

Bike-horse-hiking trail idea still barely alive

By Lem Messe
outdoors writer

"Michigan (R)Rralls Alliance" is a name that throws you until you think about it.

Note the "RR" in it. Obviously that stands for "railroad." And the base word is "trail."

The "alliance" refers to the fact that it's a coalition of bicyclists, hikers and horse riders.

Their goal: to carry through a state plan for a bike-horse-hiking trail on the unused right-of-way of the Grand Trunk Western Railway from Lakeland in Livingston County to Jackson.

"LOCAL LANDOWNERS AND politicians halted the project after the initial land purchase and extensive and favorable environmental impact study were completed," said Judy Class of Onondaga, a member of the Michigan Horse Council.

"We don't quite understand why the two departments (Natural Resources and Transportation) allowed that to happen. Vandalism (near the abandoned railroad bed) will continue so long as they hold up construction of the trail."

One lane would be surfaced for bikes. Other portions would be designated for hikers and horses. Rails and ties were removed years ago.

The Michigan Legislature will sell the right-of-way unless the trail is built soon, said Thomas J. Pendleton of Ann Arbor, a bicyclist who chairs the Michigan Department of Transportation advisory committee on non-motorized transportation.

A BILL TO speed sale of the old railroad bed passed the House last year but lost in the Senate, said Bill Brown of Howell, a member of the Livingston County planning department staff.

Meanwhile, Grand Trunk has filed a petition with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to abandon the right-of-way east of Lakeland to a point near South Lyon in Oakland County. The state retains ownership of old rail beds for 10 years after abandonment. The group thinks this segment could be added to the bike-horse trail.

DNR and MDOT announced plans to start the trail in 1979, but no word on its progress has come to us from Lansing since then.

HURON-CLINTON Metropolitan Authority, the folks who bring us the 11 metroparks, has applied to the department of natural resources for half the \$225,000 for construction of two miles of a hiking-biking trail addition at Kensington Metropark west of New Hudson.

This segment — including a 150-foot bridge — would complete an eight-mile loop around Kent Lake, said David Laidlaw, Huron-Clinton chief. The authority share

would come from the quarter-mill property tax we pay. Public comments on the Kensington project are invited and may be addressed to: Bike-Hike Trail, Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, 3050 Penobscot Building, Detroit 48226.

SURPLUS MATERIALS and supplies of Huron-Clinton metroparks will be sold at public auction beginning at 9 a.m. Saturday, July 16, at the central warehouse and garage of Kensington Metropark.

For sale will be cars, trucks, other vehicles, lawn trimmers, push mowers, boats, a lot splitter, coffee vending machines, checking-writing machine, copying machine and other items.

For additional information, call the central warehouse at 684-2445 (Milford exchange) or Huron-Clinton purchasing manager Frank Sudek at 981-5865 (Detroit).

NATURE PROGRAMS galore are coming up at Oakland County parks and Huron-Clinton metroparks in the week ahead. In each case, call the park office for a space reservation. All programs are free unless otherwise noted. All parks require a vehicle entry permit.

Independence Oaks County Park — "Step into the Past," a nature interpretive program, 7:30-9:30 p.m. Friday, July 15, meeting at Twin Chimneys Shelter. Independence Oaks is on Sashabaw Road 2 1/2 miles north of I-75, Clarkston; call 625-0877.

Stony Creek Metropark — "Foul and Loathsome Crea-

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tures," a nature walk on creepy-crawlies, 10 a.m. Sunday, July 17. "Focus on Nature," monthly photo workshop, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Sunday, July 17, with shooting session and workshop. Stony Creek is northeast of Rochester; call 781-4242.

Kensington Metropark nature center — "Summer Wildflowers," 10 a.m. Sunday, July 17. "Insects of a Summer Evening," 8 p.m. Monday, July 18. "Sights and Sounds of Summer Insects," 8:30 p.m. Thursday, July 21. Take Kensington Road exit from I-96 west of New Hudson; call 685-1561.

Kensington Farm Center — "Cosmetics from Your Garden," 1 p.m., and "Barnyard Weeds," 2 p.m. Sunday, July 17. The farm center is at the north end of the park; take the Milford Road exit from I-96; call 685-9501.

Indian Springs Metropark nature center — "The Beauties and the Beasts of the Night," a guided hike, 8:30 p.m. Friday, July 15. "A Forest Floor Creature-Feature," 1 p.m. Sunday, July 17. Indian Springs is near Clarkston in northern Oakland County; call 625-2781.

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