

The Connecticut Horse Council, Inc.

VOLUNTEER HORSE PATROL

The Connecticut Horse Council (CHC) partnered with Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) in 2003 to create the Volunteer Horse Patrol (VHP) to ride and serve in State Parks & Forests.

This unique program benefits many aspects of the DEP, in helping to patrol and provide assistance to the DEP staff and public visitors to our state forests and parks. This also provides our membership the opportunity to volunteer their time to a community service, a cause that also benefits them and their equine companions.

The establishment of this Patrol Unit comes at a critical time, when drastic cuts on our State Budget have caused layoffs, staff & supervisor reductions. This situation is forcing the closure of many state parks & forests and reduction of services due to lack of State Funding.

The Volunteer Horse Patrol Program and Policies is based on the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Mounted Patrol Program and the National Park Service's Volunteers in Parks program (VIP).

The Patrol operates under the auspices of the Connecticut Horse Council in cooperation with DEP and other land management administrations. The primary responsibility is to serve as auxiliary **"eyes and ears"** for the protection of the resource and its visitors -- on the lookout for what is going on out on the trails. Members assist with non-enforcement tasks such as promoting trail etiquette as well as provide hands on services maintaining and repairing trails and other facilities. Volunteers provide non-confrontational services to the public including, but not limited to, information on rules and regulations, facilities and special features. Volunteers also assist with special events and programs such as the "No Child Left Inside" and continue to foster community involvement.

All volunteers go through a training program, learning the rules and regulations of the state park or forest, trails that they are assigned to patrol, public relations, trails etiquette, communication skills, First Aid and CPR. The horse and rider must be in good physical condition and have adequate riding skills to pass the Horse/Rider assessment that is used to educate and test applicants to the program. Volunteers maintain patrol logs that include volunteer hours as well as visitor sightings, contacts and assistance.

The program has been established in over 60 areas throughout the state, including state parks, forests, Greenways, land trusts, open spaces, and town parks. Expanding the program to other areas is a goal of the program.

If you or your organization ride on state DEP or other public or private lands with permission, this is your opportunity to give back for our riding privileges to ensure that we can continue to protect and expand the network of open lands available for trail riding throughout the State of Connecticut.

We are seeking committed individuals and organizations, leaders and volunteers to join the Patrol. The Volunteer Horse Patrol Committee is looking for individuals to help out with various functions.

For more information, and a Volunteer Horse Patrol Application please e-mail or call Diane Ciano trails@cthorsecouncil.org or 203-757-1904