

WHERE DO YOU RIDE?

Part I

“Where do you ride?” This is a question, perhaps phrased in a different way, but one you have undoubtedly asked or heard a hundred times. As avid trail riders we always want to know where the good riding areas are and how to get there. The days are past where you could ride out your front gate and down the gravel road for a morning or afternoon ride. Many rural roads are now paved, have drivers without horse sense when approaching a rider, and greatly increased traffic. Even the gravel roads are no longer inviting with the lack of the “horse sense” factor and increased use. So, where do we ride? The more than likely answer –government public land.

Knowing where the good riding can be found is important but just as important is to know which government agency manages the PUBLIC LAND and knowing what their mandate for management entails. Missouri has six (6) major public land management agencies that manage equestrian trails. Each agency has a different mandate for their management of the land and differing rules or requirements when applied to equestrian trails. In other words, all riding areas are not just “government or public land.” As an informed and responsible trail rider utilizing Missouri’s public trail system, we need to understand the differences between land management agencies and how they apply to our equestrian or multiuse trail system.

Missouri has four federal agencies that have equestrian trails:

- National Forest Service (Mark Twain National Forest – MTNF)
- National Park Service
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Fish and Wildlife (not a major equestrian trail manager)

Missouri has two state agencies that have equestrian trails:

- Missouri Department of Natural Resources – Division of State Parks
- Missouri Department of Conservation

Missouri has multiple county/city/privately owned equestrian trails. Some of the major entities are:

- St. Charles County Parks
- St. Louis County Parks & Recreation
- Jackson County Parks & Recreation
- Pioneer Forest - L-A-D Foundation

The above listed agencies have very different regulations regarding equestrian use policy. In the coming issues of “*Trail Country News*” newsletter each agency will be discussed and their equestrian trail policies. We all need to be knowledgeable of these differences. With knowledge comes the ability to further develop and strengthen our relationship with each agency and promote/protect our “Right to Ride”. Be looking for the upcoming articles explaining the differences among Missouri’s public land management agencies and their differing attitudes and regulations concerning horseback riding.