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Equine Land Conservation Resource Supports Launch of Nationwide Trail Etiquette Campaign

Lexington, KY – August 25, 2021– Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR) has announced its participation in the launch of a nationwide trail etiquette campaign, “Trails Are Common Ground,” with a national coalition of trail user groups.

Any trail user will tell you there are more people on the trails than ever before. According to a study commissioned by the Outdoor Industry Association, 8.1 million more Americans hiked in 2020 versus 2019. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, automated counters at trail systems around the country recorded four times as many users compared to the same timeframe in 2019. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy reported a 79% spike in usage nationwide between March and July of 2020.

Recognizing that the community of trail users continues to expand at an exponential rate, which is a significant concern to the equine trail community, ELCR and Backcountry Horsemen of America joined an unprecedented consortium of advocacy groups, brands, media outlets, and ambassadors that came together to create the recently launched public awareness campaign, “**Trails Are Common Ground**,” which elevates the importance of respectful, inclusive, safe, and enjoyable experiences on trails.

Trails are being used more than ever before by an increasingly large number of people, many of whom recently discovered a love for the outdoors. It’s a complex ecosystem with lots of moving parts: people and animals moving in different directions, in lots of different ways, for lots of different reasons. Trails Are Common Ground aims to build a communal perspective on the mutual use of, and respect for, trails and for one another.

"ELCR was pleased to join with one of our partner organizations, Backcountry Horsemen of America, to represent the equestrian trail community in this important nationwide initiative," said ELCR Executive Director Holley Groshek. "We look forward to working with the equine trail community across the country to embrace the campaign aimed at ensuring the trail experience is welcoming, safe, inclusive and enjoyable for all trail users."

Advocacy groups and industry leaders began collaborating in February 2021 to discuss the need for this campaign. The coalition shaped the campaign to reinforce the many local, regional, and user-specific trail respect programs in existence by promoting kindness and awareness while elevating the work of these programs. More than 15 meetings have taken place with input from more than 20 organizations, as well as outdoor industry brands, land managers, representatives with BIPOC communities, and adaptive trail users. Coalition members represent all manner of activities that take place in the dirt, including hiking, trail running, equestrian, mountain biking, and motorized singletrack.

The organizations partnering on Trails Are Common Ground include American Motorcyclist Association, American Trail Running Association, American Trails, Back Country Horsemen of America, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Equine Land Conservation Resource, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Latino Outdoors, NavajoYES, PeopleforBikes, Teton Adaptive Sports,

Tread Lightly!, US Trail Running Conference, Vermont Mountain Bike Association, and Washington Trails Association, among many more partners.

Equestrian trail users across the country are invited to support the **Trails Are Common Ground** campaign. The campaign includes a website, social media, and creative assets that can be shared and personalized by brands, nonprofits, content creators, and all passionate trail users who want to rise together to share the message of Trails Are Common Ground. To find out more, visit www.trailsarecommonground.org and follow the campaign on Instagram and Facebook @trailsarecommonground.

About Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR): *ELCR builds awareness of the loss of lands available for horse-related activities and facilitates the protection and conservation of those lands working to ensure America's equine heritage lives on and the emotional, physical, and economic benefits of the horse-human relationship remains accessible. ELCR serves as an information resource and clearinghouse on conserving horse properties, land use planning, land stewardship/best management practices, trails, liability, and equine economic impact. For more information about ELCR, visit www.elcr.org or call (859) 455-8383.*