

## OUR TRAIL SYSTEM

by

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Our Virginia Horse Trail System is one of the best within the United States. Most of our trails are located on public lands within National Forest, State Parks, or Local municipalities. In short, the majority of our extensive trail system is on government owned or controlled land.

Over the past few years, government dollars have been shrinking in efforts to down-size or right-size and to keep expenditures in line with income. The effects are felt across agencies in the form of reduced personnel or operating/maintenance dollars or both. Within Federal, State, and Local agencies, fewer dollars have been available for trail and camping maintenance let alone new trail development.

Hence, this leads to the point of this article. **Get Involved!** Get involved with the agencies facing this dilemma and get involved with other trail users. All of us are a part of the system and can claim ownership. And, as with owning anything, a certain responsibility is associated with ownership. Take the responsibility to protect and preserve our trail resources.

Get to know the managers of the trail systems that we enjoy. Listed within the **Virginia Horse Council Trail Guide**, are addresses for:

- National Forest Ranger Districts - U. S. Forest Service
- State Sparks
- Local Municipality Trails

Let them know that you care about trails and volunteer to help them. Trail maintenance is always needed and so are extra hands and bodies. Additional eyes are also helpful to observe changing trail conditions such as fallen obstacles, washouts, etc.

Multi-use is the trail norm. All trail disciplines, working together, can form an army and can create an arsenal of tools to help in maintenance and development. Also, as disciplines stand together, a stronger voice and message is sent forth for trail preservation and development and the dollars to get it done.

Currently, some funds are becoming available for Federal and State trail and camping development. Before development can occur, public notification and input is solicited through **“scoping notices”**. Anyone can request to be put on the list to receive scoping notices. Just contact a Ranger District. Response to these notices are important because decisions are made based on responses. Each of us have opportunities to help shape our future trail and camping system. **Get Involved!**

