

WHERE DO YOU RIDE?
Part VII – Summary of Series

“*Trail Country News*” 2012 Issue began a seven part series with the purpose of providing information to riders on Missouri’s five major land management agencies. Each of these agencies supports horseback riding in differing degrees. What I hope readers have taken from this series is that “public land is not just public land.” Each agency was created by law and with a specific mission. As trail users we need to know how each agency supports a trail system and how horse trails fit into the system.

SUMMARY OF AGENCIES AND MISSIONS:

For Detailed Information, Please Read Original Articles

US Army Corp of Engineers: (Federal) Mission – national defense, flood protection, hydroelectricity, potable water supply, conservation - somewhere in this huge mission comes recreation. Horseback riding is only one very small part of the many forms of recreation held in lake areas.

National Park Service: (Federal) Mission – to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and value. While preservation is its basic mission, recreation is allowed and governed by federal laws. Horseback riding is allowed on designated trails only. (See: *Trail Country News*” Spring 2013.)

Mark Twain National Forest: (Federal) Mission – Created by the Weeks Act permitting the federal government to purchase land for reestablishing forests and protecting watersheds. The Forest Service manages for the sustainability of our forests areas and protecting watersheds. The MTNF is the most generous of the agencies in supporting horse trails.

Missouri Department of Conservation: (State) Mission Statement – *“To protect and manage the forest, fish, and wildlife resources of the state and to facilitate and provide opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources.”* Recreation falls into citizens using and enjoying conservation land.

Missouri State Parks: (State Division of Department of Natural Resources) Mission – *Protection to park visitors, their property and the cultural and natural resources of Missouri’s state parks and historic areas. Provide opportunities to understand, appreciate, and enjoy the cultural and natural heritage.*

So why do we as horseback riders need to know the differing missions of these five agencies? We must be knowledgeable of their mission mandated by law and know how we as equestrians fit into the mission. As citizens of this state we seek recognition as recreational equals with Missouri’s trail user groups. We seek the same opportunities for use and trail development. We recognize and take responsibility that horses have an impact on the environment. All users create impact. We also recognize horse impact has often been misrepresented with opinion often taking precedence over scientific data. We, as SMMBCH members, support minimizing impact through service to each of these land managers. Our volunteer hours in helping maintain and plan for sustainable multiuse trails, has a place in all Missouri’s land managers missions. Hoses not only historically and culturally belong on Missouri’s trails; they have earned the privilege of being included.

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