

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/5/2022 12:00:00 PM
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Organization: Back Country Horsemen of Blue Ridge
Title: President
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Reference GAP Project, Pisgah National Forest

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback during this early stage of the project. Back Country Horsemen of Blue Ridge is an equestrian volunteer organization that has active volunteer agreements on all the Grandfather and Appalachian Districts in the state of NC. Our mission is to preserve equestrian access on public lands. We are currently interested in a few trail areas that are either proposed or we have interest in proposing into the designated trail system.

We understand the difficulty of recognizing a trail or trail system that is not currently designated. We're grateful for the work being done by Kevin Massey & Wild South to provide "heat maps" to show social/legacy trails. Our understanding is that these are driven by Strava, which is a GPX type tracking system, widely used by mountain bikers but not generally used by equestrians. We fear that reliance just on these heat maps will not adequately represent the trails that are of high value to equestrians.

In the Nantahala Pisgah Forest Plan Revision, there is a standard that would restrict horses & bikes to designated trails (REC S 11). The reasoning behind this was to reduce water quality impact. The restriction would go into effect after collaborative trail planning had been done. That planning has begun and in many cases has been ongoing for years. We hope that this project would consider those trails that have been identified in current planning or will be identified in further collaborative trail planning, which could directly be tied to the GAP's objective of providing clean water.

We request that the GAP project recognize the currently designated trails during their proposed actions & restore the trails to their current or to improved conditions.

We further ask that the GAP project would coordinate directly with our chapters to recognize those high value but currently undesigned (i.e. social/legacy trails) in the areas of our Volunteer Agreements.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Deirdre Perot

BCH of Blue Ridge President