

Recommended Best Practices for Managing Stock Use Sites at Developed Campgrounds

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Issue Summary: With increasing use levels at developed sites, there are reports of campgrounds and campsites designed for use by stock users being increasingly occupied by campers without stock. Since there are very limited camping options for stock users, this is resulting in displacement of this user group. Likewise, this can result in safety concerns as non-stock users are often unaware of proper etiquette around stock. There is no policy for managing stock use sites, so this document provides best practices to assist local units when addressing this issue.

Introduction: The objective of this white paper is to raise awareness of the use of campgrounds and campsites designed for stock use by non-stock users, highlight associated safety concerns, and recommend best practices for managing horse campgrounds and campsites to better serve the public. Equestrian campgrounds and campsites are also referred to as horse camps and stock sites. For the sake of consistency, this paper will further address these sites as horse campsites or horse campgrounds. Users with non-stock needs from other recreation user groups will be addressed as non-stock users. Certain regions allow horses at other types of sites like trailheads, picnic areas, and cabins, but this document will focus on horse campgrounds and campsites.

Background: Campgrounds throughout the country are seeing an increase in visitation. This has resulted in larger numbers of non-stock users in campgrounds and campsites intended for stock campers. The Equestrian Design Guidebook describes equestrians as, “a person who rides (or “packs”) a horse or mule...can also describe anything related to horses and mules, such as an *equestrian trail*.”

The NRM-Infra Database defines horse campground as a “site with camp units managed primarily to accommodate riding and pack stock and overnight use: Development Scale 2-5.” A horse campground generally includes infrastructure specific to stock campers, such as water tanks, corrals or highline areas, hitching posts, and larger parking sites to accommodate trailers.



Palisades Horse Camp, San Juan NF

The use of horse campgrounds by non-stock users is a real issue for stock owners who are hauling and caring for large live animals with very specific needs. It can be difficult for stock campers to locate other horse camping options as supply is limited and they are unable to utilize traditional camping facilities due to site designs or prohibitions. Without a campsite, stock owners are often forced to disperse camp on the side of forest roads without adequate water supplies for the animals.

The Equestrian Design Guidebook also notes, “Adults who are not familiar with stock might unintentionally create problems....” Having non-stock campers near stock users and their stock can create safety issues for both parties. Non-stock users are often unaware of proper etiquette around stock, stock handling protocols, and basic equine/stock behavior. The amenities present at horse campgrounds and



recreating near stock can provide a different recreation experience and should be used to educate non-stock users before they decide to reserve or occupy a horse campsite. Non-stock users at horse campgrounds commonly report a subpar experience due to their proximity to stock facilities and stock.

There is currently limited and inconsistent messaging to make visitors aware that most horse campgrounds are specifically designed and constructed to serve stock campers and not intended for use by non-stock users. This messaging, usually limited to onsite signage or online on Forest Service and Recreation.gov websites, leaves non-stock user groups with little information on the importance of horse campgrounds to campers with stock. Clear and consistent messaging can help inform and direct people and set user/visitor expectations for the use of horse campgrounds and campsites on developed recreation facilities across the National Forest system.

Existing Policies:

FSH 2309.13 10 Planning and Design of Developed Recreation Sites and Facilities

12.12 - Install signs and posters at developed recreation sites where necessary or helpful to visitors but keep them to a minimum.

12.12a – Provide bulletin boards at a central location at developed recreation sites for posting rules, regulations, length of stay limits, and other information. Notify the public of the conditions of occupancy and use at each developed recreation site. Signs should be positive in tone and should explain the reasons for regulation.

FSH 2309.13 Recreation Site Handbook. Chapter 50 – Forest Service Operation and Maintenance of Developed Recreation Sites

53.1 – 1. Developed recreation sites are managed for a quality visitor experience without compromising the natural resources of the area.

2. Recreation opportunities at and development and management of developed recreation sites are consistent with the applicable recreation opportunity spectrum class...

53.28 – Provide reservation services for developed recreation sites when it is desirable for the public to have assurance that they will be available on a particular day

3. Set reservation windows in Recreation.gov based on observed use patterns at developed recreation sites and, where possible, public demand.

4. Continue to improve site information on Recreation.gov, particularly photographs and safety messages.

Recommendations:

Education & Coordination

1. Raise awareness of this issue and share best practices with forest-level staff. Regional Developed Recreation Program Managers can facilitate this conversation with local district or forest units and help address any possible future problems within their areas.
2. Advise stock campers to work with their local district or forest on specific campground issues.
3. Consider shortening the booking window for how long in advance non-stock users can book campsites in areas with limited horse campgrounds.





Indian Creek Horse CG, Pike-San Isabel NF



Frijole Horse Corral Campsite, Guadalupe Mtns. NP

Best Practices for Recreation.gov:

1. Encourage local district or forest units to place horse campgrounds or a high percent of horse campsites onto the national reservation system under Recreation.gov. This will allow stock users to -*reserve horse sites in advance to reduce the risk factor of travelling long distance to a site only to find out that non-stock users got there first.
2. Recommend local district or forest units to include the following information in the 'Need to Know' section on National Forest websites and Recreation.gov reservation pages to explain the intended use of horse sites (see Appendix A):
 - *"The horseshoe icon on the site map indicates that this campsite is designed for stock use. Please be courteous and select non-horse sites or view alternative "Campgrounds Nearby" section below. (Figures 1 and 2)*
 - *"This site is-designed for stock use. If your party does not need access to a horse campsite, please consider selecting another site or review the "Campgrounds Nearby" section below.*
 - *"This site has the following amenities to accommodate for stock users: (insert amenities that apply to your campsite). Please be aware that recreating near horse campgrounds can provide a different experience to non-stock users. Please be courteous and select non-horse sites or view alternative "Campgrounds Nearby" section below.*
3. Consider shortening the reservation window to provide local stock campers with greater opportunity to reserve campgrounds.
4. Consider including the option to input how many horses and the size of the horse trailer being brought as part of the reservation information at the reservation portal.

Best Practices for Onsite Management:

1. Consider posting the following statement onsite to increase awareness of visitor responsibilities.



For other examples of signage see Appendix B.

*i. **Please Respect** that this campground is designed and constructed with features designed specifically for stock camper use and the care of their animals, vehicles, and gear. If you are camping without stock, please select a non-horse-based site or review the map on the bulletin board for other nearby campgrounds. **Thank You!***

2. Provide a safety document on the bulletin board addressing proper horse campground etiquette, handling protocols, and basic stock behavior to educate all recreation users about using horse campgrounds.
3. Educate and train campground hosts, call center staff, and any relevant Forest Service representatives to provide the tools to properly educate all recreation users on the expectations of recreating on horse campsites. Place emphasis on all users having access to all sites and non-stock users still having the option to recreate at horse campgrounds while raising awareness about the differences in experiences at each campsite.
4. Consider a forest order, in coordination with the Forest Supervisor's office, to manage horse camp site use. (See Appendix C)

Appendix A: Example Alert Messages for Recreation.gov

** The following are examples that can be used/adapted to each location's needs.*

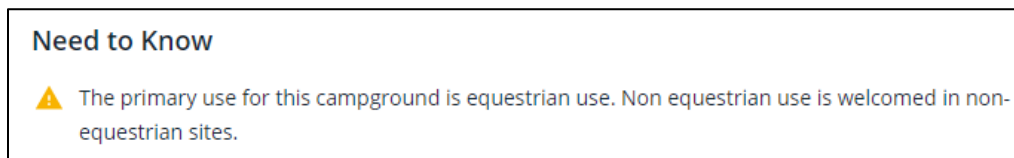


Figure 1: 'Need to Know' alert on Recreation.gov.



Figure 2: Equestrian site icon generated through Recreation.gov indicating individual horse campsites.

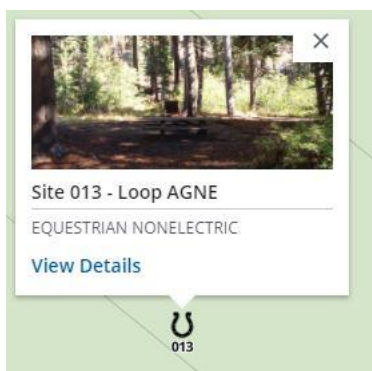


Figure 3: Equestrian site icon with image of site pop-up on map feature on Recreation.gov.

Appendix B: Example Campsite Signage

** The following are examples that can be used/adapted to each location's needs.*



Figure 4: Horse camp sign designed as an example.



Figure 5: Signage used by the Deschutes National Forest.



Figure 6: Entrance signage used at the Bull Trout Horse Camp on the Boise National Forest. (Photo: Freddy Dunn)



Appendix C: Forest Orders used for horse camps

* The following are examples that can be used/adapted to each location's needs.

ORDER

SPECIAL CLOSURE

USDA - FOREST SERVICE
GIFFORD PINCHOT NATIONAL FOREST
MOUNT ST. HELENS NATIONAL VOLCANIC MONUMENT

LEWIS RIVER HORSE CAMP

PURSUANT TO 36 CFR SEC. 261.50 (a), THE FOLLOWING ACTS ARE PROHIBITED ANNUALLY DURING THE PERIOD APRIL 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30, WITHIN THE LEWIS RIVER HORSE CAMP, WITHIN THE MOUNT ST. HELENS NATIONAL VOLCANIC MONUMENT, GIFFORD PINCHOT NATIONAL FOREST, UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

- 1) Entering or using the Developed Camping Area of the Lewis River Horse Camp from April 1 to September 30. 36 CFR Sec. 261.58 (b)

PURSUANT TO 36 CFR SEC. 261.50(a), THE FOLLOWING ARE EXEMPT FROM THIS ORDER:

- 1) Person (or persons in the company of a person) possessing at least one saddle, pack, or draft animal in a single camp unit.
- 2) Person (or persons in the company of a person) possessing at least two saddles, pack or draft animals in a double camp unit.
- 3) Person (or persons in the company of a person) possessing at least 3 saddles, pack or draft animals in a group camp unit.
- 4) Federal, State, or local law enforcement officer, or member of an organized rescue or fire fighting force in the performance of an official duty.

DONE AT VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON, THIS 3rd DAY OF August 1994

[Signature]
W. C. Stubbins
Forest Supervisor

VIOLATION OF THESE PROHIBITIONS IS PUNISHABLE BY A FINE OF NOT MORE THAN \$5000.00 OR IMPRISONMENT FOR NOT MORE THAN SIX (6) MONTHS OR BOTH. TITLE 16 USC, SECTION 551.

12-94-006 94 Mount St. Helens NUM
Order no. Fiscal Yr. Monument.

Figure 7: A Forest Order from 1994 on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest for the Lewis River Horse Camp prohibiting use of the site annually between April 1 and September 30 by users other than parties with stock.





BITTERROOT NATIONAL FOREST
1801 N. First Street
Hamilton, MT 59840
Forest Supervisor's Order

Pursuant to Title 36 Code of Federal Regulation 261.50(b), the following acts are prohibited at National Forest Campground, Rock Creek Horse Camp, on the Darby Ranger District of the Bitterroot National Forest. These prohibitions are in addition to those enumerated in Subpart A, Part 261, Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations and will remain in effect until rescinded.

36 CFR 261.58 — Occupancy and Use

Persons, without stock, are prohibited from camping in designated stock camp sites at National Forest Campground Rock Creek Horse Camp as described below, Title 36 CFR 261.58(d).

For the purpose of this order, three developed camp sites within Rock Creek Horse Camp, located in the Lake Como Recreation Area, are designated for stock use only. Persons without stock are prohibited from camping in or occupying the three sites designated for stock use. The sites will be signed and designated on the ground. Designation of stock use only camp sites provides a safe recreation experience for the public and for the animals and helps minimize resource impacts from stock users camping in undeveloped horse camps.

Rock Creek Horse Camp Description:

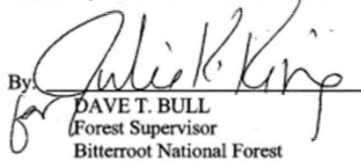
National Forest Campground, Rock Creek Horse Camp, is located within the Lake Como Recreation Area in the North Central ¼ of Section 32, T4N, R21W.

Exemptions:

Pursuant to Title 36 CFR 261.50(e), the following are exempt from this restriction:

1. Persons with a permit issued by a forest officer specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
2. Any Federal, State, or local officer or member of an organized rescue or fire fighting force in the performance of official duty.
3. Logging contractors and their employees while engaged in official business within the area.
4. Forest Administrative personnel.

Done at Hamilton, Montana this ____17th____ day of ____June____, 2009.

By: 
DAVE T. BULL
Forest Supervisor
Bitterroot National Forest

Penalty

Violation of these prohibitions is punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, or both (16 USC 551 and 18 USC 3559 and 3571).

Notification

A copy of this order shall be posted as prescribed under 36 CFR 261.51.

Figure 8: A 2009 Forest Order on the Bitterroot National Forest for the Rock Creek Horse Camp. This order prohibits parties without stock from camping in three developed camp sites.

