

House Republican Press Release

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REP. HOVEY EXPECTS HORSEBACK RIDING ON STATE TRAILS WILL REMAIN UNCHANGED



Monroe Legislator Met With DEP Regarding Issue In November

State Rep. DebraLee Hovey (R-Monroe, Newtown) said today she expects that despite publicity about proposed changes to state regulations, equestrian access to state trails will improve. The state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently proposed changing regulations to significantly limit horseback riding on state-owned trails.

DEP held a public hearing in Hartford on Monday, February 5, regarding the proposed changes, which was attended by more than 250 people. Rep. Hovey, who was out of state on business, submitted testimony to the hearing regarding the need to continue to allow equestrians access to the same trails they currently enjoy and have enjoyed for more than 50 years.

Rep. Hovey said that after she met with DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy in November 2006, it was her understanding the state would continue its equine friendly policy on state trails and parks. However, in recent weeks, the department proposed making state trails exclusive and restrictive to either horseback riding or pedestrian use.

“Since last week’s hearing, I have since been assured by DEP and representatives from Governor Rell’s office that Connecticut’s equine-friendly policies will be maintained,” said Rep. Hovey. “Also, as new trail surfaces are developed, I expect the state will continue to allow horseback riding to exist alongside other passive recreation. It’s unfortunate that DEP initially drafted the proposed regulation change in a way that would restrict use but I am confident that horseback riding and pedestrian use will continue to coexist on state trails and parks.”

“The Connecticut Horse Council appreciates Representative Hovey’s hard work on this issue and the voices of concern that were raised at the February 5 public hearing,” said council President Amy Stegall. “We look forward to continuing to work with DEP on this issue.”