is an incident or emergency situation involving horses **Connections** will be a resource for local fire departments, first response dispatchers, and, as they continue to organize, with local CTSART Region Team Leaders. If you choose to participate in **Connections**, CHC will add your name to our list of people who can be contacted when help is needed.

[] CHC has my permission to make my name available to my local Fire Department/local Emergency Dispatcher as an experienced horseperson to call in the event of an incident involving horse/s.

My local FD is _____

Local Police _____

[] CHC has my permission to contact me to provide emergency trailering for horse/s.

Type/size of vehicle _____

[] CHC has my permission to contact me to provide temporary emergency shelter/housing/paddock space for horses which need to be relocated in emergency situation

Describe _____

[] CHC has my permission to contact me to provide emergency supplies (feed, bedding, or other) for horses involved in emergency incidents.

Describe _____

[] I am unable to participate at this time but would like to be included in future alerts or mailings.

Although not yet mandated by Connecticut statute, the CT State Animal Response Team regions recognize the needs of large animals. CHC remains committed to assisting the five Region Team Leaders in their efforts to include horses in their disaster response plans.

[] Please give me the contact name of my CTSART Region Team Leader so I can contact him/her.

I attest that I am at least 18 years of age and that the information I provide The Connecticut Horse Council, Inc. is true and accurate. I understand that I may, in any particular situation, prudently decline to offer my good faith services. I further understand that The Connecticut Horse Council, Inc. acts only as a conduit for providing this information to individuals and/or organizations for the purpose of emergency response, and CHC is not liable for any injury or misadventure resulting in my volunteer efforts.