

Each specific trail project is then evaluated based on design criteria such as: safety, views, wildlife, vegetation, hydrology, soil types, topography, watersheds, drainage, anticipated numbers and types of users, and percent of slope. Slopes are a major factor for trail development and rerouting opportunities. Five to 10% are best and up to 15% is possible under limited applications. Over 15% slopes are not sustainable and many of our current trails are well over these limits.

About 95 percent of our trail work budget is spent on restoration. Two-thirds of the budget is dependant on annual grant money received and their specific requirements which also determine work sites. Other factors include available crew and supervisor skill levels, difficulty of the projects, access to the work sites, and local assistance provided.

Presently the DNR can not maintain the trail miles we have now. We are finding a continuing decline in the overall condition of our system. We would like to consult with any and all trail users to seek a solution in improving our trail system and welcome all public participation.

In particular, the DNR want s to work with all user groups and individuals including equestrians in ways to improve our trails and protect our natural resources for generations to come. Please contact your area manager and help us have happy trails.

## THE FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF TOPICS FOR FUTURE ARTICLES:

### *Temporary Trail Closings*

Temporary trail closings are decided by the local area manager after consulting the "Temporary Trail Closure Guidelines for Non-Foot Traffic Users" which consider current rainfall/precipitation, previous precipitation, and the existing trail surface condition. Temporary trail closures are communicated to the public as soon as possible using signage on or near the trail areas or by a recorded message on the area office answering machine. Trail conditions are periodically monitored in order to re-open trails for use as soon as possible.

### *New Trail Proposals*

All new trails are proposed through the area manager who files a trail request or amendment to the Trail Plan which is then submitted to their district supervisor. The proposal is inspected by the supervisor and forwarded to the Director for approval before work can begin.

### *Trail Widths*

Trail widths on our state areas vary generally from 3 to 8 ft. wide and are determined by a number of factors such as the need for emergency access, maintenance requirements, safety, site limitations, and user priorities. Some users prefer wider trails to ride two abreast while others want them to be single track. We attempt to provide a wide variety of trail experiences and both kinds of trails at each location. Typically trails are around five to six feet wide to accommodate tractors and mowing.

### *Rerouting*

The choice to re-design and re-route the old system is necessary to insure natural resource protection and allow continued use of the trails. It is costly and becomes a trade-off in disturbing even more stable habitat to develop a more sustainable system. In addition to establishing the new trail it is necessary to permanently close and rehabilitate the old, abandoned system so it will not continue to erode.



*Impromptu pas de deux by Kelli & Kallie - photo by Cindy Hainline, Timber Ridge Pony Club*

