

Supporting Testimony on SB0345

Agriculture – Right to Engage in Equine Activities

As a member of Trail Riders of America (TROT), I am concerned about having quiet and safe places to ride that our Maryland State Parks provided. The public has the right to clean and safe access through Maryland's state parks and those lands that are held in lease agreements. We should be able to rely on Emergency services and First Responders to reach us in the event we are injured on the trail or need immediate attention in the event of a medical emergency. Every second counts!

The Maryland Horse Council regularly hears complaints about the problems individuals encounter when accessing public trails.

Recent examples include:

- Fences or barbed wire set up by tenants leasing land. Evidence of these fences are often rusty and found buried along the edges of the tree lines.
- Abandoned machinery, household appliances and junked cars left to the elements leaking various environmental contaminants hidden among leaves and heavy brush.
- Wood piles and downed trees often block access for emergency responders creating tripping hazards for them as well as other individuals and their animals.
- Crops are sometimes planted right up against tree lines causing individuals to find alternative paths which often times result in more serious and dangerous situations.

Finding alternative paths often result in using public roads which are not safe, even with conservative speed limits. In some cases, individuals can also find themselves using storm water easements, which defeat their purpose. Emergency responders, who find they need to transport life saving equipment and/or move injured individuals, can use up valuable time resulting in further injury and/or even death.

The State's efforts to improve public park access while investing in outdoor recreation can't be realized if lands are unsafe and/or inaccessible. Please help ensure open access and public safety in our parks and other lands held by the state.

Respectfully submitted,
June Mellinger
Lusby, MD 20657
443-532-5044