

Horseback Riding

Policy

DWSP prohibits horseback riding within all its water supply lands and waters, except for authorized equestrian trails on DWSP Properties in the Ware River watershed under specific conditions. These authorized trails replace all previous equestrian access roads and trails (see Map 11). The following are specific restrictions on equestrian access to DWSP lands.

- Riding is allowed on DWSP authorized equestrian trails only.
- Horse feces within sight of any tributary or surface water must be removed from trail by riders.
- Horse wading in, watering in, or disposal of any waste in or adjacent to a tributary or surface water is prohibited.
- Horseback riding is prohibited during “mud season” when all DWSP trails are closed for access. Trails may be closed for operational needs.
- Horseback riding for commercial purposes on state land is prohibited.

Organized rides for groups up to 25 require a DWSP group access permit issued at least one week prior to the ride. Contact the Quabbin Visitor Center for information on the permit. Groups are limited to 25 individuals. DCR may issue up to two permits per year for groups larger than 25 people.

Large group horseback riding permit requests will be reviewed and either approved or denied. Permit conditions may include trail access, manure management, signage, etc.

DWSP may revoke a permit and/or reject future permit applications if conditions are not met or significant impacts occur.

Summary

<i>Activity</i>	Ware River Watershed System	Intake Buffer Zone	Exclusion Zone
Horseback Riding	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

☒ **Prohibited**

☐ **Allowed - General Restrictions**

☐ **Specific Restrictions**

☐ General public access within the Ware River Watershed System is allowed from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset through gates or designated (posted) areas only. Night Access is prohibited on DWSP owned lands in the Ware River Watershed System. Any activity which injures or defaces the property of the Commonwealth is strictly prohibited. Littering is strictly prohibited. Carry in/Carry out. Do not feed wildlife. Groups of 25 or more are required to obtain a group access permit from the Quabbin Visitor Center prior to access.

¹ Equestrian access allowed only on trails designated by DCR Division of Water Supply Protection lands in the Ware River watershed under specific conditions. Equestrian access restricted during mud-season, watershed management operations, and other situations, which will be posted.

Explanation

This policy is based on state and federal surface water protection regulations that restrict horse access on public drinking water supply lands and waters to safeguard the quality of the public's

drinking water supplies (e.g., 310 CMR 22.20B(2)(b) and Interim Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule). Unrestricted horseback riding within a public drinking water supply watershed, especially near surface waters, is incompatible with DWSP's water quality and public health protection goals.

Potential water quality impacts from horseback riding include physical and microbial water quality threats from erosion, improperly managed animal fecal waste sanitation, and behavior such as illegal body/water contact, littering, or vandalism. Creation of illegal trails can impact historic and cultural resources, wetlands, and endangered species habitat.

Potential water quality effects of horseback riding include:

- Improper disposal of sanitary wastes from horses and the resulting threat of microbiological contamination.
- Increase in the sediment/nutrient inputs caused by large numbers riding on trails, riding off trails, or riding on closed trails.
- Attraction of wading or watering horses in nearby, off-trail surface waters or tributaries to the drinking water supply.

The first DWSP authorized horseback riding trails in the Ware River watershed were created in 1988 through a public process. Local horse owners and DWSP staff identified the authorized trails based on water quality protection and preferred routes. DWSP policies have since evolved, reflecting new scientific research, federal regulations, and enhanced watershed protection strategies. DWSP's revised authorized trails for 2023 in the Ware River watershed limits access to appropriate locations for equestrian use by prohibiting horses on trails with unbridged stream crossings and outside a one-kilometer exclusion zone from the Ware River Intake.



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Authorized Equestrian Trails Open During Daylight Hours



Department of Conservation & Recreation
Division of Water Supply Protection - Office of Watershed Management
Ware River Public Access Management Plan 2023

