

L-A-D Foundation, Missouri State Parks and SMMBCH Join Forces to Create Horse Trail

Rarely has an opportunity of this magnitude presented itself to the equine community. An idea or perhaps dream has been kicked around for close to a decade by SMMBCH for a continuous trail where one could ride or pack with our horses spanning the state. The closest thing to this would be the Ozark Trail (OT) that allows hikers to travel over 350 continuous miles and when totally completed over 500 miles and meet with the Ozark Highland Trail in Arkansas. The OT travels through different public land agencies. While horses are welcomed in land managed by Mark Twain National Forest (MTNF) and most of the Missouri State Park managed land, horses are denied access to the Ozark Trail in land managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Previously horses could not use the Ozark Trail through the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry. This is where L-A-D comes in. The Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry is owned by the L-A-D Foundation and the OT is designated for hikers only. However, due to Greg Iffrig, the coordinator of all recreational, natural area and endangered species efforts for the L-A-D Foundation, an unparalleled opportunity has presented itself.

Greg has coordinated with the Missouri State Parks, who manages the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry, and presented SMMBCH a proposal to put a horse trail through this area that would allow travel from the MTNF to the north to the National Park Service boundary to the south thus allowing a continuous trail from near St. Louis to the Current River in Shannon County. The horse trail could parallel the Ozark Trail or not depending on what the needs would be for horseback riding such as staging areas, and camping opportunities. The trail placement would be a cooperative effort with the L-A-D Foundation and Missouri State Parks with SMMBCH taking the lead.

Now the hard part comes! It will be up to our SMMBCH riders/members to carry out this project. Volunteers will be needed who have GPS expertise, trail building interest, but most of all, individuals that know the local area and willing to share their knowledge of the current trails in place that perhaps could be linked. Scouting work will begin this fall when the leaves will not hinder efforts. If this extraordinary opportunity and project holds an interest for you, contact any Board member or Officer immediately. This project will be discussed at the Annual Membership Meeting in November. Please attend and learn more. Even better – Volunteer to be a part of this great opportunity for the good of all trail riders!

SMMBCH would like to thank and express appreciation to Greg Iffrig representing the L-A-D Foundation and also Kelley Brent of Missouri State Parks for approaching our organization with this opportunity. We have come a long way, Folks. This opportunity would have never been a topic of consideration or even discussion only a few short years ago.

For information on Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry: www.mostateparks.com/rogerpryor

For information on the Ozark Trail: www.ozarktrail.com

