



Annual Report 2015

Working together....Stronger than Ever”

North Carolina Horse Council

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“Wow, what a year! The legislative advances are historic!”

*Sammy Jenkins
President*



“This has been a remarkable year including thousands of people who participated in the free five minute lessons at the NC State Fair.”

*Rose Cushing,
Secretary*



To Our Members

Strategic Highlights

The Horse Council continued our presence across the state

- The trail horse challenge expanded with the addition of multiple sponsors including,
- The Lumberton Stall Project moved closer to completion
- Nothing Could be Finer than a Horse in Carolina events impacted people from across our state.
- New Grants were awarded for scholarships, therapeutic riding programs for our veterans, health research, education to “backyard” horse owners, and multiple trail projects

Financial Highlights

- The feed assessment income was within budget
- The budget projection on the sale of the new NC Equine License Plate was met.
- Our Special Events were all profitable
- The State Fair Contract was completed

Legislative Highlights

- Passed historic legislation on tax laws
- Passed state law prohibiting Cities and Counties from setting Standard of Care Ordinances
- Appointed to a three year term on the Outdoor Cultural Heritage Board
- Improved the Horse Promotion Act by extending the vote to every 10 years and adding the potential to increase the assessment up to \$4.

Looking Ahead

“Working together...Stronger than Ever!” this motto has made 2015 a historic year and will allow us to move on improved land conservation and equestrian access to public land in 2016.

Sue M. Gray
Executive Director
2015

“This is the best thing I have ever done at the state fair...it is all down hill from here! I will be back next year and bring my friends.”

Anonymous Participant talking about the Five Minute Lessons



“Nothing Could be Finer than a Horse in Carolina continued to be the best value for your buck at the NC State Fair. The Drill Team Competition, Alley of Breeds and the Parade of Breeds was exceptional”

Sue Gray, Executive Director



NC State Fair: Nothing Could be Finer than a Horse in Carolina

The NCHC conducted 11 days of educational and entertaining activities to increase awareness of and interest in horse-related activities in North Carolina. The event targeted families who are challenged to not only find family-friendly activities but who are also interested in finding refreshed joy for themselves. We hoped that by providing hands-on and entertaining activities more families would discover the benefits of horse-related activities

- **A five minute lesson:** Riding instructors from across the state provided almost 2000 individual five minute lessons. The age range of riders was 18 months to 94 years old. All instructors rated the event as exceptional stating: “I had a great time and it’s so nice to be able to promote my breed and encourage activity in the Horse Industry”, Bailey Bennett. Instructors were able to establish new costumers from the event thereby building our “rider base” for the industry.
- **Alley of Breed:** Twelve unique breeds were displayed during the State Fair. Each breed was presented with a basic description and history of the breed along with an individual activity sheet and special facts about the North Carolina Equine Industry.
- **Parade of Breeds:** A special parade of all the horses highlighted in the Alley plus the addition of other breeds was held on select days throughout the fair. This event provided an opportunity for fairgoers to view the unique differences of each breed and marvel at the beauty of the horse.
- **Educational Component:** For the first time at the state fair, the NCHC offered a special “backstage” or guided tour of the Alley of Breeds. This personal tour included the opportunity to interact with the horses and ask questions of professionals within the horse community. Each participant came away with a NCHC bracelet, coloring book, facts about the and magazine bag.
- **Drill Team Competition:** Five Drill Teams from across the State competed in a friendly competition against one another for recognition as the Champion of the North Carolina State Fair.
- **Special Event:** A daily scavenger hunt was held in search of a red horseshoe. The winner each day received a plush stuffed horse!

“The Trail Horse Challenge series has brought attention to the NCHC from trail riders across the state”



Jim Thomas,
Executive Committee
NCHC

“Preserving our trails and working with other trail user groups provides a future for our sport”



Tom Thomas,
Executive Committee
NCHC

Trail Report

This year was like many preceding years, with a mix of trail opportunities, trail losses, and chances for the equestrian community to be heard. The following are just highlights of our Trail activities reviewing, Local Trails, State Trails and Federal Trail Lands.

Local Trails

Working with local (County) Parks and Recreation departments, land trusts, as well as private landowners, can provide new trail opportunities in NC. County trail systems usually serve the surrounding community and provide lower mileage day riding for people and equines new to trail riding or just looking for a few nice hours out on the trail.

- We continue to track Wake County’s progress on the development of the planned “Proctor Farm Equestrian Park” in eastern Wake County. Wake County staff and consultants are continuing to work through permit issues, and hope that the park can be open to the public in late 2016.
- Our members are involved with the Thermal Belt Rail Trail in Rutherford County, currently only 6 miles but with future connection possibilities NCHC members in western NC are working toward a formal agreement to maintain local access to a large tract of private property in McDowell County
- Assisted several local equine developers on how to plan for equestrian trails

State Trails

We have strong working relationships with the State Parks staff and the state-administered Recreational Trails Program. Despite those relationships, 2014 produced a net loss of trails in the State Parks system. Important sources of trail funding have also been diminished this year. We are working to establish connections with state agencies not traditionally known for providing recreational opportunities for trail riders, including the NC Department of Agriculture and the Wildlife Resources commission.

- We met with NC Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) Directors and Chair to discuss equine trail riding opportunities on lands managed by WRC. We continue to work with the WRC on a possible horse trail near Jordan Lake. A current issue under consideration is the buffer distance between the trail and known eagle nesting areas.
- We participate in coordination meetings between the City of Raleigh and NC State Parks regarding the urban Crabtree West Greenway connection into Umstead Park, where equestrian use occurs on multi-use trails.
- The Equestrian Trail Coalition of WNC continues to work with the staff at South Mountain State park on the trails and supporting their public field days.
- We continue to represent the equine recreational trail community on the North Carolina State Trails Committee. The Federal Recreational Trail Program (RTP) funds continue to be authorized by congress, and grants for 2016 funds were awarded in September to the qualified applicants.

Trail Report continued:

“Trail issues remain the most important land issue that we face”

*Barb Oslund, NCHC
Trail Consultant*



“We must preserve and protect our historic right to ride. One way to increase our work is to join with other trail user groups.”

*Sue Gray,
Executive Director*



Some horse trail projects were included in the awarded funds, mostly in the State Parks and National Forest system. The Federal RTP has been in place since 1993 and has typically provided over \$1 million annually in grant funds to North Carolina for motorized and non-motorized recreational trails.

Trails on Federal Lands

The National Forests in NC, and to a lesser extent the National Parks, provide the greatest equine trail mileage, camping, and variety of experience. Every National Forest and National Park in NC is supported by a chapter of the Back Country Horseman (BCH) of North Carolina. The NC Horse Council has a cooperative agreement with the Back Country Horsemen of North Carolina, whose chapter members exemplify the spirit of volunteerism, knowledge and stewardship that is needed to maintain our access to trails.

- We have participated in a series of public Trail Strategy Meetings for the trail designation process in Uwharrie National Forest. These meetings were also attended by other user groups (hikers, mountain bikers, off-highway vehicle enthusiasts), as well as several BCH Uwharrie chapter members, independent trail riders and adjacent property owners. In December 2015, the USDA Forest Service released preliminary maps showing the proposed trail system for motorized & non-motorized trails. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/nfsnc/recarea/?recid=48934>. The website also includes the summaries from the working groups and the proposed actions, and presentations from Forest service staff. The Forest Service anticipate that a scoping letter will be sent out by December 31, 2015 to explain the commenting process and the steps to be taken as they continue the analysis process. The Back Country Horsemen of NC – Uwharrie chapter is expected to continue its important role in this process, though all individuals and other riding groups will be welcomed in the process. The Uwharrie chapter also continues to do trail assessments and develop work projects with the district Forest staff on regularly scheduled work days.
- The Back Country Horsemen of NC continues to be very involved in the plan revision process in the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests process. The NCHC and BCH of NC are represented on the Leadership Team of the Nantahala Pisgah Forest Partnership, as this collaborative group continues to work to find common ground among interested parties to help support the Forest Service in their new Forest Planning effort. The Nantahala Pisgah Planning process seems to be ahead of other national Forest efforts, and the collaborative partnership is becoming a template for other forest planning efforts.
- As part of the ongoing forest plan revision process for the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forests, the NCHC was included in a coalition of user groups that entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that supports establishment of National Recreation Areas (NRAs) in the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests. The MOU recommends more trails and better public access as well as backcountry and wild areas for the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Alpine Club, American Whitewater, Back Country Horsemen of America, Back Country

“ Working with
our Back Country
Horsemen
strengthens our
efforts and
promotes
success.”

*Sue Gray,
Executive Director*



Horsemen of Blue Ridge, Back Country Horsemen of North Carolina, Back Country Horsemen of Pisgah, Back Country Horsemen of Western North Carolina, Black Dome Mountain Sports, Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine, Carolina Adventure Guides, Carolina Climbers Coalition, Franklin Bird Club, Friends of Big Ivy, Ground Up Publishing, Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, Highlands Plateau Audubon Society, Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA), MountainTrue, Nantahala Area Southern Off-Road Biking Association (SORBA), Nantahala Hiking Club, North Carolina Horse Council, Northwest North Carolina Mountain Bike Alliance, Outdoor 76, Outdoor Alliance, Pisgah Area SORBA, Pisgah Mountain Bike Adventures, Southern Appalachian Plant Society, Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS), Stay and Play in the Smokies, The Wilderness Society, Trout Unlimited - Unaka Chapter, and Wild South. The idea driving the coalition is that Western North Carolina's national forests are the regions greatest public asset. The Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest is in the top three most visited national forests in the United States, and the proposal acknowledges the economic importance of these forests for recreation and tourism, and recommends management of these assets in a responsible manner that is both environmentally and economically sound.

Key recommendations within the proposal are

- Two new National Recreation Areas for Western North Carolina: a 115,573-acre Pisgah National Recreation Area and a 57,400-acre Grandfather National Recreation Area that will protect these areas from resource extraction and ensure that their unique natural beauty and ecological diversity are maintained for future generations, while recreation use such as hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, kayaking, and climbing is planned and managed for as a long-term priority. National Recreation Areas will formalize recreation access in key points of our forests, and would allow for the establishment of sustainable infrastructure to prevent damage to the areas while preserving recreational opportunities.
- Wilderness protection for 109,961 acres in the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forests. Hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and hiking are among the many activities that would be welcomed in these areas. While the Forest Service can recommend wilderness, it would have to be approved by Congressional legislation and signed into law by the president.

Those who support the recommendations put forth in the MOU can help by providing public comments to the Forest Service that both endorses a plan that provides more public access and recreation, and protects more of our backcountry and wild places. Comments can be submitted via email at NCPlanRevision@fs.fed.us or via mail at United States Forest Service Supervisors Office
160 Zillicoa St, Suite A, Asheville, NC 28801

NCHC Special Events

“We loved the trail horse challenge and will be back next year!”



“We look forward to the Miss Southern Horse Festival Pageant each year because of the wonderful scholarship and educational opportunities.”



Ms. Southern Horse Festival 2016

Extreme Trail Horse Challenge

This was third year of the Trail Horse Challenge and due to the strong sponsor support from Double L Tack and Feed, Shadow of Carolina, Rolling Acres Tack Shop, DC Western, Carolina Hoofbeats TV and Carolina Trail Rider Magazine, we attracted participants from across the state. Winners in each division received a plaque and ribbons at each challenge. Both the Experienced and the Novice Division overall highpoint winners received a saddle. The winner of the Pro Division received a cash award of \$1000. The NCHC wishes to thank all of our wonderful volunteer judges, trail hosts and sponsors!

Ms. Southern Horse Festival Pageant

The Southern Horse Festival was held during our First Statewide Trail Ride and Extreme Trail Horse Challenge held at Barnhill Dairy. We had five wonderful young ladies compete for the title. Each contestant was judged not only on their riding ability but also on public speaking and presentation. The new Miss Southern Horse Festival is Bailey Adair Foote and the Jr. Miss Southern Horse Festival is Emily Grace Swinson. We look forward to their reign.

Cowboy Up

This was the fourth year of the Southern Horse Festival's sister show...Cowboy Up. This yearly event is held at the Southeastern Agricultural Event Center in Lumberton and the proceeds from the show are donated to the North Carolina Horse Council Foundation to benefit the development of the equine facility at the Southeastern Center. New events for this year included a Barbeque Cook Off. The NCHC would like to give a special thank you to the Border Belt Horsemen's Association who planned, staffed and participated in all of the weekend events and our NCHC Board Members who came out to work and enjoy the action.



Legislative Actions

North Carolina Farm Act of 2015

The Farm Act of 2015 was a historic piece of legislation for the equine community. We improved the Horse Promotion Bill by extending the time frame from 3 years to 10 years and changing the assessment from \$2 to a range of up to \$4 per ton. The Horse Promotion Act has been in place since 1998 with no changes or adjustments based on the cost of feed. This is not intended for any immediate increase but rather to provide for the opportunity to increase should it become necessary. In addition, we included language in this year's farm bill to clarify that the boarding and training of horses is indeed a farming activity and included in the intent of the existing agricultural present use value law. This minor adjustment creates a more favorable tax atmosphere for the entire equine industry. And finally there are several portions of the Farm Act which will allow for us to operate our farms with less regulations such as moving large equipment or hay bales.

Ordinance on Standard of Care

As North Carolina continues to grow in population, the clash of rural versus city continues to be a major issue. Many cities and municipalities are considering or have passed ordinances which place unnecessary and highly restrictive 'standards of care' upon equine owners. These ordinances have mandated very specific types of shelter, activity and social interaction of horses. Equine experts all agree that horses do not necessarily require a manmade shelter and that natural shelter is often adequate. In addition, animal welfare, including the care and management of livestock are currently protected under our existing laws. Therefore, with the assistance of the NC Farm Bureau and other commodity groups, a bill to amend the authority of cities and counties to adopt ordinances regarding farm animals was submitted and passed into law. House Bill 553 now prohibits counties and cities from establishing "standards of care" for farm animals including mandating the type of shelter, feed, medicine, activity or social interaction of livestock.

Outdoor Cultural Resource Board

A new law was passed which established the North Carolina Heritage Trust Fund to expand opportunities for youth to engage in outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, biking and equestrian sports. This commission will also study how to improve recreational access to public land. The Governor appointed Sue Gray from the North Carolina Horse Council to a three year term on the new Commission.

Right To Ride

The North Carolina Horse Council submitted an Equine Access to Public Land, AKA Right to Ride or House Bill 893. This bill was intended to improve access to public land upon establishment of a usage agreement, allow for trail maintenance by volunteers, provide for inclusion of equestrian representation on trail decisions and allows for the issuance of permits to ride. While this bill did not proceed out of committee, we will be working on these issues again in the next legislative session.

The NCHC wishes to thank our lobbyists, John Cooper, Stephen Kouba and Jackson Stancil for a successful 2015 long session.

Grants and Sponsorships

“A special thanks to the NCHC for helping to fund trail projects”

*Deirdre Lightsey, NCHC
Western Trail
Consultant*



“It is always great to acknowledge our Board Members working to support our goals. Thanks Tom for all that you do!”

*Sue Gray,
Executive Director*

*Tom Thomas, NCHC
Board Member and
President of the NC
Backcountry Horsemen*



Grants remain one of the most critical functions of the North Carolina Horse Council. During 2015 we supported youth development programs such as Horsemen’s Youth Day at the North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine. The NCHC provided dollars to support an Equine Health Symposium which was open to not only equine professionals but also equine owners and participated in the Veterinary School Open House.

Grants to improve our trails dominated our funding dollars and provided dollars to build parking areas, build high lines and generally improve our trail from the Mountains to the Sea. We continued to enjoy our partnership with the Back Country Horsemen of NC.

Two new Educational Grants were awarded. The first grant will provide educational programs to “backyard” horse owners this grant was awarded to a University Student Group to both design and present the materials. The Second educational Grant was awarded to support the Effects of Trauma Focused Equine Assisted Psychotherapy on Combat veterans and Military Personnel.

A Health and Research Grant was funded to continue to look at non-structural carbohydrates (NSC) which are present in feedstuffs (e.g., hay, pasture, cereal grains, etc.) used in equine rations. NSC makes an important contribution toward the daily caloric requirement of horses; however, when consumed in excessive amounts they have been linked to increased risk of laminitis, a devastating disease manifesting in horses feet resulting in severe lameness. The exact mechanism by which excessive NSC intake contributes to laminitis is unknown. This study will hopefully move us further along in preventing this equine health problem and reduce laminitis risk in grazing horses. We wish Dr. Paul Siciliano and Dr. Shannon Pratt Phillips success in their research.

The NCHC completed our work with the NC Department of Soil and Water Districts, and Sustainable Stables on the 319 Funded Grant to develop best management practices and education for Horse Livestock operations. This one of a kind program provided cost share dollars to equine farms in the Falls Lake Watershed.

NCHC Officers

2105 Board Members

Casey Armstrong
Pat Benton
Chris Bulla
Dottie Burch
Clara Cahoon
Myra Daniel
Paul Dunn
Diane Ferello
Virginia Godwin
Brock Griffith
Allen Harper
Lucinda Human
Jerry King
Lycurous Lowry
Mike Lubell
Kaye Meyers
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