

THE SPRING 2012 RESOURCE

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

Driving to Save "Horse Country"

By Jennifer M. Keeler



When thinking of areas branded as "horse towns", Lexington, Kentucky, Ocala, Florida, and Saratoga, New York may immediately come to mind; but undoubtedly worthy of similar mention is Southern Pines, North Carolina. Located just over an hour southwest of the bustling Raleigh-Durham metropolitan area, the tranquility of Moore County has long been a haven for equestrians, even earning widespread recognition as "Horse Country."



Photo courtesy of Landon Russell

A cornerstone of Horse Country is The Walthour-Moss Foundation, a 4,052-acre nature preserve in the Sandhills of North Carolina that is home to large stands of longleaf pines and serves as a sanctuary for numerous endangered plants and wildlife. The Foundation was established as a charitable trust by the late William O. "Pappy" Moss, a lifelong fox hunter, to ensure the preservation of the open land that he and his wife Virginia so treasured. Long known for its equestrian use, the Foundation has also become a true environmental preserve and community asset, with land and trails open to the public year-round whether one is riding,

(Continued on next page)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 Driving to Save "Horse Country"
- 3 From the Saddle
- 3 ELCR Receives Award
- 4 Conservation Partners Spotlight: Essex County Trail Association

- 5 Dougherty Foundation Awards ELCR Funds for Education
- 6 Donor Spotlight: Ginevra Hunter
- 7 2012 ELCR Conservation Partners Events
- 8 ELCR Donation Form

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carriage driving, walking, or running. "We are very lucky to have access to over 4000 acres of open land," explained Landon Russell, Executive Director of The Walthour-Moss Foundation. "That's why it's so important to preserve its future."

It's a future which may be in jeopardy. In 2004, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) adopted a concept called the Strategic Highway Corridor Plan (SHCP), with the objective to create a network of high-speed freeways through the state. This plan contained five major road improvement projects in Moore County, including a reclassification of U.S. Route 1 to "freeway" status, which could result in construction of a "bypass" around downtown Southern Pines to handle high-speed traffic. The NCDOT reported the change in U.S. 1's status as necessary to ease congestion on area roads, although citizens believe most traffic is local which would not necessarily be relieved by a freeway or bypass. Possible routes for the bypass would inevitably cut a wide swath through area farms and Foundation land.

The NCDOT insists there is no actual plan to route the \$150-million bypass through Horse Country, but citizens fear that the state department will ultimately act anyway. Neither the Foundation's importance to the community, its status as a non-profit organization, nor the probable crushing blow to local neighborhoods and businesses can protect land seizure by the government under "eminent domain," which allows property to be taken for government use or delegated to third parties and put to public or civic use, or for economic development. The Foundation lands are not currently under conservation easements or other government protection. "But even these measures offer no protection against condemnation by NCDOT," explained Russell. "We would like to think that

action such as the establishment of the Foundation by the Mosses would protect the land forever, but that's not necessarily the case."

If the U.S. 1 bypass project were to come to fruition, Horse Country and Foundation land would be in the center of the bulls-eye. "If you were to lop off just a part of the Foundation land, or even if the bypass missed our land completely, it would still devastate the neighboring Horse Country land," noted Russell.

An impressive mobilization of Southern Pines equestrians and other residents demonstrates how awareness and active involvement in community planning issues is vital to conservation of land.

Horse enthusiasts and downtown Southern Pines merchants, who believe the proposed bypass would devastate their businesses, have rallied together in opposition to the plan. On December 6, 2011, the Moore County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a strongly-worded resolution opposing any Comprehensive Transportation Plan that would route any portion of the future U.S. 1 corridor through Horse Country, and to petition for a reclassification of the "freeway" status imposed upon U.S. 1 by the NCDOT's Strategic Highway Corridor Plan. Within the next several days, the four municipalities closest to U.S. 1 also passed similar resolutions.

An impressive mobilization of Southern Pines equestrians and other residents demonstrates how awareness and active involvement in community planning issues is vital to conservation of land. But the issue is far from over. Local citizens must work together to find long-term solutions to traffic issues and continue to fight for preservation of the land that could be disrupted by the proposed freeway bypass. "The decisions being made now are going to dramatically affect the future of our towns and everyone who lives here," resident Alison McCormack told Southern Pines' newspaper, *The Pilot*. "Once done, the damage cannot be undone. We'll have to live with it forever. Forever is a very long time."

The Walthour-Moss Foundation was the 2010 recipient of a \$10,000 equine land conservation grant from the Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR) and Breyer Animal Creations. To learn more about the Foundation, visit their website, www.walthour-moss.org. ■



ELCR Receives Award for Outstanding Industry Support

ELCR received the 2011 Outstanding Industry Support Award from the Kentucky Horse Council (KHC) at their annual banquet on January 13, 2012. KHC recognized ELCR for its “quietly persistent work to protect equine land – both working farmland and natural trails,” according to KHC Executive Director Ginny Grulke. ■



ELCR's Denise O'Meara accepting the Outstanding Industry Support Award from KHC Executive Director Ginny Grulke.

From the Saddle

A letter from ELCR's CEO, Deb Balliet

There is a constant sense of urgency to ELCR's equine land and trail conservation awareness-raising, education and networking activity. Our vision is to enable horsemen across the nation to plan for the future of horses in their communities, forever. However, if we wait too long to recognize the issues and understand and implement the solutions, all will be lost.

Rand Wentworth, President of the Washington, D.C.-based Land Trust Alliance and a member of ELCR's Advisory Council offered this statement in January:

“We are in a critical phase for conserving farm land and open space in this country. The land that we protect in the next 15 years will determine the face of the American landscape in perpetuity. For horsemen, this will determine the future of the equestrian landscape and lifestyle for all time.”

As I think about the significance of this statement, unpleasant visual images cross my mind. I am reminded of the communities that develop a horse farm and name the subsequent shopping mall after the farm. However, it is not that development is wrong; it is, in fact, inevitable. It is for that reason that we are emphatic about the need for equestrians and leaders of equine organizations to be planning ahead for the future of horses and the places and spaces in our communities that we need to support them, and us.

“...we are emphatic about the need for equestrians and leaders of equine organizations to be planning ahead for the future of horses...”

We will keep up the “drum beat,” and continue to enhance our expert education and networking opportunities for your benefit. In fact, we are directing a great deal more resources to our Education Program – check it out at our issue pages and the Conservation Partner section on our website at www.ELCR.org to learn more.

We welcome one and all to join the cavalry at any time; for as Patrick Henry said, “Together We Stand, Divided We Fall.” ■



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Munson Photography

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Conservation Partners Spotlight: Essex County Trail Association

By Jennifer M. Keeler

Equestrian lands are fighting an ongoing war against urban sprawl, and it may seem as if an army is needed to turn the tide of development and preserve precious acres for riding. In the case of the Essex County Trail Association in Massachusetts, preserving land for the community did indeed take the effort of an army – a one-woman army.

Susanna Colloredo-Mansfeld grew up as an enthusiastic equestrian in Hamilton, MA, less than an hour north of Boston. Her studies and career took her away from historic Essex County until 1970, when she returned with her husband and three children to find the charming countryside she grew up in had changed. With many more houses dotting the landscape, trails she'd loved to ride on were no longer accessible.

...the landowners knew they had someone they could call if a situation needed to be addressed...

Determined to do something to help preserve precious acres for riding, she decided to pursue the formation of a local trail association. She invited members of local horse clubs to come together to discuss ideas, looked to area conservation groups and land trust organizations for guidance, and recruited the help of her neighbor, Ann Getchell of Groton House Farm. A plan was developed to help “police” the trails and act as communicators and liaisons between equestrians and landowners in order to regain the confidence of people whose private property had been taken for granted and even abused by horseback riders. “That way, the landowners knew they had someone they could call if a situation needed to be addressed, and we also would work with riders to be respectful, understand property restrictions, and encourage stewardship of the land,” explained Colloredo-Mansfeld.



Enjoying a peaceful ride on the ECTA trails

Since the time of her original idea to form a trail association in 1982, the tireless efforts of Colloredo-Mansfeld and other founding members of the Essex County Trail Association (ECTA) have paid off.

Today, the ECTA works to protect access to open land and a vast network of over 450 miles of trails throughout six towns in eastern Massachusetts, partnering with both public and private landowners to ensure that the experience of open trails is positive for them as well as the trail users. And while ECTA is a favorite with local equestrians, this active group is about much more than just horses, hosting many athletic, educational, and social events throughout the year including long-distance runs, nature walks, and sled dog races. ECTA embraces diversity in trail usage for multiple disciplines, such as walking, running, riding, biking, and skiing, bringing different trail users together in a mutually respectful way.

On the conservation front, ECTA actively negotiates with private landowners to give permanent trail easements to the association's members. ECTA also rigorously maintains, repairs, and constructs trails, ensuring safety and protection of the land. Maintaining a vast network of trails takes manpower, and ECTA excels by engaging the community through Volunteer Trail Days combined with an innovative system of 19 “Trail Stewards” located throughout the six townships who oversee particular sections of trails.

ECTA has become a model organization in making a real difference for conserving land for future generations of equestrians. But it all began with just one individual. “This grew into more than I could have imagined,” said Colloredo-Mansfeld. “I just wanted to do what I love and be able to ride through the trails of my childhood.”

Could you be the next person to make this kind of difference for your community? ■



ECTA Founder Susanna Colloredo-Mansfeld

Photo courtesy of Elisabeth Pundi Photography

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Dougherty Foundation Awards ELCR Funds for Land Stewardship Education

ELCR is proud to announce that it has been awarded a grant from the Dudley T. Dougherty Foundation to promote best management practices for farm and ranch land stewardship. The funds will be used to produce and disseminate materials that educate equestrians, horse farm and ranch owners of the need for sustainable methods in the use and management of horse lands, and where to find regionally appropriate resources.

The Dudley T. Dougherty Foundation aims to make a critical difference on the planet by giving voice to those who wish to be part of the many worthy forces for change in the world. The grant fits the Foundation's goal by enabling the ELCR to produce learning modules aimed at dealing with issues of concern to those who own, manage and enjoy horse lands.

Funds will be used to produce and disseminate materials that educate about the need for sustainable methods in the use and management of horse lands...

The educational materials will deal directly with the issues of storm water quality and quantity, manure management, wildlife friendly fencing, and air quality.



Water quality protection is improved with native plantings and a vegetative buffer zone

"All of us connected with ELCR are honored that the Dougherty Foundation has chosen us for this grant. These funds will help us promote our mission of protecting the lands that are of primary concern to those involved in equestrian sport, horse recreation and the equine industry," said Deb Balliet, ELCR CEO. "This assistance from the Dougherty Foundation will allow us to effectively reach many more people who, through our educational outreach, can have a positive impact on lands of concern to those in the equine community." ■

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Equine Network and its fine family of equestrian print and online publications:

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Donor Spotlight: Knowledge is Half the Battle According to Ginevra Hunter

By Jessi Jump

"People need to be aware before the land loss, and not afterward." Ginevra Hunter's support of ELCR springs from that simple statement. She sees the strength that ELCR has built as a uniting force, bringing together breed and discipline organizations to recognize and react to the threat. "Those with horses need to be aware of what is happening in their communities because open space is diminishing so quickly," Ms. Hunter warns.

Ms. Hunter has also been involved with ELCR from the very beginning, as one of our first donors and a member of our first Advisory Committee, and later on the National Council.

As an active foxhunter in Virginia, she has seen the threat of land loss for a long time, as developments hedged in around hunt lands and opportunities vanished. "The hunts here [in



Longtime ELCR supporter Ginevra "Giny" Hunter stands with her retired foxhunter Jeb (left) and Novice event horse Jack (right) at Morningstar Farm in Middleburg, VA. Jack joined the family last April as her 85th birthday gift.

Virginia] are very aware of the issue and watch property as it comes on the market. There are also many organizations working on saving land." The hunts are keenly aware of what could happen and are active to ensure that the history and activity of the hunt are preserved.

But, through her travels, she's also seen what can happen when horsemen aren't aware of the threat. On a recent trip to Denver, Ms. Hunter was shocked by the changes to the landscape. "There is so much loss of open space in Denver. It's a completely different area than it was ten years ago, when I last visited," she reported. "When you go to other areas, you can see the cities creeping out," she said.

Ms. Hunter has a long history of giving to ELCR through gifts of securities. "Financially, donating stocks is a good and practical way of giving," says Ms. Hunter. "It's attractive, tax-wise, to the donor and it gives the organization the flexibility to sell or keep the stock."

"I'm happy to have a small part in ELCR," relates Ms. Hunter.

If you are interested in joining Ms. Hunter by making a gift of securities, please check the appropriate box and return the form on the back of this newsletter, or contact Deb Balliet at dballiet@elcr.org or (859) 455-8383. ■

"There is so much loss of open space in Denver. It's a completely different area than it was ten years ago, when I last visited..."

Please join us at the

Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference



More information and registration at <http://setc2012.com>

2012 ELCR Conservation Partners Educational Remote Conferencing Events

All Calls and Webinars* will begin at 8:00 pm Eastern Time (*Note new format offered for 2012)

SPRING LAND USE PLANNING SERIES

2/9/12	Title:	"Stop the Sprawl – I Want To Get Off!"
	Presenter:	Tom Daniels, Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, City & Regional Planning Dept.
	Format:	Telephone conference
3/22/12	Title:	"The Invisible Horse – How to Make Horse-Friendly Language Appear in Your Community Land Use Plan"
	Presenter:	Tom Daniels, Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, City & Regional Planning Dept.
	Format:	Telephone Conference
5/24/12	Title:	"The Trust for Public Land – An Introduction for Horsemen"
	Presenter:	Trust for Public Land Staff
	Format:	Webinar, Hosted by the Trust for Public Land
6/21/12		TBD

FALL TRAILS SERIES

Dates, Topics and Presenters TBA

To join or learn more about the Conservation Partners, visit http://www.elcr.org/index_partners.php



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