

THE FALL 2011 RESOURCE

ELCR advances the conservation of land for horse-related activity.

Sustain Your Horse Parks Series: Foothills Equestrian and Nature Center (FENCE)

By Jennifer M. Keeler

Every weekend across the United States, equestrians gather at a variety of facilities for a show or event in their favorite discipline. But beyond the trophies and ribbons, many horse lovers may not consider the importance these public and private venues have in ensuring places are available for training and competition. What is most important regardless of how they are structured and managed, every equestrian has a stake in helping ensure their future. "Without the active involvement of equestrians speaking up for their treasured places, and supporting them with their time, talent and treasure, these beautiful and vital competition venues may be lost forever," notes Deb Balliet, CEO of the Equine Land Conservation Resource. In this issue of *The Resource* and on our website www.elcr.org, ELCR is profiling several horse parks around the country which demonstrate various organizational structures, community involvement, and efforts to ensure places are available for equine use.



Nestled in the foothills of Tryon, NC is a nature and equestrian treasure—the Foothills Equestrian Nature Center, otherwise known as FENCE. Owned by a non-profit organization which, as stated in its mission statement, is "dedicated to providing facilities and focus for education, recreation and preservation in nature studies and equestrian activities with the aim of enhancing these endeavors to enrich the quality

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of life for the community”, FENCE came into being in 1985 as a non-profit nature education and outdoor recreation center, built around an original land grant of 112 acres generously contributed by the Mahler family. Now governed by a volunteer board of directors working with a small salaried staff, FENCE’s property is protected by a conservation easement and therefore will always be available, free from development, for future generations to enjoy.

Since its founding, FENCE has grown to its present 384 acres and six miles of trails through hardwood forest, meadow, and wetland and serves some 65,000 people each year with programs in nature study, outdoor recreation and equestrian competition. Dedicated to educating the public about nature, FENCE offers a variety of programs and amenities for hikers, birdwatchers, gardeners, and astronomers, and also helps educate future generations by working with local schools in their “Project FENCE” natural history curriculum and hosting summer day camps. Gretchen Verbonic is a FENCE volunteer who also serves on the Board of Directors, as well as Chair of the organization’s Finance Committee. “First and foremost, the focus of FENCE is on nature and education, although we offer a variety of other activities which include our equestrian center and therapeutic riding program,” she notes.

Since holding its first event in the late 1980’s, FENCE’s equestrian center has gained a reputation as one of the finest facilities of its kind in the Southeast. Comprised of three lighted show rings with all-weather footing (including a covered arena), stabling for over 300 horses in eleven barns,

But without support from volunteers...FENCE would not be able to continue serving the community.

and spectator seating, the FENCE Equestrian Center hosts events in all disciplines year-round, including hunter/jumper competitions, cross-country events, dressage, carriage driving, and the famous Block House Steeplechase. In addition, FENCE offers a therapeutic riding program which teaches horsemanship skills to adults and children with physical and developmental disabilities.

Kay Whitlock has managed dressage shows at FENCE for over twenty years, and is a strong supporter of the non-profit organization. “I manage competitions at several different

facilities in the region, and FENCE is one of the best groups that I get to work with,” Whitlock explains. “Facilities with different organizational structures, such as state-run properties, seem to fall victim to budget cuts and don’t have necessary funds for maintenance, equipment, or staff. Some parks are burdened by tremendous debt from the land which they can’t get out from under. Others don’t have extensive community involvement and have to fight a perception of elitism. None of these are issues with FENCE.”

Verbonic explains that FENCE primarily relies on grants and donations, which may be earmarked by donors for a specific purpose such as a new building or arena. “Our biggest challenge at this time is that with the tough economic times, our donations are down,” says Verbonic. “Our equestrian center facilities are rented out to various groups to hold shows and events, and the money generated goes back into the property for maintenance and to further support the nature programs. We also hold community events such as a golf tournament and a wine and art festival in

the fall to help generate additional revenue.”

But without support from volunteers, serving in a myriad of roles in both the nature center and equestrian facility, FENCE would not be able to continue serving the community. Verbonic, a busy licensed dressage judge by day, makes time to serve in multiple volunteer capacities for FENCE and is committed to the center’s success. Her dedication and active involvement sets an example for horse lovers everywhere to help preserve the venues they utilize and treasure. Become educated about the organizational structure of equestrian facilities in your area, understand the challenges facing them, become an advocate for these sites, and find out how you can help beyond simply attending the occasional horse show. Yes, writing a donation check is important, indeed. “However, even if someone doesn’t have the funds to donate to a facility, they may have the time to contribute as a volunteer,” says Verbonic. “Every bit helps.”

Look for additional horse park profiles on the Equine Land Conservation Resource website, <http://elcr.org/sustain.php>





Conservation Partners Spotlight: Sustainable Stables

By Clay Nelson

Sustainable Stables (Durham, NC) assists horse farm owners with implementing “best management practices,” or BMPs. “BMPs are practices that help protect soil and water on your property and nearby,” notes Lynnette Batt, co-owner. “On a horse farm, these include things like composting manure and fencing horses out of streams. Going further, they can include bigger projects like conservation easements and stream and wetland restorations.”

Sustainable Stables is working with the NC Division of Soil and Water to provide information and assistance to the equestrian community on BMPs. They developed educational materials highlighting BMPs on a local demonstration farm, which included a rainwater collection tank used to water gardens and bathe horses, and a rain garden that traps and filters polluted runoff. Sustainable Stables is also working to help make the state’s agricultural cost share program -- which provides financial and technical assistance for implementing BMPs -- more horse-friendly.

BMPs are becoming increasingly important as regulations tighten in response to an increasing number of horse farms. In North Carolina, for example, farms in certain watersheds must



Lynnette Batt of Sustainable Stables reviewing site plans with NC land owners developing a horse farm.

fence horses 25 feet from streams; in other states, farms must develop waste management plans to keep nutrients from horse manure and fertilizer out of streams.

Sustainable Stables LLC is a small business that provides site planning, design and farm management services to horse property owners. Principals Clay Nelson and Lynnette Batt founded the company in 2009. They emphasize sustainable horsekeeping practices that make good financial sense, create healthy environments, and help to protect nature.

As a primary service, Sustainable Stables provides assistance with facility planning and design, specializing in small to medium-sized farms. They have successfully worked with land owners in North Carolina, New York, Maine, and Michigan to develop plans for properties ranging from 5 to 250 acres. “Whether building from scratch or renovating an existing facility, creating a well thought-out site plan is critical to developing a smart, sustainable horse farm,” says Lynnette. Planning will help answer questions on size, location, and type of facilities (barns, paddocks, pastures, manure storage, etc) based on the owners’ interests and local environmental conditions such as soil type and wind/rain patterns.

For more information contact Clay and Lynnette at www.sustainablestables.com.

ELCR in Wyoming



ELCR President Larry Byers and Advisory Council member, Rand Wentworth, President of the Land Trust Alliance present Luke Lynch and John Turner, (ret) with a plaque recognizing their support of ELCR in its formative years and in recognition of their equine land conservation work. The presentation occurred at a gathering in Teton Village, WY, at the ranch of ELCR Board member Robin Lighter and her husband, Sam.

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Horse Manure on Trails—Myths and Mysteries

By Merle Richmond, BS, Biology, Eastern Michigan University & M.A., Vertebrate Zoology, UCLA

When equestrians share trails with other users, the first word out of the non-equestrian's mouth when asked about equestrians on the trail is "YUCK".

The big pile of brown "yuck" is large, smelly and therefore, it must be bad in every aspect. It must carry germs first of all that will make us sick. And if they are environmentally involved, it must spread the dreaded exotic, invasive plants they hear about.

Contrary to the belief of many, healthy horses do not carry statistically significant numbers of indicator organisms or pathogenic organisms. *E. coli* which is an indicator species for human pathogenic bacteria is almost nonexistent in normal horse manure. A study "An Analysis of Human Pathogens found in Horse/Mule manure along the John Muir Trail in King's Canyon, Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks," was completed by Robert Wayne Derlet, M.D. and James Reynolds Carlson, Ph.D. both of UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, California. The purpose of this study was to determine

whether specific pathogenic organisms including *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and/or *Giardia* could be found in quantities that could contaminate water sources for backpackers along popular sections of the John Muir Trail. In this study, the chief aim was to identify *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. It was found that horses and pack animals generally have a low likelihood of importing *E. coli* and *Salmonella* into wilderness areas. Other studies indicate that if a horse or pack animal is not healthy, there is a greater risk of finding pathogenic organisms. It has also been noted the "if" horse manure contained significant pathogens horse owners and especially veterinarians would show increased incidence of these diseases—which is not so.

Environmentally conscious individuals will also point out that horse manure obviously contains seeds from the grass



and hay they eat, and therefore, must be a significant factor in the spread of exotic weed seeds. Paranoia here has led to rule regarding weed free hay being required on some federal lands in the west. A research study ordered by the American Endurance Rides Conference, conducted by Dr. Stith T. Gower, Department of Forest Ecology and Management at the University of Wisconsin and published December 28, 2006 finds

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Practice good manure management and Leave No Trace when horse camping.

to the contrary. Using sites in North Carolina, Kentucky, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan, non-native plant species composition and percent of total plant species did not differ between horse and hiker trails. He states "The results of this study and others demonstrate that horse hay and manure contains seeds of non-native plant species, but native and non-native plant species rarely become established on horse trails because of the harsh environmental conditions." Hay is composed of sun loving plants that do not grow in forests. They may sprout and become small plants, but never grow into seed producing plants. Other factors like wind, water

(Continued on next page)

(Horse Manure, continued)

and wildlife play more important roles in this dispersal. The requirement for “weed free” hay places a heavy, chemical burden on the land in order to produce it. Locally grown hay would provide the same benefit since the weeds in locally grown hay would only contain those weed already in that geographic area.

So, it gets back to the “YUCK” factor. As equestrians using the trails and parking areas, always be sure to totally clean up parking areas. Work on training your horse to step on the trail to relieve its self. It is not reasonable to require riders to dismount and kick it on the

trail, as many are older and some are handicapped. Horse back riding is a sport that these people can participate in to enjoy long hours in the wilderness. At stream crossing, water your horse and then move away from the stream.

next to a lake or stream. Manure in this case should be placed in bunkers for regular collection.

Try to educate land managers that horse back riding is a low impact sport, enjoyed by the very young to the very

...always be sure to totally clean up parking areas.

The occasional horse that would drop its manure in a stream is insignificant as the fast moving water disperses it quickly and natural bacteria will break it down quickly. Nutrient enrichment is only significant if there is a camp where large numbers of horses would be present is

old, including many that are handicapped or have special needs. Maybe we should be more concerned about the treatment that our own human sewage from our homes get. Look up primary, secondary and tertiary sewage treatment. What type does your town, city, village have? n

ELCR Announces New Additions to Advisory Council

By Jennifer Keeler, Yellow Horse Marketing



Marty Bauman

MARTY BAUMAN is president and owner of Classic Communications, a well known and highly respected name in the world of equestrian public relations, marketing and event management. During his 14 years as Director of Public Relations for the United States Equestrian Team (USET), Bauman was selected by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) to serve as equestrian press officer at three Olympic Games, and in 1998

he served as Chairman of the USOC's Olympic Public Relations Association. Bauman has also acted as press chief for the last seven FEI Show Jumping World Cup Finals held in the United States, and most recently was Director of Media Services and Operations for the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games in Lexington, Kentucky. Bauman oversees public relations for some of the nation's biggest equestrian events such as the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event and Hampton Classic Horse Show, and also serves as Executive Director of the Show Jumping Hall of Fame and Museum, now located at Kentucky Horse Park.

In addition to his expertise in communications, Bauman is committed to environmental pursuits. In 1994, he helped the Rhode Island chapter of the Nature Conservancy with the announcement of its largest land purchase ever, Beane Point on Block Island. Three years later, he assumed management and marketing responsibility for the Charles River Watershed Association's Run of the Charles Canoe and Kayak race, helping develop the event to currently attract about 1500 entrants

annually, with each participant sharing a stake in the health of the river.

KATHERINE “KAT” IMHOFF currently serves as the State Director for the Nature Conservancy in Montana. Previously, Imhoff was the vice president of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., which owns and operates Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, in addition to posts as executive director for the Preservation Alliance of Virginia and vice president for conservation and development for the Piedmont Environmental Council. In her appointment to the ELCR Advisory Council, Imhoff brings expertise as a conservationist, planner, fund-raiser, and equestrian while serving as a bridge to conservation organizations.



Photo courtesy of Lynn Babiker

Katherine “Kat” Imhoff

A Utah native and former foxhunter that still enjoys riding and “beagling”, Imhoff has lived and worked across the country. Because of these experiences, Imhoff has a special perspective as to how land conservation efforts vary between states and regions. “Conservation efforts for large public lands in Montana can be very different than parcel-by-parcel individual farms in Virginia,” noted Imhoff. “But Montana and Virginia landowners are alike in that when you scrape below the surface, they all care deeply about their property, and support conservation out of a love for the land.” n

Georgiana Hubbard McCabe: A Founder's Story of Love, Loss and Land

By Jessi Jump

A lifelong horse person, Georgiana Hubbard McCabe's connection to the land fostered early on. Growing up on 25 acres in Greenwich, Connecticut, she spent a great deal of time at the land grant farm down the street. John Lyon, owner of the idyllic farm, allowed the little girl to milk cows, gather apples in the orchard and play with the horses.

It was the land that Georgiana loved. So, it was a "painful shock" when that land sold in the late 1960's to a developer. The effort to prevent the land she loved from being divided into 175 one acre units led her to the Open Space Action Institute who declared the land to hold nothing ecologically unique. Finally 55 acres were set aside by the town's planning and zoning and the remaining 120 acres became the home to 199 condominiums.

"It was very motivating that my first attempt failed," Georgiana related. Also feeling the pressure of land loss, her mother donated two acres to the fledgling Nature Conservancy and persuaded a neighbor to donate eight. This created a ten acre preserve, where Georgiana served as the Preserve Manager, learning and growing with the land trust movement.

"My mother's example was that protecting the land trumped any financial gain," she relates. By the 1990's, Georgiana had moved to Virginia, where a conservation easement on her own property was almost automatic. She became involved in the US Pony Clubs, through the interest of her children and in 1995, served on the Pony Club's Task Force for the 21st Century. Here it became obvious that the biggest threat to Pony Clubs and the entire equine industry, sport and lifestyle was land loss.

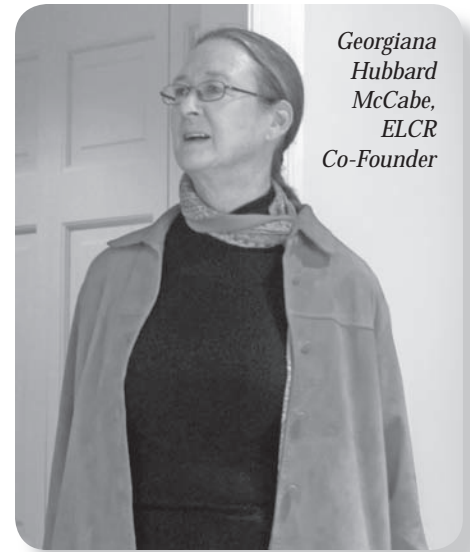
...it became obvious that the biggest threat to Pony Clubs and the entire equine industry, sport and lifestyle was land loss.

Four individuals from that meeting, Georgiana, Anson W.H. Taylor, Jr., Melanie Heacock and Rick Jorgensen set out to create an organization designed to conserve land for horse-related activity and stem the flow of land loss. From the passion and determination of those individuals, Equine Land Conservation Resource was born.

Through the years Georgiana has made her dedication to the issue and to the organization known through her tireless service on the Board of Directors and as President. In addition, she is one of ELCR's very first legacy donors, making the choice to include ELCR in her estate planning. "ELCR's work is not going to be finished in the next ten to fifteen years," Georgiana related. "I want to make sure that such an organization continues. As long as the mission is incomplete, I want to be a part of funding it."

"There is something deeply spiritual about being on the back of a horse, riding in the woods or cross country," Georgiana says. "It remains important that future generations are able to experience it."

If you would like to join Georgiana by including ELCR in your estate plans, please check the appropriate box on the reply form on the back page and return it to us or contact Deb Balliet at dballiet@elcr.org or (859) 455-8383. □



Georgiana
Hubbard
McCabe,
ELCR
Co-Founder

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