



THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL

Trails Stewardship Committee

Spotlight on Cecil County: Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area

by Katherine O. Rizzo

With over 5,600 acres of protected parkland to explore, it is no surprise that the Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area in Cecil County was voted Maryland's top place to trail ride in *The Equiery's* 2021 survey. The property is known for its pristine fields, woodlands, and rustic natural beauty, as well as its rich history.

Fair Hill was formerly the largest private land holding on the east coast, when it was owned by William duPont, Jr., an avid equestrian who built the property by purchasing neighboring farmland in the 1920s to create a fox hunting and steeplechase paradise. DuPont also ran a large cattle operation on the property at one time, as well as Foxcatcher Farm, his Maryland Thoroughbred racing stable. The stable produced the 1938 Preakness Stakes winner Dauber.

The state bought the Maryland portion of the property, in 1975, after DuPont died. It has been managed since then by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

The property boasts than 80 miles of multi-use trails and also hosts world class competitions in its Special Events Zone. The highlight of the competition year is the MARS Equestrian Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill, one of only seven five-star eventing competitions in the world.

The park is open year-round from sunrise to sunset, though access to some areas of the park is restricted during competitions and during the Cecil County Fair. There are five trailer parking locations, each with easy access to various areas of the park. There are parking lots at 4646 Telegraph Road, Black Bridge Road, 2941 Appleton Road, 491 Gallaher Road and 2000 Appleton Road.

Fair Hill also offers camping with stalls and camper hook up stations. You can make camping reservations online at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15FqvCV-8KE5WKvBHQ5TZMOoKaxS_8BP5sitUIQit_eI4/viewform?edit_requested=true

Trails range from easy to difficult and are color coded. Most of the trails are open to horseback riding – those that are not are marked with a no horses sign.

The Orange Trail is considered the most difficult and is accessed from the Telegraph Road parking lot. This 5.8-mile loop mainly follows the hayfields and goes through mature forest along Big Elk Creek but there are a few steep climbs along the way.

The Green Trail is a 5.5-mile moderate loop with a combination of double-track and single-track trail. Most of the trail is old farm roads. This trail passes by the famous historic Fair Hill covered bridge which horseback riders can ride through for a great photo op.

The Blue Trail starts at the North Appleton Road lot and is a moderate 3.8 miles. The trail is a mix of woodland and open fields and also goes through the tunnel that crosses under Appleton Road. This trail skirts Christina Creek, which feeds into the Delaware Bay watershed in the Little Egypt area of the park.

The Yellow Trail is also considered moderate. It is 3.2 miles and has scenic views of the Scott's Mill Bridge crossing of Big Elk Creek. The trail had one steep descent and then follows along the creek.

The Red Trail is considered the easiest and least technical of the Fair Hill trails. It crosses through mature woodland and open hayfields. The 2.5-mile loop also crosses Grammie's Run Creek.

The Blue Diamond Trail is the longest route - 6.8 miles and is considered moderate. It is a double-track gravel trail. The trail has views of historic ruins, current horse properties and Big Elk Creek. Most of the trail is along open hay fields with some woodland areas.

Trail maps can be found here: <https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Documents/FH-NRMA-Map-Brochure.pdf>

For more on the history of Fair Hill, please go to equiery.com and read the following articles:

- Fair Hill's History: <https://equiery.com/fair-hills-history/>
- Foxhunting, Pony Club & The Legacy of Miss Patsy duPont: <https://equiery.com/foxhunting-pony-club-the-legacy-of-miss-patsy-du-pont/>
- Fair Hill: From Foxhunter Paradise to International Equestrian Center: <https://equiery.com/fair-hill-from-foxhunter-paradise-to-international-eque...>



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