

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Maria Schwartz, TROT President

As we head into this holiday season, I am sitting here reflecting the accomplishments of TROT this past year (see list of highlights, below). 2014 saw us engaged in many equestrian activities as an organization dedicated to maintaining and creating sustainable trails. We started the calendar year off with a very well attended Annual Dinner and Silent Auction; we had a lot of interest, participation and help with TROT's new Adopt-A-Trail program; we had many good organized rides (in spite of the inclement weather); and we attended and testified at several County zoning board meetings.

Speaking of testifying at meetings, please look for an article in this issue of your newsletter about two Maryland Public Service Commission public hearings in January 2015 regarding the merger of PEPCO Holdings, Inc. and Exelon Corporation. These provide an opportunity for TROT members, partnering with many other citizens' organizations, to request public access for recreational uses -- including horse riding -- on the various Pepco right-of-ways. The upcoming hearings are going to be held in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, and TROT needs your testimony and support by attending these hearings. TROT works with other equestrian forums such as the Maryland Horse Council which keeps us informed about other equestrian challenges and successes.

This year we sponsored Miss Maryland Rodeo Queen, Madison Iager, in her bid for Miss USA Rodeo Queen. We also shifted our focus on our long established event, the Judged Pleasure Ride, as it did not have enough TROT volunteers to support it, and instead are in the planning stage for a "non-judged" obstacle clinic (for you and your equine buddy) to be held tentatively in late spring 2015. Look for more information about this in upcoming TROT newsletters and TROT Constant Contact mailings. We held several clinics and our Baltimore and Carroll County chapters of TROT have sprung to life, holding meetings and clinics for the trail riders in those counties. In January 2015, we will once again sponsor a booth at the Horse Expo to get out the word about all the activities that TROT supports and hopefully recruit new TROT members. Most recently, the TROT Board of Directors, recognizing that it is today's youth who will become the "Trail Riders of Tomorrow," voted to award two \$500 scholarships in 2015 to young equestrians to help our youth pursue their ongoing equestrian activities. Check our website for upcoming information.

I started my message this month referring to the 2014 Annual dinner. We are now planning our 2015 Annual dinner and need you to help us. It's so much fun to get together with friends at the Annual Dinner, but it takes work. While our guests are busy renewing friendships, planning their next trail rides, debriefing their friends about what they did this last year, the TROT Board and other TROT members are busy in the kitchen, at the Silent Auction table, and working the

registration desk, all trying to make sure your evening is fun and enjoyable. I am sure you can see yourself there as part of the working group that supports this one activity. We aren't asking for more funds or for all of your hard-earned spare time, but TROT would like you to consider donating a few hours here and there to keep activities like the dinner going. TROT holds monthly board meetings that you, our members, are welcome to attend, in person or via the phone. *We'd like to hear from you*, and taking it one step further, ***we'd like to work with you***. We need YOU in TROT. Please feel free to call me at 301-421-1928 or send an email to mariaeschwartz@verizon.net.

TROT wishes you and your family a Happy 2015! And as always, Happy Trails!

SOME OF TROT'S 2014 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Expanded TROT's "Adopt-A-Trail" program, ably coordinated by Amy Kimble.
 - Held numerous organized joint trail workdays, including ones scheduled at Patuxent River State Park, Catoctin Mountain, Monocacy DNR, Morgan Run, Union Mills, Gillis Falls, and Seneca Bluffs Trail in Seneca Creek State Park.
 - Completed great 2014 Trail Ride program, enthusiastically coordinated by Lisa Troutman, with rides scheduled at North Tract, Schooley Mill, Doncaster State Forest, Woodstock Park, Liberty, Rachel Carson, Ag Park, C & O Canal, New Market, Graham Equestrian Center, Fair Hill, Cedarville, Susquehanna State Park, Fairland Park, Rocky Gorge, and Anacostia.
 - Initiated successful one day \$5 TROT membership allowing new riders to explore TROT's camaraderie on rides.
 - Arranged with a new enthusiastic Trail Ride Coordinator for 2015, Diana Urick, upon Lisa's stepping down.
 - Worked to protect the zoning that allows small farms as we know them in Howard County (ongoing effort).
 - Involved with area residents in a major effort to preserve the Sugarloaf trail system as we know it.
 - Worked with DNR in an effort resulting in their opening Little Bennett State Park for equestrian camping.
 - Encouraged WSSC, who kindly opened parts of their Tridelphia Reservoir access road for equestrian use, year-round, and built a new parking lot for our use.
 - Involved in plans to reopen Newtowne Neck State Park, in St. Mary's County, for equestrian use.
 - Participated with MORE and DNR in planning sustainable trails in Patuxent River State Park (ongoing effort).
 - Participated as an appointed representative on an Ad Hoc committee working on getting permanent multi-use trails and better parking on Frederick's watershed (ongoing effort)
 - Partnered with multiple other groups, asking the Maryland Public Service Commission to allow recreational public
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access on Pepco's rights-of-way (ongoing effort).
 Participated in the revival of the Gunpowder Volunteer Mounted Patrol unit.
 Worked with the rangers of Gunpowder Falls State Park to get blocked trails re-opened.
 Educated members about hunting dates and proposed hunting legislation.
 Expanded TROT's regional meetings/activities, especially in the Baltimore area, but also in Carroll County, the Rocky Gorge region, etc.
 Organized an appreciation luncheon for the WSSC staff who have cleared vast numbers of trees to maintain their Rocky Gorge equestrian trail.
 Attended volunteer appreciation receptions for Howard County and Catoctin Mt. Park, to continue collaborative relationships on behalf of the equestrians.
 Co-sponsored Madison Iager, this year's Maryland High School Rodeo winner, to compete in the 4H National High School Rodeo Finals, to encourage youth equestrian involvement.
 Coordinated effort to award equestrian scholarships for budding youth equestrians in 2015, to further encourage youth equestrian involvement.
 Exhibited at the Horse Expo, Timonium, MD, Jan. 2014.
 Held Annual TROT Dinner, March, 2014.
 Participated in the Maryland Horse Forum, PG Equestrian Center, August, 2014.

RENEW YOUR TROT MEMBERSHIP FOR 2015

from Sim Shanks & Barbara Sollner-Webb

Renewal notices have been sent out via USPS or email (to those members for whom we have a valid email address), and the application is copied below in this newsletter. Many members have already responded using PayPal and the email form.

We encourage you to renew your TROT membership as soon as possible. Doing so allows the membership volunteers to process the applications in a timely manner and reduces the time assisting renewing members at the Annual Meeting, leaving more time for all to interact with fellow members.

Please also encourage your equestrian friends and barn colleagues to join TROT. This is important because when TROT lobbies for retaining trails and trail access or for the creation of new trails – as we have so successfully done in the last few years (see the 2014 accomplishments listed in this newsletter) – the number of our members is incredibly important in getting decision-makers to listen to our requests. The membership fee is rather minimal, and most folks get this and more back in discounts from local tack stores that the TROT membership offers. But most important, your membership adds your voice to help maintain and enhance the area trail system and encourage trail riding as a great sport.

Note that, as in 2014, TROT will very occasionally be

sending announcements, information, updates, etc. via email, to all who give their permission. This will be limited to such activities as Membership Meetings, TROT Rides, Judge Pleasure Ride, Trail Clearing, Annual Dinner, changes to events, and requests for volunteers. It will not take over your mailbox but it will provide you with the most current and timely information. The TROT Website, Newsletter, MarylandTrailRiders and TROTMembers Yahoo Groups, and TROT Trail Riders Of Today on Facebook are available as well.

POSSIBILITY OF PUBLIC ACCESS ON PEPCO RIGHT-OF-WAYS FOR RECREATIONAL USE -- TROT, MORE, MHC and others join forces

from Judy Thacher

Twelve years ago, Trail Riders of Today (TROT) and Mid Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts, Inc. (MORE) participated in a lawsuit to uphold Maryland's "recreational immunity statute". This recreational use statute immunizes landowners from liability when they allow the public to enter their land for recreational activities without charge.

In September 2014, TROT, MORE, Potomac Bridle and Hiking Trail Association, Inc. (PBHTA), Equestrian Partners in Conservation, Inc. (EPIC), Montgomery County Road Runners Association (MCRRA), MD Horse Council (MHC), and others filed a "Petition to Intervene" in the merger of PEPCO Holdings, Inc. and Exelon Corporation (Case # 9361) currently before the Maryland Public Service Commission. The petition was approved on September 19th. The purpose of the intervention by these user groups is to seek to have Exelon, should the merger be approved, grant more public access to PEPCO's rights-of-way for recreational use.

Early in 2015, the Maryland Public Service Commission will hold hearings in PEPCO's service area to take testimony at the following times and locations:

- 6 pm, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2015 at the Montgomery County Council Office Building Auditorium, 100 Maryland Ave., Rockville, MD 20850
- 6 pm, Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2015 at the Prince George's County Community College, Room 227 -- Community Room B, 301 Largo Rd., Largo, MD 20774

Please mark you calendars and plan to attend one or both of these hearings. Your attendance and voice is important, in trying to gain permission for us to ride on Pepco right-of-ways.

It appears that the Montgomery County Executive and the Montgomery County Council are leaning toward supporting trails on power lines. It is important that the TROT membership, especially those TROT members who ride trails in Montgomery County, contact their elected officials in the County government as well as in Annapolis to request that they take a favorable position regarding trails on power lines in the Exelon/Pepco merger case (Case # 9361). Please, do this today!