



PO Box 485 Rogue River, OR
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Volunteering and
advocating for trails on
public lands in Southern
Oregon.



**BACK COUNTRY
HORSEMEN**
OF OREGON
501(c)(3) Non-Profit

July 27, 2023

Corral Flats Equestrian Trails Project (62771),

On behalf of all equestrians, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to add the Corral Flat Trails to the Forest Service trails system. This opportunity is one that we as equestrians not only support but would like to offer to share in the maintenance of this area. The Back Country Horsemen of Oregon (BCHO), Oregon Equestrian Trails (OET), The Pacific Northwest Endurance Riders (PNER), and the American Endurance Ride Conference (AERC) would be willing to avail themselves through man hours or trails funds to help with what is needed, whether signage, trails work etc. Equestrian groups have always been willing partners with the Forest Service. This would work in the extreme if the request below was afforded to us.

We would like to see Corral Flats restricted to horses and hikers. Mountain bikes and off-highway vehicles should be prohibited. Designating these trails as 'non-motorized trails' will ban OHV's but most likely allow mountain bikes. It is important that equestrians have trails they can ride that do not have mountain bike traffic. Corral Flats is ideal for this and it's been where many equestrians have ridden in past years in an effort to avoid mountain bikes, so prevalent in other nearby State Parks and National Forests.

Many horsemen have been displaced from other multi-use areas for safety reasons.

When you consider the average age of a mountain biker (20 to 39) and gender (male) and that they often cannot hear anyone else because they like to ride with music (earbuds), it is easy to understand the danger of putting these user groups together. Mountain bikers enjoy the thrill of overtaking the terrain before them and at as fast a speed as possible. Herein lies the excitement of mountain biking, it's what makes it so much fun! This is easy to understand, but as horses are fight/flight animals, the closest thing to a silent and fast approaching bike is a cougar/puma. Trying to convince the equine that what they're seeing is not a threat can be a daunting task! The time factor to do so is very limited. When one considers that the average speed of the mountain biker to be between 18 and 27 mph, (or 44 feet per second) it is easy to ponder the unintended consequences of this pairing. Additionally, the rider must assess the situation, then cue the horse for a response, the horse must register the cue, then physically respond. All this takes precious time. Please understand, we are not saying that mountain bikers are careless or wish to create accidents, it is just that the way they enjoy their sport creates a natural incompatibility with equestrians.

Whether a trail rider, packer or endurance rider, we all share the same safety concerns. This is why so many of us no longer recreate in areas we used to enjoy. To be able to ride or hike the unparalleled beauty of the Ochoco's without a care would be the greatest kindness afforded to us. Please consider this most important request. Thanks again for creating this opportunity and for hearing our concerns.

Sincerely,

Joy Trevey Lowell

Public Lands Director

Sourdough Chapter BCHO