

## **Horse Corrals Installed at Randolph Area of Tuttle Creek State Park**

After months of raising funds and planning, the eight new double horse pens on the 200 loop at the Randolph Area of Tuttle Creek State Park became a reality on the rainy Saturday morning of July 20. Thanks to the volunteers from the Tuttle Creek Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Kansas and park manager Levi Gantenbein with his skid loader, the work was accomplished in a short, drenching time. With the completion of arches designating the Opie Huddleston trail heads, two major projects have come to fruition.

Gantenbein and his crew showed up with the loader a couple of days earlier and leveled the sites for the new pens, and then he unloaded the truck and distributed the panels to each location Saturday. Jake Drews of the Hillsdale area built and delivered the panels for the pens, and the pipe to construct them was donated by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Each pen is a double. They are 12'x24' with a dividing panel and there is a gate on each side. With the two existing double pens, each campsite in the loop now has pens. Each one is numbered for its corresponding campsite. Park management has offered to build a manure bunk for the loop and BCHKS has donated a manure cart.

The Tuttle Creek Chapter of BCHKS, formed in 2021, hosts an annual fund-raiser trail ride, auction and dinner, and a major portion of each year's event was earmarked for the pens. The chapter also received grants from Back Country Horsemen of America and BCHKS, and funds were raised through private donations and from the Kansas Trails Council. Several options for the construction of the pens were considered over the ensuing months, and it all finally fell together with Drews' hiring and the KDW&P pipe donation.

While the chapter has geared its fund-raising efforts toward creating an equestrian loop in the campground with electric and water hookup sites, and a few with sewer, it also continues to maintain and improve the 20 miles of equestrian trails in the park, install signage and provide brochures with complete trail maps and information.

The "blue" trails on the north and south sides of Highway 16 have been designated "Opie Trails" and pipe archways with powder-coated signs have been put up at the entry area to each trail.

The chapter will host its annual fund-raiser on Sept. 28. Anyone is welcome to join in the trail ride, dinner and auction, and there will again be live musical entertainment. It will be a celebration of the late Opie Huddleston as the original trail builder in 1996. She will be honored at 4:30 with a dedication ceremony. Her commitment, and the commitment of those whom her spirit inspires, perpetuates the common sense use and enjoyment of horses on our public lands in the back country.

Learn more about the Sept 28 events and costs at the Facebook page, Tuttle Creek Chapter of BCHKS. Site reservations can be made by calling the park at 785-539-7941.

Volunteers are vital to maintaining the equestrian trails at the many state parks in Kansas. BCHKS recently celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Tuttle Creek Chapter was the third formed and there are now five chapters. Visit [www.bchkansas.com](http://www.bchkansas.com) for more information and to join. A discount is available to Kansas Horse Council members who also join BCHKS by taking advantage of the Trails Advocate option.