

AHC Urges Land Managers to use Stimulus Funding for Equestrian Trails

Over \$1.7 million is allocated for improvements to trails on public lands.

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The American Horse Council has asked the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to use stimulus funding for trails.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 signed into law on February 17 appropriates over \$1.7 billion for the NPS, USFS, and BLM that can be used for the maintenance and construction of trails and other infrastructure improvements on public lands.

The AHC recently wrote to NPS Acting Director Dan Wenk, Chief of USFS Gail Kimbell, and BLM Acting Director Mike Pool urging the agencies to allocate a significant portion of stimulus funding to address the current backlog of needed infrastructure improvements on public lands, including maintenance and construction of trails and other facilities that are open to equestrians.

The AHC cited the importance of public lands and trails to recreational riders around the country and the economic impact of the recreational riding community on the national economy. "The recreational horse industry contributes \$11.8 billion a year directly to the economy and directly employs nearly 130,000 people nationwide. Indirectly the industry contributes an additional \$20.1 billion and generates another 307,000 jobs. That is significant and extremely important in these economic times," said AHC President Jay Hickey.

The NPS, USFS, and BLM have yet to finalize spending plans for this recently appropriated money. "An opportunity exists for equestrian groups to provide input to land managers in their states and communities on how this money should be spent," said AHC Legislative Director Ben Pendergrass, "and recreational riders must work with these federal agencies to ensure that equestrian trails are among the projects to benefit from these funds."

The AHC encourages members of the equestrian community who use these public lands to contact their local Ranger Districts, Forest Supervisors, BLM field or District offices and NPS Superintendents to work with them to identify projects beneficial to riders in their area. "This is a great chance to improve trails for equestrians and stimulate the economy," said Hickey.

Read more about efforts to preserve equestrian lands.