

October 14, 2024, AERC Board Meeting Minutes

President Nick Kohut DVM called the meeting to order at 8:02 p.m. EST.

Board members present were Bruce Burton, Kristin Seymore-Norsworthy, Connie Caudill, Marci Cunningham, Maureen Fehrs DVM, Bridget Helms, Dawn Hilliard, Nick Kohut DVM, Naomi Preston, Regina Rose, John Parke, Susan Kasemeyer, Vance Stine, Stephanie Palmer-DuRoss, Maribel Paulson, Susan Garlinghouse DVM, Tami Rougeau, Olin Balch DVM, Mollie Krumlaw-Smith, Bob Marshall DVM, Melissa Ribley DVM, Diane Connolly, Mike Maul, Eric Rueter, Jan Stevens, and Laurie Underwood. Executive Director Kathleen Henkel, AERC-I Committee Chair Tom Rajala, Stagg Newman and Cheryl Newman were also on the call.

Susan Kasemeyer made a motion to accept the revised agenda, Vance Stine seconded. Motion passed

A motion was made by Connie Caudill to approve the August 10, 2024, midyear Board meeting minutes which was seconded by Susan Garlinghouse DVM. Motion passed.

Kathleen Henkel presented the statistical report:

Membership as of 10/06/2023	4,339
Membership as of 10/08/2024	4,208
Sanction fees as of 10/08/2023	\$12,765
Sanction fees as of 10/08/2024	\$15,405
Rider fees as of 10/08/2023	\$43,424
Rider fees as of 10/08/2024	\$44,971
New members as of 10/08/2023	588
New members as of 10/08/2024	569

Starting in November 2024, Kathleen Henkel will include rider start numbers with the statistical report to get a better idea of rider participation.

Update from the AERC-I Committee

Tom Rajala updated the Board on the International ride that was recently held in France.

He stated a few AERC members traveled to Australia to compete in the Quilty Ride.

Motion from the International Committee to Revise the AERC-I Committee Charter

Tom Rajala presented the following motion on behalf of the AERC-I Committee:

Motion to adopt a revised charter for the International Committee reducing the number of committee members from 18 to 8 elected committee members and shorten the term length.

Change the AERC-International “Regions” to “Zones”. Region is defined by AERC regions, Zone is defined by the United States time zones.

Revise the number of representatives from 18 Regional representatives to 8 Zone representatives: 2 representatives from each Zone.

Reduce the term length of elected representatives from four (4) years to two (2) years.

Add committee members shall be current AERC and AERC International members (payment of AERC International member dues).

Motion from committee passed unanimously.

Motion from the Competition Committee to Establish a Fund for 100 Mile Ride Managers

Naomi Preston presented the following motion on behalf of the Competition Committee.

Establish a fund for 100 mile ride managers by adding this fund to the list of other donation options available when a member renews their AERC membership. Direct donations may also be given.

Background, analysis and benefit

The 100 mile ride has historically been the highest achievement in AERC, and is fundamental to our National Championship. Unfortunately, AERC has lost 100 mile rides in many regions. In order to keep this distance available for riders, a fund for Ride Managers would encourage existing Ride Managers to continue hosting their 100 (particularly rides with few entries), as well as being an incentive to Ride Managers interested in adding the 100 mile distance to their ride. The fund might also encourage a Ride Manager to bring back a 100 mile ride that is not held anymore. (For example, the Big Horn). 100 mile rides require a greater monetary commitment from Ride Managers, particularly with the additional Veterinarian expense, and this would fund help offset the added costs. In addition to funds secured by the renewal donation option, Julie Suhr has offered to donate 100% of her profits from her upcoming book to this fund. AERC could also solicit other individuals or groups to contribute directly to this fund.

Requirements would be to add a line on the current funds donation section of the renewal form, and setting up an account for the funds. The benefit to riders is to retain existing 100 mile rides that may be in financial jeopardy due to having low numbers of riders, as well as encouraging Ride Managers to add the 100 mile distance to their existing rides, and possibly bringing back 100 mile rides that are not currently being held. Retaining our 100 mile rides and possibly adding new ones gives riders the opportunity to qualify for the AERC National Championship 100. The benefit to Ride Managers is having a distance that appeals to additional riders. The benefit to AERC is keeping the 100 mile distance alive, as well as generating more income for AERC.

Ride Managers would need to submit an application. Applications would be reviewed by the Competition and Ride Managers' Committees. The primary criteria important for selection would be financial need and

the importance of this ride to the respective region. The Committees would meet separately, and rank order the applications. The Committee Chairs would then meet to agree on the rides to receive funding. The number of rides to receive funding would be dependent upon the amount in the fund. If possible, if funds allowed, we would hope to grant several rides a year. Once a Ride Manager's ride has been selected, funds would be distributed as follows: the Ride Manager would submit an invoice to AERC, and receive reimbursement for up to \$500. This could be for the additional Veterinarian expenses, awards, glowsticks/lights, or anything specifically pertaining to the 100 mile ride. The amount of funds to be distributed for the year would be decided by the Competition Committee with input from the AERC Office on the amount of funds available. To announce the new fund, we recommend an article in Endurance News as well as a post on the AERC Facebook page, 100 Mile Riders page, and Ride Managers page, as well as a special email to Ride Managers. The 100 Mile fund could be implemented immediately on the renewal form. If Ride Managers use these funds for any other distance, they would risk future sanctioning of their ride. Separately, a private donation was made for New 100 mile Ride Managers to receive \$500 for expenses. This separate fund has \$2000 remaining.

Connie Caudill made a motion to amend the motion to add; "The Competition Committee will bring the suggestions to the Board for approval". Vance Stine seconded the motion.

Naomi Preston made a motion to amend Connie Caudill's amendment to include input from the Sanctioning Committee and submitting recommendations to the Board for approval.

Connie Caudill's amendment with Naomi Preston's amendment to Connie Caudill amendment reads as follows:

The Competitions Committee, with input from the Sanctioning Committee, will bring recommended rides to the Board of Directors for approval.

The Motion to approve the amended amendment passed unanimously.

The motion, with amendments reads:

Establish a fund for 100 mile ride managers by adding this fund to the list of other donation options available when a member renews their AERC membership. Direct donations may also be given. The Competitions Committee, with input from the Sanctioning Committee, will bring recommended rides to the Board of Directors for approval.

Motion from committee passed unanimously.

Motion from the National Championship Ride to Award Bonus Points for the National Championship Ride

Connie Caudill presented the following motion on behalf of the National Championship Committee.

All riders who complete the 100 mile AERC National Championship Ride will receive 100 bonus points in their respective weight division and in their overall points.

All riders who complete the 50 mile AERC National Championship Ride will receive 50 bonus points in their respective weight division and in their overall points.

Background, analysis and benefit-

The bonus points may encourage more participation in the AERC National Championship Ride and would add an extra incentive to not only compete in the NC Ride but also to complete.

Analyzing the National Championship rider points for the 100 mile ride over the past 5 years, there would have been 34 riders move up in their overall top 10 regional placing, and 26 riders move up in their respective weight division.

The programmer has estimated the cost to reprogram the system to report the bonus points in the NC ride to be approximately \$400.

This would help show case the AERC NC Ride and it will recognize “to finish is to win” when riders complete the ride.

To begin implementation at the 2025 NC Ride.

Motion from Committee passed with 23 in favor and 3 opposing.

Motion from the National Championship Committee for Change of Format and Additional Distances to be added to the 2025 National Championship Ride to be held at the Biltmore Estate, May 2-3, 2025, Ride manager, Cheryl Newman

Connie Caudill presented the following motion on behalf of the National Championship Committee.

The 2025 AERC Championship Ride management is requesting a change/exception from the traditional 3 day format to a 2 day format. In addition, they are requesting the addition of more open ride distances.

Proposal- Friday May 2, 2025-25 mile open, 50 mile open, 50 mile AERC National Championship.

Saturday- May 3, 2025- 30 Mile open, 55 mile open, 75 mile Young Riders Championship, 75 mile open, 100 mile open, 100 mile National Championship.

Background, analysis and benefit-

In light of the disaster created by hurricane Helene in the Asheville area, the National Championship Committee realizes the potential to lose financially in hosting the ride. The committee felt with the experience that Newmans will bring in hosting the NC ride, we should approve an exception to the traditional 3 day format and the additional distances that they requested. If ride management feels this change is advantageous to potentially make a profit then we should approve. The National Championship Committee agreed to allow as a one time exception.

After discussion on the motion was held, the motion from Committee passed unanimously.

Motion from the National Championship Committee, on behalf of the 2025 National Championship Ride, to Add an FEI Co-Sanctioned Ride to the 2025 National Championship Ride

Connie Caudill presented the following motion on behalf the Biltmore 2025 AERC National Championship Ride Manager and Ride Management:

Background- The National Championship Committee is bringing forth this motion on behalf of the 2025 National Championship ride management. The National Championship Committee is not tasked with voting on this according to the National Championship Contract.

“RM must receive prior approval from the AERC for any other sanctioning (ie: open, FEI, AHA)”.

It is the AERC Board that must decide if they approve the addition of having the National Championship ride sanctioned by FEI.

Ride management feels strongly that without the FEI ride, the 100 mile ride will fail and not bring in the riders. In 2024, an FEI ride was just two weeks before the Biltmore ride. The Biltmore 100 mile distance did not have enough entered the 100 mile to host that distance, so had to cancel.

With the disaster that hurricane Helene brought to the Asheville area, the Biltmore Estate had to close down for repair. It has been reported that they will be up and running before the May 2nd ride date. The Biltmore endurance ride will need to make a profit in order to continue in the future. With several major interstates being damaged, the ride management will need to do everything possible to bring in as many riders as they can attract.

Benefit and/or Impact to Membership and/or the AERC Organization

Ride management has stated they will share with USEF information on the AERC riders that are available on the AERC ride results. No personal information will be shared.

FEI riders needing qualification rides will have to opportunity to ride in the AERC National Championship and at the same time using it as a qualification ride for the Pan American and World Endurance Championship.

Benefit to all riders- Bring the best horses and riders in the country together for a great National Championship. Bringing hundreds of AERC members together to enjoy the passion of our sport and build it through riding, crewing, volunteering, etc.

The FEI co sanctioning will take place only on Saturday May 3.

Discussion and vote on adding an FEI ride to the 2025 AERC National Championship Ride. It was noted that an abstention vote is the same as no vote as the motion would need to pass by a majority.

After a thorough discussion the motion passed. 14 approve, 6 oppose, 5 abstentions.

Motion from the Competition Committee regarding Standalone Limited Distance (LD) Ride Trial

Dawn Hilliard presented the motion on behalf of the Competition Committee.

Proposed Motion-Beginning with the 2025 season, AERC will allow the sanctioning of single-event, Standalone Limited Distance rides for a trial period of three years (2025, 2026, 2027 ride seasons). All Standalone Limited Distance events will be considered Special Events and require approval of the Sanctioning Committee.

The following additional guidelines will be used when considering sanctioning for Standalone Limited Distance rides:

- All Standalone Limited Distance rides must be at least 3 weeks or 400 miles away from an established ride with an Endurance Distance unless the competing ride managers give their written approval.
- Only one Standalone Limited Distance ride may be held during an event (no multi-days or two rides on the same day).
- The Regional Sanctioning Director will contact all ride managers who may be impacted. {note: this may involve more than one region, hence more than one Sanctioning Director.}
- The Sanctioning form will ask the reason the ride cannot offer an Endurance Distance. {acceptable reasons include: no overnight camping allowed at this venue, no way to get 50 miles of trail, weather conditions, etc.}
- Standalone Limited Distance rides will not take precedence over rides offering Endurance Distances the following year.

The following rules would need to be updated:

Current: Rule 1. The ride must be at least 50 miles in length per day, up to a maximum distance of 150 miles in three days. For special sanction rides, see rule 16.2 and 16.2.1. Mileage is expected to be measured accurately. A 5% variance is acceptable due to human and mechanical error.

Proposed change: Rule 1. The ride must be at least 25 miles in length per day, up to a maximum distance of 150 miles in three days. For special sanction rides, see rule 16.2 and 16.2.1. Mileage is expected to be measured accurately. A 5% variance is acceptable due to human and mechanical error.

Current: Rule 16.2. Special event rides are series of rides on consecutive days, totaling three days or more, and a minimum of 150 miles. Sanctioning of such rides must be sent to the AERC Executive Director for distribution to the Sanctioning Committee at least 90 days before the ride date. Special event rides shall require approval of the Sanctioning Committee for the first two years or at any time a request to change ride dates.

Proposed change: Rule 16.2. Special event rides are *Standalone Limited Distance rides or a series of rides on consecutive days, totaling three days or more, and a minimum of 150 miles*. Sanctioning of such rides must be sent to the AERC Executive Director for distribution to the Sanctioning Committee at least 90 days before the ride date. Special event rides shall require approval of the Sanctioning Committee for the first two years or at any time there is a request to change ride dates.

Current: Rule L1. Limited Distance rides must be at least 25 miles but not exceed 35 miles in length. These rides must be sanctioned into the Limited Distance Program and held in conjunction with or within an adjacent 24 hour time period of an AERC Sanctioned Endurance Ride.

Proposed change: Rule L1. Limited Distance rides must be at least 25 miles but not exceed 35 miles in length. These rides must be sanctioned into the Limited Distance Program and held in conjunction with or within an adjacent 24 hour time period of an AERC Sanctioned Endurance Ride.

Background, analysis and benefit

Over the years, AERC has been losing rides and ride venues, with some regions affected more heavily than others. Issues such as loss of trails, loss of campgrounds, and aging out of management are often the reason for these losses.

The availability of Standalone Limited Distance rides can counteract some of those issues by allowing events at locations that do not permit overnight camping, increasing opportunities to bring in riders, veterinarians, and volunteers from new locations, increasing visibility of equestrians on local trail systems, encouraging new managers to run their first rides, and extending the ride season in some regions where weather is not favorable for longer distances certain times of the year.

There have been concerns that allowing Standalone Limited Distance rides will cause a greater loss of Endurance Distances, but the Special Sanctioning guidelines will mitigate the impact to established rides and new rides offering endurance distances. Standalone Limited Distance rides are intended to complement the Endurance Distances already on the ride calendar, not replace them.

Benefit and/or Impact to Membership and/or the AERC Organization

The availability of Standalone Limited Distance rides will benefit us in many ways, including:

- allowing events at locations that do not permit overnight camping
- increased opportunities to bring in riders, veterinarians, and volunteers from new locations
- increased visibility of equestrians on local trail systems
- encouraging new managers to run their first rides
- extending the ride season in some regions where weather is not favorable for longer distances certain times of the year
- increased income to AERC from additional ride days/new members

Start in the 2025 ride season and continue through 2026 and 2027 seasons. At the 2027 Convention (or before), the results of the trial program will be evaluated and the decision will be made whether to make Standalone Limited Distance rides permanent.

A thorough discussion on this motion was held.

Motion from committee failed with 18 opposing, 7 approving.

Motion was made to adjourn by Susan Kasemeyer at 10:39 p.m., seconded by Kristin Seymore-Norsworthy. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Connie Caudill, Secretary.