

Report of
Carver County Parks
Equestrian Subcommittee
on
Trail Criteria

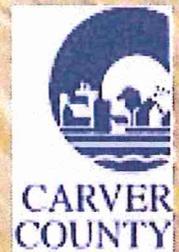


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Report of Carver County Parks Equestrian Sub-Committee on Trail Criteria

Introduction

The Carver Park Commission met in June of 2009 to form Equestrian sub-committee of the Park Commission. The composition of the sub-committee was to include two members of the Park Commission, three to five representatives of the equestrian public and a County Park staff representative. The sub-committee was charged with investigating the criteria and degree of demand for equestrian trails. A proposed schedule of work tasks was also provided by the Park Commission, such that the sub-committee would 'inventory and provide analysis of existing trails in the county and within close proximity.' Specifically, the tasks would include:

- Obtaining data on trail usage
- Make site visits to several equestrian trails
- Meet with agency representatives regarding horse trails to gain better understanding of issues, use of, and sustainability of equestrian trails
- Develop criteria to help identify possible future equestrian trails

Trail Inventory

An inventory of metro area trails comprised of state and regional parks and trail areas is attached. Fifteen trails are identified within the suburban metropolitan counties. An accompanying listing of these trails provides a brief description of each of the trails. A horseback riding map of trails on State properties outside of the suburban metropolitan area is also included. See Exhibit A.

Work Completed

In order to obtain data on trail usage the committee first identified the appropriate resources. The main resources were identified as follows:

- MN DNR
- U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
- U of MN Extension Service
- Sheriff's Department
- Veterinarian Associations/ U of MN Veterinarian Hospital
- Other state DNR websites
 - Arizona
 - Kentucky
 - Tennessee
- Three Rivers Park Districts
- Metropolitan Council
- MN Trail Riders Association
- MN 4-H
- MN Horse Council
- Internet Search Engines (Google, etc.)

It was decided what specific information the committee members should gain from the

selected resources includes:

- Design standards/development guides
- Sustainability of trails trail length
- Facilities: parking, camping, restrooms, etc.
- Knowledge of successful public process
- Safety issues
- Designated users of the trail
- Allowed uses and restrictions
- History of land use
- Land acquisition and development
- Funding
- Schedule of development
- Land availability
- Integration with other trail systems
- Infrastructure support for equestrian trails
- Community support

The committee then developed and conducted a formal survey of agencies who administer equestrian trails. Those agencies included Three Rivers Park District, MN DNR, Scott, Dakota, Nicolet, Blue Earth and Sibley County Parks, Friends of Rush River, Central States Dressage and Equestrian Associations, and Southwest Trails Snowmobile Club. See Exhibit B, Survey and Exhibit C, Equestrian Survey Tabulation.

The sub-committee members conducted several site visits, both as group and individual excursions, to surrounding trail systems. These included Carver Park Reserve, Murphy-Hanrehan, Minnesota River Valley Trails, Luce Line and Lebanon Hills

Results

Based on the information gathered from the identified resources and associated agencies a matrix of criteria was created. This matrix listed many factors which might be considered when planning and designing trails or acquiring land for trails. Additionally, through discussion about equestrian trails and the many factors which influence a successful trail, an over-arching principal of a safe and respectful environment was identified as a lynch pin to the success of a trail. Without this environment, usage of a trail would be adversely impacted. The matrix was further refined into preferred criteria for equestrian trails and are as follows:

- Adequate parking with pull-through for horse trailers and tow vehicles
- Picnic tables or facility and mounting structures near the parking area
- Restroom and water access
- Looped trail design preferred over out-and-back design
- A variety of distances, minimally 4 miles but longer is preferred
- Stable soils

- Groomed trails for winter riding
- Signage/maps readily visible from horseback
- A mix of single file trails & trails wide enough to ride side by side
- Routine site maintenance
- A mixture of trails (flat with little climbing) and trails that have more difficult terrain to ride
- Trails designated for horses and hikers only
- Tethering, corral and camping facilities
- Proximity to users

Conclusion

This report is built upon existing informational resources and supplemented with work to obtain pertinent information from state, regional park agencies, county and private associations. An effort was made not to reinvent what has already been developed for equestrian trail design and development guidelines but to rely on both written and practical information from those who have had experience with equestrian trails as resources for this report. The report provides an equestrian trail inventory and listing of the metropolitan area along with a map of other places where equestrian trails are located in the state. Additional work conducted included the development, distribution and collection of an equestrian survey, on site meetings on equestrian trails, obtaining information via website or through correspondence and meetings of the sub-committee. The result of the work has produced a preferred listing of criteria which is recommended to be used in evaluating potential equestrian trails.

Representatives selected to form the committee and contributed to this report included: Marty Walsh, Parks Director; Richard Tieden and Myron Karki, Park Commissioners; and citizen members: Carol Dunsmore, Chanhassen Stable Inspector, Carver County Sheriff's Mounted Posse, and horse owner; Suzanne Lowy, advisor for previous trail design at Carver, Crow-Hassen and Elm Creek Park trails and horse owner; Becky Scott, involved in saddle clubs and horse owner, Mara Carlson, horse owner; Ann Kjos, horse owner.

References

The US Dept. of Agriculture & Forest Service book "Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trail, Trailheads and Campgrounds"
Minnesota Trail Riders Association "What's a Trail Rider Looking For?"
The Minnesota Recreational Trail User Association Profile of 2008 Minnesota Recreational Trail Users
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Trail Planning Design and Development Guidelines
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Trails and Waterways Division & Office of Management and Budget, State Trail Use Summary of Summer Trail Use and User Surveys conducted in 1996, 1997, and 1998
American Trails, Economic Impact of Trails, Spring 1997, Trail Tracks, The National News Letter of American Trails
Minnesota Horse Council
Minnesota Valley Veterinarian Association

Contributing Agencies and Associations

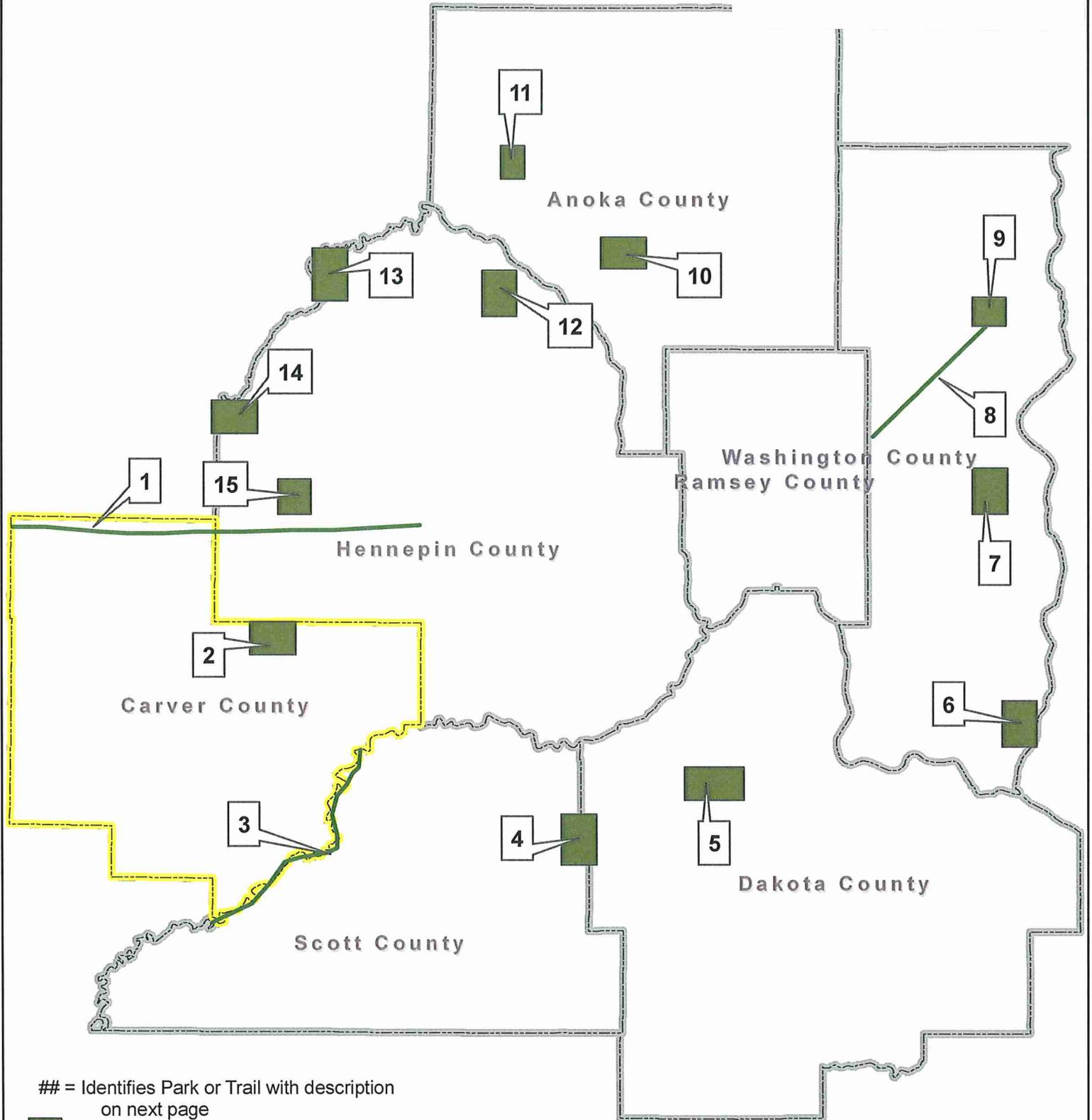
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Three Rivers Park District
Dakota County Parks Department
Scott County
Blue Earth County Parks Department
Nicollet County Public Works Department
Friends of Rush River
Southwest Trails Snowmobile Club

Exhibits

Exhibit A, Trail Inventory Maps and Trail Descriptions
Exhibit B, Equestrian Survey
Exhibit C, Equestrian Survey Tabulation

Equestrian Trails in the Metropolitan Area

EXHIBIT A



= Identifies Park or Trail with description on next page

■ = Park Area (Regional or State)

∨ = Trail (State)

Description of Equestrian Trails in the Metropolitan Area

1. Luce Line State Trail – Multiuse Trail with a parallel turf equestrian trail from Vicksburg Lane in Plymouth west to Carver County/McLeod County Line. Approximately 28 miles in length.
2. Carver Park Reserve – Park reserve owned and operated by Three Rivers Park District and has 9.3 miles of equestrian trails within the park. Park is located between Victoria and Waconia in central Carver County.
3. MN Valley State Recreation Area – Multiuse trail on the Scott County Side of the Minnesota River extending roughly 30 miles from Chaska SW to Belle Plaine.
4. Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve – Operated by Three Rivers Park District but located along the Scott/Dakota County border this park reserve has almost 14 miles of natural horse trails.
5. Lebanon Hill Park Reserve – Located in the City of Eagan this park reserve is owned and operated by Dakota County Parks and has over 10 miles of equestrian trails.
6. Afton State Park – Located in southern Washington County, this State Park offers 5 miles of equestrian trails.
7. Lake Elmo Park Reserve – Located just west of Oakdale, this park reserve is owned and operated by Washington County Parks and has 8 miles of multiuse turf trails for equestrian use during the spring, summer and fall.
8. Gateway State Trail – Multiuse Trail with parallel turf equestrian trail from 694 NE to Pine Point Regional Park in Washington County almost 10 miles in length.
9. Pine Point Regional Park – Located in Stillwater Twp and owned and operated by Washington County Parks the park has 5 miles of multiuse turf trails open for equestrian use during the spring, summer and fall.
10. Bunker Hills Park Reserve – Located in Coon Rapids and owned and operated by Anoka County Parks, Bunker Park has a riding stable and about 2.5 miles of separate equestrian trails.
11. Rum River Central Regional Park – Located in Ramsey Twp and operated by Anoka County Parks the park has roughly 6 miles of multiuse turf trails open for equestrian use.
12. Elm Creek Park Reserve - Park reserve owned and operated by Three Rivers Park District and has 21 miles of equestrian trails within the park. Park is located in northern Hennepin County near Osseo.
13. Crow-Hassan Park Reserve - Park reserve owned and operated by Three Rivers Park District and has 10.6 miles of equestrian trails within the park. Park is located in NW Hennepin County near Rogers.
14. Lake Rebecca Park Reserve - Park reserve owned and operated by Three Rivers Park District and has 9.2 miles of equestrian trails within the park. Park is located on the Hennepin/Wright County border near Rockford.
15. Baker Park Reserve - Park reserve owned and operated by Three Rivers Park District and has 9 miles of equestrian trails within the park. Park is located near Maple Plain in west central Hennepin County.

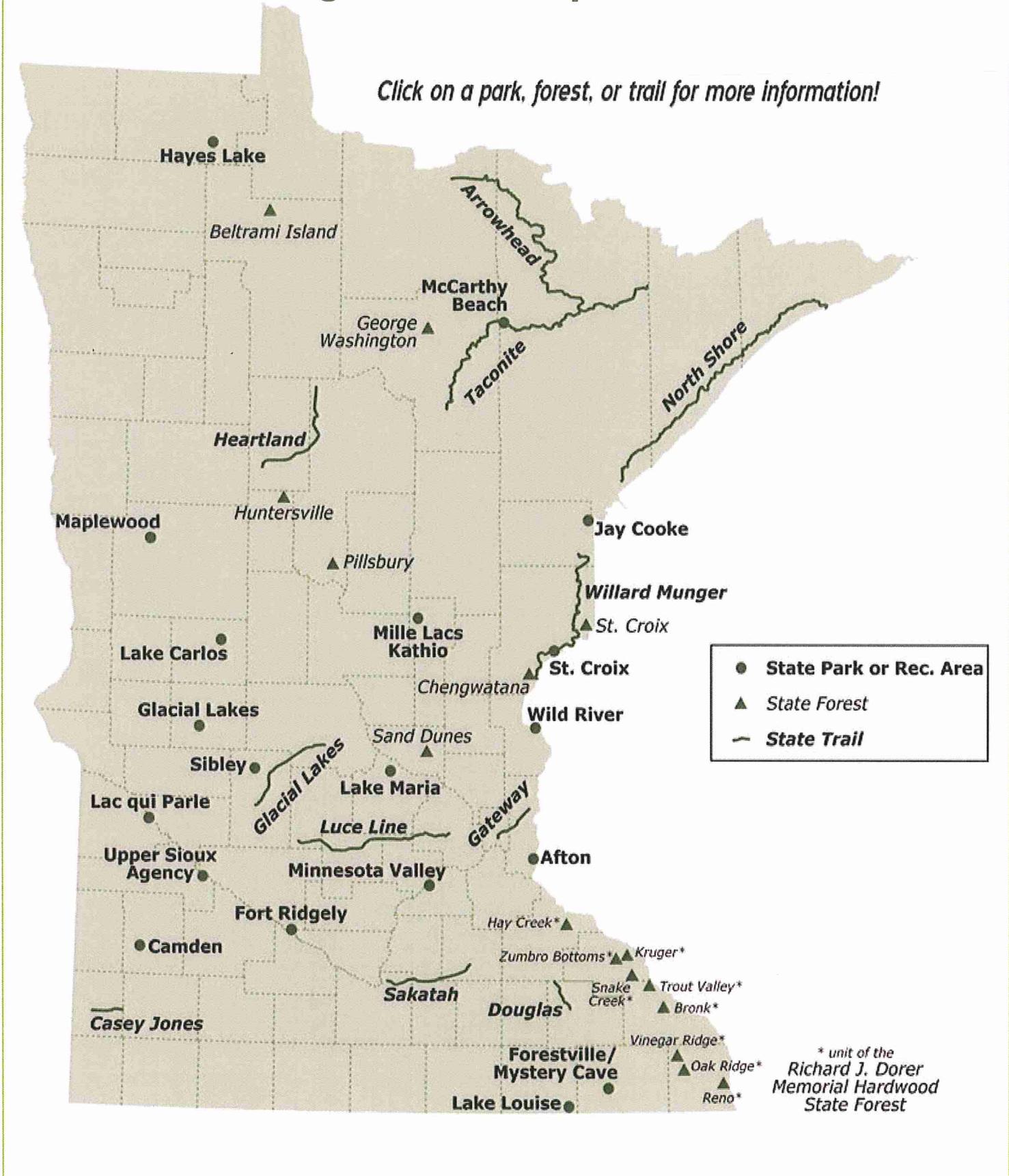
Other Facilities near the Metropolitan Area

- Hay Creek Day Use Area – Part of the RJD Memorial Hardwood Forest and is located near Redwing and has 15 miles of equestrian trails open May 1 – November 1.
- Lake Maria State Park – Located near Monticello the park offers 6 miles of equestrian trails.
- Wild River State Park – Located near Center City the park has 20 miles of equestrian trails.
- Sand Dunes State Forest – Located in Sherburne County it has 29 miles of equestrian trails.

Horseback riding location map

EXHIBIT A

Click on a park, forest, or trail for more information!



- State Park or Rec. Area
- ▲ State Forest
- ~ State Trail

* unit of the
Richard J. Dorner
Memorial Hardwood
State Forest



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The following questions are intended to aid a sub-committee of the Carver County Park Commission in working to develop criteria which would help to evaluate possible future considerations for equestrian trails in Carver County. Answers to the questions will help the committee members understand what other agencies have experienced regarding equestrian trails. Your assistance in providing information is greatly appreciated. Please refer question(s) to others in your organization if they would be a better source for the information.

Name: _____

Agency: _____ Agency Address _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

General Questions

What are characteristics of the most successful horse trails?

What trends has your agency observed pertaining to equestrian trails and trail usage?

What strategies, rules, etiquette, have been used to manage trail use and mitigate conflict? (e.g. Are there calendar restrictions during times of the year due to unstable soils, higher or lower use conditions?)

What sources of funding has your agency used for the development and ongoing maintenance of a horse trails?

Did your agency enter into any agreements for private or other public lands not owned by your agency for equestrian trails? If so how was that achieved?

How did the land become available for development as an equestrian trail, what was the process?

Design

What design standards/development guides are you aware of or used in the development of equestrian trails?

What criteria/items would you recommend be considered for the development of a horse trail (e.g. trail length, # of vehicle with trailer parking stalls, restrooms, site facilities/amenities, other consideration)

What safety issues are there and how can they be avoided or resolved?

What is your agencies experience with equestrian trails in corridors with a shared tread way or parallel uses?

In trail corridors with multiple use and constraints such as bridges, steep slopes, and wetlands, how have issues been resolved.

What is the preferred surfacing for equestrian trail?

Maintenance

What is the type, frequency of maintenance for horse trail? Do you have any development or maintenance costs that you can share with us?

Support

What are key considerations to garner support for equestrian trails? (e.g. getting the word out about the equestrian trails, funding, working with development)

What are the pit falls to avoid as it may relate to political obstacles, design, planning, site selection, multiple uses or other situations that did not work?

Concluding Comments/Suggestions or additional information

Is there any additional information which you feel would be of benefit to the sub-committee which would aid in the development of criteria for considering possible future equestrian trails?

Equestrian Survey Tabulation

1. What are characteristics of the most successful horse trails?
 - a) Trails with $\frac{3}{4}$ "crushed rock
 - b) Functional way finding signage, parking (2)
 - c) Good & Sizable parking accommodations. (2)
 - d) Long Trails (3)
 - e) Well maintained (3)
 - f) No trespassing

2. What trends has your agency observed pertaining to equestrian trails and trail usage?
 - a) All trails within 7 mile County Park are multi-use.
 - b) Increased use over the past five years. (3)
 - c) Required purchase of Daily or Annual Permit

3. What strategies, rules, etiquette, have been used to manage trail use & mitigate conflict?
 - a) Effort was made to include the horse-use group in the regulation process - signs are posted to keep trails free of manure
 - b) Clean-up horse manure.
 - c) Horse & hiking trails have been combined
 - d) No Restrictions

Equestrian trails closed during winter

4. What sources of funding has your agency used for the development & ongoing maintenance of horse trails?
 - a) 90% Public Monies/10% Private Donations
 - b) Minnesota Horse Trail Council Grants (2)
 - c) County Funding (3)

5. Did your agency enter into any agreements for private or other public lands not owned by your agency for equestrian trails? If so how was that achieved?
 - a) No (3)
 - b) Anoka County has an agreement with a private vendor to provide trail riding & horse rental services within a Regional Park

6. How did the land become available for development as an equestrian trail, what was the process?
 - a) No
 - b) Master Plan Process (3)
 - c) Bunker Hills – Long standing history
 - d) Land purchased for wetland mitigation due to road construction

7. What design standards/development guides are you aware of or used in the development of equestrian trails?
 - a) Use of the crushed rock to prevent erosion of the trails
 - b) MN DNR Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines (2)
 - c) U of MN Recreational Trail Design & Construction
 - d) Newly designed trails follow sustainable standards similar to what the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) uses.

8. What criteria/items would you recommend be considered for the development of a horse trail (e.g. trail length, # of vehicle with trailer parking stalls, restrooms, site facilities/amenities, other consideration)
 - a) All the above
 - b) Signage & maps
 - c) MN Dept. of Natural Resources Guidelines
 - d) Trail distance should be something users can get about 4 hours of use with if they are expected to trailer their horses there. This distance is close to 10 miles minimum. (2)

9. What safety issues are there and how can they be avoided or resolved?

- a) Respectful behavior of all patrons – bike riders, runners, horses, children
 - b) Minimize crossings & sign them.
 - c) Ensure dogs are kept on leashes (2)
 - d) Build sustainable trails to avoid erosion
 - e) Avoid winter use to minimize the possibility of horses slipping on slippery ground, ice or snow.
 - f) Use carsonite signs rather than steel posts to avoid injuries to horses.
 - g) Keep horse trails away from RR tracks
10. What is your agencies experience with equestrian trails in corridors with a shared tread way or parallel uses?
- a) Ours are all multi-use - mediation between groups is necessary – all can work together for use by /for all
 - b) Some conflict with dogs & horses
 - c) None. We have designated trails and this is problematic also. The users always use each other's trails and then they all get upset
11. In trail corridors with multiple use & constraints such as bridges, steep slopes, & wetlands, how have issues been resolved?
- a) Horses are not allowed on bridges due to wood planking. All creek crossings are sloped for horse traffic
 - b) Large culverts were used instead of wooden bridges
12. What is the preferred surfacing for equestrian trail?
- a) Crushed rock – maintains the trail by controlling issues such as mud & erosion. (2)
 - b) Lengthens the spring use season.
 - c) Combination of soil, grass & gravel
 - d) Native soils

13. What is the type, frequency of maintenance for horse trail? Do you have any development or maintenance costs that you can share with us?
 - a) Tree branches are cut back to allow for horses – crushed rock – 10 trucks of 10 yards.
 - b) Crushed rock are used for 7 miles of trail surface
 - c) Occasional soil erosion
 - d) Occasional grading

14. What are key considerations to garner support for equestrian trails? (e.g. getting the word out about the equestrian trails, funding, working with development)
 - a) Local horse club groups - mountain bike riders are also interested in use of this type of trail.
 - b) Use of the park by horses is advertised in park brochure.
 - c) The horse community generally easy to work with & are cooperative
 - d) Web site & maps help to gather support & awareness
 - e) Support from local advocacy/user groups
 - f) Getting the word out through newspapers, County publications, website

15. What are the pit falls to avoid as it may relate to political obstacles, design, planning, site selection, multiple uses or other situations that did not work?
 - a) The Manure issue is #1
 - b) Work with the horse community, not against them. (2)
 - c) Able to find a good balance (2)

16. Concluding Comments/Suggestions or additional information
Is there any additional information which you feel would be of benefit to the subcommittee which would aid in the development of criteria for considering possible future equestrian trails?
 - a) Enlist the cooperation of the park users to work cooperatively toward a nice park experience for all.
 - b) Work with the area horse groups to better understand their needs