

Q&A

The Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back

Updated 4.9.2023 with additional information

March 30, 2023

Here is the direct LINK <https://youtu.be/rBsfPn2yGQU> to the American Trails 3.30.2023 One Hour Webinar Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back

"Here is the LINK to the VIDEO that we were not able to view during the webinar -.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-nmrS9yuig> Stop, Speak, Smile: The Key to Sharing the Trails Safely, hosted on the RfVHC You Tube Channel"

Q: Isn't it inconvenient to turn around when there are large numbers of other trail users? That seems impractical.

-- Aleta Abrams

A: Hi Aleta - As we explained the ripple effect with one horse hearing an approaching trail user, as it is for turning the horses around. You are right. It is practical that the time we are offered by the stopped trail user, gives us a chance to access all the other horses, the trail itself and the others in the group. Time is the key, in a large group like you are referring to. Sometimes it is only necessary to turn the horses head slightly so they can see the approaching trail user from behind and not their whole body. When the horseback rider can be sure their horse sees the other trails users and is comfortable, then trail passing is safe for everyone. That is why speaking is also an important part to trails safe passing. **As prey animals, horses are assessing their surroundings for survival. It's helpful when horses can understand what is approaching them from behind so they can compute if there is potential danger. Sometimes it may only be necessary to turn your horse's head, and not their whole body, so they can see the trail user from behind. That is why it's helpful for everyone to Stop! Speak and Stand Back to allow TIME for people with horses to prepare for safe trails passing.**

Q: please stop saying horses don't hear bells, that confuses people. They hear them, they just don't know what they mean. Also, I always ride with a bell on my horse, it has helped in many cases to alert wildlife AND other trail users that we are coming.

-- Annette Parsons

A: Hi Annette - Advice taken. We want to share that the human voice is the best and quickest way for horses to be comfortable. My only objection are the websites and trail user groups that believe and write to their viewers to replace the human voice with a bell. It's a conversation that we are glad we had, and your point is well taken. **. As prey animals, horses are assessing their surroundings for survival. The human voice helps horses to understand the intentions of people, who are their natural predators. A bell is just another sound that they need to try to understand and then they still need to determine the intentions of the other trail user, who to them are still natural predators.**

Q: Will you be adding, at some time, on the Remember Card in the SPEAK rule - “wait for rider and horse to turn to face approaching user when overtaking from behind”? I really appreciate what you have included! Loved this! Covered a lot in a wonderful way.

-- Debbie Briscoe

A: live answered

Q: How can signs be purchased?

-- Dick Wilhelm

A: Hi Dick, We considered being in the Selling the Trail Sign business, but since everyone's needs for signage is different, what we offer are the graphics...and then the signs and QR Codes YOU need can be created locally for you. please go to www.rfvhorsecouncil.org website. Go to the PROJECTS page and you will find all the graphics there. To use the trail sign, we ask that you fill out a Trail Use Registration Form found on the RFVHC website. This will give you written permission to use the copyrighted sign: <https://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/trails-safe-passing-plan-tspp.html>

Q: Are the Stop/Speak/Stand Back signs available to trails associations?

-- Geoff Weaver

A: Hi Geoff, We considered being in the Selling the Trail Sign business, but since everyone's needs for trail signs are different, we offer the graphics...and then the signs and QR Codes YOU need can be created locally for you. Please go to this page <https://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/trails-safe-passing-plan-tspp.html> and we ask that you fill out a Trail Use Registration Form found on that page. This will give you written permission to use the copyrighted sign:

Q: I was asking if we can purchase the signs somewhere, don't believe I heard an answer to that question.

-- Geoff Weaver

A: Hi Geoff, We considered being in the Selling the Trail Sign business, but since everyone's needs for signage are different, what we offer are the graphics...and then the signs and QR Codes YOU need can be created locally for you. To use the trail sign, we ask that you fill out a Trail Use Registration Form found on the RFVHC website. This will give you written permission to use the copyrighted sign: <https://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/trails-safe-passing-plan-tspp.html>

Q: What about horses on bridges or on walkways with grating. Can you talk about this for trail users and preferences for fording, etc?

-- Gina Austin

A: live answered

Q: Many trails cross paved roadways with signalized crossings and non-signalized crossings. How do horses respond to vehicles? What product can you apply to the road surface that provides traction for the horse?

-- Gregory Davies

A: live answered. Contact us Gregory for more info on this question.

Q: I find bells helpful so that I can call out to the biker to let them know that they are approaching another user.

-- Joan Fleming

A: Hi Joan - Yes, Bells are helpful for bikers, not so much for the horses and **the human voice is the best choice so horses can assess the intensions of the other trail user through their voice.** There are ear bud issues, too, that we did not cover - but bells have been used for centuries on bikes, for bikes, horns on cars, for cars and with people with horses the human voice is the best choice. Horses assess the intensions of the bicyclist through their voice.

Q: So just to be 100% clear...this sign replaces the older yield to 'triangles' correct? Also, what is the best guidance for how MTN bikers can pass?

-- Joe Inslee

A: live answered, Hi Joe - Maybe not replace, but add to....as the Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back is an educational resource on what to do when encountering horses on trails. The video demonstrates perfectly: Here is the LINK.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-nmrS9yuiq>. Stop, Speak, Smile: The Key to Sharing the Trails Safely, hosted on the RfVHC You Tube Channel

Q: Where can we find the graphic so we can print and produce the main stop/soeak/stand back sign? Thank you!

-- Joe Inslee

A: Hi Joe - please go to www.rfvhorsecouncil.org website. Go to the PROJECTS page and you will find all the graphics there. To use the trail sign, we ask that you fill out a Trail Use Registration Form found on the RfVHC website. This will give you written permission to use the copyrighted sign: <https://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/trails-safe-passing-plan-tspp.html>

Q: What is happening on the horse side to make sure riders are taking responsibility for using horses that are seasoned and trained for trail use?

-- Kathryn Tobias

A: Hi Kathryn, By embracing and presenting the Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back to your trail users the multi-user trail encounters with people and horses will improve. A "seasoned" horse is a horse that has a lot of miles of trail rides. The better our encounters with bikers, hikers, and all others, the better our training will be. Every single horse is different from another, so the work on "training horses" is ongoing. **We developed this safety action plan to help educate the public how horses as prey animals, naturally perceive and react to their environment. We are asking trail users to please help our trail partners, the horses, be more comfortable and confident by practicing the Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back so horses can understand that you, a natural predator, is not in an attach or planning and attack.**

Q: Do you use this presentation in schools? Or do you have another presentation?

-- Laura Duncan

A: live answered

Q: How would this work with shared trails with OHVs?

-- Lori Adams

A: live answered

Q: Where does the assertion about horses not hearing bells come from? We have a program in our park promoting bell usage that provides the bells, sponsored by REI. I have found them not affective for horses and maybe you have told me why.

-- Lucy Williams

A: live answered, Yes Lucy. We believe they bells are not effective with horses. That is the collected assertion we found from many sources. **Horses, as prey animals, are trying to understand everything and everyone around them for survival. The human voice is the best way for horses to comprehend the intensions of the other trail users, who are the horses' natural predator. While the horses may hear bells, they need to decode the bell sound, adding an extra step to their survival calculations, and still try to assess the intensions of the people, their natural predators, so a pleasant human voice is much more helpful to horses than bells.**

Q: are there any social media marketing materials available?

-- Luesa Janke

A: live answered

Q: the website mentions plugging in logo in their sing

-- Luesa Janke

A: Yes - Luesa - On **slide 16** of the presentation, you will see two QR codes - the QR Code can be branded with your own Trail Group Logo or Park Symbol. On our website, we offer a QR Code that is EMPTY in the middle - and that is where your brand or logo can be placed. Let us know if you need help.

Q: Post resources, link to RFVHC

-- Mitch Marich

A: The website link for the RFVHC is www.rfvhorsecouncil.org. All of the links can be found on the American Trails webinar's webpage <https://www.americantrails.org/training/the-trails-safe-passing-plan-stop-speak-and-stand-back>

Q: You may already have answered this question in which case, apologies. I just left the webinar and went to the web site and see that there are no already-manufactured signs available - just a download of the pdf. Is that correct? We are then supposed to make our own signs? Thank you. Great evolution of horse safety measures, btw.

-- Nancy Gilkyson

A: live answered, Yes Nancy, we considered being in the Selling the Trail Sign business, but since everyone's needs for signage is different, size, what it's attached to, etc. what we offer are the graphics...and then the signs and QR Codes YOU need can be created locally for you. Here is the LINK <https://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/trails-safe-passing-plan-tspp.html>

Q: What about trails being damaged by weight of horse hooves in muddy conditions and when there's a steep edge uphill or downhill — this causes dangerous conditions (twisted ankles) for hikers and trail runners

-- Patti Beardsley

A: live answered

Q: "Is there a "standard" for WHERE to "Stand Back" - I have heard different "correct answers"

—

"Hikers and Mountain Bikers should step to the DOWNHILL side of the trail to be below the horse and rider and appear less threatening",

or

"Hikers and Mountain Bikers should step to the UPHILL side of the trail because if the horse spooks, it is most likely to travel downhill rather than uphill"

Is there a "standard" or does it "depend" ?? Thanks."

-- Peter Irvine

A: live answered. Please view the VIDEO on this link... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-nmrS9yuig>

Q: Tagging on to the question on trail damage - in my area (southern Appalachian mountains & hills) we have found that trail grade on multiple-use non-motorized trails is a key factor - trail tread damage and erosion is low/minimal/acceptable at grades below 8%; then damage + erosion gets much greater at grades greater than 8%. So initial trail design keeping grades below 8% is optimal in our area, as is relocation of "bad" , usually steep, trail sections onto more sustainable grades.

-- Peter Irvine

A: Hi Peter, Just like with bikers horse back riders are asked not to deviate from the trails and go around a muddy or puddle area. Unfortunately, because of horses depth perception and wary self protection, walking thru a muddy trail section is not high on their list of things they are willing or love to do. Some horses are not afraid, at all, and others will refuse to walk thru. If a rider has a brave horse, we do not damage the sides of the trails. On the trails you mention, standing water may be less of a problem. , **Thank you for the trail grade information. Proper trail design and maintenance is the best practice. Horses compact and aerate with each step, so they neutralize their pathways. It's best to avoid trail riding in wet, muddy areas. Horses are always assessing their footing and looking for solid ground to support themselves and their riders.** That is very good information, thank you!

Q: What definition of yield is best to use that doesn't alienate other users? Making bicycles stop for every person and horse has the opposite effect of making them less willing to comply with the idea of yielding.

-- Randy Winter

A: Hi Randy, Typically, the number of horseback riders on trails is extremely low compared to the number of bikers and hikers, so we believe this problem is minimized. The Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back ASKS trail users to stop. Once this becomes a habit, and the safe passing becomes normalized we believe compliance will be less of a problem. Yielding to people with horses is not common trail practice. The Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back is a friendly, safe, and efficient way to share multi-use trails. This yielding plan only takes a few seconds and promotes safe and happy trails for everyone.

Q: Another observation. I do presentations to trail user groups and recently attended a Courtesy Workshop put on by Jefferson County Open Space in Colorado. Other users expressed fear at the idea of being below a horse on a hillside to allow safe passage. While we are focused on what others should do to keep us safe we must consider their reaction to what we advocate.

-- Randy Winter

A: Hi Randy, Yes the geography of the trail and safety of the other trail users is just as important. If everyone is on the same side, and not so close to the trail edge so the horses are at ease, it's all good for safe trail passing. You bring up a good point. People with horses are not wanting to put anyone at risk, just to make it safer when encountering people with horses on trails. **We want everyone to have safe and enjoyable experiences along the trails. By following the Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back, you have the opportunities to communicate your fears and safety concerns.**

Q: Hello, I'm with a mountain bike non-profit in Colorado. How would you recommend mountain bikers should pass horses? Both when approaching from behind and when approaching from the opposite direction.

-- Riley Frackleton

A: Hi Riley, - The Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back asks approaching bikers that when they encounter people with horses on the trails to Stop! first, Speak out that they are near, and to Stand Back off the trail for the people with horses to be on their way. When approaching from behind, please give the people with horses enough time to turn toward the bikers so the horseback riders can assess the approaching bikers, the trail conditions, their horses and the other riders. Time is key for safe passing. **Please follow the Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back when they encounter people with horses on the trails from either direction. People with horses need TIME to turn their horses' head so the horses can see and assess the other trail users. Horses need can hear your intentions through your voice. Please ask the horseback rider if they are ready for you to pass.**

Q: How can this be transmitted to non-horse trail users without horse people coming across as out of control trail users who whine if everyone does not bow to our needs. Hikers don't stop when they meet other hikers

-- Wendy Wakula

A: Hi Wendy, Excellent Question: The Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back is an educational resource on what to do when encountering horses on trails. The video demonstrates perfectly: Here is the LINK. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-nmrS9yuiq>. Stop, Speak, Smile: The Key to Sharing the Trails Safely, hosted on the RFVHC You Tube Channel . Horses are great trail partners and are welcomed on many multiuser trails. There currently is not a program in place for education on what to do when encountering people with horses on trails. We believe this effort can be transmitted to non- horse trail users - we'd like to work with you and other groups to improve safety on trails. How can we help? Watch the video and let us know...

It's good to understand by practicing the Trails Safe Passing Plan (TSPP) Stop! Speak and Stand Back, we are all helping our horse trail partners to be calm and confident, which helps our trails be safe, comfortable, and efficient. The Stop, Speak, Smile video is a great demonstration. Here is the LINK. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-nmrS9yuiq>. Stop, Speak, Smile: The Key to Sharing the Trails Safely, hosted on the RFVHC You Tube Channel