



I.

**Here are some facts for you about Horses in Loudoun**

- Most common size horse property is 10 to 19 acres. That is insufficient land for trails. Not only that, but due to development, many horse properties are now landlocked making access to public trails all the more important.
- There are over 14,000 horses in Loudoun
- Trail riding is a common activity among Loudoun horse owners, but not all equestrians trail ride.
- Trails currently available to equestrians in Loudoun
  - BRCES (Sweet Run): 9 miles Pay to use
  - Oatlands: 7 miles Pay to use
  - Salamander: 4.5 miles Pay to use
  - Camp Highroads: 5-6 miles \*\* closed to outside horses
  - Evergreen Mill: 2 miles linear
  - W&OD: No parking until Sterling
  - Temple Hall: 3 mile
  - Franklin Park: 3 miles
  - Lovettsville: 1 mile
  - Algonkian: 2 miles linear (Algonkian park to Trump Golf Course)
  - Morven Park does not have trails open to the public

Simply stated, we need public lands on which to ride!

II. **LPAT vision Statement:**

- LCEA has been quietly advocating for equestrian access to Banshee for close to 10 years. This is not a new idea. However, the LPAT plan adopted in 2019 calls for assessing existing parks for adaptation to multi-use trails and this should include Banshee.
- The first item within the vision statement for LPAT is to create an interconnected system of multi-use passive recreation linear parks and trails and to look at all existing parks for their ability to support multi-use trails

### III. LCPRCS Master Plan

- The Loudoun Parks, Recreation and Community Services Master Plan was updated last year and calls for increased investment in parks with natural areas.
- ALL Parks will be assessed to retrofit existing trails for multi-use or to add additional multi-use trails.

### IV. Master Planning Process For Banshee Reeks

#### What got us to this point?

#### A little Banshee history

- The property was originally a combination of farms that were mostly for cattle production. It undoubtedly also had horses on the property, at least until after WWII when tractors became more affordable. Pictures in the MP show open fields with hay and cattle on them.
- A VOF easement was in place when the county purchased the property in 1991 to act as a buffer to the landfill when the county had concerns that the landfill was leaching. It was purchased to create a nature preserve.
- The original master plan included equestrian trails and equestrian parking for 10 vehicles and 10 trailers plus a primitive camping area. During public input sessions this plan was chosen over three other options.
- The easement holder did not voice opposition to the master plan.
- The BOS voted in favor of the original MP in April, 1999.
- The easement was rewritten in 2015 to accommodate construction, paving and realignment of Woods Road. It does not specifically restrict use to education or nature studies, nor does it specifically restrict equestrians. It does allow for erosion control and restoration and enhancement techniques on trails and other areas.
- A planning document review of the master plan in March of 2000 by PRCS, B&D and Community planning found that the proposed park would have no negative impact on the structural capacity of soils.
- **Never the less in October of 2000, at the recommendation of Friends of Banshee Reeks (FOBR), Parks and Recreation amended the master plan to**

**exclude both equestrians, and primitive camping. ALL WITHOUT PUBLIC INPUT.**

## **V. So why Banshee Reeks?**

- Banshee, at nearly 700 acres is Loudoun's largest park.
- Equestrians were included in the original master plan without objection by the VOF easement holder
- Existing trails are created from old compacted farm roads throughout the property.
  - They are sufficiently wide and trimmed high enough to accommodate horses
  - They are compacted farm roads that to this day have ATV and tractor traffic on them routinely
  - They do not require any more enhancements than should already be done for hikers.
  - There is sufficient existing trail to more than quadruple the miles of county managed trail for equestrians.
- There is no need to make parking available inside the park as equestrians can use the old Evergreen Mills Park.
  - This will further reduce concerns of manure management at Banshee.
- It is ideally located off of easily accessible roads
- It is a mostly passive (except for the model airplanes) park
- **In response to recent FOBR Emails**
  - The current trails are wide enough to support equestrian and hiking. They are wider than the newly opened EM park
  - No hardening needed specifically for horses other than what should already be done for hiking
  - No VDOT concerns. Woods road will have signage but not striping of the road. Furthermore if we come in at Elgin road entrance most horses will enter and exit there, completely avoiding Woods Road.
  - No new parking areas We will use what was opened for EM Mills
- **And Loudoun Wildlife EMAILS**

- Banshee is not under DCR guidance and there are parks under DCR guidance that allow horses
- The master plan is not the original MP but the FOBR amended master plan that never received public review. FOBR is clearly anti-equine.
- Loudoun Wildlife says that "Addressing one community need should not come at the expense of another community need". THIS IS EXATLY WHAT FOBR DID 25 YEARS AGO to equestrians. Banshee is only a "preserve" because FOBR named it one. LCEA counters that environmental protection and equestrian trails can be compatible.