



# BLACK FOREST TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEWS

## President's Corner

### Greetings Black Forest Trails Users and Happy New Year!

By Rich Mock



I am Rich Mock, your new president. Following Larry Fariss's ten year term and record of success will be a real challenge for me but with your help and the support of the board staff, I think we can make some progress.

I've lived in the NE corner of the Black Forest by Hodgen and Eastonville for over twenty years. My wonderful wife, Cris, and I have two horses and four cats but am currently dogless. We were instrumental in establishing the Palmer Divide trail when I was president of the Woodlake HOA. I started a friend's group there (see my picture by the sign) and at Homestead Ranch. I've also served on the El Paso County Parks Advisory Board and am currently part of the Fairgrounds Corp. I admit to being a chronic volunteer. Serving my community is important to me.

I'm originally from the Albany NY area and got here through my Air Force civil service career, retiring out of the AF Academy. Also did some defense contractor work, adjunct faculty and consulting. Now looking forward to serving you!

For this newsletter, I've asked the MeadowGrass chair, Nicole Nicoletta, to tell us about the 2021 COVID compliant fest and longtime BF resident, Judy von Ahlefeldt, to provide some BFTA history. Board members Gordon Limb writes about biker etiquette and Nancy Reinhardt provides an equestrian perspective. Also still serving board member Larry Fariss updates us on Redtail Ranch trail progress. I'd also like to start a guest column with the first input from AnnElise Smith on Section 16. Please send your thoughts so we can include.

My initial goals are to increase community outreach and membership involvement; network with local government and community partners; and develop a strategic plan. Three is enough to start. Please contact me at [president.bfta@gmail.com](mailto:president.bfta@gmail.com) with your thoughts, issues and ideas to keep BF cool.

Sincerely, Rich Mock  
President BFTA

## Horses on Trails - Why Do They Get the Right of Way?

By Nancy Reinhardt

Horses are the largest creatures on the trail and can be the least predictable. For safety reasons, trail etiquette has been established for years to give equestrians the right of way. Even very trail savvy horses can be startled and can kick (did you know they can cow kick or kick sideways?) They can also spook and whirl sideways, knocking other trail users down.



Just like when you are skiing, it is a good idea to call out loud or ring your bike bell when coming up from far behind, and ask if you can pass on the right or left. It's better to wait for a response than to just ring the bell and assume the rider heard and ride on by. Always allow at least 6+ feet because horses can kick sideways and of course, backwards. Even though horses can be slow to maneuver at times, they can kick at lightning speed. Many a horse rider is surprised in a seconds notice to feel that their horse is kicking.

Many horse riders will gladly yield the trail, but sometimes they won't or can't, so be careful when you're around horses on the trail.

Our trails are lovely and a great way to exercise and restore our peace of mind with all that has happened. Please be kind and share the trail.

## Black Forest Musings

By AnnElise Smith

*BFTA Note: AnnElise Smith communicated with us recently regarding some goings on in Section 16. Her refreshing approach and subtle humor attracted us to her writings so we asked her to submit some of her thoughts about Black Forest for this issue of our newsletter. This from AnnElise:*

I have tales of Section 16, once I met a raccoon ( I reported him I think he was rabid). There is a nice buck, at least eight point, I hope he stays alive, he really is used to humans. He is so majestic. I see him a lot (hubbie warned me to be careful since they are rutting), I run early in the morning. Yesterday, some young ladies were walking a dog and miniature horse. A beautiful and well dressed young couple right out of MTV walking two amazing and nicely collared pitbulls. A man walking two big burly black Newfs. A couple walking two gangly great danes. The wonders never cease.

The first year I ran 16 there was an incredible array of mushrooms. I have pictures of several. I googled and found a few were poisonous. They could have been found in any respectable fairy's garden. They obviously have been all taken care of.

There are also, and not too often, the Ken and Barbie runners who flow past me (scantily clad), not sure their feet even touch the ground. Air Force cadets. Military getting ready for their PT test and playing catch up at the last minute.

Anywho, Section 16, and I am sure other trails, have a million stories, if only the trees could talk. They become a member of your family basically. If I run anywhere else I feel like I am cheating and miss the trail.

I have lived so far 4 years in Colorado (keeping this on the down low I know how "native" Coloradans feel about transplants), 20 years sheep/cattle rancher, Army brat 25 years and after living overseas and all over the United States moving 21 times I am finally putting down roots. We skied Beaver Creek/Vail every Christmas vacation for over 30 years.

Sincerely,  
AnnElise Smith

## El Paso County Friends Group Kickoff

By Rich Mock & Aaron Rogers

The Trails and Open Space Coalition is organizing a virtual meeting of all existing and planned Friends Groups on **February 4, 2021 at 6:00 PM**. Friends Groups are a dynamic way volunteers can have a major impact on a park. In the Pikes Peak region, there are more than 20 Friends Groups led by volunteers who are passionate for the care and stewardship of their parks. In 2021, there will be at least four new Friends Groups bursting on to the scene. The Friends of Pineries Open Space and the Friends of Rainbow Falls held their first organizational meetings last fall. These groups will have more organizational meetings moving into the spring and give more people a chance to join. This will be an hour-long virtual event that will feature different Friends Groups and organizations that help EPC Parks through volunteer work. Each organization will present during this Zoom to highlight their groups work in the community and talk about how people can support their mission or get involved.



This virtual event will go live to the public and will be recorded and distributed so that we can hit the biggest audience possible. The main goal is to get the public and each other pumped up for the upcoming volunteer season!

To register for this event, please scan the QR code on the left with your smartphone, or go to: <https://bit.ly/EPCOFriends>

# Trails Yesterday - Trails Today - Trails Tomorrow

## All connected....

### Part 1

by Judy von Ahlefeldt

*In a Nutshell this is the Vision of Trail Advocates all over the Nation.*



Local non-motorized trails that serve Neighborhoods in Black Forest, and connect them to one another and to the trails in area Regional Parks and Open Spaces, or to specific Regional Trails that link and access the Open Spaces Parks themselves has always been the primary focus of what is now Black Forest Trails Association. These are our “rural sidewalks”.

I grew up in the 1940s-50s Urban Jungle of East Cleveland Ohio where there were only paved streets and sidewalks. Imagine coming to Black Forest (at twenty-something) in 1969 as someone who enjoyed walking, and riding a bicycle or a horse. Someone who especially liked doing those activities for longer distances on trails, from home, in a SYSTEM of connected gravel roads and informal trails that connected to the only “Park” we had at the time – the Pike National Forest Picnic Grounds (now Black Forest Regional Park).

For over 50 years now I have lived ½ mile north of Section 16. Herring Rd. was gravel back in those days and Section

16 was fenced. The State Forest Service was replacing the old pasture fence in 1978 and I dreamed of a trail around the perimeter - outside that setback fence. County Parks was just beginning to consider the need for “Regional Trails” and by 1980, a group of us (mostly “horse people”) had formed a fledgling Black Forest Equestrian Trails Association, which mostly removed old barbed wire fences in the new, large 5 ac subdivisions of the day (Wildwood Village, Wildwood Ranch, Pine Cone Acres, various other isolated properties), cleared out doghair trees, and by 1985 had about 14 miles of “trails” connecting numerous gravel roads - mainly on the CIG pipeline or along paved roads (but not on the road shoulder), and had the verbal consent of agreeable landowners. Quiet, soft surface trails.

Black Forest Equestrian Trails Association continued on during my absence from Black Forest from 1985 until 1996, and when I came back in 1997 the name had been changed to Black Forest Trails Association – but the mission was the same – Non Motorized Trails Connecting our Community. Very capable people (among them Ike Mosgrove, Karen Laden, Susie Witter, Judy Wise Mason, Barbara Jagoda, and Irv Perelstein) were actively trying to secure all or part Section 16 for trail and recreational use, and the forty+ year-old organization already represented a wide variety of trail users.

By 1999 a citizen committee had completed the Trails Addendum to the Black Forest Preservation Plan which spelled out, in detail, GOALS, POLICIES and PROPOSED ACTIONS for local trail integration with County Park, Open Space and Regional Trail efforts, using unpaved roads as part of that system. The Addendum included trail design, providing trails in new development, seeking places to provide trails in existing neighborhoods, trail maintenance, trail education, funding for trails and networking with government and other trails organizations. The addendum was adopted by the El Paso County

Planning Commission on May 19, 1999 as part of the Black Forest Preservation Plan. You can download this document by scanning the QR code on the left with your smartphone camera, or go to this URL: <https://bit.ly/BFPPTrails>



Today, in January of 2021, the current El Paso County Master Plan is just months away from completion (possibly May, 2021). This will do away both the Black Forest Preservation Plan and its Trails Addendum. The need has never been greater for The Public who wants trails to exist, to get involved with BFTA and assist its leaders in continuing the vision for this Black Forest Community Amenity.

## MeadowGrass Music Festival

By Rick Mock

This year marks the 12th Annual MeadowGrass (MG) Music Festival! Memorial Day Weekend 2021 in beautiful Black Forest. Rocky Mountain Highway Music Collaborative will showcase 22 bands over three days, present the 3rd Annual MG Beer Festival, offer yoga classes, kids activities, outdoor adventure for teens, and announce the winner of the inaugural Steve Harris Songwriting of the Year Award. The MG Music Festival is the premier event to kick off summer in the Pikes Peak region. This Americana music festival is family friendly, collaborative, and rejuvenating. Although we had to cancel last year's festival, we were able to host 4 smaller concerts throughout the summer with COVID precautions in place. These precautionary measures were approved by the El Paso County Health Department and will be in place for this year's MeadowGrass Festival. We are delighted to partner with Black Forest businesses, vendors, and clubs. How about a 10%

discount on your ticket? Black Forest Trails Association members get 10% off regular ticket prices. Contact Rich for more information,

[president.bfta@gmail.com](mailto:president.bfta@gmail.com) For

all things MeadowGrass and Rocky Mountain Highway go to this URL <https://rockymountainhighway.org/> or scan the QR code on the left with your smartphone camera.



## Red Tail Ranch Connector Trails Update

By Larry Fariss



The Red Tail Ranch Connector Trails are a series of footpaths, across private property that will connect Meadow Glen Lane with Vollmer Road. The purpose is to provide a key link to allow Black Forest neighbors the ability to transit from Brentwood, off Black Forest Road, all the way to The Pineries Open Space.

Phase one of the Red Tail Ranch connector trails, completed this past Fall, connects Meadow Glen Lane with Ward Lane. This was an

Eagle Scout project led by Carrick Trcka. The path crosses the northern boundaries of three privately owned parcels, whose owners, generously granted BFTA access to complete this section. The trail runs from the Southern end of Meadow Glen Lane, East to intersect Ward Lane.

The final two phases, scheduled for completion in Summer 2021, are possible due to the Developer of Red Tail Ranch, generously granting an Easement to BFTA, explicitly to make this Connector Trail possible. This far ranging foresight, not only benefits the residents of Red Tail Ranch, but will eventually link several area neighborhoods to The Pineries Open Space.

Phase Two will install a section running south on the western edge of Ward Lane. Phase Three will finish this segment by turning easterly on the northern edge of Ward Lane all the way to Vollmer Road. From there, the entrance to the Pineries Open Space is only a quarter mile north on Vollmer Road and BFTA hopes, in the near future, to negotiate a crossing and pathway along Vollmer with El Paso County Parks to allow direct access to this fantastic open space.

This entire project is a great example of a community, with Developers and Neighbors alike, working together to create non-motorized trails that link Black Forest neighborhoods. BFTA will continue looking for similar opportunities, like the Red Tail Ranch Connector Trail, that foster a healthy robust trail system throughout Black Forest! We are very grateful to those of you making this dream a reality we can all enjoy!

## Annual Section 16 Spring Clean-Up

Our annual Section 16 Spring Clean-Up will be held on **Saturday April 24, 2021** (with Saturday May 8, 2021 as the backup for inclement weather). Stand by for more information via email and our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/blackforesttrails>.

# Trail Etiquette

By Gordon Limb

With everything that 2020 threw at us, one silver lining was a vast uptick in trails usage throughout the region. The long-awaited opening of the Pineries (thanks largely go to RMFI) offered some much needed relief from the congestion, especially for the mountain bike users. Overflowing parking lots created challenges in the spring and early summer during the lockdown, but it seems like we have settled in to a higher than average usage without as much crowding. With the uptick in usage, there has also been a decrease in trail etiquette, so we offer some reminders and tips to share with your friends, family, and co-workers.

Leash laws were reinstated by El Paso County in 2019. The public was split during the review process, with 180 comments supporting the law, and 125 against it. But the votes amongst the commissioners were not split according to the Colorado Springs Gazette report on the subject. The \$50 fine for a first offense, \$100 for a second, and \$150 for a third don't seem to matter for the dog owners who frequent the parks. Also, El Paso county law enforcement generally has more pressing matters, so we are appealing to the public to "do the right thing" and keep their canines on a leash.

Another frequent complaint is dog poop. Two issues are common throughout the region - not just in the parks – not picking up or "bag and leave". The first is somewhat related to the previous leash discussion. If a dog is off leash, it generally goes far enough off trail where it isn't seen. However, the damage to the ecosystem is still there. The "bag and leave" is when the owner is courteous enough to at least bag the waste, but then leaves it on the side of the trail. This practice is somewhat baffling, as if the parks system pays someone to walk the trails to pick up waste bags. Instead, there are a handful of good Samaritans who take it upon themselves to bring along a plastic grocery bag and pick up what should have been done by the dog's owner.

Parking was an issue early on, with so many additional hikers and bikers, the spots reserved for horse trailers were overrun with other users. Now that we have settled into a more moderate loading, this isn't as much of an issue, but we still ask that if the parking lot is filling up, please leave at least a couple of spaces for horse trailers (and the room to maneuver).

Another negative impact of the increased trail loading (especially in section 16) is the gradual widening of the original trails. Often this occurs following weather events (snow or rain), where users are trying to avoid ice or mud, but are actually causing more damage to the environment by effectively widening the existing trail. I actually had to have this discussion with my high school son when I noticed that he was using the widened portions when we were running section 16 last summer. We need to keep to the middle as much as possible – the original trail didn't have trees in the middle, those extra paths have been formed by users seeking to avoid portions of the trail that may be wet, rough, or iced over.

Electronics have become an integrated part of our lives, but we sometimes fail to realize the negative impact of this obsession. While listening to your favorite podcast or music may seem like a great way to pass the time while on the trail, it has several negative impacts. First, if you use earbuds, you lose the ability to hear what is going on around you. Second, if you decide to use either the device's speaker or an external amplifying device, you are negatively impacting everyone else's experience. Finally, by staying tied to an artificial stimulus, you impact your own ability to disconnect from the electronic world and get the most out of your experience with nature. We don't advocate leaving your phone or valuables in your car, but just keep them silent so you and others can enjoy the great outdoors and reconnect with nature.

Right of way is the final topic we would like to address. The National Parks Service trail etiquette guidelines are:

- **Know your right of way.** Check signage for the trail you are hiking, and follow the correct right of way yields. Signs may vary from park to park, but these are the general guidelines of yielding on the trail.
  - **Hikers coming uphill have the right of way.** If you're descending the trail, step aside and give space to the people climbing up.
  - **Bicyclists yield to hikers and horses or other pack stock.** Come to a full stop and step to the side to give the right of way. Be mindful of the plants or animals that are near the trail if you must step off the trail. Bicyclists should always ride within their abilities. Before your visit, check individual park regulations to see if biking is allowed.
  - **Hikers yield to horses and other pack stock.** Slowly and calmly step off to the downhill side of a trail. If you approach from behind, calmly announce your presence and intentions. Horses and other pack stock can frighten easily, so avoid sudden movements or loud noises.
- **Make yourself known.** When you encounter other hikers and trail users, offer a friendly "hello" or a simple head nod. This helps create a friendly atmosphere on the trail. If you approach another trail user from behind, announce yourself in a friendly, calm tone and let him/her know you want to pass.

A special note to our fellow mountain bikers – we yield to both hikers and horses. In practice most hikers and horse riders will often step off the trail *if they have advance notice of our presence*. I experience this routinely, especially in the Pineries. Two things help with this – riding in control and a simple \$10 bell. These devices are available at your favorite local bike shop and are very easy to install. The two variants are a thumb activated (like when you were a kid and making noise was fun), or the "constant ring". I have the latter on my bike and get compliments from riders and hikers alike because they hear me coming and are alerted by the sound.

Sharing and following these guidelines will make the trails experience more enjoyable for everyone.

## Pineries Open Space Storm Shelter

We are currently in the planning stages with El Paso County to build a storm shelter and information kiosk at the overlook (northeast corner) of The Pineries Open Space trail. The storm shelter will be built with logs harvested from burned areas within The Pineries. If you haven't yet, you need to hike up to the overlook - the views are stunning. The parking lot is 1/2 mile north of Shoup Rd on Vollmer Rd.

To assist with the funding to build the storm shelter the Black Forest Trails Association will be asking for donations from its members. For each member donation, the BFTA will match the member's donation up to a total of \$2,500 (\$1,250 in member donations and \$1,250 in BFTA matching funds). The minimum donation will \$50. In exchange for a donation, the donor's name will be engraved onto a plaque that will be mounted in the new storm shelter.

We have not yet started to accept donations - a few details need to be worked out first - but as soon as we can take donations, we'll announce how to donate via email and via our FaceBook page.

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## **BFTA Membership**

By supporting BFTA with your annual membership, you help provide the funding and support for a whole range of issues that affect Black Forest trails and the lifestyle we all want to protect. The Black Forest Trails Association is a non-profit organization under IRS Code Section 501(c)(3). Donations are fully deductible to the extent permitted by tax law.

There are 4 tiers of BFTA membership (Dues are tax deductible):

- 1) Individual / family (\$15 per year),
- 2) Business / club (\$30 per year),
- 3) Donor (\$50 per year)
- 4) Lifetime (\$150 one time).

Membership runs from April 1 to March 31, so if you become a member or renew now, your membership will be good through March 31, 2022. We use PayPal, which is easy and secure, to accept online payments, or you can print out an application and mail your payment in via US Postal service – either option can be completed via our website at **<http://www.blackforesttrails.org/joinrenew>**