



City of Auburn

Endurance Capital of the World Committee

## **User Group Trail Etiquette & Safety Manual**

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## Introduction

The Auburn State Recreation Area (ASRA) is a 35,000-acre park along 40 miles of the North and Middle Forks of the American River in Northern California. It is easily accessible from the City of Auburn, as well as from the Sacramento region in general. Learn more about the ASRA here: [http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=502](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=502).

To help keep these trails safe for the ever-increasing numbers of all user group members, the City of Auburn's Endurance Capital Committee established a 2013 work plan goal to create a Trail Etiquette Manual. This manual has been compiled with the help of trail etiquette guidelines from user groups and parks around the U.S and then tailored to be specific for the ASRA by experienced ASRA users.

In this manual, categories of user group encounters include those on foot, on bicycles and on horses. Since the ASRA is closed to motorized vehicles except in a few designated areas, encounters with motorized vehicles are not described here.

## General Etiquette & Safety Guidelines for all Trail Users

- **Common Courtesy, Common Sense**
  - Rules: Be familiar with and abide by all ASRA rules
  - Trails: Use only trails designated for your user group.
  - Consideration: Always be considerate of others; err on the side of caution.
  - Communicate!
    - Let others you encounter on the trail know you are approaching.
    - Be friendly, curious and informative.
    - Ask questions and/or be ready to answer them.
    - Communicating with other trail users is a key component of trail safety.
    - Hearing human voices has a calming effect on horses.
  - Be Vigilant!
    - Watch and listen for others coming toward you or from behind you.
    - The use headphones or ear buds is NOT recommended. These devices impair your ability to hear and communicate with other trail users.
    - On a trail officially designated for a specific user group, never assume that other user group people are not on that trail, intentionally or unintentionally.
  - Restricted Line of Sight: Slow down, increase your awareness, and be ready to stop.
  - Do not startle other users: Slow down before you are too close to the other user(s) and communicate courteously your intention to pass.
  - Noise and Dust: Keep noise levels down and avoid stirring up dust.
  - Pets/Children: Keep pets on a leash; this is an ASRA rule. Keep children close by.
  - Volunteers/Patrols/Rangers: Be respectful of these groups and follow their instructions.

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- **Who Yields to Whom?**
  - Yield the right of way to those passing you from behind.
  - Yield the right of way to those traveling uphill.
  - Mountain bike riders yield to runners, hikers and equestrians.
  - Runners and hikers yield to equestrians.
  - Note that these are general guidelines *and there will be exceptions*. Mitigate any potential conflicts with communication, courtesy and common sense.
- **Protect and Respect your Surroundings**
  - No Bushwacking: Use only officially designated trails; do not travel off of these trail. Doing so creates unmarked “social trails,” encourages others to follow, and subsequently creates a negative impacts on the environment. When multiple trails exist, use on the one that is the most worn. Stay off closed trails.
  - Obstacles: Travel single file in the middle of a single-track trail, even if snowy or muddy. Go through puddles and not around them. Traveling around mud, rocks, or downed tree limbs widens trails, impacts vegetation, and causes further and unnecessary erosion. Do not use trails that are excessively water-logged. Moisture is the chief factor that determines how traffic (from any user group) affects a trail.
  - Wildlife: Do not disturb or harass wildlife. Give them plenty of room. Avoid trails that cross known wildlife havens during sensitive times such as nesting or mating.
  - Do Not Disturb or Remove: Leave natural (all animals, minerals, vegetation), historic objects, and trail markers as you find them. Removing trail markers is serious vandalism that also puts others at risk, and the Park protects many plant and animal endangered species.
  - NEVER Litter: Pack out spent food wrappers, tissues, etc.
  - Give Back: Volunteer, support, & encourage others to participate in trail maintenance days.
- **Safety**
  - Know or learn about the area where you plan to travel:
    - Prepare accordingly.
    - Take a map with you in unfamiliar areas.
  - Schedule: Let at least one other person know where you are going and when you expect to return.
  - Company: Travel with a friend (or friends) if possible.
  - Cyclists and equestrians: Helmets and safety gear are strongly recommended.
  - Weather: Be prepared for the weather and plan for the worst, given the duration of your activity.
  - Supplies: Carry plenty of water, electrolyte replacement drink, and snacks for longer outings.
  - Self-knowledge: Know and respect your limits.
  - Report Back: Tell the proper authorities about unusually dangerous, unsafe, or damaging conditions and activities upon your return.

## Pedestrian Trail Etiquette & Safety Guidelines

Pedestrians include runners, hikers, nature lovers, and those seeking access to the rivers, caves, and other sites of interest.

- **Pedestrian/Pedestrian Encounters Etiquette**
  - Yielding: Uphill pedestrians yield to downhill pedestrians in most situations.
  - Communicate: Let the pedestrian(s) ahead of you know you are coming.
  - On Wide Trails and Dirt Roads: Pedestrians traveling out stay to the left, those traveling back stay to the right.
  - Split Larger Groups into Smaller Groups: Larger groups have a greater environmental impact on trails, and can be disruptive to others. The ASRA has limits on the size of organized groups; familiarize yourself with these policies and honor them.
- **Pedestrian/Equestrian Encounters Etiquette**
  - Yielding: Pedestrians must yield to equestrians.
  - Trails with a steep drop offs: Stay on the downhill side of the trail and allow the horse and rider to stay on the uphill side of the trail.
  - Sunglasses: Remove sunglasses while near a horse.
  - Carry on a Conversation: Hearing human voices has a calming effect on horses.
  - No Sudden Noises or Actions
  - When Approaching from Behind:
    - Let the horse and rider know of your presence with a low-volume greeting from a respectable distance away.
    - Ask for instructions about passing.
    - Carry on a conversation; hearing human voices has a calming effect on the horse.
    - Remove your sunglasses.
    - Once the horse and rider acknowledges you, slowly and quietly pass the horse and rider, giving them a wide berth.
  - When Approaching from the Front:
    - Remove your sunglasses.
    - Stop well over on the downhill side of the trail, and make a low-volume greeting.
    - Unless otherwise instructed by the rider, allow the horse and rider to pass by you while you wait.
    - Carry on a conversation; hearing human voices has a calming effect on horses.
    - Then proceed quietly on your way.
  - Dogs: If you have a dog on a leash, be sure the dog's leash is shortened and the dog is fully under your control.
  - Children: Be sure they stay close by you.

- **Pedestrian/Mountain Bike Rider Encounters Etiquette**
  - Yielding: Mountain bike riders must yield to runners, hikers and equestrians, but be aware that occasional situations may occur where this is not feasible.
  - Be courteous & Communicate: Ask the mountain bike rider if there are more riders and how many in the group, so you can be prepared for more riders.
  - Dogs: Be sure the dog's leash is shortened and the dog is fully under your control.
  - Children: Be sure they stay close by you.

## Mountain Bike Riders Etiquette & Safety Guidelines

- **General**
  - Yielding: Mountain bike riders must yield to runners, hikers and equestrians.
  - Safety Gear: Helmets and appropriate safety gear are strongly recommended.
  - Be Aware of Your Surroundings: Anticipate other trail users, especially when riding on trails with a limited line of sight.
  - Ride within your limits.
  - Speed: Obey all bicycle speed regulations and do not ride at speeds that compromise your ability to control your bike.
  - Trail Choices:
    - Ride only on designated, open trails.
    - Avoid any trails that are overly saturated with water to minimize trail damage.
- **Mountain Bike Riders/Mountain Bike Riders Encounters Etiquette**
  - Yielding: Cyclists traveling downhill should yield to ones traveling uphill.
  - Passing: Strive to make each pass a safe and courteous one.
- **Mountain Bike Riders/Pedestrian Encounters Etiquette**
  - Approaching Pedestrians from Behind:
    - Slow down or stop and announce your presence either verbally or with a bell.
    - Say, "I'll pass on your left." This is the universal side on which to pass, but many do not know this.
  - Approaching Pedestrians from the Front: slow down and consider stopping if the trail is narrow.
- **Mountain Bike Riders/Equestrian Encounters Etiquette**
  - Yielding: Mountain Bike Riders must yield to equestrians.
  - Carry on a Conversation with the Rider: This has a calming effect on the horse.
  - Trails with a steep drop offs: Stay (or stop) on the downhill side of the trail and allow the horse and rider to stay on the uphill side of the trail.
  - Stay Calm: Never act suddenly or make loud noises.
  - When Approaching from Behind:
    - Let the horse and rider know of your presence with a low-volume greeting from a respectable distance away.
    - Ask for instructions about passing.

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- Once the horse and rider acknowledges you, slowly and quietly pass the horse and rider, giving them a wide berth.
- When Approaching from the Front:
  - Stop well to the side of the trail, remove your sunglasses, and make a low-volume greeting.
  - Unless otherwise instructed by the rider, allow the horse and rider to pass by you while you wait.
  - Then proceed quietly on your way.

## Equestrian Etiquette & Safety Guidelines

- **General**
  - Gear: Helmets and appropriate safety gear are strongly recommended.
  - Be Attentive: to your surroundings and potential encounters with other users.
  - Conversations: Hearing human voices has a calming effect on horses.
  - Limits: Know and ride within your and your horse's capabilities.
  - Trails to Ride: Ride only on designated, open trails.
  - Be Kind to the Trails: Avoid any trails that are overly saturated with water to minimize trail damage.
  - Limited Line of Site Trails: Exercise caution; be aware of and try to anticipate other trail users who may be just around the bend.
  - When Riding a Horse with Limited Trail Experience:
    - Avoid busy multi-use trails.
    - Be exceptionally cautious around pedestrians and mountain bike riders.
    - Before taking your horse on the trails, consider working with your horse in a confined, safe area (like an arena) with friends who have mountain bikes, so the horse becomes more accustomed to mountain bikes.
- **Equestrian/Equestrian Encounters Etiquette**
  - Yielding: Give a faster horse and rider room to pass from behind; give a horse and rider coming uphill the right of way.
  - Slow down: Whenever nearing another horse and rider.
  - Communicate with each other.
  - Keep moving; stopping on the trail can cause more problems than steadily moving.
- **Pedestrian & Mountain Bike Riders/Equestrian Encounters Etiquette**
  - Yielding: Pedestrians and mountain bike riders are required to yield to equestrians, but be attentive to the possible exception.
  - Slow down and stop if necessary.
  - Communicate any behavior issues you may have with your horse.