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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As an avid user of public lands and trails, my favorite way to get outside is with my trusty gelding. I appreciate that the Pisgah National Forest provides areas for riders to access trails with their horses and would like to see that trend continued in this project. Please consider the following suggestions for this project related to recreation and preserve the heritage of horsemanship on our public lands.

As funding and capacity come available, please provide for horse trailer access at as many access points as possible. Horse trailers require larger parking areas and clearance for turning around, but that cost has a benefit. Once horses can access the trail, they and their riders are a great asset for keeping that trail maintained and clear because horses and riders like the Back Country Horsemen's groups can pack chainsaws in to parts of the Forest that are harder to access.

As part of providing access, please also consider extending the dates in which the access gate to Forest Service Road #97 is open for vehicular traffic to year-round or as close to year-round as possible. I understand that a horse trailer could currently find parking on the other side of that gate, but only when it is open. If there is a reason why that gate can only be opened a short time of the year, please explain. If possible to include a gravel parking space or two for trailers along the road, that would be ideal.

In addition to providing sufficient access for horse trailers, please consider horses as regular users of these trails. Horses have lived and died beside us as this nation was built. For the roads in this EA that will be converted to trail, we ask the Forest to open those trails to equestrian use along with hiking and biking where safe and appropriate for the terrain. Since horses are wider and longer than bikes and hikers, please design trails open to equestrians accordingly. With thoughtful training, there is no sound reason why horses cannot share suitable trails with other users like bikes and ATVs. In unison with other users, we also advocate for loop trails where possible with the promise of providing organized volunteer stewardship if new trail would have to be built to create a loop.

In conclusion, thank you for your service to our public lands. We look forward to many more miles in the saddle on the Pisgah for years to come.