

May 11, 2009

STEP Lightly

Let's team up to protect the trails you and your horse love.



Help preserve the land you love to ride on.

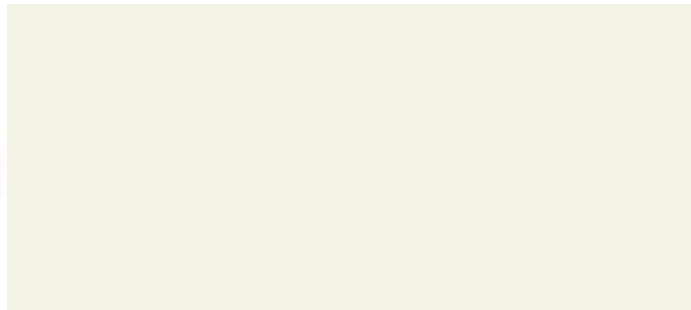
Here at AQHA, we believe that taking an active role in land preservation is part of our responsibility as horse enthusiasts.

That's why we're so thrilled to have Tractor Supply Co. serve as the sponsor of our trail conservation program, [STEP: Stewards for Trails, Education and Partnerships.](#)

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STEP: Stewards for Trails, Education and Partnerships

Get involved to preserve the trails you and your horse enjoy for future generations!



[Stewards for Trails, Education and Partnerships](#) is a new program under AQHA's wing with the idea to build a program that would increase participation in trail stewardship among equine enthusiasts while casting a positive light on horseback riders to land managers and other trail users.

Now under AQHA's leadership, the program will be expanded to include the entire month of June in conjunction with Great Outdoors Month.

Equestrian groups and individuals are encouraged to participate in trail maintenance and restoration projects through the **STEP program**. A National Stewardship Award will be given each year to a group or organization whose project proves commendable through community involvement and sustainability.

Program Benefits:

- Help the Forest Service recruit volunteers for trail stewardship.
- Educate equestrians so they will be effective advocates for trail stewardship in the horse community.
- Accomplish maintenance goals for trails and trailheads with land management.
- **Improve stewardship of land** owned by horsemen that are adjacent to or critical to Forest Service land.
- Build and/or strengthen relationships between local equestrian communities and Forest Service land managers for the long-term stewardship of trails, trailheads and campgrounds.

So, you've committed yourself to stewardship of the land. Now what?

The STEP program allows individuals to submit trail conservation project proposals nationwide.

A committee consisting of officials from AQHA, Tractor Supply, Equestrian Land Conservation Resource and National Forest Service will review each individual proposal, select the individual projects for funding and assist in organizing volunteers for the completion of the approved projects.

Projects are selected based on the potential impact for trail sustainability and community involvement.

Additional benefits of STEP include helping national land managers recruit volunteers for trail stewardship, educating equestrians to be effective advocates for trail stewardship, maintaining goals for trails and trailheads with land management, improving stewardship of land owned by horsemen adjacent to or

critical to national land, and building and/or strengthening relationships between local equestrian communities and land managers for long-term stewardship of trails, trailheads and campgrounds.

Land preservation is the responsible thing to do, but as a horse enthusiast, it's also in your best interest. There is simply no way to ensure access for trail riding unless you take over as a steward of the land. Get involved with AQHA's STEP program to protect access for you and future generations.

Make your love of land preservation known to everyone with a cute ["my horse is a tree hugger" T-shirt](#), only from Quarter Horse Outfitters.

We kicked off our new conservation division at this year's QuarterFest. Here are some tips from QuarterFest clinicians:

From [Tread Lightly](#), a nonprofit organization focusing on outdoor ethics:

Top-6 ways to be a "green" trail rider

1. Do your part by leaving the area better than you found it
2. Properly dispose of waste and pack out trash
3. Minimize the use of fire
4. Avoid the spread of invasive species
5. Volunteer and restore degraded areas
6. Join a local enthusiastic organization

Travel Responsibly

- Stay on designated roads, trails and other areas open to horse use.
- Ride single file to reduce trail damage, and don't cut switchbacks.
- If there are no trails, and horseback riding is permitted, spread out in open country. Spreading out, rather than following each other's tracks, disperses impact and avoids creating a new trail.
- Comply with all signs and barriers.

From the U.S. Forest Service:

Call before you haul. If you're riding on public lands, check in with the district office to make sure no trails have been closed due to weather or wildlife activity.