

WHERE DO YOU RIDE?

Part III

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.

National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) system on a national level comprises 397 areas covering more than 84 million acres in every state (except Delaware), the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These areas include national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House.

The mission of the NPS, which covers all units, comes from the 1916 Organic Act that established the National Park System. In basic terms, the NPS preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and value. A tough balancing act when you think about it...preserving unimpaired for this and future generations while allowing for enjoyment, education, and inspiration by the public.

For Missouri horseback riders, there are two NPS units that allow horseback riding: Ozark National Scenic Riverways (ONSR) and Wilson's Creek National Battlefield. The ONSR is perhaps the one which many of us are familiar. It is a very popular riding destination and also has had controversy associated with horseback use. (SEE: ONSR and Horse Use article). Before speaking of conflict, one must keep in mind that National Parks including ONSR is bound by law and Act of Congress in 1964 "*...for the purpose of conserving and interpreting unique scenic and other natural values and objects of historical interest, including preservation of portions of the Current River and the Jacks Fork River in Missouri as free-flowing streams, preservation of springs and caves, management of wildlife and provisions for use and enjoyment of the outdoor recreational resources thereof by the people of the United States...*".

The Ozarks National Scenic Riverways extends along 134 miles of the Jacks Fork and Current Rivers in the Ozark Highlands of Southeast Missouri and encompasses 81,216 acres. The horse trail system consists of four designated loops with a total of 23.5 miles. There are out of park horse camping facilities located in the Eminence area and at the northern end of the park. Two trail head staging areas are available for day use and provide restrooms, hitching posts and parking for large horse trailers. The longest trail, the Shawnee Loop, is seven miles and the northern most trail, the Jerktail Loop, is the shortest at 5.2 miles. Horse trail maps are available on the park's website, upon request at park headquarters and at the Shawnee and Broadfoot Staging areas. For more information on Ozark National Scenic Riverways, visit: www.nps.gov/ozar.

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, which is located in Republic, Missouri, just outside of Springfield, provides another equestrian opportunity within the National Park system. Wilson's Creek was the first major Civil War battle fought west of the Mississippi River, and the scene of the death of Nathaniel Lyon, the first Union general killed in combat.

The 715 acre battlefield has a seven mile loop equestrian trail. There is a \$5.00 entrance fee per adult to a maximum of \$10.00 per vehicle. An annual pass can be purchased for \$20.00. A parking area which can accommodate trailers is provided. Groups of more than 7 riders require a Special Use Permit. There is no horse camping within the park.

For additional information on Ozark National Scenic Riverways visit the ONSR website: www.nps.gov/ozar ; Wilson's Creek National Battlefield website: www.nps.gov/wicr