

UNITED STATES *Dressage* FEDERATION, INC.

November 17, 2011

Dear USDF Members;

In less than three weeks you are going to be asked to vote on what I consider to be an important and exciting endeavor. Almost twenty years in the making, a USDF National Dressage Finals, to start in 2013, is now ready for your approval. Like the Regional Championships, this competition will be open to only USDF Participating Members. It will be funded in large part through sponsorships and with the designated portion of the qualifying fee Participating Members pay when they compete in the Regional Championship program which has been collected over the years in the National Championship Fund.

I'm sure you have read some of the hype on the proposed championships. Janine Malone wrote a superb "Inside USDF" column in June in which she asked the question: "Why is dressage the only national discipline – and the largest- not to have national championships for the largest segment of USDF's membership – the adult amateurs and open riders who don't compete at the high performance level? Why not dressage?"

The concept of a national championship has been around for at least as long as our current Regional Championship program. Until now, for various reasons, the timing for a championship of this nature has not seemed right. We were appropriately cautious in 2008 when there was tremendous economic uncertainty. In general, especially globally, there still is uncertainty today. But, as I pointed out in my October "Inside USDF" column, participation in our Regional Championship program has remained relatively stable over the years despite the economy. I believe now the timing is right. If we don't start now we will be ignoring the long-term promise made to regional championship participants, who indicated their support of going forward. This championship can give a boost to our sport by creating interest and providing additional goals for competitors.

Of course, there are a few obstacles and issues. The biggest one is the size of our country. This leads to the question of location and venue. We would like to start in 2013 at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington. The reasons for this are simple: It is in the backyard of our office, it's a known facility, convenient, and our staff is familiar with the park management. Due to the nature of contracts with venues and sponsors; and just plain working the kinks out, we are looking at keeping the championships at the KHP for the first three years. After that, we plan to rotate these championships. We recognize and would like to address that the west coast is constantly at a disadvantage and seem to always be asked to travel the furthest.

The second big question is the date for a championship. Once again, the size of the country and the corresponding climate considerations that go with each Region make this a difficult issue. Although it is far from ideal, as a starting point we are looking at early November. Again, we know that unpredictable weather, snow and icy conditions, especially in the numerous mountain ranges across our country, could make this date difficult. However, once again in order to get started and with minimal interference with the Regional Championships that are already planned, we felt that this date was the best.

I want to give you a little background on where and what has been done thus far.

As many of you know, the topic of a national championship based on the current Regional Championships, were revived again last year after a two year break and were covered more fully last

December at the USDF Annual Meeting in Jacksonville. It was discussed in several committee meetings and later at the Board of Governors.

In early 2011 the USDF conducted a survey of those members who would be eligible to compete in such a final. The results of that survey were reported to the Executive Board at their spring meeting. At the meeting the EB voted to pursue planning and proposing a championship to be held at the Kentucky Horse Park with a target date of 2013, due to the overwhelming support of the proposal by those surveyed. The proposal for a championship will be brought before the Board of Governors for a vote this December.

The USDF is working with the USEF on a competition that would bring together the top placers of the Regional Championships. As a first step, USDF staff initiated talks with the USEF in the late spring. Janine met with USEF and USDF staff members in May and again on August 1st to discuss preliminary plans. As a result of those discussions a MOU between the two organizations was recently signed, setting the stage for going forward pending USDF BOG approval.

The title of the competition has been discussed with the USEF and is still undetermined. It is important to note that these championships will not replace any current USEF National Championships such as the Young Horse or Juniors, nor should they be confused with the High Performance Grand Prix or Intermediaire 1 Championships/Selection Trials held along with the Festival of Champions.

Although every aspect of the National Championship proposal has been reviewed many times over the past twenty years, each review has concluded that the format proposed for this competition should be pretty much unchanged from what was originally put forward. One of the most exciting aspects is that it will allow for Adult Amateurs to compete in AA only classes at a national level.

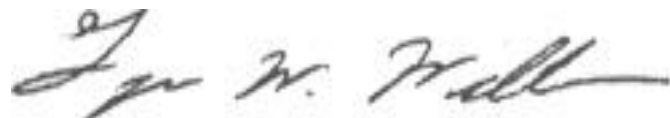
The USDF has formed an Organizational Task Force to work out some of the details, or what may be referred to as the "day to day operations". Their responsibilities include working out detailed logistics of the competitions, including dates, schedules, fees charged, expenses, and facilities.

In addition the USDF formed a Competitors Advisory Group. They have representation from all nine USDF Regions and their responsibilities include: Serving as advisers and a sounding board to the Organizational Task Force in representing competitors' interests and Regional challenges (geographic and otherwise). To act as advisers to competitors who may have questions (including logistics such as travel) about the National Championships. They also should be available to the delegates and the BOG to address questions regarding competitors' concerns.

Most recently on their October 25 teleconference call the USEF Dressage Committee voted "to support in principle the USDF National Dressage Finals or Championships".

The Executive Board is asking for your support on this exciting project. I will be happy to try to answer any questions you may have, so please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

George Williams
USDF President