Riding Horses at the Sandy River Delta:

The Sandy River Delta is very different from most trails on National Forest land. It is flat and the trails are wide. There is one of the seven Confluence Project installations, the “Bird Blind” at the SRD. The area is bounded by the Sandy River, Sandy River East Channel, and the Columbia River. The trails are generally good, but please keep in mind that the Sandy River was originally names the “Quicksand” river. When you explore all of the trails and take your time, you can get in several pleasant hours of riding.

The SRD is wildly popular with off-leash dog owners, and it is an easy drive from our large metro areas. Add in the hunters, people who like to fish, birdwatchers, bicycles and hikers, and you have a very busy park. Since many urban dogs are quite excited at the sight of horses, be prepared for dogs that will want to get up close. Alert the owner and stop your horses, allowing them time to leash their pet. You may have to offer some advice, as many people are not acquainted with the nature of horses.

History of equestrian volunteers at the Sandy River Delta:

Since the purchase in 1991 by the Forest Service of both Sun Dial Island and Thousand Acres Ranch, the 1,400 acre area became a under the radar spot for local hunters, fishermen, equestrians and hikers. Since many National Forest trails are closed by snow until mid-summer, the SRD is a particularly good place for winter and spring riding. The trails in the Columbia River Gorge are open year round, but there are only a few open to horses.

OET started volunteer days to keep briars from closing the trails left-over from dairy farming and beef cattle grazing. When there was still a fenced area for the cattle OET installed two gates so visitors could cross the grazing area. In 2005, the Forest Service started working on a plan to prepare the SRD for one of the seven Lewis and Clark installations designed by artist Maya Lin. The meetings drew dog walkers and OET members. During the process the dog and horse lovers united to form Friends of the Sandy River Delta to support development of trails, park maintenance, and respect for all types of visitors.

Fast forward to 2014 as Friends and OET, working closely with the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (Forest Service), have removed briars to uncover old trails, improved trails, and worked out issues between our two favorite animals. In 2008 the “Bird Blind” was completed along with a large parking area, and a restroom. Now instead of a small (with BIG pot holes) parking spot, we have 90 vehicles slots and six long slots for horse trailers.

In 2013 the dam to Sun Dial Island was removed for fish habitat restoration. No formal trails were ever signed on Sun Dial Island. OET continues to be heavily involved in trail maintenance, and as a partner with Friends of the SRD and the GRGNSA.

For more information or to volunteer contact: mthood@oregonequestriantrails.org