

WHERE DO YOU RIDE?

Part II

The purpose of this series of articles is to acquaint our riders with background information on agencies where equestrian trails can be found and how their missions differ from one another.

U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (COE)

The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers is one of three federal managed land agencies in our state that provide equestrian trails. The entire scope of the COE's purpose and mission for our nation is mind boggling when one looks into its entire mission. Among national defense, flood protection, engineering, hydroelectricity, potable water supply, fish and wildlife conservation, incidental navigation, etc., while maintaining a healthy balance of the varying uses of the heartland's waterways, you will find within the mission to provide recreational opportunities.

Every year nationally, 365 million people visit one of the 422 COE lakes for recreation; the COE is the largest provider of water-based outdoor recreation in the nation. Water is a huge recreational draw for thousands of individuals when you consider the boating, swimming, fishing, etc. and those who like to just picnic or enjoy being near water. The land surrounding the lakes is home to a multitude of outdoor recreational activities such as hunting, hiking, camping, bird watching – and the list goes on. Horseback riding is only one very small part of the many forms of recreation held in appropriate lake areas. Our smaller numbers and presence makes it even more vital to be involved where equestrian trails do exist and claim our need to have trails open to horse use.

Missouri's COE equestrian trails can be found at the following lake areas:

KANSAS CITY DISTRICT: Smithville Lake: Longview Horse Trail and the Smithville Lake Trail.

Truman Lake: Berry Bend Equestrian Park and the Smith Bend Horse Trail. **Stockton Lake:** Orleans Trail and Hawker Point. **Pomme de Terre:** Bolivar Landing Trail.

ST. LOUIS DISTRICT: Mark Twain Lake: Joanna Trail and Lick Creek Trail. **Wappapello Lake:** maintains four different trailheads.

SMMBCH is appreciative of the positive relationship we share with the managers of these COE lake areas. Each area is managed by COE officials that are knowledgeable of their area and its unique set of trail management issues based on geology, soil components, etc. What does all this mean to us as responsible equestrian trail users? Whether we are driving to these areas for a vacation ride or are local riders, all need to be knowledgeable and follow the rules/regulations that go with the particular area. Each lake manager makes recreational decisions based on the characteristics of the lake and land mass surrounding the lake. Most requirements are the ones we are already familiar with and follow – stay on trail; cross tie to trees; Pack it in – Pack it out; etc. There is not one universal set of recreational rules. Each lake is unique; before riding, check with the local lake management.

With all our land management agencies, it is well known that funding for trail maintenance is an issue. We can make a significant contribution toward keeping our trails through our volunteer efforts to help with the maintenance and protection of trails. The NEMO River Valley Chapter of SMMBCH has a very positive presence in volunteer trail efforts on Mark Twain Lake trails. Tri-Lakes Chapter is very involved with the Pomme de Terre Lake, Stockton Lake area and trying to help with trails on Truman Lake even though it is not in the local Tri-Lakes Chapter membership area. Local chapters are needed in areas not well served to concentrate on the great equestrian trail opportunities that the COE can offer. If trail riders want good trails, it is our responsibility to develop positive relationships with our land

managers, practice good trail ethics, and pursue cooperative volunteer projects. All trail users should support and give back to those making trails available.