

Trails

The Pennsylvania Equine Councils Trail Committee's purpose is to build a working relationship with groups that have the same trail interests and agencies who manage the over five million acres of land that riders want access to, such as the D.C.N.R - State Forests and Parks, National Forests, PA Game Commission and various county, municipal and private parks; to offer educational programs, trainings and assistance to not only promote good relations on shared and single use trails but to promote conservation efforts to preserve open space.

Are Your Trails in Jeopardy? Your trails could be in jeopardy of being closed and you may not even know about it. In 2002 almost 1.5 million acres of Game Lands was lost to open equestrian and mountain bike use. In mid-2005 the Allegheny National Forest, 513,000 acres in Northwestern PA, proposed in their mandated Long Range Plan wanted to limit equestrian use to only 12% of the land on signed trails only. Now the 2.4 million acres of DCNR (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) State Forest and State Park trails could be in jeopardy. DCNR has done a remarkable job over the last decade to make trails available to equestrians. Although marked with signs, prior to 2002 most of the DCNR trails were "user generated" meaning the public created a trail that subsequently was marked and mapped for public use. As recreational use has increased these user-generated trails were not holding up in some wet or sensitive spots. Boggy areas have developed and erosion on steep trails has causing environmental impacts.

Over the last 40 years environmental laws and regulations have been developed to protect our dwindling clean water resources and sensitive habitats. Those rules are beginning to be enforced on non-motorized, (hiking, biking and equestrian) recreational trails and rightly so.

State and national budget cuts are affecting maintenance and repair of the existing trails and thus many trails with environmental issues are being closed or may be in the near future. Historically equestrians have not devoted much time to helping or learning how to assist the agencies. On the other hand horseback riders have been working a little on their own, trimming trails but not signing the volunteer forms the agencies require. These good intentions have caused environmental problems for the lands and liability issues for the agency.

What can be done to keep trails open and improve opportunities for access? The Pennsylvania Equine Council began a Trail Stewardship Program in 2002 to build relationships and awareness between non-motorized trail user groups and the state land agencies. There are many programs that raise awareness of trails issues and offer solutions to problems. For more info on these programs please contact

Bud Wills, PEC State Trail Chair and Gwen Wills, Trails Stewardship Program Director at gwwills52@gmail.com or (814)379-3759.

Everyone can become part of the solution to our vanishing open space. Sometimes all we need to do is Ride Smarter!

Trail Contacts:

State Trail Chair:

Bud Wills
235 Mule Lane
Summerville, Pa 15864
814-379-3759
814-379-3045 (Fax)
gwwills52@gmail.com

Asst-Trail Chair:

Elaine Winters
2058 South Forge Road
Palmyra, Pa. 17078
717-838-5224
ewinters67@verizon.net

Informational Links:

www.horsetrip.com

State-by-State Directory of Stables, Horse Motels, Equine Friendly Camping, and Bed & Breakfast's

www.PAtrail.com

PA horse trail, horse camping, and carriage trail guidebooks