

NEWS RELEASE

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RECREATION GROUPS JOIN FORCES TO IMPROVE TRAIL SAFETY AND ENJOYMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS

A group of national and state trail advocacy organizations representing equestrian, OHV, and bicycle interests recently completed a collaborative effort to develop a new guide called "Sharing Our Trails – A Guide to Trail Safety and Enjoyment". The guide is intended to be used in a variety of ways such as incorporation in trail brochures, magazine articles and trail education programs of all types.

The purpose of the guide is to improve safety and improve trail satisfaction for all trail enthusiasts on multiple-use trails. To quote the document itself, "In many parts of the country trails are open to and shared by equestrians, OHV riders, bicycle riders, runners and hikers. Trail sharing can and does work when people respect each other and work cooperatively to keep each other safe."

Deb Balliet, CEO of The Equestrian Land Conservation Resource stated "We all recognize that there are techniques and practices that will keep trail enthusiasts safe and improve the quality of our experiences. This guide represents the efforts of a broad range of trail enthusiasts working together to develop an understanding of each other's needs and develop a guide that specifically tells trail enthusiasts what steps to take when they meet on the trail".

Jack Terrell, Senior Project Coordinator for the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council said "Understanding other trail enthusiasts' needs, particularly when it comes to safety, is critical to minimizing conflicts and maximizing the enjoyment of all trail enthusiasts. This guide goes a long way toward promoting that understanding among everyone on the trail".

Daphne Green, Deputy Director of the California State Parks OHMVR Division stated "We are proud to work with the organizations involved in this effort to devise programs and initiatives to minimize user conflicts, increase safety, and enhance enjoyment of our public recreation opportunities".

Lori McCullough, Executive Director of Tread Lightly!, Inc. said "The Tread Lightly! ethic has always encouraged respect and courtesy between all trail enthusiasts, but conflicts still occur. This joint effort in educating all recreationists on the best practices for sharing trails shows common ground and collaboration can lead to improved trail experiences for all".

Jim Bedwell, Director of Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Services for the US Forest Service stated "The groups that came together to produce the guide for sharing trails on our public lands are to be commended for their view of "the big picture." Outdoor recreation provides many benefits to people, communities, and the economy. An attitude of sharing increasingly scarce resources and cooperating safely is paramount to sustaining these benefits."

Tom Ward, California Policy Director for the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) said "This set of guidelines was developed after an extraordinary collaboration between equestrians, mountain bikers, hikers and motorized trail users. It includes suggested rules of etiquette, which provide understanding between users, and will create a safe and enjoyable experience for all. IMBA was pleased to be involved in this effort."

Organizations and agencies involved in the development of the guide include the American Endurance Ride Conference, Americans for Responsible Recreational Access, American Motorcyclist Association, American Trails, Back Country Horsemen of America, BlueRibbon Coalition, California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division, Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan, Equestrian Land Conservation Resource, International Mountain Bike Association, Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, Loomis Basin Horsemen's Association, Motorcycle Industry Council, National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council, Off-Road Business Association, Open Beaches- Trails, Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association, Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, Tread Lightly!, and United States Forest Service.

The guide can be found on the following websites:

Americans for Responsible Recreational Access	http://www.arra-access.com/
American Trails	http://www.americantrails.org/
Equestrian Land Conservation Resource	http://www.elcr.org/index_cal.php
International Mountain Bicycling Association	http://www.imba.com/
Loomis Basin Horsemen's Association	http://www.garlic.com/~lbha/
National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council	http://www.nohvcc.org/
Tread Lightly!	http://www.treadlightly.org/

SHARING OUR TRAILS – A GUIDE TO TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Responsible trail enthusiasts, both motorized and non-motorized, have much in common. They have an appreciation for our public lands and want to enjoy what our public lands have to offer.

In many parts of the country trails are open to and shared by equestrians, OHV riders, bicycle riders, runners and hikers. Trail sharing can and does work when people respect each other and work cooperatively to keep each other safe.

While it is important for people to respect each other on the trail, it is important to remember that equestrians are dealing not only with other trail enthusiasts' personalities, they also are working with horses whose temperaments are as individual as our own. Horses' natural instincts can influence their behaviors and affect the way they react to circumstances encountered on the trail.

For these reasons, it is important that equestrians know their horses well enough that they are confident that they will be able to control their horses when they encounter other trail enthusiasts who are allowed on the trail.

Conversely, OHV riders, bicycle riders, runners and hikers must understand that "equestrian only" trails must be respected for the safety of both the horse and rider. These trails offer the opportunity for horsemen to acclimate their horses to basic trail conditions without encountering "unknown threats" that can trigger the horse's natural instinct of flight.

When young or inexperienced horses encounter new conditions on the trail like OHVs, bicycles, runners and hikers, and even certain scents, the flight response can end with disastrous results for the horse or rider.

When equestrians on well-trained horses and other responsible trail enthusiasts meet each other on the trail the encounters can be enjoyable social exchanges if the groups understand how to work together to keep the encounters safe.

These basic guidelines will help ensure that meeting on the trail will be a safe and enjoyable experience:

Guidelines for all trail enthusiasts:

Common Courtesy

- Respect all trail restrictions and use only trails open to your mode of transportation.
- Be considerate of others on the road or trail.
- When traveling on shared use trails, continually watch for other types of recreationists.
- Slow down when sight lines are poor.
- Keep speeds low around other recreationists.
- Keep noise and dust down.
- Keep your ears open – no ear buds for an iPod or MP3. Listening to headphones or ear buds can make it difficult to hear and communicate with other recreationists. In some areas it is illegal to operate vehicles or bikes with both ears covered.
- Keep pets under control. Some trails require dogs to be leashed. Be familiar with local rules.

Yielding

- Yield the right of way to those passing you from behind or traveling uphill.
- Motorized vehicles yield to mountain bikes, runners, hikers, and horses.
- Mountain bikes yield to runners, hikers and horses.
- Runners and hikers yield to horses.



Guidelines for Equestrians on shared trails:

- Be sure you can control your horse and it has been exposed to other trail recreational uses before riding on shared use trails.
 - Cooperate with local OHV and bicycle riders to expose your horse to vehicles in a gradual manner in a safe environment.
- Be alert and aware of the presence of other trail enthusiasts. If possible, pull to the side of the trail when you hear oncoming OHVs or bicycles.
- At trailheads or staging areas, park vehicles and secure stock in a manner that provides a safe distance between the horses and passing traffic.
- Be prepared to let other trail enthusiasts know what needs to be done to keep you, the horse, and other trail enthusiasts safe when you meet on the trail.
- Less experienced horses and riders should ride behind more “trail-wise” horses and riders.
- If you are “ponying” a horse, go slow and never take a loose horse on the trail.

Guidelines for OHV riders when encountering horses on the trail:

- Pull to the side of the trail far enough for horses to pass safely as soon as you see horses.
- Pull to the downhill side of the trail if possible since horses tend to perceive unknown threats on the uphill side as predators.
- Shut off your motor as soon as possible and remove your helmet. The horse will be more likely to recognize you as a human.
- Speak to the oncoming rider and horse in a friendly, relaxed tone.
- Horsemen may pull to the side of the trail a safe distance if they hear an OHV approaching but this **does not** necessarily mean it is safe for you to ride by. Stop and wait for instructions from the horseman.

- Ask the horseman how he/she would like to proceed.
 - The horseman will know his/her horse and how the horse reacts to other trail enthusiasts.
 - The horseman may ask you to stay put and ride past you.
 - The horseman may ride to the side of the trail and ask you to ride or push past them.
- If you ride by a horse, keep your rpm's low and steady and your sound as low as possible. Sudden movements or sounds can startle horses.
- Be alert – be aware and on guard for oncoming traffic.

Guidelines for bicyclists when encountering horses on the trail:

- Pull to the side of the trail far enough for horses to pass safely as soon as you see horses.
- Pull to the downhill side of the trail if possible since horses tend to perceive unknown threats on the uphill side as predators.
- Speak to the oncoming rider and horse in a friendly, relaxed tone. Remove your helmet if it conceals part of your face. The horse will be more likely to recognize you as a human.
- Horsemen may pull to the side of the trail a safe distance if they hear a bicycle approaching but this **does not** necessarily mean it is safe for you to ride by. Stop and wait for instructions from the horseman.
- Ask the horseman how he/she would like to proceed.
 - The horseman will know his/her horse and how the horse reacts to other trail enthusiasts.
 - The horseman may ask you to stay put and ride past you.
 - The horseman may ride to the side of the trail and ask you to ride or push past them.
- If you ride by a horse, do so at a slow, steady pace and avoid making any sudden movements or sounds that might startle the horse.
- Be alert – be aware and on guard for oncoming traffic.

Guidelines for other non-motorized recreationists when encountering horses on the trail:

- Hikers and trail runners should always stop and step to the side of the trail when they meet horses on the trail.
- Step to the down-hill side of the trail.
- Speak to the rider and horse in a friendly, relaxed tone.
- Keep pets under control.