

Marin Horse Council

2010 SUMMER EQUINOX NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 103

Marin Horse Council | 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd. | Novato, CA 94949 | 415.259.5783 | www.MarinHorseCouncil.org



Dias Ridge Trail Grand Opening Day Celebration!

From the Saddle

Farewell to winter. Our cool, rainy winter – and spring – is slowly giving way to the warmer and longer days of summer. This gives us more time for outdoor activities – more time to take in nature with our horse. Thanks to our late season rains, Marin is seeing a great grass and wild flower year. In her article, **Botanist on Horseback**, Linda Novy, equestrian and local environmental professional, helps us recognize the abundance of flora and fauna that we can enjoy on the trail.

In each issue of our newsletter, we strive to provide you with articles and stories that will inform and inspire all

types of horse riders and enthusiasts. You will also learn of the many activities and political fronts in which the MHC is actively involved.

The 680 Trail: The Marin Horse Council has written a letter to the Board of Supervisors urging a thorough environmental analysis of this proposed multi-use trail connecting the Terra Linda and Loma Alta Open Space Preserves. We are concerned about the environmental and safety issues raised by a trail built across steep slopes in fragile terrain. The MHC does not subscribe to the view that a bad trail is better than no trail.

Save Our Trails: Delos Putz reports on the Save Our Trails fund drive. Thanks, Delos, for taking the initiative and spearheading this successful campaign.

The Morgan Horse Ranch: Carol Whitmire fills us in on what is happening at the Morgan Horse Ranch at Point Reyes National Seashore. We learn about the history and also some of the volunteer jobs at the ranch.

Dias Ridge Trail: Maureen Pinto, Director of Ocean Riders at Muir Beach, has been active in the planning of the long awaited multi-use Dias Ridge Trail. She writes of the grand opening day celebration on May 18th.

New Chief, Parks and Open Space: We will meet Linda Dahl, the new head of the Department of Parks and Open Space.

Save the Dates: Mark your calendar for our **Fall Ride** out of Five Brooks on October 9th. Bring your own horse, or rent a horse from Five Brooks. The **Marin County Fair**, July 1-5, will be our third annual, and it is fun to volunteer at the MHC booth. You will receive a full-day pass to the fair for the day you volunteer. Please contact Lauren Terk at Lauren.terk@terklaw.com to secure a shift and a free day pass.

Thanks to all of you for your continued support of your Horse Council. Remember to send in your horse tales (not "tails") so we can put them in our newsletter for all to enjoy.

Happy trails,
Ann Burke and Joel Bartlett
Co-Presidents, MHC

IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE SADDLE

President's message 1

OUT ON THE TRAIL

Accidental Botanist . . . 2-3

MHC Spring Ride 3

Trail Rage 3

NEWS AND UPDATES

Dias Ridge Trail 4-5

Save Our Trails 5

AT THE BARN

Morgan Horse Ranch . . 6-7

Shows & Events 7

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SAVE THE DATE
FALL RIDE OCTOBER 9
FIVE BROOKS STABLES

Meet Our New Director of Parks & Open Space, Linda Dahl

Linda Dahl came to Marin County in June, 2009 to become the Assistant Director of the Community Development Department, having spent the previous 4 years working for the National Park Service at Yosemite. There she led an official mediation process to resolve user capacity and conflicts issues that had resulted in a series of law suits starting in the 1990s.

Linda's BA degree was in City and Regional Planning, but her formal training also included conflict resolution and mediation. She worked for the National Park Service for 18 years, much of which time she was based in Colorado. In addition to her "formal job" with NPS, while in Colorado she was appointed to the Jefferson County Commission where she led a process and developed protocols to resolve user conflict issues that, 15 years later, still work. She also was elected to the Evergreen Colorado Parks and Recreation District Board of Directors (2002-2005), and she co-founded a Land Trust in Colorado. She brings this incredible background to Marin County Parks and Open Space District, effective June 1, 2010.

Linda's initial goal is to understand the mission of the Parks and Recreation District to preserve Marin's amazing open space; to connect Marin's people to the out-of-doors; to acknowledge all the users of open space; and to establish and enrich all possible connections. She will spend her initial time listening to and understanding the issues, looking for the appropriate balance leading to the sustainability and preservation of Marin County Open Space.

{continued on page 3}



California hazelnut



Poison hemlock



Trillium

PHOTOS: CRAIG SOLIN

An Accidental Botanist – On Horseback!

Trail riding through Marin presents a great opportunity to learn more about our special plant communities. My 10 year- old Andalusian, Falco, and I move at a slow pace on the fire roads and trails, giving us more opportunity to savor the natural setting. Over the next few issues I'd like to share some observations from the Giacomini Open Space Preserve, where each season offers interesting changes, and with it, a variety of fragrances, flowers, berries, nuts, and herbs.

Riding out of Creekside Equestrian Center, the trail meanders along San Geronimo Creek, part of the Lagunitas Creek Watershed. The dense vegetation shades the creek, and helps maintain the correct water temperature for the endangered Coho salmon. The riparian corridor is lush with alders, big leaf maples, oaks, bays, and buckeyes, which form a dense tree canopy. Willows colonize the edge of the creek banks, tolerating flooding, and growing about 15' tall. The under-story includes the non-native Himalaya berry, the California blackberry (smaller leaves, fruit, and shorter than the invasive non-native,) and poison oak ("leaves of three, let it be!") Sword ferns, native roses, and the California hazelnut (pictured) fill out the dense vegetation. Along the edge of the path grow Sedges, a grass like moisture-loving perennial. I enjoy this area, and inhale the essential oils released by the plants, warmed up by the sun.

We head down the road toward the Preserve and pass by several stands of poison hemlock (pictured.) This biennial grows to about 10', has wide white umbrella shaped flowers and purple blotches on its stems. It is poisonous to vertebrates. If you smell something like Fritos Corn Chips, you know you are near this invasive weed. Another herb that likes moist places is Stinging Nettle. It resembles a mint with its square stems; the stems are covered with hairs containing formic acid. This plant can sting but is rich with medicinal qualities. We reach the trailhead to the Willis Evans Trail, greeted by a broad meadow. Willis Evans was a well-known biologist and passionate conservationist for whom this trail is named. This coastal riparian forest interfaces with a redwood plant community, creating a rich tapestry of plant and animal life.

Filberts, alders, willows, and 'Ray Hartman' Ceanothus (a taller form of the California wild lilac) create a screen from the road. Just last month, the Ceanothus was in full bloom – its blue flowers are highly attractive to native and European bees. Thimbleberries are beginning to ripen, and the Redwoods along the path create a majestic tree canopy. This trail runs along the perennial Willis Evans Creek, home to Coho and a wide range of aquatic life. Ground cover is diverse, some plants favoring light gaps in the tree canopy. Wood rose, sword fern, redwood sorrel and violets, wild ginger, and Trillium (pictured) create a patchwork of interesting shapes and forms. The forest envelopes us, and Falco's footfall softly carries us into this natural cathedral.

A few reference books you might wish to have in your library – Plant Communities of Marin County, by W. David Shuford and Irene C. Timossi, published, 1989, by

OUT ON THE TRAIL

the California Native Plant Society (www.cnps.org) has a wide selection of books about Marin's native flora. Another book of interest is *The Herbal Handbook for Farm and Stable*, by Juliette de Bairacli Levy, published, 1951, by Rodale Press, Inc. She was an Englishwoman who abandoned position and wealth to study with peasants, farriers, and gypsies. She was a pioneer in herbal medicine. This is a good and helpful resource.

I look forward to sharing more plant lore over the approaching seasons and taking you further into the Giacomini Open Space Preserve. - Linda Novy

MHC Spring Ride

The dawn broke foggy, drizzly and chilly on Sunday, May 16th at the Presidio Riding Club at Fort Cronkhite in the Marin Headlands. Nonetheless, 22 intrepid riders showed up for the Marin Horse Council Spring Fundraiser Trail Ride. Besides riders from Marin County, there were also riders representing the Sonoma Horse Council and the Tri-City Horseman's Association in the East Bay. We were all most grateful for the coffee and muffins provided at the morning registration by MHC Co-President Ann Burke.

The trails from Presidio Stables provide for some lovely vistas of the valley and ocean below. Most riders chose to view the beautiful scenery from the Rodeo Valley Trail, Bobcat Trail, Miwok Trail, Marincello Trail, or the Old Springs Trail. Ann Barath summed up the day: "Although the sky was overcast, it hardly detracted from a fine day of riding with friends."

Besides the trail riders, an additional 20 or so folks showed up for the lunch. Chef extraordinaire, Bob Weems, always puts on a great BBQ -- and this was no exception with a meal that included barbecued chicken, fish, and sausage. Besides the lip-smacking, mouth-watering, finger-licking good meal, lunch provided a chance for everyone to relax, renew acquaintances, and meet some new horsey friends.

The funds raised from the ride are going to help with the riding arena restoration at Marin Stables in Fairfax. Our thanks go out to the National Park Service and GGNRA, the generosity of Presidio Stables for hosting our event, and to all the volunteers who helped with trailer parking, registration, and other jobs throughout the day. - Joel Bartlett



Riders enjoying the Marin Horse Council's Spring Ride

{continued from page 2}

When I asked her how the equestrian community could support her in her goals for the District, Linda's reply was, "Participate! Give input! Have an open mind!" She noted that she is currently working on a process for participation in the upcoming Road and Trail Plan, and there is a real need for more Open Space volunteers!

PS - Linda would love to see the District from the equestrian point of view and is happy to ride some trails with us!

- Carol Whitmire

Trail Rage

A few weeks ago my husband and I rode up Stewart Trail in Pt Reyes National Seashore from the Five Brooks trailhead. Just past the first junction with Greenpicker Trail, (going up) Stewart narrows and becomes rocky, with a sheer wall on the right and a drop off on the left, so we walked single file. Trotting behind us was a woman riding a big Thoroughbred and ponying another one. She yelled that she wanted to pass. I called back that there was a turnout about 50 ft away and we would move over there. The woman screamed, "Move over, this is a big park!" and as she passed us, her two horses side by side, we moved over to the rocky wall. She screamed "You do not own this park!" and trotted off.

We have been riding for some 10 years and never encountered anything like this. Rudeness is unpleasant and unnecessary, but dangerous trail manners are unconscionable.

- Marina Eisenzimmer

EXPANDING NORTH BAY AREA HORSE EVENT FACILITIES

The Sonoma County Horse Council has initiated the development a large horse facility to meet the needs of equestrians and the public interested in horses. The facility is the California Equestrian Park and Event Center (CEPEC). The objectives of CEPEC are to:

- Provide venues for local, regional and national equestrian competitions, conferences and clinics
- Provide an attraction for competitors, spectators and visitors
- Provide career technical education, internships, and certification programs for a variety of students
- Attract people, horses, and businesses to the County
- Improve the local economy by providing jobs and revenue
- Preserve land for equestrian activities and public recreation
- Provide an emergency shelter for horses and people
- Preserve the history of local horses and their contributions

CEPEC's proposed equestrian facilities include multi-purpose indoor and outdoor arenas for different equestrian disciplines, spectator facilities, a trail system, conditioning tracks, polo field, and cross country riding and driving courses. CEPEC will also have a horse museum, conference and educational centers, farrier and quarantine center, and veterinary hospital. It will be constructed as the first "All Green" equestrian facility in the country, becoming a model for environmentally-friendly equestrian recreational development. CEPEC is expected to draw participants and spectators throughout the world and attract prestigious national and international events.

For additional information, see the CEPEC web site at: <http://www.cepec.us>

- Wanda Smith



Equestrians, hikers and bikers enjoyed the trails and the celebration.

Dias Ridge Trail

The long awaited Dias Ridge Trail had its grand opening day celebration on May 18th at the Golden Gate Dairy Stables. Ocean Riders volunteered to host the celebration in front of the Dairy's historic hay barn. It took many meetings with the NPS, Golden Gate Park Conservancy, Bay Area Ridge Trail, and State Park Law Enforcement to plan the event

The bottom of the trail spills into the parking lot of the stables, and Ocean Riders has been working closely with Golden Gate Park Conservancy and its volunteers this past year to make room for heavy equipment, materials and vehicles. In the end the realignment and restoration of this 3.1 mile trail cost more than \$1 million.

During the construction period several opportunities were offered to all user groups to hike the trail to offer feedback, and concerns about safety. Every effort was made by the contractor, Barth Campbell, a horseman himself, to construct a safe trail, but choices in many places were constrained by the contour of the land and environmental impacts. It is a trail with magnificent views to Muir Beach, but there are sections that are narrow with poor line of site; a combination that could pose potential dangers if yield protocol and speed recommendations are not closely adhered to. To assure a safe opening day I had requested a preview ride so our horses could become familiar with the trail before they had to deal with banners and bands and massive amounts of bikers. Each group was offered a two hour exclusive ride or hike; and our horses were on their best behavior for opening day!

The day began with a mini Bay Area Ridge Trail ribbon cutting ceremony and speeches at the top of the trail to celebrate this segment finally opening. Barbara Weitz received well deserved recognition for her efforts that started in 1989 to get this trail in place. The trail was then blessed by a representative of the Federate Indians of Graton Rancheria. The heavily represented mountain bike community started working their way down the trail. Jane McAlevey, a mountain biker as well as an Ocean Rider member, rode her horse down with her mountain biking buddy to represent our hope that we can share this trail with respect and safety for all users always in mind. Hikers then started off, and Ocean Riders and Robert Eichstaedt with his horse Fox from Horse Hill followed. Three Ocean Riders wore the State Parks Volunteer Mounted Patrol uniform. We all appreciated Morris Older, Delos Putz, and Ann Barth hiking behind to warn mountain bikers of horses ahead on blind corners.

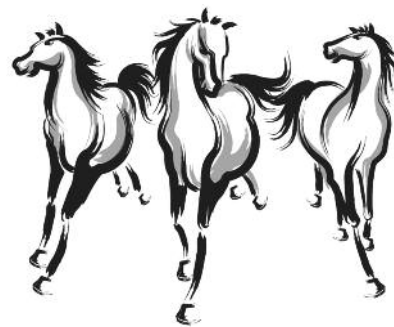
Arriving at the bottom, we were greeted with a band of fiddle players, bass, and guitar. A catered lunch was set up in the hay barn. *{continued on page 5}*

NEWS AND UPDATES

Ocean Riders had cleared out all horse trailers, arranged hay bales around the front of the hay barn as well as in clusters in the turnout arena, and covering many of them with horse blankets to provide an inviting place to sit, eat and talk.

Dedication and speeches ended the day with Superintendent Frank Dean as MC. The speakers included Supervisors Kinsey and McGlashen, Janet McBride from BARTC, and Barbara Weitz who was honored as "the mother of the trail." Many acknowledged Brian O'Neill and how everyone wished he was here to see this day. I was asked to say a few words representing the local (note: NOT equestrian) community. I have appreciated working with so many dedicated people who share our appreciation of this valley, and our hope is this trail can become a symbol of unity and cooperation that connects us. Next, we are looking forward to the Phase 2 Safety connector trail along Highway One getting underway.

TRAILS FOREVER! - Maureen Pinto



Again the early-morning sun was generous with its warmth. All the sounds dear to a horseman were around me – the snort of the horses as they cleared their throats, the gentle swish of their tails, the tinkle of irons as we flung the saddles over their backs – little sounds of no importance, but they stay in the unconscious library of memory.

- WYNFORD VAUGHAN-THOMAS

Save Our Trails Drive Meets Goals

In May 2009, the California Department of Parks & Recreation announced approval of a plan to open Bill's Trail in Samuel Taylor State Park to mountain bikers. State Parks proposed to close Bill's Trail to horses on an odd-even day basis. The Marin Conservation League, with the support of the Marin Horse Council and other local hiking and environmental groups, raised objections based on environmental and safety concerns. When persuasion failed, MCL advanced \$15,000 to finance a legal challenge to the plan on the ground that State Parks had failed to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act. MCL took this courageous step relying on the hiking and equestrian communities each to pick up a share of the cost. Faced with the prospect of litigation, State Parks withdrew its approval of the plan.

In August 2009, the Board of the Marin Horse Council authorized a group of volunteers to undertake a limited campaign to raise funds to help defray the costs incurred by the Marin Conservation League. The volunteer committee to Save Our Trails consisted of Linda Albion, Connie Berto, Joel Bartlett, Ann Burke, Diana Dougherty, Ron and Duffy Hurwin, Linda Novy, Tom Quilici and Delos Putz, chair. The committee put together a list of about 120 present and former trail riders and people known to be concerned with trail issues. Beginning in October, the committee members mailed letters and made follow-up phone calls to everyone on the list. The goal was to raise sufficient funds to reimburse MCL for a fair share of the legal costs it incurred in defense of Bill's Trail and to establish a contingency fund to resist future threats to safe trail access for horsemen.

The equestrian community responded generously. The Save Our Trails Fund has received 54 gifts totaling more than \$10,000. The response rate of 45% is extraordinarily high. It reflects both the concern for protecting trails and the effectiveness of personal solicitations by the committee members. These contributions have enabled the Horse Council to fulfill its obligation to the Marin Conservation League and to establish a modest reserve fund for future contingencies involving trails. The Horse Council is extremely grateful to all who contributed to the campaign, and to the volunteers who worked so hard to make the campaign a success. - Delos Putz

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AT THE BARN



Frank Binney, a tule elk wildlife management technician, with a dart gun which was used during the tule elk contraception program in the 1990s.

NEW Board Meeting Location!

Meet the Marin Horse Council Officers & Directors. Meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month, 7PM in the conference room upstairs, at 535 Jacoby Street (off Anderson) in San Rafael.

Morgan Horse Ranch

About ten years ago, I was coming down Horse Trail behind the Morgan Horse Ranch pasture when I saw a new foal struggling to get up on its feet for the first time, and, finally, wobbling the few steps to its mother to nurse. I was captivated, and stood watching the pair for at least half an hour. I now know that that was the last horse bred and born at the ranch.


The National Park Service had long been interested in buying what is now known as the Point Reyes National Seashore; in 1962 President Kennedy signed the Point Reyes National Seashore legislation.

There were no horses or horse facilities on Bear Valley Ranch when the Park took over. But the Park Service wanted a horse breeding operation to supply horses for its new seashore holding, and built the facilities in its present location. June 27, 1970 the Morgan Horse Farm was dedicated. The breeding program became so successful that many horses were bred and sent to other National Parks.

"Why Morgans?" I wondered. David Schifsky, Chief Ranger, speculated that Boyd Stewart, who owned the Stewart Ranch at the time of the Park's acquisition, arranged for the foundation stock to be donated by the Northern California Morgan Association. The Park leased pregnant mares so that the foals that became the foundation stock would have the Los Reyes name. Initially the horses were used for patrol by the 8-ranger horse patrol. Over time, and with the budget cuts that started in the 1980s, the breeding program ceased. The last two horses bred on the Ranch are Elvis and Rosie, both 10 years old (one being the foal I saw getting on its feet), and are the youngest of the 8 remaining horses. Meantime, vehicles replaced horses for much of the patrol work, both at Point Reyes, and other National Parks who got their stock from Bear Valley. The Point Reyes National Seashore is readily accessible from numerous points, Schifsky noted.

As of this writing, the Park has a young Morgan on a 90 day trial. The Morgan is a calm, trail-worthy horse, good with the public and with good conformation.

The Park has no protection riders today, but resource managers and volunteers ride the current eight Morgans. The resource managers and some volunteers conduct an elk monitoring program. Frank Binney is a tule elk wildlife management technician, who uses the Park's Morgans as a way to approach and monitor the elk without disturbing them. The photo of Frank shows him with a dart gun which was used during the contraception program in the 1990s to deliver contraceptive booster shots to selected elk cows in that experimental program. The dart gun is also used for tranquilizer darts to temporarily sedate an animal for various purposes such as attaching a radio-tracking collar. The National Seashore has a pretty stringent protocol for using the dart gun: a vet must be present at all time; the dart has to be administered only in the fleshy part of {continued on page 7}



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AT THE BARN

the rump from a distance of 30 meters; no shots can be taken when it's windy or there is a chance of miss-hitting another elk. The shooter must go through a rigorous training program. Frank notes that he doesn't do any of the dart shooting. His job, on horseback, is to be a moving blind – walking the shooter close enough to the animal for a safe shot – and then to follow the elk after it has been darted. It may take up to 20 minutes for the tranquilizer to take effect, and Frank has to make sure the elk doesn't lay down in a way where it can't breathe easily or is in a dangerous or uncomfortable position. He also has to cover the eyes of the tranquilized elk immediately to prevent sun damage to its dilated pupils.

Other equine volunteer jobs include cleaning the horse facilities and tack, including mucking, and riding the horses. Dave Schifsky noted that a volunteer must make a specific time commitment, and there are many volunteers. All volunteers must know how to ride and handle horses, and must ride only Ranch horses there. Sandy Sherman talked about a typical volunteer day: she would arrive, prepare feed (grain, supplements and vitamins) and hay. While the horses were eating, she would muck and dump the manure at an off-trail location. They would then sweep the barn, do laundry, clean the office, and other similar chores, including some office work. Then they would do ground work, clean the horses and clean the tack. In the afternoon, they would ride from 1 to 3 hours patrolling the trails and being public advocates of the horse program. All riders ride all horses. Occasionally a volunteer truly does rescue work. A few years ago a friend and her husband were riding their own horses on Woodward Trail. Her horse stumbled on some large rocks and she fell onto a rock. Although they had a cell phone, it didn't work in the hills of the Park. Her husband ponyed her horse, and she started to walk back, very slowly, in great pain, when a volunteer rider saw her and radioed ahead for help. It turned out that she had broken three ribs and punctured her lung, and the rescue was truly a gift.

- Carol Whitmire

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8/7 English/Western Series

9/11 Play Day

9/18 Schooling Dressage
(Western riders welcome)

10/2 English/Western Series

Contact person: **Grace Tolson 488 0454**

NOVATO HORSEMEN'S

7/11 CSHA/NHI Gymkhana

7/17 NJH Playday

8/21 Western Day

8/28 CSHA/NHI Gymkhana

Contact: **novatohorsemen@gmail.com**



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Help MHC to better serve you -- tell us about yourself. The MHC never shares or sells its members' information.

Occupation _____ Affiliations _____

- Own a horse?** Yes No
Your interests: English Western Trail Riding Endurance Show Jumping Dressage
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MHC needs volunteers! Please indicate if you can help us with: Finance, Communication, Membership, Barn Liaisons,
 Government Affairs, Horse Course, Eq Evac, Events committee, Marin County Fair, Volunteer Co-coordinating

Your membership in the Marin Horse Council helps support the Council's many activities on behalf of Marin's equestrians and equines.

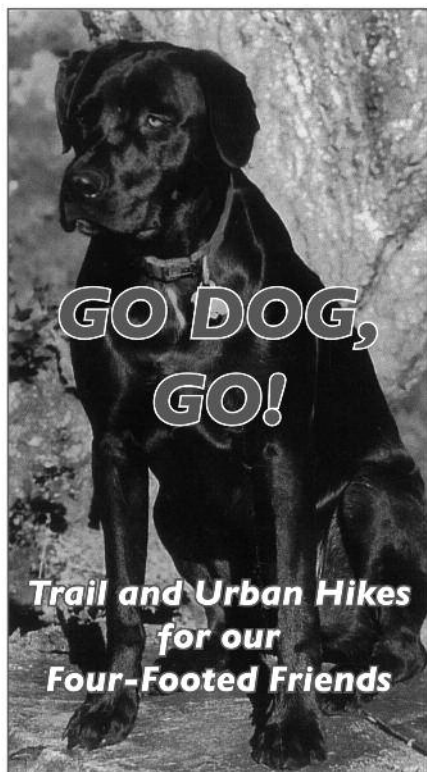
Donations are also welcome. Fees and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Thanks for joining! Mail your check to Marin Horse Council | 171 Bel Marin Keyes Blvd. | Novato, CA 94949-6183

06/10

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2nd Edition!

MARIN COUNTY EQUESTRIAN TRAIL GUIDE

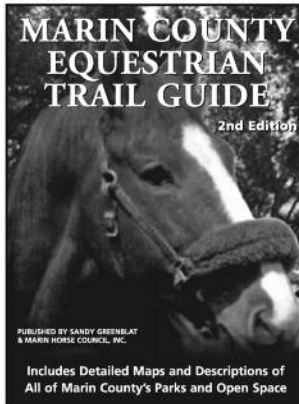
Updated April, 2009

This Equestrian Trail Guide covers all trails within approximately 200,000 acres located in the Point Reyes National Seashore, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) including the Marin Headlands, various California State Parks, the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed and lands of the Marin County Open Space District. It contains all the trail updates available as of the end of April, 2009.

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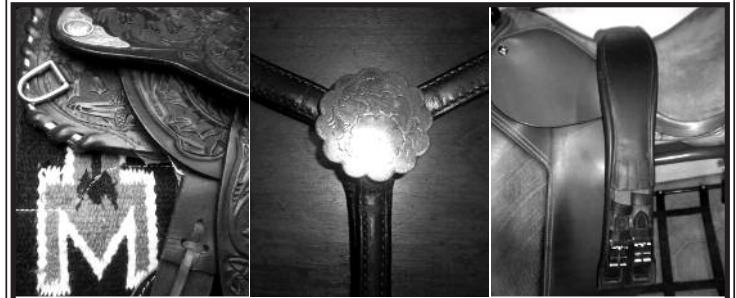
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