



Walkers, runners and hikers regularly use the more than 300 miles of paved and unpaved trails in the Forest Preserves for exercise and exploration, to walk their dogs, and as a way to get from Point A to Point B.



Horses may use any of our stone and natural surface trails. Most equestrian activity takes place in the northwest and southwest areas of the County. Off-trail riding is prohibited, and horses and riders must have Forest Preserve licenses.



Approximately 50 miles of stone and natural surface trails wind through the 15,000 acres of wilderness in the Palos Preserves in southwest Cook County. This is the area's premiere destination for mountain bikers of all skill levels. Off-trail riding is prohibited.



The Forest Preserves offers 147 miles of paved trails that are frequented by a variety of users travelling at different speeds, from walkers and joggers, to families with young children and bicycle commuters.

Walkers/Runners/Hikers



Equestrians



Mountain Bikers



Bicyclists on Paved Trails



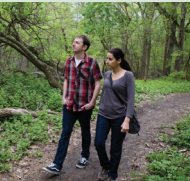
What can you expect?

Faster trail users. Bikers and equestrians, as well as runners, approaching from behind will often say “On your left.” This means you should stay to your right.

Bikers yield to foot traffic. It is the responsibility of cyclists to pass at a safe speed. Offer friendly communication to let the rider know when it's safe to pass: give verbal acknowledgement, step to the side of the trail, or wave the rider by on a wider trail.

What is your responsibility?

Share the trail. When travelling in a group, remember to stay single file or take up no more than half the trail. Be sure everyone in your group understands what actions to take when encountering hikers, runners, bikers and horses.



Don't tune out. If you wear headphones, keep the volume down or only wear one earpiece so other trail users don't startle you.

Keep a short leash on your dog when passing (or being passed by) horses, cyclists or other foot traffic. Remember that other trail users may be frightened by dogs or unsure how to pass safely.

Yield to horses.

1. Stay downhill. Spooked horses go uphill.
2. Greet the rider. Horses can perceive hikers wearing tall backpacks as predators. Your voice confirms your humanity.
3. Ask how to proceed. If hiking with a child, hold their hand when passing.

What can you expect?

Inexperienced trail users. While all trail users yield to horses, many are intimidated by large horses, or they just don't know what to do.

What is your responsibility?

Manage your animals. Don't school green horses in high-traffic areas. Familiarize horses with expected trail encounters (cyclists, dogs, backpack-wearing hikers, etc.)

Negotiate safe passage.

1. *Greet users early.* Hikers and bikers should yield to horses, but they may need your guidance.
2. *Be vocal* and announce yourself on blind corners.
3. *Guide* trail users to move downhill of the trail.
4. *Continue communication* until the pass is complete.
5. *Expect the unexpected.* Small children and animals can be unpredictable or easily frightened by horses.



What can you expect?

Surprised trail users: Fast moving users can startle others, especially when approaching from behind. Always ride under control, anticipate others and announce yourself around blind corners. In general, be friendly, communicative and aware of your surroundings. If you wear headphones, keep the volume down or only wear one earpiece.

What is your responsibility?

Mountain bikers yield to hikers, horses and uphill traffic.

Passing hikers:

1. *Greet* hikers early.
2. *Slow down* to about the same speed as the hiker.
3. *Pass slowly* and be prepared to stop if necessary.
4. *Expect the unexpected.* Humans and animals can be unpredictable and easily spooked by cyclists.

Passing cyclists:

1. *Announce* your intention to pass with a friendly “Let me know when it's safe to pass.”
2. *Use* the “single-track yield” on a narrow trail – stop to the side, put one foot down and lean away from the trail.

Passing horses:

1. *Stop* at least 30 feet from the horse.
2. *Greet* the human and the horse to demonstrate that you are not a predator.
3. *Ask* for instructions on how to pass safely. Offer to get off your bike.
4. *Pass slowly* and steadily, but only after the equestrian gives you the go-ahead. Sudden movements can spook a horse.



What can you expect?

Varying Speeds: Fast moving users can startle others, especially when approaching from behind. Always ride under control, anticipate other users, and be communicative and friendly. Pass on the left and say “On your left.”

What is your responsibility?

Bikers yield to walkers and uphill traffic.

Passing pedestrians:

1. *Greet* pedestrians and slower riders early.
2. *Slow down* to about the same speed as the person you're passing.
3. *Pass Slowly* and be prepared to stop if necessary .
4. *Expect the unexpected.* Humans and animals can be unpredictable and easily spooked by cyclists.

Passing cyclists:

Announce your intention to pass with a friendly “On your left.”



Nature Center Trails

Nature center trails are special. The trails at the Forest Preserves' six nature centers provide unique and important learning opportunities for their visitors. Therefore, dogs, bikes and horses are not permitted on the trails inside nature center gates. You can find more info at fpdcc.com/preserves-and-trails/rules-and-regulations.



Trail Watch Program

We need your help! The Forest Preserves is seeking new volunteers to join our Trail Watch program. Become additional eyes and ears for our Law Enforcement Department, and help us keep the preserves safe, healthy and attractive for all our users. Just by going out and enjoying the preserves, you can be a visible presence to help make our preserves even more welcoming.

Support Your positive, visible presence increases a sense of safety and discourages prohibited conduct.

Monitor Familiarity with your route allows you to easily recognize troubling trends and issues.

Report Prompt reporting leads to prompt resolution and reduces the chance that the unwanted behavior will reoccur.

Find out more and register!

1. Visit fpdcc.com/volunteer
2. Click the red "Volunteer" button
3. In Search by keyword, type "Trail Watch"



Etiquette for All

Don't use wet trails. If you are leaving prints (hoof, tire or shoe) the trail is too wet to use. When approaching muddy spots, go through the center of the mud to keep the trail narrow.

Stay on the trail. Do not go off the trail (even to pass), create new trails or cut switchbacks. Narrow trails mean less environmental impact and happier critters.

Respect. If you offer respect, you are more likely to receive it. All groups have rights and responsibilities to Cook County's trails and to each other. Be friendly and expect to see folks around every corner.

Don't block trails. When taking a break, move to the side of the trail.

Preserve our natural areas. Please put trash in its place.

A note for dog owners. Please be sure to pick up after your pet. And remember that all dogs must be leashed.



WINTER TRAILS TIP

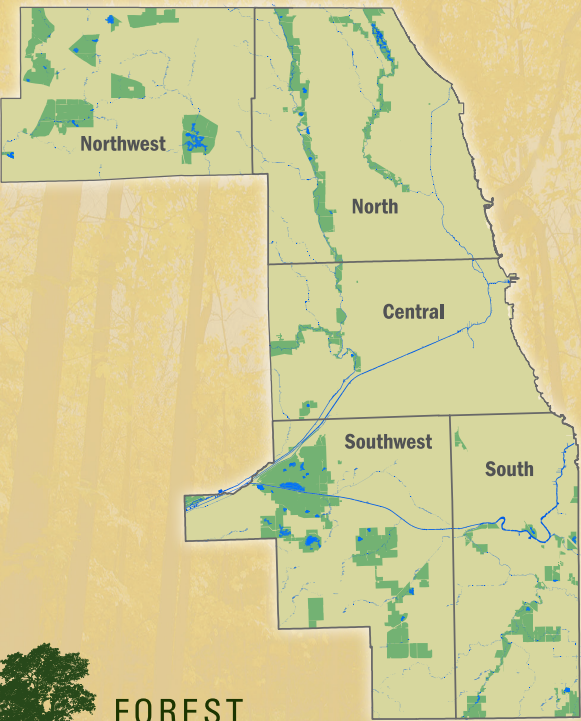
If you see cross-country ski tracks, make skiers happy by staying out of them.

What does yield mean?

Yielding means slow down, establish communication, be prepared to stop if necessary, and pass in a safe and friendly manner.

ABOUT THE FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY

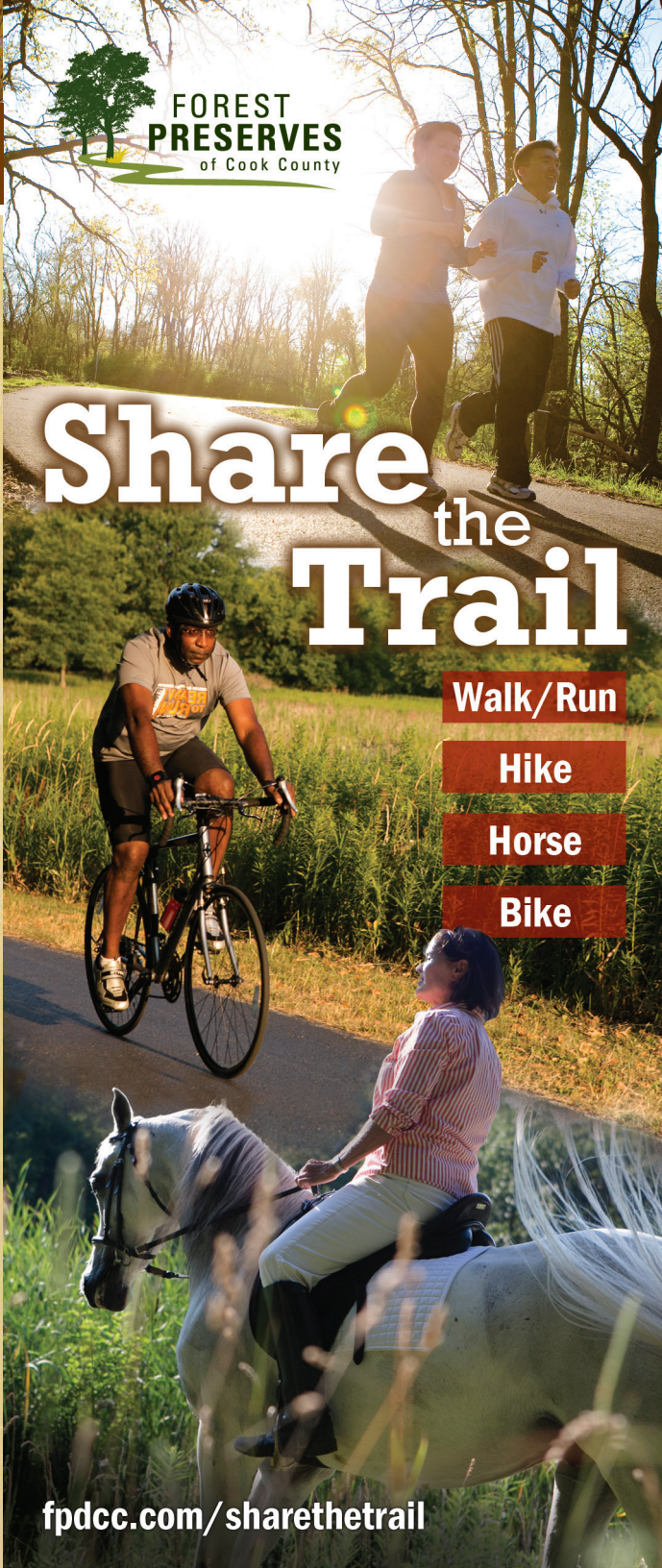
The Forest Preserves of Cook County is the oldest forest preserve system in the nation, maintaining 69,000 acres of open land for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public. We strive to protect and restore the county's diverse ecosystems, so all our unique native plants and animals can live and thrive. Each year, millions of people use these lands and facilities to enjoy or study nature, bicycle, hike, fish, cross-country ski, picnic, golf, canoe or simply relax in a large preserve that leaves urban life behind.



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Phone | 800-870-3666
Police | 708-771-1001
In case of emergency, call 911

fpdcc.com



Share the Trail

Walk/Run

Hike

Horse

Bike

fpdcc.com/sharethetrail