



Illinois Trail Riders

Dedicated To Keeping Horses On Our Trails

E-mail: ILTrRdrs@illinoistrailriders.com

www.illinoistrailriders.com

May, June, July 2009

Proposed Trail User Fees

On March 18, 2009, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) unveiled a budget that included proposals for 10 new or increased fees. Notable among those proposals is a state park parking fee and a new Equestrian Trail Use Fee. Implementation of both would require an administrative rule change. This proposal would charge all visitors (in and out of state) a \$5.00 daily parking fee. An annual parking pass would also be available for \$25.00 for in-state and \$35.00 for out-of-state residents. These fees will allow the agency to hire additional staff at state parks, natural areas, wildlife areas and other sites as funds become available.

The Equestrian Trail Use Fee would establish a fee for individuals to bring horses or other equine into IDNR-owned property. Equestrians would have the option of purchasing a \$5 day pass or a \$25 annual pass. Since equestrian trails, day use areas and campgrounds require an extraordinary amount of maintenance, revenue generated from this fee will support added staff and maintenance of equestrian trails throughout the state. Other fees such as for hunting, fishing fees, permits, and stamps would increase. Boat launching and state beach use fees would also be new.

With the help of Illinois Federation for Outdoor Resources (IFOR) President Bob Becker and Vice President Bo Arnold, Sandy Poletti, Secretary of Illinois Trail Riders and IFOR, set up a meeting for Illinois Trail Riders and Horsemen's Council of Illinois representatives to speak with IDNR representatives in an Open Door Policy meeting. Those attending the meeting on behalf of IDNR were Director Marc Miller and representatives from the Land Management Division, Diane Kitchen and Terri Musser. Speaking for equestrian trail users were Frank Bowman, President of Horsemen's Council of Illinois; Denise Maxwell, Lori Kennedy, Sandy Poletti, Directors of Illinois Trail Riders; Peter Veit, a director of Illinois Trail Riders and Horsemen's Council of Illinois; and Mike Schlemmer of Westwood Trail Riders, a large Jerseyville area trail riding club that is an affiliate of IFOR. The Open Door Policy meeting took place on May 11, 2009 at 3:30 pm.

Equestrians were invited to introduce themselves to the new director of the IDNR, Marc Miller, and took the opportunity to enlighten him on our experiences as "horse riders and horse campers" at IDNR managed lands and facilities.

We came prepared with a list of comments and concerns about the proposed fees at State managed lands. Everyone had a copy prior to the meeting (see the list on page 4). After the introductions, we voiced how important state IDNR managed lands are to the average trail rider and expressed our concerns about the fees that are being proposed as an effort to supplement the IDNR operating budget.

We advocated for a **single annual rider-based** fee, which would be good at all IDNR sites. That fee could be of

a sufficient magnitude so that **no separate fees** for parking, horse tags, people tags, trailer tags, etc. would ever be required. A rider-based fee would work favorably as many equestrians own more than one horse, but can only ride one horse at a time on IDNR property. Trailhead honor system boxes would work well for this.

Illinois equestrians understand the need for money and manpower to manage land and provide services to the public. Fees are sometimes necessary to help maintain parks within the state (pay to play?).

Not much was said on the fees probably because Marc and his staff have little answers at this time, but we did give them a lot to think about on the fee issue.

According to Bob Becker, all the fees, including equestrian, need legislation approved by the Illinois General Assembly. Legislation has not yet been introduced. The Spring session should end by May 30, 2009. He said the IDNR plans to introduce a bill in the Fall, but Fall is generally a short veto session. It may be well into 2010 before a bill will be introduced and passed.

A multitude of different topics were addressed including the current budget and manpower shortages of IDNR, the possibility of extending the seasonal trail usage, probably on a site-by-site basis, a user fee structure for the speedy restoration of 40 critical vacancies, avoiding conflicts between different user interests possibly with better scheduling.

We also discussed the use of other IDNR properties for equestrian use such as the World Sporting Complex in Sparta. This site could be used for venues such as the popular "Cowboy Mounted Shooting".

There are many more issues involved with equestrian fees such as the exemption of youth riders. When the time comes to set up rules and regulations for equestrian fees, we ask that equestrians be involved in the fee structure process.

Marc was open and frank when discussing our mutual concerns. His friendly, accommodating personality allowed us all to freely share our feelings and insights about IDNR campgrounds, trails, employees, seasonal closures, proposed fees, potential volunteer work, and the "regular" problems and issues that IDNR land managers and equestrian trail users recognize as important.

The Illinois state budget is very tight and every branch of state government is competing for the same dollars. The budget is dependent on legislation and the amount of taxes which are collected by the state from various sources. Budget negotiations with state administration is difficult for everyone in government given the current economic situation. Any public discussion which involves raising taxes or creating fees is not popular with citizens or politicians.

A very poignant fact is that virtually all users are more (continued on page 6)

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**Illinois Trail Riders Handbook
Of Trails, Camps and Services**

Over 300 pages of information on Illinois trails and trail riding. A total of over 24,000 rideable miles.

Each listing contains pertinent information on each area including directions to the facility, a description of the trails, a detailed map, camping facilities and a contact name and phone number.



All this for \$20.00 (plus \$5.00 postage and handling)

Order Form On Back Page

**Illinois Trail Riders
Goals and Purposes**

Encourage the development of year-around horse trails with improved trailer parking and horse camping facilities.

Establish/maintain communications throughout all stages and levels of trail or land planning and management.

Utilize education programs to help trail developers provide safe multi-use trail facilities and all trail users to understand trail etiquette.

Work with legislators to illustrate the importance of trail-based recreation to the horse community and Illinois.

Meet with environmental and conservancy advocacy groups to encourage an unbiased approach to trail development (saddle, carriage and pack).

Work to keep existing trails open and monitor changes in trail use to protect equestrians and defend our right to be on trails and roads throughout Illinois.

Advertising

Promote your event or sell your items through the Newsletter which reaches over 2,000 riders around the State of Illinois on at least a quarterly basis (February, May, August, November).

Ad deadline is the 10th of the month preceding publication date. Ad copy along with payment must be received by that date and are subject to approval. See rates alongside.

Ad Type	One-Time Rate	Per Issue Four-Time Rate
Business Card	\$18.00	\$13.00
Quarter Page	\$25.00	\$21.00
Half Page	\$35.00	\$28.00
Full page	\$50.00	\$40.00
CLASSIFIED: \$10.00 PER ISSUE, 40 WORDS OR LESS		

Send your camera ready copy and prepayment to Bobbi Glab, 4006 Oak Avenue. Unit 3W. McHenry, IL 60050-6311. 815 578-8960.

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From The President

Today Blagovich is out and Quinn is in. Obama is in and right wingers are crying and the far left are disappointed. Time moves so fast and things change so quickly. Yesterday there was a different story, but it is history now. Tomorrow will be another day. The stormy climate of recent politics seems to have settled down into occasional gusts, rain, and strong breezes. There are still a great number of issues we have to tackle and legislation that needs watching. The storm is not over yet and I keep catching glimpses of a rainbow.

When I reflect on my involvement in politics and civic responsibility, I see myself first as a small tree being moved by the wind but with my roots firmly attached to the things I know, love and want to protect. Like the "Lone Ranger," I often stood alone to speak for horses, trails, green space, environmental preservation and conservation, recreation, and education. With the world around me changing, I had an opinion, a mission, and wanted to be heard. Now people around me are taking notice and getting active. They are reacting to current events, economic realities, and joining with others to form networks with goals of their own.

As president of Illinois Trail Riders, the rewards are and have been greatest when I meet others who are willing to get involved, take a stand, and help with some of the heavy lifting. Even though the people I talk to while advocating for horse trails seem uninvolved (especially if they don't own a trail horse) or busy (if I am trying to convince them to volunteer), or poor (if I am trying to get them to donate or advertise), they still want to help. Yet many of these same people are doing more with less and they are finding a position and a voice of their own.

More and more people are joining the cause, getting involved and working with trails. Horse owners are stepping forward in greater numbers to attend meetings, to work on trail projects, to call a politician and voice and opinion or to just learn how to get involved for themselves. I can feel it when I talk to people at events such as the Horse Fair. I can see it best on the internet. I know it when I read federal and state publications that finally include horse trail users in their education. These are like rays of sunshine peeking out from behind the clouds.

More groups and organizations are forming and the old ones are getting stronger. Back Country Horsemen and Equestrian Land Conservation Resource as well as the trail groups affiliated with state Horse Councils are becoming more visible to the public, the politicians and to government officials. Equestrian voices are joining together and they are getting louder. Most recently there has been the formation of effort to form an association called "United Organizations of the Horse." It is good!

Maybe the storms will blow over soon and the sun will come out tomorrow. We can forget politics and work for a while and enjoy the trails.

May your trail never end.

I will see you out on the trail.

Denise

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting and Election of Directors was held on Saturday, March 7, 2009, in the Seminar Hall at the Livestock Center at the Illinois State Fairgrounds (during Horse Fair) in Springfield, IL.

We welcome Ronald Rhoades as a new director. According to Ron, "I was born and raised a central Illinois farm boy who obtained a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Illinois. I was introduced to horses and began riding when I met my wife-to-be, Sara. Today we live on a portion of her original family farm in central Illinois, operating a small boarding stable and have rental properties to put bread on the table. We enjoy trail riding on our Quarter Horses, Blue and Scooter. We became interested in ITR and HCI while searching for avenues to help protect our riding areas as we kept seeing our local riding areas disappear."



Re-elected as directors for an additional term are Sandy Poletti, Sara Rhoades, Jerry McKinley, and JoAnne Gernant. Continuing their terms as directors are Denise Maxwell, Jean Greenlee, Lori Kennedy, and Peter Veit.

Carolyn Cushman, Lee Ann Fouert and Gloria Heggy and Gary Hampsmire have decided not return as board members. We thank them for their time and contributions. Of special note, Gloria Heggy has been a very hard-working board member for nine years and served as secretary for many of those years.

On behalf of the organization, THANK YOU to all of our officers and directors for their commitment to equestrian trails in Illinois.

Ed Lawrence of the Illinois Quarter Horse Association (IQHA) discussed the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Recreational Riding Program which is open to all equines, not just quarter horses, and is the fastest growing segment within AQHA. Through its Recreational Riding Program, IQHA is building a large database of when and where trail riders ride. This database will be of use to all organizations working in trail advocacy. IQHA has funds to support recreational riding and is focused on trail conservation and outreach. IQHA wants to partner with Illinois Trail Riders to further serve recreational riders.

Sandy Poletti briefly discussed legislative bills introduced in 2009 which are being tracked by the Illinois Federation for Outdoor Resources.

Recreational Trail Program

In our last *Newsletter*, we reported that the Recreational Trails Program was in jeopardy of not being reauthorized due to funding.

Illinois Trail Riders, together with many other trail-related organizations, has signed a letter drafted by the Coalition for Recreational Trails letter that will be sent to key members of the US Congress regarding reauthorization of the Recreational Trails Program in the upcoming multi-year. This letter also addresses surface transportation legislation and inclusion of funding for this important program in the amount of \$550 million, over a five-year period.

To view the letter, go to our website, www.illinoistrailriders.com.

For more information on the Recreational Trails Program go to <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/>.

New Alliance Unites Horse Owners

Press Release May 12, 2009

United Organizations of the Horse unveils new website, www.UnitedOrgsOfTheHorse.com, and rallies all facets of the equine community around its goals of advocacy, education and assistance

In response to the growing number of public policy challenges facing American horses, their owners, and horse-related organizations, a diverse group of horsemen and women today unveiled a new umbrella group, United Organizations of the Horse.

"We need a voice that is capable of coherently and articulately communicating to a misinformed and emotionally manipulated American public," said Sue Wallis, a Wyoming state legislator and United Organizations of the Horse founder.

The United Organizations of the Horse seeks to unify all like-minded equine associations and individuals in support of its mission - to promote the humane care and management of horses and the continued viability of the equine community in the United States of America.

The group is organizing around three pillars:

1. The United Horsemen's Front is already established as a non-profit 501(c)3. This pillar educates the public about the unwanted horse issue and seeks humane, realistic solutions. A new initiative will establish a nationwide rapid-response network of horse owners and others who can mobilize trailers, hay, feed, veterinary care and additional support for law enforcement or other groups rescuing horses in crisis.
2. The United Horsemen's Alliance, a trade group serving as a national voice for horse owners' concerns at the federal level. The Alliance is open to horse owners, equine professionals, breed registries, recreational groups, businesses and others who share the United Organizations of the Horse's core principles. This arm will also ensure that equine groups at the local, state and regional levels have the resources they need to influence and address issues.
3. The United Horsemen's Political & Legal Action Fund, a future political action committee and legal defense fund, providing an effective, adequately-financed voice at the local, state and federal legislative levels. It will also provide expert assistance for members facing court proceedings, and an avenue for initiating legal action.

The organization is founded on the core beliefs that the humane care and management of horses is paramount; policy decisions should be based on sound science and guidelines developed by equine professionals; and policy should safeguard horse owners' private property rights and options to the greatest extent possible.

The leadership team includes current and former legislators at both the federal and state level; agricultural public policy experts; horse trainers; print and broadcast journalists; farmers and ranchers; representatives from tribal, breed and horsemen's associations; and celebrities from the world of country music and cowboy poetry.

Visit www.UnitedOrgsOfTheHorse.com and its news/com-

munications site, www.EquuiVox.org, to learn more about the group and a unique opportunity to actively participate in this new and powerful alliance. The United Organizations of the Horse has scheduled its first annual Leadership Summit on June 14, 2009 in Washington, DC, inviting anyone who adheres to its core principles to attend.

Illinois IDNR Budget Includes New Fees

Supplement to Article on Page 1

The comments and questions listed below are those which were presented at the Open Door Policy Meeting on May 11, 2009. Please review them and use them when talking with your with your favorite IDNR site manager or employee, then making comments to Marc Miller, the new Director of IDNR, or to your legislators.

1. Would equestrians be required to pay the visitors fee in addition to the equestrian user fee? A day ride in a state park would then cost \$10 or the annual fee would be \$50. Given the poor economy and the high cost of maintaining the equine, many feel this would be cost prohibitive for many equestrians.
2. Would monies collected from these fees go directly back into equestrian trails at IDNR parks? Equestrians would like any fees collected from equestrians be earmarked and used exclusively for equestrian facilities.
 - Currently all of the money we pay in camping fees goes straight into "General Funds" and may be used to maintain ball fields, lakes, interpretive centers, showers and other public facilities far away from equestrian trails and campgrounds.
3. Will the implementation of fees mean that they will be able to count exactly the uses of trails and parking and camping facilities by equestrians? At this time IDNR can barely estimate the number of equestrians using the state park system.
4. If an equestrian chooses to purchase the annual fee, would that fee cover all IDNR parks or just one IDNR park? How would this apply to concessionaires who rent horses in the parks? At present time, most equestrian trails in IDNR parks have seasonal closures and most equestrian trails are closed for various hunting seasons. Where there are year-around or lengthy trails there is often no camping facility or only limited parking open to equestrians.
5. Would the annual equestrian fee cover the horse or the rider? One rider may ride several different horses on dif-ferent days throughout a given year.
6. Could youth equestrians be omitted from the fee process? This might help families afford to ride on state trails. Currently horseback riding is the most popular activity for women who appreciate the outdoor sports and they often introduce their children to outdoor activities. A fee might limit youth activities such as 4H and Pony Club.
7. For day fees, how would these fees be collected? Would parks have controlled access points for all users or would a park official collect day fees at the equestrian trail head? Many equestrian trail heads are miles from the park office. Would a volunteer fee box be implemented or would equestrians have to pull their rig into a park office to pay?

At Work In Region 3

By Sara Rhoades



John Hott and Volunteers on Granny Mobile

For those of you who have been browsing through your Illinois Trail Riders *Handbook*, you may have noticed that Region 3 has the fewest number of parks that have horse trails (only 8 parks in a 15 county area). Since we have so few parks in our region, my husband, Ron, and I thought we should do something to help the decreasing number of state employees who have to try to maintain these horse trails for our benefit and enjoyment. For that purpose, I called John Hott, the site superintendent of Middlefork Fish and Wildlife Area near Danville. We have ridden those horse trails for many years but had never volunteered to help clean or maintain them. The local chapter of the Old People's Riding Club had been there for trail cleanup the month before (January), so we got together with them and scheduled two more trail maintenance days, one in March and one in April.



John Hott Chainsawing Fallen Trees

Mark your calendar! Northern Illinois Horse Fest weekend of August 23 and 24 in Belvidere, IL. See us at our booth!

For more information: <http://illinoishorsefest.com/>.



John Hott Using the John Deere Tractor

We nearly froze during the March workday, but were still able to clear more than two miles of trail with chain saws and lopping saws plus five helpers. The photos are from the April work day when we cleared an additional six miles of trails with chain saws, lopping saws, the John Deere tractor that John maintains at the park and 1½ trail crews of seven helpers (we occasionally split into two groups). After these three work days, John and his volunteer crews have been able to clear nearly a third of the 35 miles of horse trails in the park. John's wife, Christie, provided some terrific meals for the volunteer crews which may have been an additional deciding factor in getting people to show up for more work.

If you are concerned about your favorite horse trails staying open and usable, think seriously about volunteering at those parks. Our experience has shown us that site superintendents may be very happy to accept help with the horse trails, given the fact that they now have fewer employees to maintain the park and they also have to maintain trails for the hikers and bikers as well. Think about it and help yourselves keep your favorite riding places!

Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference

Making \$ents out of Sustainability – Green Horses is the theme for SETC 2009. Ways to build better trails...protect water quality at creek/river crossings, at horse camps and at our own farm will be explored. Additional topics will be manure management, carbon footprints, invasive exotics, conservation easements and more!

If we want to preserve historical use of horses on public lands, we need to educate ourselves to be good (green) stewards. Plan to attend to learn more about policy, planning and politics.

Thursday, July 9, 2009 8:00 a.m. (Eastern Time)

Paramount Plaza Hotel

2900 SW 13th Street

Gainesville, FL 32608

Contact: Helen Koehler, Conference Chair, 352 317-0273

Shawnee News

Recreation Fee Increases

Shawnee National Forest Supervisor, Allen Nicholas, announced an increase of fees for five Shawnee National Forest campgrounds. The increases became effective March 15, 2009. The fees for Pine Ridge, Pharaoh, Camp Cadiz and Pine Hills Campgrounds are now \$10.00 per night, up from \$5.00 per night.

Fees for single family campsites at Johnson Creek increased from \$5.00 to \$10.00 per night, with double sites being increased from \$9.00 to \$12.00 and triple sites from \$12.00 to \$15.00.

The fee increase was authorized by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004. This Act allows 95% of the fees collected to be spent on the Shawnee National Forest where it is collected. Prior to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, fees collected at these sites were sent to the United States Treasury.

The fees collected in the Shawnee National Forest (Forest) will be used in campgrounds in the Forest to take care of deferred maintenance items such as replacing split-rail fences, replacing picnic tables with accessible versions, repairing potholes or installing ramps to ensure full accessibility to toilets. As fees accumulate, future plans will include larger projects such as replacing old toilets with larger, more accommodating buildings. The Forest website, www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee, will highlight projects completed with fee money.

For additional information contact the Forest Supervisor's Office at 618 253-7114, the Hidden Springs Ranger District at 618 658-2111 or the Mississippi Bluffs Ranger District at 618 833-8576.

Storm Update

Late winter and spring storms have taken their toll on the Shawnee National Forest. Many areas remain closed or partially closed due to storm damage.

February ice caused many trees to become uprooted, broken in half, and their tops snapped off. April storms hit the western side hard while slamming into the Carbondale area. Hanging tree branches, commonly called widow makers, hang above some access roads, camp sites, picnic areas and other recreation areas.

It is a complicated and time-consuming process to safely remove these types of hazards. Some areas will require extensive cleanup before opening and some popular recreation areas will remain closed until late summer or early fall.

The public's concern and patience is appreciated as work is continuing to clear developed recreation sites and trails. You can always volunteer to help through any of the ranger stations.

For information about specific recreation areas log into the Shawnee National Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee or contact Bob Monroe at (618) 658-2111.

Newsbit

September 12 – Shawnee National Forest Master Trail Steward Trails Training Course offered through the Shawnee Community College. For further information call Kelly Pearson at 618 687-1731.

Proposed Trail User Fees (continued from page 1)

than willing to "pay for services." Collectively, users' main concerns are the diversion of fees collected going to either sweepable accounts or to other users totally foreign to the fee payer's interests, such as capital improvements. Each wants a quality experience. Each special interest wants any fees that they pay to serve their interests and be earmarked specifically for their interest rather than going to a general fund of any sort.

We let Marc know how dependent equestrians are on having IDNR create and maintain trails throughout the state and expressed concerns over the lack of parks and trail facilities in many parts of the state. Marc was adamant that any fees collect by IDNR at the parks would stay in the parks and not be swept for other purposes and would be an addition to already appropriated operating funds rather than a replacement for them. We also discussed ways of promoting multi-use trails by changing the way trail grant programs (such as Bicycle Path grants and Recreational Trail Programs) are presented.

We understood that the new Director of IDNR wants to work on getting people involved in the parks as volunteers. Marc wants the citizens of Illinois to have a vested interest and participate in how their public open lands are cared for and enjoyed. We all assured him that trail riders in many saddle clubs already have set the goal to be involved in the creation and maintenance of their local trails, but do need permission and guidance from land management.

Lack of expansion of parks and facilities that provide multi-use trails for horses

Most IDNR facilities do not accommodate horses and purchases of new lands are rare or are for specific purposes that limit the creation of new trails. Then again Illinois does rank 48th out of 50 states in ownership of public lands. Its provision of public common land for all uses include, but are not limited to, recreation, environmental and historical preservation, conservation (hunting) and education.

We asked for consistency and predictability at parks, forests, and wildlife areas which do allow horses. Limited seasonal and hunting closures during the best seasons for riding are sometimes a problem for us. Trails should be designed and built to withstand weather and use. After driving long distances to arrive at a state facility, the weather and wet trails should not force us to cancel rides.

If indeed this was a new beginning of a relationship between IDNR and equestrians, it was a good one. I can only hope that our good, positive start produces a relationship that can weather the winds of politics and lasts longer than any Governor's term of office.



Keeping The Horse Trails Open

By Sara Rhoades

Here are a few ways that all of us can do something to keep our favorite riding trails open and maintained:

1. Contact the site superintendent of your favorite park and volunteer to help maintain the horse trails or better yet, just volunteer to help him with anything that needs to be done, whether it's for the hikers, bikers, or horse people. The state parks are woefully understaffed these days and should be ecstatic to have some additional help.
2. Convince your local saddle club to have a trail work day and add a potluck to it for fun. Working, eating, and riding sound like pretty fun activities, don't they?! Some trail groups have plenty of money to donate. but most horse people need any extra cash to spend on their favorite hobby. But if you're at the park to ride anyway, why not spend a couple of hours helping the park staff?
3. Find out if there is legislation or an issue that affects or concerns you and who your district's state Representative and Senator are and how to contact them:
 - a. Go to the Horsemen's Council of Illinois (HCI) website and click on the Legislation heading on the left column.
 - b. Just fill in your zip code to find out the name and address of your Representative and Senator.
4. Decide if you want to contact your Representative and Senator by phone, fax, email, or in person.
 - a. If there is a current issue in the House or Senate, you can also find that on the HCI website. If there is no current legislation, let the political person know that you are a horse person and give them an idea of how much money you spend each year on your horse habit.
 - b. If you phone, fax, email, or appear in person, be sure to keep it short and sweet with your introduction and ideas. If you have an idea for a bill, let them know. Appearing in person is by far the best way to let your political people know who you are and what your desires are. The political arena takes notice of constituents who show up in person.

Time Spent With a State Park Manager

By Ron Rhoades

I recently had the opportunity to spend the day as part of a small volunteer group (five) helping a local state park manager trim and maintain equine trails in a well used park. He was extremely happy to get the help and very impressed with our work ethic and skills. We were there for about four and one-half hours all told, of which one and one-half hours were spent being fed by his wife and talking. We covered about four miles of trails, all of which were in the woods, which was a good thing because the winds were about 30 mph in the open on a 20° day!

I had many conversations with him during the day and had the opportunity to listen to more of his "side" of the story and learned the following:

1. He and one worker are responsible for THREE parks.

One park has equestrian trails; all parks have other public trails.

2. In the past 12 months, he had ONLY ONE other group of a similar size volunteer to help with equestrian trails.
3. NO donation of materials or funding had come from equestrian groups. And most of the equipment and repair supplies come from things like the sale of hunting and fishing permits, NOTHING from equestrian users.
4. The parks had received many donations of materials, volunteer efforts and dollars from other user groups (bike groups, field trial groups, etc.), nothing from trail riding equestrians.
5. The trail-riding season, according to the IDNR policy, is under Operations A. 1. - Seasons and hours of operation. The general statewide season dates are April 15th through October 31st. These general dates may be adjusted on either end at the discretion of the site superintendent.
6. After a weekend of camping, they spend more manhours (two men, six hours each) to CLEAN up the horse camp area (less than 30 camp sites) than the RV camping area of over 150 sites (a few hours for one man).

As most have probably heard by now, horsemen as a group can be divided into two types – the cowboy and the others.

The cowboy can be stereotyped as the type that will slide his truck and trailer to the point it stops in the almost axle-deep mud and then need TWO trucks to pull out the original truck and trailer when he leaves, leaving behind bottomless ruts, trash and piles of manure.

The others treat the publicly-owned areas like they do their own property and would never think of leaving such damage and would pick up their trash. The reckless, "I'm going to do what I want to do" childlike behavior is the biggest detriment and sore spot with campground operators.

We (as reasonable, responsible equestrians) need to make our presence known. Only by sacrificing our riding time to help support these public endeavors will we gain the respect and acceptance of the powers that are responsible for controlling our access to these public lands - not by being in their face about injustices and not by loudly complaining about inequities/injustices.

I have heard reports of equestrian campground managers saying how much wear and tear the horses wreak on the campgrounds when there is so little use. They have to mow and trim around the tie rails (and when there is a lot of use, it generally means filling in the holes around the poles!). Other campground managers consider the filling in of holes normal wear and tear and are glad they don't have to trim the grass around the poles!

And we need to be very mindful of all levels of park staff. If we don't make friends with those workers that may be gone someday, they can rear their ugly head and harass the powers for allowing volunteer help to do the work in the park when they themselves have been laid off! I know this may not seem fair or rational but this is how society works!

There is a BIG difference in the horse background of those that are in charge. We need to take them under our wings and guide them along the correct path, not just harass them (sugar attracts more than vinegar sort of thing).

And the best sugar is helping make the lives of those in charge easier!