

New Rocky Fork State Park Trail Use Designations

The Tennessee Parks Service has issued the official Rocky Fork Trail Map that has the trail use designations for park visitors. Currently horseback riding has been allowed on all trails with the understanding that changes would be coming as the park developed. In the very near future, new park signage will be going up and the Rocky Fork Trail (main entrance) will no longer be an access point to the park for horseback riders. Instead, riders will be allowed into the park using the Flint Mountain Trail. I have meet with and discussed the reasons for this action with Rocky Fork Park Manager Jesse Germeraad and I am in agreement with him that establishing the trail use designations at this time is in the best interest for use and safety of all park visitors.

The Flint Mountain trailhead is just below the Rocky Fork main entrance. This trail leads up Flint Mountain and provides access to several riding trails on the western perimeter of the park and in the Cherokee National Forest. After visiting and viewing the Flint Mountain trailhead, Mr. Germeraad and I discussed how to best provide safe rider access to the trail. Currently there is a metal gate across the trail entrance. The gate must remain closed and locked to help prevent illegal OHV/ATV access, theft of State Property being stored in that area, and vandalism of State Property. It is not a particularly high barrier but high enough that most horses would not be able to safely cross it without jumping which could get rider and/or horse seriously injured. Mr. Germeraad did some research and found what is called a "stepover gate". This gate will have a maximum step over height of 12 to 16 inches making it safe for horses to cross. I believe it to be an excellent solution to the problem. He is currently working to get estimates and bids for construction of this type of gate. There was one other accessibility concern discussed at a near-by second gate. The park service has already made changes at this second gate and should now be easily passed by horse and rider.

Please be supportive and respectful of the new trail use designations. The development of the Rocky Fork State Park is a monumental task and is going to take time and patience from everyone who is interested in the enjoyment and protection of this special area. If you have any questions regarding these topics, please direct them to me at sdoyle73@comcast.net. I will do my best to answer any of your questions as well as provide updates to any relative projects in a timely manner.

Be safe and see you on the trail.

Sammy Doyle
Representative for Back Country Horsemen of East Tennessee
To Rocky Fork State Park Trails Group