

The Connecticut Horse Council, Inc.
Trails & DEP update 4 2007

As horse owners throughout Connecticut know, CHC has been working to change proposed regulations put forth by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) this year.

A public hearing was held February 5th 2007, and public comments were accepted from the equestrian community. CHC board members had subsequent meetings with the DEP in order to review issues raised at the hearing, and to come to a compromise for the wording in the proposed regulations.

We are happy to report, that DEP has made significant changes to the wording. Essentially two things have been modified:

First, horses will no longer be separated as a user group. Instead, all trails will be open to “non-motorized” multiple-use activities except where posted closed. Service, logging and other roads closed to public use by motor vehicles, are also open to non-motorized multi-use activities unless posted as closed. It should be noted that the Blue Blazed trails and NPS Appalachian Trails that cross state property are limited to hiking only, unless DEP has blazed the section for other coinciding uses.

Secondly, the DEP will no longer require that horse manure be removed from trails. However, there are specific named areas, such as paved parking areas, and picnic areas, where riders will still be required to remove manure.

These changes will be submitted for final approval to the regulation review committee before they are officially in effect. We expect this to take place in the next few weeks.

Please remember that we do share the trails, so CHC encourages riders to be polite and curb their horses, and make every effort to keep manure to the sides of trails where possible. On well used trails and Greenways, it is especially important for riders to be mindful of what is left behind, so please consider dismounting and moving the manure off to the side if you cannot curb your horse, and remember to clean up at all trail heads. Additionally, please pay careful attention to trail signage and do not ride on any trail that has any indication of being closed to the public or to horse use.

A copy of the changed wording can be found on the CHC website at www.cthorsecouncil.org, and will also be published in our next newsletter.

CHC is very pleased that the DEP responded to the concerns of horse owners, and we appreciate that they made modifications to the proposed regulations. We also thank all equestrians who submitted comments and were involved with the process.

As a result of the recent trail use discussions, the CHC Volunteer Horse Patrol (VHP) is working with DEP on evaluating trail systems for possible multiple use. We are also collecting information on other public open spaces, town parks, land trusts, etc. that are open to equestrian use. Your help in this state-wide project is needed. Please contact Diane Ciano at Spirit76@snet.net or 203-757-1904 for more information on how you can help.

If you have questions about this information, please contact CHC trails chair Diane Ciano trails@cthorsecouncil.org or President Amy Stegall at president@cthorsecouncil.org.