



## Spotlight on the Trails Safe Passing Plan

The Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) is an educational initiative created by Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council (RFVHC) President Karin Reid Offield and the Michigan Trails Advisory Council Equestrian Representative (MTAC) Jenny Cook in 2023 to elevate trail safety and the overall shared trail experience.

TSSP serves as a safety action plan urging trail users to stop, speak and stand back when encountering horseback riders on the trail. The initiative was developed to promote trail safety by helping all trail users understand that horses, as prey animals, can naturally be afraid of unfamiliar people and objects and can respond to potential threats with a “flight” survival instinct, preferring to move their feet towards an exit route. Responding to the dramatic increase in outdoor recreational activity since COVID, ELCR has promoted the TSSP and other regional trail safety initiatives to promote proper trail etiquette and safety. The TSSP is a good model because it promotes a better understanding of the special needs of horses and their riders and what all trail users should do when encountering them on the trail.

Both Karin Reid Offield and Jenny Cook say they are thrilled with the response to the TSSP initiative and thank ELCR for helping them get the word out about this important trail education initiative. The following quotes are just a few examples of how well TSSP has been received since the safety action plan was rolled out in the spring of 2023 in an American Trails webinar:

- “We will use the Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back on welcome info boards at the trail head parking lots throughout the 6,900-acre White River Area Pines Point Recreation Area.” –USFS Baldwin Ranger Station Huron and Manistee National Forests, Michigan
- “There have been increasing conflicts between horse users and other trail users on shared use trails. Your trail sign, QR codes and PowerPoint would educate trail users and raise awareness of how to respond when approaching or being approached by equestrians and horse and wagon users on trails.” –*The Provenance of Alberta, Canada*
- “These RFVHC signs offer practical information on how to behave around horses rather than simply stating yielding rules (triangle signs).” –*TriCities Horsemen’s Association, Martinez, California*
- “We have a new trail system being developed, and education is needed. Many of the trail users are not familiar with what ‘yield’ means. Your trail sign is GENIUS.” –*Back Country Horsemen of Blue Ridge, North Carolina*

**For more information on the Trails Safe Passing Plan and to download signage, please go to <http://rfvhorsecouncil.org/trails-safe-passing-plan-tspp.html>**

The graphic features a green and brown color scheme. On the left is the Equine Land Conservation Resource logo. The central text reads 'Please Remember The Trails Safe Passing Plan Stop! Speak and Stand Back'. On the right is a yellow triangular sign with a black border and a silhouette of a horse and rider, containing the text 'Stop! Speak Stand Back Yield To'. Below this is a brown box with white text detailing the 'STOP:', 'SPEAK:', 'STAND BACK:', and 'SMILE:' protocols.

**STOP:**  
Horses are prey animals and naturally can be afraid of unfamiliar people and objects. People with horses should pass at a walk while other trail users remain STOPPED, until passed. When approaching horses from behind, please STOP! SPEAK to announce your location and pass slowly when the people with horses are prepared. STOPPING allows TIME for everyone to prepare for safe trail passing.

**SPEAK:**  
Please ANNOUNCE your presence.  
Please SAY “Hi” when we pass by.  
Speaking helps horses identify you as a person and will help keep them calm.

**STAND BACK:**  
Please STAND BACK with your whole group on the same side of the trail.  
Please contain children and dogs.  
Please do not hide or stand behind a tree, as these actions may cause horses to fear you are a predator planning an attack.

**SMILE:**  
Enjoy the safe, happy trails! Please contact the Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council for the use of the Stop! Speak and Stand Back sign at: [RFVHC.Colorado@gmail.com](mailto:RFVHC.Colorado@gmail.com)