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To Whom It May Concern

This is a letter of support and “thank you” to the O’Brien County Conservation Board (CCB) for the decision to designate the McCormack Prairie Area as the first parcel of land owned and managed by the O’Brien CCB that names horseback riding as a designated use.

It’s a decision that was made after spirited discussion by horse enthusiasts and hunting groups. Those advocating for horse trail use are disappointed in the size of the area and have commented that there is not enough trail riding there to make it worthwhile.

I have been contacted about the McCormack Trail Project by the O’Brien County Conservation Director and Assistant Director. We have discussed their plan and vision for allowing horseback riding on this county owned land. I decided to get a closer look at the area so one day I parked my car, walked up the level B road to the McCormack Prairie Area and hiked around just to get a feel of what it would be like to ride a horse there. What I found was a hillside prairie rich in native plants and natural history! To the east, there are deer trails through the trees and the creek that runs through the area had a bald eagle doing some afternoon hunting. In other words, a wonderful place to spend some time on horseback.

For the trail riders in O’Brien county and surrounding area to have the McCormack Prairie Area to ride in is a huge start in forming a positive, collaborative relationship with county decision makers. Future decisions about horseback use on county lands or leases should also be considered as part of this cooperative relationship.

There are not many public areas to ride in this part of the state. Research on areas that have horse trails show that few county areas have over 4 miles of total trails and most list their total riding time as between 1-2 hours. The McCormack Trail would have about 2 miles of riding from the parking area to the prairie area – some along a gravel road, some possibly along an abandoned railway, and some on a level B road – with an estimated 1.5 – 2 miles of trail at the McCormack Prairie. This project is in the planning stages and is open to positive input.

The opening of the area to horseback riding is a first for O’Brien county. Horse riders should be able to work with the county on providing a safe experience of enjoying public lands while horseback riding. Words to the O’Brien County Conservation Board should be words of “thank you” – “thank you” for listening to the trail riders concerns, “thank you” for allowing horseback riding on the McCormack Prairie and “thank you” for being a partner in the enjoyment of public lands!

Thank you O’Brien CCB!
Jolene Hultgren
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