

NSBTA 2005/2006 TRAIL CONDITION AND MAINTENANCE REPORT



In last year's Newsletter I took you on a virtual trail ride to clarify the areas of the trails we have been working on. The format was so popular, especially to those who don't know our trail system, that we are doing it again this year. We're also including last year's NSBTA 2004/2005 Trail Condition and Maintenance Report for those who haven't seen it or who need a refresher on areas not covered in this one. To keep you from getting lost, this ride is divided into four quadrants: The first will be the southern end of town which includes Turkey Hill; next is the west side of June Road in the Windswept/Hardscrabble area, then over to Baxter Road and we finish by detailing a new trail we are working on to get people over to the Vail lane area. So saddle your horse, put on that helmet and get ready to ride....

TURKEY HILL

On the southern end of North Salem is the former Staysail Farm, which recently changed hands and will soon become a much bigger horse operation. Just north of Staysail, on the east side of Grant Road, is Echo Pond Farm. The owners of Echo Pond have cleared trails throughout the woods on their property and have worked with us on the trails across the road off Turkey Hill Road. There is an entrance to these trails on the left just as you turn onto Turkey Hill Road from Grant Road. They are absolutely beautiful and very extensive. They stretch south/southwest to Bogtown Road and Cat Ridge Road and west to Mills Road. The trails meander through whispering pines on footing padded with years of accumulated pine needles. It would be impossible to explain every twist and turn but we have marked the trails so you shouldn't get lost. When you reach the top of Turkey Hill you will know it. The vista is breathtaking. It over looks the Titicus Reservoir to the Hudson River and the Catskills beyond...



WINDSWEPT

If you ride the length of Turkey Hill Road to Route 116 you can cross the road onto a dirt driveway that leads to the eastern side of the Windswept Property. There are trails on the right as you head down the road and they are well marked. Some trails are on NSOLF property and the rest are on Windswept property. These trails have also been extensively repaired over the past few years - eroded banks and stream crossings have been shored up with railroad ties, drainage pipes and other construction materials. If you haven't been in these woods for a while you'll be amazed at the improvement. Mucky areas are dried out, there are fewer rocks as run-off has been controlled and the trails are better marked. Even I no longer have an excuse for getting lost! There are also quite a few jumps in these woods that range from stone walls with log riders to coops and natural cross-country fences. We have rebuilt a lot of these jumps and have added some new ones. Once again, it would be impossible to explain exactly where all these trails go. Keep in mind that they run from behind the North Salem Library (the southern boundary), over to June Road (eastern) and up to Old Salem Farm and Hardscrabble Road (northern). The northwestern boundary of these trails is the North Salem Vineyard. Please remember we are not allowed to ride in the Vineyard proper, just on the trails around the vineyard.

At this juncture I am going to take you to the trails on Hardscrabble Road. I'll come back to the Windswept woods again to lead you to Baxter Road and the Race Track.

HARDSCRABBLE

There is a trail that goes from Windswept, behind Old Salem Farm to Hardscrabble Road. This section is near some ongoing construction at Old Salem Farm. We will have to wait for Old Salem to finish their projects before we can get into the woods and really sort out the trail. It's passable but may not suit all riders and horses as it's a bit muddy.

When you reach Hardscrabble Road, you go directly across the road to a trail on the north side. This trail winds through the woods then forks. If you stay to the right you'll pass behind North Salem High School and the new town park by Kingsley's market. This trail doesn't really connect with anything west of June Road but it does help those who have horses on the north end of June Road to get to our more extensive trail system to the south. You can also cross June Road at the bottom of the N.S. High School driveway where there are the Bloomerside trails that lead over to Baxter Road.

If you bear left at the fork you will skirt along the edge of a couple of fields parallel to Hardscrabble Road, past Darlington Hall and Red Horse Farm to a private driveway across from Baerridge Farm. Once you reach this driveway you cross back over Hardscrabble Road onto the Baerridge property. Carefully make your way through that property and do your best to stay off the lawn and not surprise anyone riding in the indoor ring. Directly behind the indoor is a trail that leads to the newly built Little Creek Farm. They are still doing work on the Little Creek property so please be respectful of signs. And please only walk around the paddocks where horses are turned out. When the Little Creek construction projects are complete we intend to fix a trail on the west side of the property that connects with the Audubon Nature Preserve. As members of the NSBTA we are allowed to ride on a portion of the Audubon property to reach the trails behind the southern side of Outhouse Orchards. Audubon has clearly expressed that they prefer we only use this particular cut through and have not given us unlimited access to the trails. As of this writing the trail to get you there is being fixed so please be patient.

Before we leave the Hardscrabble area I just want to make sure you know we are doing what we can to make the best trails and access we can, given the very wet footing, difficult topography and new construction projects. Please be patient but in the meantime try to communicate with us on the trouble spots. Obviously the most important trails are the ones that keep you off the paved roads. We'll do our best to find interim solutions.

WINDSWEPT (AGAIN)

Ok, so let's go back to the Windswept woods. Most any trail you see that heads east will bring you to June Road. There is one that comes out behind Battery Farm. You can cross over June road and briefly head north to Deveaux Road. Go up Deveaux until you reach a trail on the left side, just after the stone bridge. This short trail will bring you to the Baxter Road racetrack parcel. If you go to the right from Battery Farm and briefly south on June Road there is a trail across the street next to the antique shop in the old red barn. This is a brand new trail on property we have just received permission to use. We are yet to clear the exact access but will make it known to our members when it's completed. Once it's finished, please keep a close eye out for trail markers showing you the way and remember not to ride in the fields, only on the edge. This trail will eventually bring you out behind the Hammond Museum and onto the racetrack land.

The next eastern trail you'll find in the Windswept woods will bring you out on June Road across from Ice Pond Farm. Ride straight across June Road, go left around the paddock, through the barnyard and down the gravel drive. The drive goes past the pond and up the other side to the fields behind the racetrack parcel. There are lots of farm animals so be sure to stay on your toes!

The final major eastern trail will bring you out to June Road across from Baxter Road.

BAXTER ROAD

At this point, if you and your horse are not too tired I'll take you to the other side of town. You can refer to the virtual trail ride we did last year and I will just mention some new projects we have completed and some that are in progress. For those of you who don't have a copy of last year's Newsletter, we have re-printed last year's virtual trail ride section in this 2006 issue. Among other things, it does a pretty good job explaining how to get from the Baxter Road side of town to the Vail Lane side of town without riding on main roads.

If you ride east on Baxter Road you will come to a paved lane on your left right before you reach Titicus Road. Turn left onto the lane and you will see a yellow house up on a hill to your right. There is a trail to the left of their driveway that is clearly marked. Please stay on the trail and walk. Also be aware that the owners have dogs but they are on an invisible fence and cannot reach you. If your horse doesn't like barking dogs then you may have to ride somewhere else – be respectful of private property and don't expect the noisy dogs to be removed!

Once you pass the yellow house and head down a small hill the trail goes left. This is a very wet section so make sure your horses shoes are on tight when you think about riding there. Stay on the trail, which hugs the right side of the new field you have entered. You will then reach some woods at the base of a steep hill. We have done extensive work improving the steep grade to control erosion. The trail (and trail markers) will bring you up onto the old Kraus

Helmet Rules

One of the rules of the NSBTA is to wear protective headgear while riding on the trails. A lot of our access is on private land that has been graciously opened to us by the landowners. They have requested we emphasize this rule as a condition of our use of their land. As a reminder, NY State has instituted a helmet law that applies to anyone under the age of fourteen. Section 1265 requires that no person less than fourteen years of age shall ride a horse unless such person is wearing a helmet meeting or exceeding ASTM F1163 SEIC (Safety Equipment Institute Certified). For your own safety please wear a helmet while riding.

property, which is now called Monomy Farm. There is extensive construction going on so be careful and watch for posted signs. The trail will also intersect with a new trail we are building that runs north/south behind the Monomy Farm barn and indoor ring. This new trail will connect with an existing trail that goes along the golf course, across Rt. 121 to the “Tromp Trail” that leads to the old trolley tracks. (Please refer to last year’s trail report if you are unclear about where I’m describing.) We have also helped build cross-country fences on the Monomy Farm property and are building a cross-country jumping field directly across Vail Lane from Vail Farm. This field will provide a wonderful opportunity to school horses over a true cross-country course.

Once again, please refer to last year’s trail report, which describes all the riding potential in the Vail Lane area as well as another route to take you back around to Baxter Road. However, last year’s report doesn’t include a description of some new trails that exist on the “Gaymark Property”. This is a 53-acre parcel of land that extends from Dingle Ridge Road (across from Willow Farm) all the way over to Rt. 121. The North Salem Open Land Foundation recently purchased this Gaymark property. It contains a diversity of animal and bird life and has both woodlands and meadows, with some wetlands as well. Trails and an old farm road currently traverse the property. Members of the Open Land Foundation and the general public have been using the property for walking and passive recreation and we are allowed to ride on this wonderful property as well. Thanks to everyone who made this possible!

The last section of recent work I want to tell you about as you ride around the Vail Lane area is a section on the east side of Vail Lane known to many who foxhunt as the “Grand Canyon”. Canyons are for mules, not horses so we undertook a major project to repair a section that had been eroded by over 10 feet! We closed off this extremely dangerous area with a fence and put in a structure to help the trail rebuild itself. The next step was to build a new trail just to the north. This work is complete and dramatically improves the quality and safety of this area.

END OF THE LINE...

My horse and I are quite tired and sweaty so this ends our ride. It’s been fun, at times exciting and, I hope helpful. My goal is to give you the best visual on the trail system and all the places we are working. Trail maintenance is never ending and Mother Nature has not been kind to us this year. Windstorms and extremely wet conditions have really messed up the trails and the resulting muck has made it hard to get in to battle the damage. That said, we are currently working in the drier areas (Turkey Hill, parts of the Windswept woods, etc.) and will jump into the other sectors as soon as they dry out (Hardscrabble, LaRanda, etc.). When all else fails we have lots of jumps to build!

As always, at the risk of repeating myself, please respect our landowners’ property. If it is too wet, don’t ride. This goes for NSOLF parcels too. Please wear your protective headgear, stay to the edge of open fields and follow our trail markers. If you are riding somewhere that needs marking please contact us and we’ll get right on it. We need to hear from those of you who are out there on the condition of the trails that you like to ride on. And hats off to Bob McBride of American Landscape and Estate Maintenance and our trail director Jack Manes (what would we do without you?) who have been key to improving our trails tremendously!

— Happy Trails! Charlotte Harris

