

IN BRIEF

Cattle farmer joins Angus association

The Grange, located in Elkwood, is a new member of the American Angus Association, reports John Crouch, executive vice president of the national breed registry organization in Saint Joseph, Mo.

The American Angus Association, with more than 36,000 active adult and junior members, is the largest beef cattle registry association in the world. Its computerized records include detailed information on nearly 16 million registered Angus.

The association records ancestral information and keeps production records on individual animals for its members. These permanent records help members select and mate the best animals in their herds to produce high-quality, efficient breeding cattle, which are then recorded with the American Angus Association.

Most of these registered Angus are used by the U.S. farmers and ranchers who raise high quality beef for U.S. consumption.

Seminar on farm succession planned

A Comprehensive Approach to Farm Business Succession Planning seminar will be held from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Wednesday Feb. 13 at the Gordonsville Fire Hall.

This program will provide an overview of the farm transition process for farm family members interested in learning more about the efficient transfer of farm operations between generations.

People who would like to develop a farm transition plan specifically for their farm are encouraged to attend the one-day seminar and all of the three-part workshop series that will be held on consecutive Monday evenings from March 31 to April 14.

Please contact the Culpeper office at 727-3435 to register.

Georgia dealt blow in war over water

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court on Tuesday threw out an agreement that Georgia reached with the Army Corps of Engineers for water rights to a major federal reservoir outside Atlanta, handing Alabama and Florida a major victory in the states' years-long water wars.

The 2003 agreement with the Corps would give Georgia about a quarter of Lake Lanier's capacity over the coming decades and is the foundation of Georgia's long-term plans for supplying drinking water to the rapidly growing Atlanta region.

Alabama and Florida challenged the pact, arguing that Georgia doesn't have any legal right to the federal reservoir, which was initially built for hydropower. The withdrawals would dry up river flows into their states that support smaller municipalities, power plants, commercial fisheries and industrial users like paper mills.

A district court earlier ruled in Georgia's favor, but the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington overturned that decision Tuesday, saying that the agreement constituted a major operational change at the reservoir that requires congressional approval.

Farmers' census forms still out

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A little over 1 million down, just 2 million to go.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture sent out more than 3 million agriculture census forms to farmers and ranchers across the country at the end of December. Just over a third of the forms had been filled out and returned to the agency by last Friday.

The due date was Monday, but it's not unusual to have just a third by now, said Jim Brueggen, head of the New Mexico field office of the USDA's National Agriculture Statistics Service.

The agency does the census every five years and during the 2002 census, about the same number had been returned by this time. When the 2002 census was complete, the agency ended up with a return rate of about 85 percent.

CONTRIBUTED AND WIRE REPORTS

FARM & GARDEN



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The Planning Committee will vote Wednesday, Feb. 13 on whether to hold a public hearing on a plan for a local heritage horse trail put forward by members of the Culpeper Horse Owners Association, who are seen above.

Power to the 'little people'

CHOA members working to build a trail for local horse riders

I thought I would write this week about some of the wonderful work that goes on behind the scenes with those who selflessly give up their time, money and energy to achieve a goal that I'm sure will eventually benefit us all.

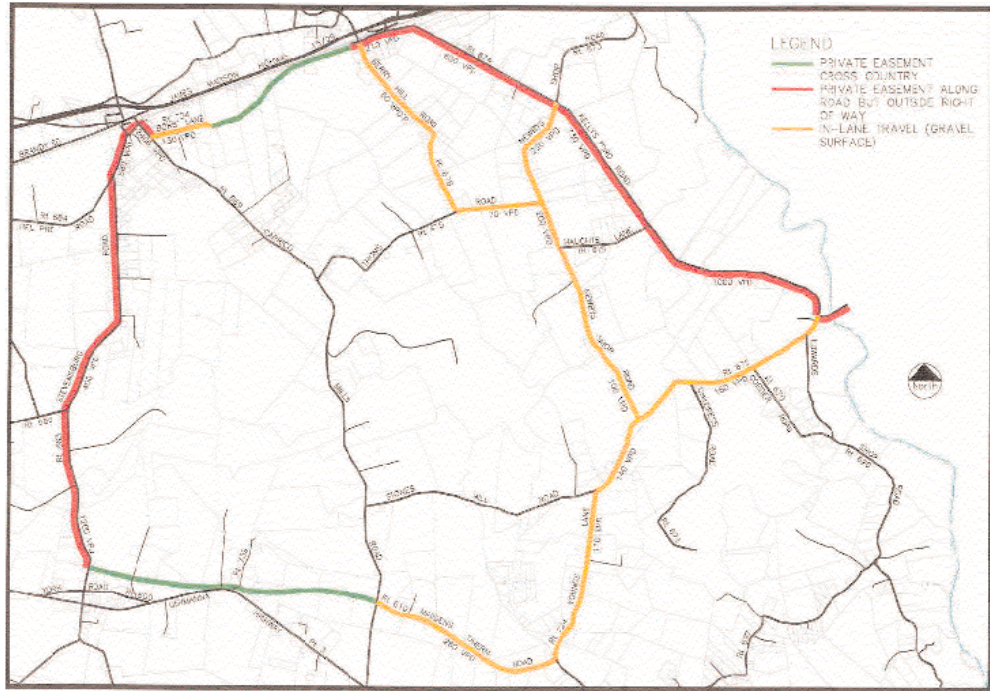
Anita and I went along last weekend to a meeting of the Culpeper Horse Owners Association (CHOA), which was intended to update everyone on the progress of one of their current projects, the Culpeper Heritage Horse Trail (CHHT) plan, and to formalize the CHOA as an organization in itself.

If you look at the plan to the right, you will see how the trail intends to loop around the Stevensburg District of Culpeper, linking various Civil War battle sites and other historic properties along the 20-mile proposed route. It will utilize, though not actually share, existing bike trails, as horses and fast bicycles do not mix well.

Horses see something "creeping" up behind them as a definite predator and tend to spook, sometimes with dramatic consequences. Having said that, both Anita and I have ridden in many a park where both horses and bikes share the same path; although the horse always takes priority over the bike, it is not unusual for a cyclist to come freewheeling around a hairpin bend and unintentionally frighten the horses.

To be fair, most cyclists do shout a warning before approaching or will pull over to the side. In practice, it is usually easier to move the horse over to the verge and allow the bikes to nip past, which we have found works pretty well for everyone concerned. With a little courtesy and forethought, there really isn't any reason why cyclists, hikers and horse-riders cannot share the same trails — although we do draw the line at pooper scooping for the horses (just not practical!).

However, it only takes one idiot to spoil it for everyone else, so to avoid any potential problems, the CHHT includes a separate



The Culpeper Heritage Horse Trail, which would loop around the Stevensburg District of Culpeper County, would be for bikers, hikers and riders. Much of the land for the proposed trail would depend on private easements of area landowners' property.



DAVID AND ANITA HASBURY-SNOGLES

horse trail, which at certain points does run parallel to the bike trail.

One thing the CHHT will really help to improve is the impact of tourism in the area — highlighting our local history, scenic views and recreational activities. Not only can we generate additional economic benefit from tourism and associated activities, but the cost involved (after initial construction of the trails) in maintaining the trail is relatively minimal. From a cost-benefit analysis point of view, this has got to be a winner for the local economy, but it still has a long way to go to become part of the county's comprehensive plan — starting next Wednesday with the Planning Committee's vote to allow a public hearing on the CHHT. All interested members of the public are welcome to attend!

The CHOA's motto is "Building paths for the future," and that phrase is very apt, as the good work these people are doing now is for the benefit of not only this community, but for many others who visit the area, and more importantly

for the generations yet to come.

Sons, daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will all benefit from the change in policy proposed by the CHOA — it is not just for the CHHT trail that these volunteers donate their time, effort and, quite often, personal funds, but for the principle that will forever ensure that hikers, bikers and horse riders' needs are considered the next time new development is proposed.

They have also been very successful in getting road warning signs erected in many parts of the district, helping to make the roads safer for riders and motorists alike.

Membership of the CHOA is free, and all are welcome to join — in fact, the more members the merrier, as strong support for the cause needs to be visible and a healthy membership presence at meetings always helps.

I should clarify for everyone here that much of the trail depends upon rights of way or private easements being provided either by the local authorities or private landowners, so there isn't a great need for CHOA to physically acquire land in order to create the trail.

Indeed, in some areas of the country, such as Alexandria Township, N.J., where a similar scheme has already been invoked in the comprehensive plan, local developers often have the provision of a riding trail around their development as a prerequisite to their planning permission.

Ironically, those who on the surface are often opposed to these trails suddenly find they become a useful and valuable feature when looking to sell their property!

Contrary to popular belief, neither the county nor the individual landowner is at risk of being sued by users of the horse trails that cross their land either. Under Virginia Law, they are not held responsible for anything that happens on the land; neither are they responsible for maintenance of the trail itself.

On the other, hand gross negligence, such as digging a new 150-foot well and not marking it in any way whatsoever or leaving an unexploded bomb in the middle of the path could be a matter for some debate!

At the end of the day, a good meeting was drawn to a close with a feeling of well-deserved acclaim. This group of people has so far achieved close to a miracle with little more than their voices and the power of the pen ("mightier than the sword," as someone once said!), and most of all with a resolute will to stand up and be counted for something they truly believe in.

It was good to see, good to hear and most of all good to know that there really are instances out there where the "little" people really can have an impact. Come join in and make a difference to your world.

David Snogles can be reached at david_hasbury@yahoo.com

Youth attend horse event

Students learn about equine health care

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

BLACKSBURG — According to a United States Department of Agriculture equine survey, there were an estimated 215,000 horses in Virginia in 2006. It comes as no surprise that in a state so heavily populated with horses, many children are fascinated with learning to care for the animals.

One organization that is helping students to achieve that goal is the Virginia Pony Club, which has more than 350 constituents from across the state.

As part of its learning-intensive educational programming, 41 Virginia Pony Club members aged 12 through 18 attended a Horse Health Half-Day program at Virginia Tech's Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center on Saturday, Jan. 12.

Ten of the commonwealth's clubs were represented at the three-hour event, including Blue Ridge Hunt, Cape Henry, Casanova-Warrenton, Difficult Run, Dominion Valley, Loudoun Hunt, Middleburg-Orange, North Mountain, River Bend and Rocky Run. "As veterinarians and educators, we are committed to encouraging students to pursue careers in veterinary medicine," said Dr. Nat White, Jean Ellen Shehan, professor and director of the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center.

The program began when White welcomed the group and asked how many attendees would like to be veterinarians. He advised the interested candidates to study hard and to excel in math and science in order to increase their odds of success.

Following White's introduction, presentations were given by five of the center's faculty on a variety of equine health care topics, including biosafety, respiratory disease, gait analysis, equine emergencies and foal care.

According to Carol Noggle, regional supervisor of the Virginia Region Pony Clubs, the lectures provided a wealth of information for attendees.

"I would say that this was a great mini-vet school," said Noggle. "It was a comprehensive and valuable addition to our members' knowledge base and we are very appreciative of the doctors' time."

The United States Pony Clubs Inc. is one of the leading junior equestrian organizations in the world. There are over 600 individual clubs spread throughout 48 states and the Virgin Islands.

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