

NCDA&CS Research Stations Division McCain Forest Management Area

Equestrian Use Program

The Research Stations Division of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) is pleased to announce the temporary expansion of its recreational use program to include limited primitive equestrian recreation activities on the McCain Tract Forest Management Area in Hoke County. Thirty randomly selected riders will be given the opportunity to purchase bridal tags to ride the property during the assigned periods for one calendar year. To facilitate family or small-group riding, these thirty individuals will be allowed to purchase two additional non-transferrable bridal tags to cover two pre-registered year-long riding guests. This could result in up to ninety total bridal tags issued during the 2014 riding season. The Division will carefully monitor the temporary riding program during this calendar year and assess user compliance to the rules and regulations listed below. Additionally, the economic and environmental impacts of riding will be assessed to determine whether the program may continue into the future or if equestrian use is incompatible with our Division's mandated goals and objectives. Interested users are encouraged to thoroughly read the rules and regulations below prior to purchasing permits.

Statement of the Forest's Purpose

The McCain Tract Forest Management Area is an experimental forest managed by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Research Stations Division. This forest is managed primarily to maintain habitat for the federally-endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) through applied silviculture. The location of this property makes it a key component of the recovery effort for the Sandhills Subpopulation of the RCW. In addition to maintaining RCW foraging habitat that is shared by active clusters on Fort Bragg, we help form a portion of the habitat corridor that is being managed to connect Fort Bragg to the Sandhills Gamelands. Other uses of the forest include forest research, education, demonstration and the production of forest products. Prescribed burning, herbicide applications, timber harvests and other stand improvement work are frequent and necessary occurrences on the McCain Tract. These activities are dangerous but must take place to maintain quality habitat for RCWs and to meet our other forest management goals. Access is controlled in order to protect the integrity of any forest research taking place on the property and to preserve our ability to move quickly with management work such as prescribed burning and herbicides applications with regards to favorable weather conditions.

Program Administration and Management Authority

Recreational use of Division lands is managed as a component of the Division's Forestry and Natural Resources Program. The Forest Manager, having met the qualifications to become a Registered Forester as determined in North Carolina G.S. 89B, is tasked with developing and implementing the overall Division forest management program. The Forest Manager is a representative of the NCDA&CS and

speaks for the Department on matters concerning forest management on Division lands. The Forest Manager shall be the primary point of contact for information regarding the management of the McCain Tract. The Forest Manager is identified as:

David K. Schnake, RF
Forest Manager
NCD&CS Research Stations Division
(919) 733-3236 (office)
(919) 733-1754 (fax)
David.schnake@ncagr.gov
<http://www.ncagr.gov/research/forestry.htm>

Annual Use Fee

The cost of an annual equestrian use bridal tag will be \$80. This fee will cover the cost of use during the allotted equestrian period beginning on February 15. This fee is non-negotiable and users must accept the risk that there will be days when riding will be prohibited due to prescribed burning, timber harvesting, herbicide applications, or other forest management work. Refunds will not be provided because of forest closures. To mitigate issues associated with this likely occurrence, riders will be provided with a list of surrounding properties which also allow horseback riding. Potential users are free to contact the forest manager to ask about a particular year's planned forest management activities in order to help them decide whether or not to purchase a permit.

Number of Users and Allotment Methods

The opportunity to purchase a primary bridal tag and have the privilege to ride on the McCain Tract will be offered to 30 randomly selected users annually. This list of users will be drawn from a database containing interested riders managed by the Division. Users will be assigned an identification number. A random-number generator will then be used to select the 30 potential users' identification numbers per year. To better meet the needs of family riders or those who share trailers, each rider selected to purchase a primary bridal tag during this random process will have the opportunity to add two additional riders to their bridal tag at the time of purchase. Each of these additional riders will need to register and also pay the annual use fee at the time that the primary bridal tag is purchased. The additional rider bridal tags are not transferrable and may only be used by the rider identified at the time of purchase.

As an example, if Susan Appaloosa is selected to purchase a primary bridal tag, she has the opportunity to purchase one tag for herself for \$80. If Susan regularly rides with her neighbors Stephanie Clydesdale and Jonathan Paint, she may identify those two individuals at the time of purchase and they may each purchase an \$80 permit. Susan Appaloosa may not purchase the two additional permits herself and then randomly invite different friends or boarders to ride with her as she sees fit.

Periods of Use

McCain will be open for equestrian use from February 15, 2014, to April 1, 2014. Use will resume on August 1, 2014, and end on September 1, 2014. Equestrian use will also be permitted on Sundays during deer hunting season. The Research Stations will attempt to complete most management work outside of this period, but users must accept that there will be many days within this period where use is restricted or possibly even prohibited due to forest management work.

The Forest Manager may add additional equestrian use periods if they do not impact forest management activities. For example, if favorable weather allows the completion of all necessary prescribed burning in early April and the RCW population is healthy, there may be an opportunity to allow equestrian use through the summer for that particular year. These additions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and approved users for that season will be notified of any changes. Users should never assume that extra days will be added.

Equestrian use will be permitted:

- 2/15 – 3/31
- 8/1 – 9/1
- All Sundays during deer hunting season of September through the end of December.
- Additional equestrian use days as granted by the Forest Manager

User Acceptance of Terms

- **McCain 101**

Users must complete “McCain 101” before they are permitted to ride on the property. This will be a tour of the property offered by the Forest Manager. This tour will familiarize users with the rules and regulations of the forest.

- **Forest Closures**

The Forest Manager will maintain a list containing contact information for all 30-90 equestrian users of the property. The Forest Manager will inform all users via e-mail when forest management work will be conducted on the property and the forest must be closed. Only portions of the forest impacted by management work will be closed if the existing trail system allows users to safely avoid project areas. If management areas cannot be safely avoided, entire forest closures for extended periods of time may be necessary. Closure specifics will be noted in the aforementioned forest closure e-mails. There is no minimum cutoff time after which the Forest Manager may not close the forest. Forest management work and the safety of our contractors and users will always take priority over recreational use.

Seasonal closures may be necessary in the event of widespread management work. An example of widespread management work would be the salvage of timber from large portions of the property following a large storm event.

- **Primitive Recreation Infrastructure**

Users must accept that the McCain Tract is a working research and demonstration forest, and does not contain the amenities or staffing levels of a State Park. The recreational opportunities are best described as primitive. Trees that have fallen across trails, trails that are too bumpy for carriages or other recreation-based activities are not priority issues for the Division. Users must accept trails in “as-is” condition. Users are strongly encouraged to email or call the Forest Manager to identify these concerns, but the Division will only fix these issues as time and financial resources permit.

Trespassing hikers, ATV riders, horseback riders and carriage drivers, and others will likely continue to illegally access the property in spite of signage and your presence. Users are encouraged to contact local law enforcement personnel in these instances as the Forest Manager does not have law enforcement authority.

Users must agree to and sign an agreement containing the following terms:

1. Equestrian use of McCain Forest Management Area is a privilege, not a right. This use program may be eliminated if the integrity of the property, and the Division's ability to maintain it, are jeopardized by recreational use.
2. Management of red-cockaded woodpecker habitat, research, demonstration, and educational uses take priority over all recreational uses.
3. The privilege to use this forest should not be interpreted as authority to guide the management of this forest resource. Management responsibilities are controlled entirely by the NCDA&CS Research Stations Forest Manager.
4. Safety is a main concern. This is a working forest and users should dress appropriately for field conditions. Users may encounter wildlife, adverse weather, insects and other potentially dangerous conditions. Safety is each user's responsibility.
5. Users must provide a valid email address, street address and phone number to the Forest Manager prior to receiving bridal tags.
6. Users will not access any part of the forest during a prescribed fire and must stay off the property for at least 48 hours after a burn has been completed.
7. Users will not access the forest for a set time period following herbicide applications. The specific time period will be determined by the chemical labeling on the herbicide and will be communicated to the list of 30-90 annual users via email before the herbicide application takes place.
8. Users will keep out of timber sale areas until they are deemed safe to re-enter by the Forest Manager.
9. Users will not approach marked RCW cavity trees or conduct any activities that create loud noises within 100 feet of these trees.
10. Users accept that prescribed burning and herbicide applications are weather-dependent activities. Precise scheduling of these activities is impossible. Users accept that there will be days in which they will plan on riding but cannot due to ongoing management work. Refunds will not be provided for riding time lost due to management work.

11. All equestrian users must have a bridal tag. The tag must be displayed in plain sight when visiting the forest.
12. All equestrian users must carry a valid photo ID while riding and be prepared for random checks to ensure that bridal tags have not been transferred.
13. A bridal tag applies to one horse and one rider. Riders may not pony additional horses.
14. Users will be issued a parking permit for their vehicle. All vehicles on the property must display the parking permit on the dash of the vehicle.
15. Carriage driving is permitted, but drivers must accept that existing trails will not be widened, graded, or otherwise improved for such use. Trails are in "as-is" condition.
16. Users must stay off trails for at least two days following ½ inch of rain. The Forest Manager may lower the rain threshold without warning if erosion issues are noticed on the property. Refunds will not be given for riding time lost due to weather.
17. NCD&CS, its contractors, researchers and native wildlife have the right of way on McCain. Under no circumstances shall equestrian users interfere with the aforementioned primary users.
18. Uses that disturb or damage vegetation, soil surface conditions or native wildlife are not allowed.
19. The collection of plants, animals or other resources from the property is strictly prohibited, unless specifically authorized by the Forest Manager.
20. Users will stay on designated trails only. Open riding through the woods is prohibited.
21. Users will not access the property before dawn or after sunset.
22. No drugs, alcohol, illegal activities or firearms are allowed on the property.
23. Trailer parking is available only on the portion of the property located on the attached map. This parking area will not be improved and users will be responsible for all towing charges if they attempt to park on a wet day and get stuck. Parking is on a first-come, first-served basis.
24. No motor vehicles are allowed on the property without permission.
25. The commercial use of the property by an outside vendor is strictly prohibited.
26. Manure, feed, deceased horses and other wastes must leave the property with users.
27. Feeding must take place inside a trailer. No hay nets or hay bags will be permitted to hang outside a trailer.
28. Horses will not be permitted to open graze under any circumstances.

29. Horses are the sole responsibility of their riders. The Research Stations Division will not assist users in catching startled horses or removing deceased horses.
30. Users agree to sign the attached indemnification clause.
31. Users must provide proof of a negative Coggins test prior to being issued a bridal tag.
32. Holders of the primary bridal tag, as well as their two additional users, must provide a scanned, copied or otherwise printed version of their photo ID at the time of purchase.