

The Ohio Horseman's Council favors any funding for HB 96, specifically for trails maintenance and improvements in Ohio.

Ohio is fourth in the country* regarding the number of horses residents own and follows Texas, California, and Florida in the first-third ranks. In Ohio, there are more than 1500 miles of bridle trails for recreational riding on public land, and a vast majority of the trails are maintained by volunteer members of the Ohio Horseman's Council (OHC). Further, 70% of trails are on Ohio DNR properties, representing the Division of Parks & Watercraft, the Division of Wildlife, and the Division of Forestry. In the Forestry division alone, Hocking State Forest and Mohican Memorial State Forest represent the highest calculated miles of trails ridden each year. The Ohio Horseman's Council volunteers' marketing efforts bring riders from all over the country, with Hocking being a draw for its "unexpected" rock formations and scenery to be enjoyed on the trail.

In 2023, Horseman's Council volunteers logged more than \$1.6 million in value spent on trail maintenance, and in 2024, \$1.2 million. Therefore, any funding for Ohio's trails, specifically for ODNR, should be provided and used for trail maintenance to help support the effort of OHC volunteers. The equine industry, particularly recreational trail riding, is rapidly growing. To ensure this growth continues and the industry remains strong, Ohio needs to fund efforts to maintain trails. This not only benefits local riders but also attracts riders from other states, boosting the local economy.

*2023 Economic Study by American Horse Council – <https://horsecouncil.org>.

Ohio Horseman's Council – ohconline.com