



MEDIA RELEASE

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TRADITIONAL RIDING TRAILS TO BE RE-OPENED IN SELECT NATIONAL PARKS AND FORESTS ACROSS QLD

Horse riders in Queensland have a much brighter future following the news that traditional riding trails will be re-opened in select national parks and forests across the state, thanks to the ongoing collaboration between the horse community, the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF) and the Queensland Government.

The Queensland Government together with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) have been in consultation with Queensland horse riders and horse riding clubs and associations since mid-2012 in reviewing access to traditional riding trails taken away by previous government legislation.

The initial findings of a 20 year independent scientific study into the effects of horse riding on trails in South-East Queensland was the catalyst for the horse community to present their case to the Queensland Government to re-open these traditional riding trails.

The study, commissioned by QPWS and conducted by four independent scientists, proved that horse riding deserved a place alongside other responsible outdoor recreation pursuits such as bush walking and mountain biking, with interim findings showing that when horse riders stayed on marked tracks and forestry roads, the impacts on the environment were negligible.

The Nature Conservation Act has since been amended to reflect a more balanced approach for the public use of national parks and conservation areas, placing an emphasis on recreation as well as conservation.

Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, Steve Dickson, said the move to reintroduce the riding trails was in keeping with the Newman Government's plan to open up national parks for recreational pursuits.

"We are delivering on our promise to make Queensland's national parks more available for everyone to enjoy and horse riding is a fantastic way to encourage Queenslanders to embrace their own backyard and foster a deep connection with our national parks through regular, responsible use.

"This scientific study has shown that horse riders deserve a place in our parks so we are now working to reintroduce these traditional riding trails and bring back an experience that many Queenslanders have been missing, and encourage more people to visit these wonderful bushland environments."

In September 2013, representatives of all major horse riding activities and associations came together with QORF, and held a special forum at the Queensland State Equestrian Centre to address the future of riding and the re-opening of traditional riding trails across Queensland.

At this forum the official representative committee of all horse groups across Queensland - the Queensland Horse Trails Working Group - was created.

The Queensland Horse Trails Working Group (QHTWG) appointed Triple Olympian and equestrian tourism operator, Alex Watson, as Chairman, and Chief Executive of QORF, Murray Stewart as Secretary.

The formation of the QHTWG, working together with QORF, has created the best opportunity for a seamless working relationship with the state government and QPWS to bring about the return of traditional riding trails in conservation areas across Queensland.

Chairman Alex Watson urged all horse riders across Queensland to acknowledge the work of the LNP Government and their support of the horse riding community.

“We are pleased that the scientific study provides evidence that supports our long held stance that responsible riding in appropriate national parks and state forests is a unique Australian bush experience that should be protected and preserved for future generations.

“The horse riding community have battled to get a fair go and we thank the State Government, Minister Steve Dickson and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services for listening to us and now acting to restore access to these traditional riding trails.”

Murray Stewart, Executive Officer of QORF, the peak industry body representing the interests of outdoor recreation users in Queensland, said the re-opening initiative would have a lasting and positive impact throughout the state.

“Horse riding has a long-standing historical and cultural significance to Queensland and is participated in by many thousands of residents and visitors through equine recreation, sporting events and eco-tourism.

“We look forward to assisting in the re-opening of these traditional riding trails and returning a special leisure experience to the people of Queensland.”

The initial priority of the QHTWG is to work with QPWS in the identification, re-opening and enhancement of trails previously closed.

The Queensland Government has committed to supporting the independent scientific monitoring program that will operate over a 20 year period with regular points of review to monitor any potential impacts that result from the reintroduction of horse riding on public lands.

For more information go to www.qorf.org.au

ENDS

*REFERENCE: Scientific Monitoring Program For The South East Queensland Horse

MEDIA CONTACT:

Shout Communications – Michelle Vecchio

Phone: 0414 287 231

Email: michellevecchio@shoutcommunications.com.au