

San Juan Islanders will have an opportunity learn about and comment on the park's plan for expanded horseback riding in San Juan Island National Historical Park at public meeting scheduled at 7:15 p.m. Wednesday February 13 in the conference room of the San Juan Island Library.

In response to requests for increased access for horses, the park staff conducted a thorough analysis of park trail networks at English and American camps. The result was that some new areas will be added to those already viewed as considered appropriate for riding, according park Superintendent Lee Taylor.

Corridor clearance, maximum grade, switchback radius and drainage were key factors in the decision-making. Impacts on areas with significant historic or cultural resources also weighed heavily in the process, Taylor said. The park's 2008 General Management Plan classifies the park landscape into different zones, and indicates that equestrian uses are not appropriate in the cultural zone.

"I believe there are trails in the park that are well suited to horse use, and that we can allow horses on those trails without causing damage to park resources or degrading the park experience for other visitors," Taylor said. Taylor will present detailed information of the park's analysis and findings on the following trails:

Back Side of Young Hill

English Camp Service Road

Sandwith Orchard to Mitchell Hill Connector Trail

Frazer Homestead Trail from American Camp to park boundary

Mount Finlayson Trail

Connector Trail from Mount Finlayson Trail to Jakles Lagoon Trail

Jakles Lagoon Trail

Existing horse use in the Mitchell Hill area of the park will continue. Anyone riding a horse in the park, including Mitchell Hill, will be required to have a permit. Horse use permits are free of charge, valid for one calendar year, and will be available at the meeting.