

Changes in Store for Equinox Course

Written by John Estle, Co-Director

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Some changes are in store for the Equinox Marathon course for the 50th edition on September 15, 2012.

The main effect of the changes will be to move between one mile and one-and-a-half miles of the course from pavement to single-track and double-track trails.

Over the years there have been changes in property ownership and access, as well as road construction and home construction which incrementally have moved a number of sections of the Equinox Marathon course from its original route and off soft running surfaces and onto pavement. This year, with help and cooperation from some landowners, as well as the tireless work of Stan Justice and help from Eric Troyer and the Interior Trails Preservation Coalition, we are going to do something about it!

At this time, we plan changes in two major segments, with hopes for a third section, as well. We'll talk about one section here.

In the 1980's, the course just past what is now the 9-mile mark turned left off Ester Dome Road and headed up a driveway that turned into a double-track and emerged back on Ester Dome Road approximately 100m below the point where the course turns right off Ester Dome Road and begins the ascent to the shoulder of Ester Dome near the 11-mile mark.

In the early 1990's, the course was re-routed from that driveway and double-track onto Ester Dome Road, effectively increasing the amount of "road" on the course by about one-half mile. In the early-to-mid-2000's Ester Dome Road was given a "high-float" surface: that half-mile on Ester Dome Road became paved.

Beginning this fall, that section of pavement on Ester Dome Road from just past the 9-mile mark will no longer be a part of the course. Instead of that, the course will turn left and enter the woods near the first driveway on the left past St. Patrick Road. At first, the trail will parallel Ester Dome Road, then it will ascend a gradual ridge before briefly rejoining the old double-track that used to be part of the Equinox course, then will depart left and climb diagonally across the fall line before reaching Ester Dome Road about 100m ABOVE the point

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where the current Equinox course departs Ester Dome Road to the right.

At that point, the course will cross Ester Dome Road at approximately a 90-degree angle, then enter the woods on the other side of the road and climb moderately steeply until it rejoins the existing Equinox course. The lower (approximately) 100m of the Equinox course from the point where it departs right from Ester Dome Road will be abandoned, and the directional arrow trail sign will be relocated.

This is a BRIEF description of what went into the planning for this segment. There is a lot of other information about land ownership and the policies of the land owners, but it would take too long to go into all that detail. For now, I'm betting that most Equinox Marathon, Ultramarathon and second-leg relay runners will appreciate the move from a paved road to a much-more-enjoyable trail.