

CHAPTER VI:

MAKING BUCKHORN A “DESTINATION” TRAIL SYSTEM

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In order for a trail use area to become a trail system, it has to have several essential attributes to ready it for commercial use. Trail riders in general, whether they are OHV, equestrian, mountain bike riders, and even many hikers are not looking for a single route that just goes to one destination only to turn around and travel that same route back. They are looking for variety. One must remember that trails are not like highway systems where the purpose of the route is to get from point A to point B often the shortest way possible. The purpose for a trail is the adventure between A and B without there ever needing to be a B. As noted in Chapter IV, it is all about the adventure on the trail and what one might experience along the way.

Trail users prefer not to travel the same routes on their excursions. This is why successful destination trail systems provide several different trail choices. The preferred method is to create trail loops with varying lengths and degrees of difficulty thus providing all users the opportunity to successfully participate in the activity choosing the route that best fits their skill level.

Ski slopes have for years been using such a system in which one can leave the top of a mountain yet, depending on their skill level, take different routes requiring different skill levels to come down the mountain, where all trails tend to merge together at the bottom. The “green” or easy trails tend to gently weave down the mountain following closely the grade of the mountain for a slow easy experience. The “blue” or more difficult trails tend to have a much faster grade of descent. A “black” trail will tend to have the greatest grade of descent plus potential obstacles requiring the user to maneuver around, over or through them.

By having all participants basically start and end in the same location requires much less initial infrastructure in which one central location becomes the gathering point. One central location at the bottom of the mountain provides the amenities to all using the trails and even those who decide not to venture out but rather enjoy their time at the lodge or camp. Using this same concept, trails for a variety of sports are now being developed in much the same way, developing different trails of differing lengths and skill levels that all tend to start and end at the same location thus creating a Looped Trail System.