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Jason Edworthy  
Alberta Equestrian Federation  
[jedworthy@spring-bank.ca](mailto:jedworthy@spring-bank.ca)

**Subject: Trail maintenance and horse use**

Dear Jason Edworthy:

Thank you for your letters of March 29, 2023 and April 21, 2023 emphasizing the Alberta Equestrian Federation's continued interest in horse-use on the trails of Jasper National Park. We appreciate your interest and passion for the park and your desire to enjoy the backcountry. The Alberta Equestrian Federation is on the list of interested stakeholders for any future consultation opportunities.

In managing national parks, Parks Canada operates with the protection of ecological integrity as our top priority. Parks Canada maintains or restores ecological integrity, and provides Canadians with opportunities to discover and enjoy them.

Parks Canada decisions are guided by various documents; with the management plan as the key guiding document. I would like to highlight four commitments from the [2022 Jasper National Park Management Plan](#), which was tabled in Parliament last summer following public and Indigenous consultations.

1. Manage large areas of the park as wilderness, where minimal facilities and low levels of human use contribute to providing the habitat requirements of wide-ranging species. (Objective 1.1)
2. Offer a trail network that provides a range of opportunities to experience the park and supports harmonious relationships between different trail users and between recreationalists and wildlife (Objective 2.4)
3. Asset maintenance and improvements are guided by the Parks Canada trail and bridge priority matrices as well as the trail and backcountry maintenance standards. (Objective 2.4 target 4)
4. Recreational activities in designated wilderness areas are supported by rudimentary facilities and levels of service. (Objective 2.4 target 5)

Several years ago, Jasper National Park implemented the use of a Trail Matrix to help prioritize trail maintenance decisions across all official trails in Jasper National Park. Several factors, including wilderness goals, visitation opportunities, and lifecycle costs influence decisions about how investments are made with regards to trails. Backcountry and front country trails that are used by the highest number of visitors tend to be the highest priority for maintenance.

Remote wilderness routes, such as The North Boundary Trail, are not typically cleared as an entire trail or maintained to the same standard as higher priority trails. However, the majority of these remote routes are cleared each year at a minimal level to allow equestrian access on an as required basis for operational requirements, such as ecological monitoring.

Trail and bridge maintenance or replacement decisions are reviewed annually as part of the Jasper Field Unit's capital planning process. This allows for emerging issues and new information to be considered based on the available resources. Levels of maintenance vary year to year based on unpredictable events such as windstorms, wildfire and irregular or new erosion patterns. I am attaching the *Backcountry Visitor Use Operational Guidelines (2021)* and the Trail Matrix for your reference.

Your suggestions to assist in reducing trail user conflicts with signage have been noted and shared with both the Visitor Experience team and the Asset Management team. As part of Parks Canada's commitment to maintaining the trail network in line with the Trail Matrix, visitors can now easily report information to Parks Canada staff on trail conditions, down trees, signage, wildlife sightings and other important information that could affect fellow trail users, through an easy-to-use trail condition reporting tool. I invite you to share this information and [form](#) with your members to help Parks Canada staff identify trail maintenance statuses across the +1,000 kilometres of trails in Jasper National Park.

Thank you for taking the time to write and express your concerns. Your comments, together with others received from the public, will help inform and shape how national parks are managed into the future.

Sincerely,

Alan Fehr  
Field Unit Superintendent

Encl: 2021 Backcountry Visitor Use Operational Guidelines for Jasper National Park  
Jasper National Park – Trail Matrix