

THE FRONT PAGE

News & Views You Can Use

MARYLAND HORSE PARK SURVEYS LOCAL EQUESTRIANS

The decision by the governor's office to involve the Maryland Stadium Authority in the questions of whether Maryland should have a horse park, as well as what features and location it should have, is an excellent one. Of course, the equestrian community can expect the MSA to be objective.

The MSA is planning a feasibility study on a facility designed for use by both Maryland citizens and out-of-state visitors. A tourist destination, it would be capable of hosting major national and international events and shows, also offering campgrounds, offices, shops, a museum, and space for conferences and educational programs, as well as an amphitheater.

Working with the Maryland Horse Industry Board, a site selection committee has been established. It includes several state representatives, as well as members of the equestrian community with extensive background in event organization and facilities management: Alison Asti (a horse person) and Gary McGuigan of the Maryland Stadium Authority; Sue Kenney and Dennis Castleman of the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development; Rob Burk of the Maryland Horse Industry Board; Greg Gingery of Gingery Development Group, and the former chairman of the Washington International Horse Show; Jim Steele of Shamrock Farm breeding station; and Charlie Fenwick of Valley Motors, founder and chairman of Shawan Downs. Architectural, engineering and economic impact consultants will be retained for the feasibility studies.

The project began with a request for site nominations. The site needs to be at least 500 acres,

with easy access to major highways, restaurants and lodging. The committee will be exploring public and privately owned sites, both undeveloped and developed, to determine potential.

The MSA also seeks the input of local horse people and prospective users. *The Equiry* is cooperating by handling a mailing. In addition, you can fill out the survey form that appears elsewhere in this issue. For more information, please visit www.equiry.com and click on "Maryland Horse Park."

MOST COMPREHENSIVE HORSE STUDY REVEALS NEARLY \$40 BILLION IMPACT

The horse industry contributes \$39 billion in direct economic impact to the United States economy and supports 1.4 million jobs on a full-time basis, according to a new study released recently by the American Horse Council. When indirect and induced spending are included, the economic impact reaches \$102 billion. The study also estimates the U.S. horse population has reached 9.2 million.

Titled *The Economic Impact of the Horse Industry in the United States*, the study was conducted by Deloitte Consulting, LLC over the past year. It was commissioned by the American Horse Council Foundation with major support from the American Quarter Horse Association, The Jockey Club, the National Thoroughbred Racing Association and Breeders' Cup Ltd., the Keeneland Association, the American Paint Horse Association, the American Association of Equine Practitioners, the U.S. Trotting Association, the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association and the U.S. Equestrian Federation. It is the most comprehensive research document ever compiled on the

American horse industry.

In conducting the study, Deloitte contacted 400,000 horse owners and other participants involved in all segments of the industry, including the recreational and commercial spheres.

Detailed Maryland Numbers

In order to be "break-out," a state had to provide its own funding. The Maryland Horse Council, the Maryland Horse Industry Board and the Maryland Horse Breeders Association all contributed to the study.

Interestingly, the study confirmed many of the numbers established by the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture. Some numbers were in excess of previous estimates.

Some highlights from the Maryland break-out study:

Estimated number of horses in Maryland: 153,000

This number is higher than the 2002 USDA/MDA census, which indicated a population in the low 80,000s. Income from the Feed Fund confirms the lower number; if there are 153,000 horses, they aren't eating much!

Estimated number of horses by activity

Recreation: 47,300
Showing: 29,000
Racing: 41,800
Other: 34,000

Estimated number of horses by breed

Quarter Horse: 22,600
Thoroughbred: 69,200
Other horses: 61,100

Number of people participating in the industry

By form of participation:
Owners: 23,800
Volunteers: 27,400

Employees: 14,400

By demographic breakdown (age, income, etc. -- household income among Maryland equestrians is fairly evenly distributed across the spectrum):

\$0 - \$25K:	6%
\$25 - \$50k:	15%
\$50 - \$75k:	15%
\$75 - \$100k:	12%
\$100 - \$125k:	21%
\$125 - \$150k:	10%
\$150k+:	2%

Forty-seven percent of Maryland horse owners are ages 45 to 59; 28 percent are 30 to 44.

Economic Impacts

Direct Economic Impact: \$1 billion
\$532 million from racing
\$167 million from showing
\$174 million from recreation
\$127 million from other

Total Economic Impact: \$1.6 billion
\$826 million from racing
\$266 million from showing
\$279 million from recreation
\$198 million from other

The total economic impact figure is consistent with past estimates.

Did you know that the horse industry contributed \$72 million in annual taxes: \$40 million to the state, and \$6 million to the feds?

The report is available for a fee at www.horsecouncil.org.

American Horse Council: House Passes Ban on USDA Spending for Slaughter Horse Process

On June 8, the House of Representatives approved an amendment to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Fiscal Year 2006 appropriations bill that would prohibit USDA from using federal funds to pay salaries and expenses of USDA personnel to inspect horses intended for slaughter.

Under the Federal Meat In-

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spection Act and the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, all horses sent to slaughter – and the process itself – must be inspected by USDA personnel. The expectation is that without such USDA inspection, the buyers of horses intended for slaughter will not purchase the animals or the horse meat and the process will effectively be stopped. The amendment passed 269 to 158.

The amendment was backed by Congressmen John Sweeney (R-NY), Ed Whitfield (R-KY), Jack Spratt (D-SC), Nick Rahall II (D-WV) and Jim Moran (D-VA), each of whom spoke in support. Speaking in opposition were Congressmen Henry Bonilla (R-TX), Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) and Steve King (R-IA).

The purpose of the amendment is to cut off funds for USDA inspection of horses for slaughter. Since the amendment is part of an appropriations bill, the suspension of funding extends for only one Fiscal Year, October 1, 2005 – September 30, 2006. The amendment's proponents believe this will lead to a shut-down of slaughter facilities for a year, during which time they will work on the broader legislation calling for a permanent federal ban.

The Senate must still act on its version of the FY 2006 Agriculture Appropriations bill. There is no provision similar to the Sweeney amendment in the Senate package now.

Similar Wild Horse and Burro Amendment

In mid-May, the House passed a similar amendment to the Interior Department's Fiscal Year 2006 Appropriations Bill prohibiting the use of any such funds for personnel involved in the sale of wild, free-roaming horses and burros. The concern is that with the elimination of the prohibition on such wild horses being used for commercial purposes, which happened in the last Congress, some of these horses may go to slaughter. Congressman Rahall offered this amendment, and it passed as part of the broader Interior Appropriations legislation.

There is no similar provision in the Senate Interior Appropriations bill at this time.

Primary House Bill

In February, Congressman John Sweeney (R-NY) introduced broader federal legislation to prohibit the slaughter of horses for human consumption. That bill (H.R. 503) was also sponsored by Congressmen John Spratt (D-SC) and Ed Whitfield (R-KY). It presently has over 100 co-sponsors.

The bill would prohibit the shipping, transporting, delivering, receiving, possessing, purchasing, selling, or donation of horses and other equines for slaughter for human consumption. Violations of the Act would subject a person to penalties of up to \$3,000 and/or one year in jail for the first offense, and up to \$5,000 and/or two years in jail for a second offense. An offender may also be subject to civil penalties of \$2,000 for each violation. The bill authorizes \$5 million for enforcement.

The bill has been referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. There have been no hearings on this legislation.

VIEWES

A Trails Advocate Proposal for a Paid State Position

by Peggy Bree

Overview

Maryland needs to develop a comprehensive and coordinated statewide trail system to support the rapid growth of Maryland's horse industry, the increasing population of pleasure horses, and the increasing popularity of trail riding. Trails are essential to the sports of recreational, competitive, and endurance trail riding as well as foxchasing. In addition, trails are also used to exercise and condition horses for various other activities and competitions including showing, foxchasing, polo, timber racing, three-day eventing, and dressage. All of these sports contribute significantly to the economic health of the Maryland horse industry.

Although Maryland has some of the most extensive trail networks on the East Coast, the state has yet to recognize the potential tourism revenue that can be realized from ancillary services associated with trails. Other mid-Atlantic states are successfully attracting

business by offering extensive trail networks augmented by equestrian campgrounds and facilities, and by effectively promoting these tourism opportunities. This is revenue that Maryland is losing.

Current Status of Trails on Public Lands

Development is rapidly consuming trail networks on farms and private lands. At the same time, existing equestrian trails on public lands are rapidly being paved to create urban multi-use trails that are overcrowded with bikers, skaters, joggers, dog walkers and baby carriages, and are no longer safe or appropriate for equestrian use. Environmentalists are excluding equestrians from trails historically used by horses without citing any scientific justification for their decision.

There is currently no statewide focus on creating or preserving equestrian trails. Planning is done at the county level by planners who usually do not have any trail riding experience. In the past, this has resulted in local trails that were unsuitable or unsafe for horses, do not connect to other trail networks, have inadequate facilities, or do not have parking lots that can accommodate horse trailers.

The Maryland Greenways Atlas documented the major trail networks and greenways in the state. Yet developments continue to truncate trails, and the state highway department continues to build road embankments, sediment control areas and bridges that obstruct the movement of wildlife and equestrians traveling along documented greenways. Maryland is on the verge of permanently losing its potential to create a large network of trails on public lands. After property is subdivided and sold to private individuals, it will be prohibitively expensive to reclaim our trails.

Is There Economic Justification to Focus on Equestrian Trails?

States like Florida, New York, Virginia, and North Carolina think so. They offer well mapped public trail systems and charge user fees for public equestrian campgrounds, rent stalls in barns, lease RV pads with full hook-ups, and sell hay and bedding. Numerous private campgrounds

bordering public trail networks provide additional revenue to the local economy, especially in depressed rural areas.

There is definitely a need for trails and facilities in Maryland. The 80 stalls at Maryland's only public equestrian campground (Fair Hill) are booked a year in advance. The League of Maryland Horsemen, a private club adjacent to Patapsco State Park, restricts attendance at its most popular events to 200 campers and draws equestrians from Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia and the Carolinas.

How Could an Equestrian Trails Advocate Help?

- Identify those Maryland Greenways that contain equestrian trails or should be preserved to connect or expand existing trail networks
- Coordinate with the Department of Transportation to prevent road construction from truncating or obstructing equestrian trails
- Help each county's recreation department develop a local Equestrian Trail Plan that would complement a statewide plan
- Provide local planners with information on how to develop trails and amenities that are safe and suitable for equestrians
- Provide a liaison to specialists who know how to apply modern technology to equestrian trail design, development, and maintenance, with an emphasis on reducing environmental impact and conflicts with other trail users
- Share information with equestrian groups to help them apply for funding to develop and maintain their trails
- Represent Maryland at the Southeast Equestrian Trails Conference
- Conduct an annual seminar to train volunteers in trail maintenance
- Serve as liaison between government land managers and the equestrian community
- Encourage local equestrian groups to be responsible trail users, and to establish electronic communication with their members ■