FOSM Trail Guidelines for Horse Riding
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The multiuse trails on the east slope of the Sandia Mountains are available for equestrian use. These trails are of a wilderness nature and so present some unique challenges for horses. As such, our trails are generally characterized by uneven, narrow tread (more suited for foot traffic) with close aboard trees presenting knee hazards for riders. Tripping hazards (tree roots, etc.) are common. Head clearance is usually adequate, even for tall horses and riders, although recent treefalls can be showstoppers. Given the mountainous terrain, even our "flat" trails have considerable up and down segments.

Good footing is common, but areas of rocky tread are not unusual. Technical encounters include short stretches of bare, weathered rock outcroppings combined with short vertical changes that can prove challenging, particularly for shod horses. Longer stretches of narrow tread traversing steep slopes are also somewhat common.

The following generalized trail rating criteria are meant to support your decision making, not to replace your judgment. They are context, not promise.

Easy

- suitable for novice riders and green horses
- minimal challenges
- wide tread with good footing
    - tripping hazards common (compared to non-wilderness trails)
- gradual inclines and minimal rocky areas
- gentle switchbacks

Moderate

- some technical terrain, intermittent hazards
- tighter switchbacks
- narrow tread, good footing with some rocky tread
- basic riding skills, ability to shift in saddle (and duck) to avoid obstacles
- challenging sections with walk arounds

Challenging

- steep drop offs
- narrow, rocky, technical sections without walkarounds
- confident horses and riders

Example Trails

Cienega Horse Bypass = **Moderate**

(west) Initial upslope, narrow tread traversing steep slope, rocky tread
(south) downslope at south end, narrow tread with some rock crossings, tight switchbacks

Faulty - Armijo to Cienega Bypass = **Moderate***

Narrow tread, rocky
*Challenging step down into Cienega Canyon from the south
*Steep descent traversing steep slope

- Cienega Bypass to Oso Corredor = **Moderate**

Narrow tread, close aboard trees, steep descent, traverses steep slope

- Oso Corredor to Bill Spring = Challenging

Narrow tread, steep descent, traverses steep slope

Bill Spring = **Easy**

- some rocky areas

Wagon Trail = **Moderate**

Narrow tread, good footing, traverses steep slope

Acequia (east) = **Easy**
Acequia (west) = **Moderate**

- narrow tread, water/bridge crossing, picnic area/vehicle traffic

Armijo = **Easy**

- gradual incline, good footing