

AERC Committee Charters

Last updated July 2026

Competition Committee

To preserve and insure fair, accessible and affordable competitions for all members of the AERC.

Committee chair is chosen by the President with the varying number of committee members chosen by the chair. The committee shall review all proposals regarding the method by which competitions are conducted, including both endurance and limited distance, and make recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding these proposals. The committee may also initiate new competitions proposals for presentation and consideration by the Board of Directors. The committee shall work closely with the Rules Committee when proposed rules affect competitions.

Education Committee

To actively promote and conduct educational efforts that will foster a high level of safety and enjoyment for all horses and riders. This will be accomplished with the understanding that goals for the rider must be meshed with the abilities of the horse. Maintain and update the education section of the AERC website. Maintain and update Mentor and Riding Partner list. Provide monthly educational articles for Endurance News. Provide other education opportunities via webinars, etc.

Committee Make-Up: The Chairperson is chosen by the President. Members are selected by the Chairperson with input from the Office and/or President as needed. Number of committee members may vary.

General Goals of Committee: Instill in all AERC members our philosophy of: Continued effort to educate themselves on endurance riding; protection of the horse; the Rider is ultimately and primarily responsible for the welfare of the horse; endurance riding is first and foremost a competition testing the fitness and endurance ability of the horse and rider over a natural trail; provide members with the knowledge and assist with the development of the skills needed to excel at their chosen roles and goals; provide updated and current educational information.

Responsibilities: Maintain and update the Education Section of the AERC Website. Provide the Educational Material for the new rider briefing package. Maintain and update the Mentor/Riding Partner lists. Plan webinars and/or seminars to provide educational opportunities to the membership. Provide monthly educational articles for Endurance News.

Ethics Committee

The purpose of the AERC Ethics Committee is to serve as an independent, fair, and impartial body to review and investigate complaints alleging violations of AERC policies or conduct unbecoming by Board members or Committee Chairs.

The Committee evaluates evidence, determines whether a policy violation or behavior deemed unbecoming of AERC leadership has occurred, and provides findings and recommendations to the Executive Committee. While the Committee operates in an advisory capacity, its processes shall reflect principles of fairness, consistency, transparency in structure, and confidentiality in case handling.

Committee Structure & Governance: The Chair of the Ethics Committee shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Board of Directors.

The Committee shall consist of five (5) AERC members in good standing who are not currently serving on the Board of Directors or as Chair of another AERC committee. Members should represent diverse AERC regions and demonstrate familiarity with AERC bylaws, rules, and policies.

Committee members shall be nominated by the Chair and approved by the Executive Committee. The names of committee members shall be disclosed to the Board of Directors and made available to the membership; however, members shall not be publicly associated with specific cases.

Members shall serve staggered terms of three (3) years to ensure continuity.

Any member with a conflict of interest in a matter must recuse themselves. A temporary replacement may be appointed by the Chair, subject to Executive Committee approval.

Standards of Review: The Committee shall evaluate all information using a “preponderance of the evidence” standard (i.e., whether it is more likely than not that a violation or poor behavior occurred).

The Committee may consider all relevant information, including witness statements and indirect evidence, assigning weight based on credibility, corroboration, and reliability.

Procedures for Filing and Reviewing a Complaint

Step 1: Filing a Complaint

A complaint must be submitted using the official AERC Ethics Complaint Form, obtained through the AERC office.

The complaint must:

- Be filed within thirty (30) days of the alleged incident (or last occurrence in a pattern of behavior)
- Include a clear description of the alleged violation or behavior
- Identify the individual involved
- Include all supporting documentation and evidence available at the time of submission

All submissions must be in writing and transmitted electronically.

Complaints determined to be frivolous, malicious, or submitted in bad faith may be dismissed, and the Committee may recommend further action against the complainant.

Step 2: Review and Response

Upon receipt, the Committee will review the complaint for completeness and relevance.

A redacted copy of the complaint will be provided to the respondent. Redactions will be limited to what is necessary to protect confidentiality and prevent retaliation.

The respondent shall have thirty (30) days to submit a written response, including supporting documentation and witness statements.

The respondent shall be given a fair opportunity to review the substance of the allegations and respond meaningfully.

The Committee may conduct further investigation, including interviews with relevant parties.

Step 3: Investigation and Findings

The Committee will evaluate all submitted materials and any additional information gathered.

The review and investigation process should be completed within thirty (30) days of receiving the complaint, when reasonably possible.

The Committee shall issue a written report to the Executive Committee that includes:

- A summary of the allegations

- A summary of the evidence considered
- Findings regarding whether a violation or poor behavior has occurred
- The rationale for the determination
- Any recommendations

If the complaint is determined to be unfounded, the Committee may recommend appropriate steps to restore the respondent's reputation where warranted.

Step 4: Executive Committee Determination

The Executive Committee will review the Ethics Committee's report within fourteen (14) days of receiving the report and determine whether action is required. If the Executive Committee adopts a decision, it will be reported in executive session to the AERC Board of Directors.

The Executive Committee will notify both the complainant and the respondent in writing of the decision within seven (7) days of the Board meeting.

Step 5: Record-keeping and Confidentiality

All proceedings shall remain confidential to protect both complainants and respondents.

Confidentiality applies to case details, evidence, and participant identities where appropriate; however, it does not extend to the structure or membership of the Committee.

The Executive Director shall maintain secure and confidential records of all ethics proceedings.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is a committee of the AERC established to support AERC's Board of Directors in fulfilling its responsibility to oversee the AERC's financial strategy and performance.

Committee make-up: Chair is chosen by the President and the members of the committee are selected by the Chair and are chosen based on professional experience and exhibited business acumen.

Number of committee members: Two to three members in addition to the AERC Treasurer.

Responsibilities: The Committee is responsible for preparing and reviewing the annual budget. The Committee should consider both long- and short-term financial strategies for AERC and report their recommendations to the board during the budgeting meeting and/or as needed.

Review the financial statements quarterly.

Review any motions having a financial impact on AERC.

International Committee

Mission Statement: The International Committee of the American Endurance Ride Conference (AERC) shall promote excellence in the sport of endurance riding and competition nationally at a high performance level through education, facilitation of communication, and support those AERC members seeking to explore international riding opportunities.

Junior and Young Rider Committee

Charter: The committee chair shall represent the interests of Junior and Young Rider members at the board level and provide support for them within the organization. Assist the junior and young riders by improving rules as necessary that impact them.

Committee chair is chosen by the President with the individual committee members chosen by the chair. Number of members on the committee varies.

Legal Committee

Charter: Chair, chosen by the President and members selected by the AERC President and the Chair. Board members are not eligible for this committee per Board policy.

Number of Committee Members: As needed

Responsibilities: Periodically review the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws to remain in compliance with revisions in state and federal laws. Annually review compliance for maintaining nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax status. Review insurance coverage. Clarify for the organization matters regarding liability to ride managers, veterinarians, sponsors and Board members.

Marketing Committee

AERC Board of Directors marketing strategies and initiatives targeted toward promoting AERC and the sport of endurance, showcasing rides across all nine regions, attracting new members, retaining and engaging current members as well as re-engaging lapsed or non-riding members. All committee initiatives and recommendations are guided by and aligned with the AERC's mission statement.

The committee explores opportunities to form partnerships with other equine and endurance-related "feeder" organizations to promote the sport and membership. The committee also works to develop coverage of AERC rides across all nine regions, increase visibility of the sport, and promote the benefits of endurance riding to broader audiences.

Committee Composition: The Chair (or Co-Chairs) of the Marketing Committee shall be nominated by the

president of AERC and approved by the Board of Directors. Committee members are selected based on their interest in marketing and communications, as well as relevant experience in earned media for use on social media platforms, webcasting, and membership development. The committee will typically consist of 5-8 members, but may expand or contract based on the needs of the committee.

Meetings and Reporting: The Marketing Committee will meet regularly via conference call or virtual platforms. The committee provides periodic reports and updates to the AERC Board of Directors, including any formal recommendations requiring board approval.

Membership Committee

The Chair is nominated by the President and confirmed by the Board of Directors. The members of the committee are selected by the Chair. The number of committee members vary as needed.

Responsibilities: Identify target markets for new members and ways in which to recruit them. Make every effort to assess why AERC loses members and develop strategies to retain existing members. In an effort to maintain membership and keep interest high, work closely with the Education Committee to bring educational webinars, along with articles of interest relating to ride preparedness, equine care, etc., to the membership so they are armed with the knowledge necessary to participate in our sport.

National Championship Committee

The Chairperson is chosen by the President and must have managed a National Championship ride. Committee members are chosen by the chair. Ideally the committee should be kept to 8 members or less, consisting of at least one Board member, previous National Championship ride managers and one veterinarian who has vetted a previous National Championship ride.

Responsibilities: Presents changes and issues related to the NC ride to the Board for consideration. Develop and update a questionnaire/application for prospective managers to fill out. Evaluate ride sites from prospective ride managers who apply to host future NC rides and present findings to the Board. Secure ride sites with proven 100 mile courses which will show a three year consistency of the 100 mile distance with a winning time of no more than 15 hours and a consistent completion rate of at least 50%. (Does not need to be consecutive). Review and update the National Championship contract with the Legal Committee and Executive Director.

Protest and Grievance Committee

The Chair of the Committee shall be appointed by the President of AERC and approved by the Board. The Chair is responsible for assembling a Committee; the Board may suggest candidates if the Chair cannot find enough people to serve. The Committee members shall be approved by the Board of Directors. The composition of the Committee should reflect geographical and experiential diversity. Geographical diversity can be accomplished by ensuring Committee members represent varied AERC regions. Experience and knowledge-based diversity is accomplished by seeking committee members that include a ride manager, a vet, a lawyer, and a long-time/high mileage rider. The optimal number of individuals on the Committee is five people; an odd number is good for a tie-breaker.

The Protest and Grievance Committee, ('The Committee') is the primary venue for resolving matters concerning the potential violation of Rules and Regulations of AERC, as well as AERC's By-Laws and related documents. The Committee is governed by the Rules and By-Laws of AERC and strives to maintain the highest levels of confidentiality and fairness in carrying out its responsibilities.

The Chair of the Committee is responsible for managing all procedural aspects of a protest in compliance with the requirements of Rule 14. The Committee as a whole is responsible for the substantive decision of all protests submitted to AERC pursuant to Rule 14. All protests shall be decided by a majority vote of the Committee members participating in decision of the protest. In the interest of maintaining impartiality on the part of the Committee, any member of the Committee may recuse him/herself, or be recused by the Chair, from participation in the decision of a protest. Moreover, in the interest of fairness and transparency, all submissions and communications from either party and upon which the Committee may rely in coming to a decision shall be transmitted to the opposing party in a timely manner so as to give the party an opportunity to respond.

Research Committee

The Research Committee will provide recommendations to the Board of Directors on matters of research pertaining to endurance riding, in particular the appropriate husbandry, veterinary care, conditioning, and welfare of endurance horses, and the well-being and safety of endurance riders. The Committee will review research proposals submitted from research groups outside of the AERC, advise the Board on the funding of these proposals, and supervise approved research projects on behalf of the Board. The Committee will evaluate requests from research groups funded by organizations other than the AERC that wish to collect samples at AERC sanctioned events. The Committee will be proactive in seeking donations to the AERC Research Fund. The Committee may itself design and implement research projects in accordance with AERC research goals. The Committee may initiate and develop Endurance News articles which providing evidence-based presentation of controversial veterinary issues.

The chair of the committee is chosen by the President with members of the committee chosen by the chair. The number of committee members is unrestricted; those willing to be active participants are welcome.

Committee responsibilities:

Determine research priorities broadly pertaining to endurance riding.

Evaluate and monitor proposals and projects from researchers seeking AERC funding, or wishing to conduct research at AERC sanctioned events. Outside proposals will be evaluated in detail by at minimum five members of the Committee, and a recommendation for funding made by majority opinion.

Seek donations for the Research Fund.

Conduct research-based activities for the Board, other Committees, Endurance News or the membership on an as-requested basis.

Ride Managers Committee

Ride managers are an integral part of Endurance Riding and AERC. The Committee will promote the integrity of the sport of endurance riding through education of ride managers, riders, volunteers, and veterinarians.

Committee make-up: Chair is chosen by the President and the members of the committee are selected by the Chair and are chosen based on their residence and/or former involvement.

Responsibilities: The Committee is responsible for updating the AERC Ride Managers Handbook, which is designed to provide guidelines to help interpret the AERC rules and establish universal application of those rules so that quality is consistent from ride to ride.

The Committee's goal is to promote good, honest ride management in all regions, while strongly supporting the individuality and uniqueness of each ride. To educate ride managers in hosting quality, fair and safe rides.

The Committee will give input to the AERC Board of Directors on motions that come before the Board that may affect AERC sanctioned rides.

Rules and Bylaws Committee

Chair chosen by the President and approved by the Board, with other committee members selected by the chair. The number of additional committee members is variable, currently 6 members, usually with three (3) year terms.

Responsibilities:

1. Review and publish all current AERC rules, bylaws, procedures and policies pertaining to the conduct of endurance and limited distance rides sanctioned by AERC.
2. Evaluate and recommend to the Board any changes or modifications in AERC rules, bylaws, procedures and policies pertaining to the conduct of endurance and limited distance rides sanctioned by AERC.
3. Review all rules infractions and answer questions from members about such infractions or potential infractions. Review protests and advise the Board of applicable rules; precedents pertaining to rules or infraction questions; and advise the Board regarding the necessity of modifications to rules, procedures or policies that may result from such protests or infractions.
4. The Committee will work closely with the any committee whose activities may be affected by changes in rules, bylaws, procedures or policies.
5. The AERC Rules and Bylaws Committee will, by publication in the Endurance News and/or other appropriate social media:
 - a. Make the general membership aware of all existing rules, bylaws, procedures and policies pertaining to the conduct of endurance and limited distance rides.
 - b. Make the general membership aware of new or changed rules, bylaws, procedures and policies pertaining to the conduct of endurance and limited distance rides.

Sanctioning Committee

The Chair of the Sanctioning Committee is named by the President from the Sanctioning committee membership. Committee members are made up of each region's sanctioning director. The duties of the committee members shall be to consider for approval those rides in their respective regions that apply for sanctioning. Sanctioning may be approved by the Director and sent to the AERC Office when the application has been made on the proper form with the proper payment included and the data therein meet AERC standards. Online sanctioning is available to Ride Managers and Sanctioning Directors with computer access with payment for online sanctioning accepted by credit card only.

The entire Sanctioning Committee is charged with making decisions based on issues pertaining to the sanctioning of all AERC rides in the United States and Canada.

Sanctioning procedures are described in Rule 16.

16. Sanction requests for new rides, ride date changes, or changes in the ride length must be received for approval by the Regional Director at least 90 days before the actual ride date and received by the AERC Administrative Office at least 60 days before the ride—so that proper notification of the ride can be made to AERC members.

Sanctioning directors may allow, with the approval of the other regional director and the Executive Committee, sanctioning or ride change requests that are received after the 90/60 day period for emergency purposes only. However, sanctioning directors may allow, with the approval of the other regional director and the Executive Committee, a request for the inclusion of an additional distance to an already sanctioned ride if the request is submitted at least 30 days before the ride date to the Sanctioning Director.

The Sanctioning Directors shall also endeavor to avoid sanctioning rides on the same date less than a reasonable distance apart, so that they will not conflict in the number of riders each ride can hope to attract. Any ride manager who feels he/she has received unfair treatment from the regional sanctioning director can appeal to the chair of the Sanctioning Committee and request a review.

The Sanctioning Directors shall act to ensure that rides in their regions adhere to AERC rules and maintain AERC standards in such matters as to include but not limited to, filing sanction applications within the required time limit, reporting ride results timely, furnishing awards as promised, etc. Sanctioning Directors may withhold or remove sanctioning before or during the competition if a ride does not meet AERC standards, including, but not limited to, AERC rules and regulations and procedures dealing with equine and rider safety.

The following should not be construed as rules. Sanctioning Directors should be guided by them, with latitude allowed for differences existing between regions:

Guidelines: It is essential that Sanctioning Directors be familiar with AERC rules, especially those that pertain to standards and requirements for rides, as well as proper procedures for filing sanctioning requests. It is also necessary for Sanctioning Directors to be cognizant of the rule concerning violations and penalties.

The Sanctioning Directors shall endeavor to avoid sanctioning rides on the same date less than a reasonable distance apart so that they will not conflict in the number of riders each ride can hope to attract. A minimum of 150 miles or a major geographic barrier (mountain range or one of the Great Lakes, for example) should probably be maintained on any given weekend. Some of the regions have been able to maintain 300 miles between rides. Three hundred miles or more would be preferable if possible.

The Sanctioning Director should give consideration in keeping the rides separated by at least two weeks if held within a 150-mile radius of a scheduled ride.

Sanctioning Directors need to check on rides near the boundaries of the adjacent region(s) to avoid conflicts.

Preferential sanctioning of established rides:

“Old” established rides which have been successfully managed should have their dates reserved IF they submit their sanctioning requests properly and on time. It is good policy to check with existing rides before the start of the new season (December 1) to ascertain whether they will be run and/or if they wish to maintain or change their date. If any ride has been cancelled for two years in a row, the date can no longer be reserved for that ride.

100 mile ride preferential

100 mile rides should not be sanctioned if another 100 mile ride is sanctioned within a 400 mile radius on the same weekend or farther if pulling from the same pool of riders. The 100 mile ride within a 400 mile radius should be sanctioned at least 3 weeks apart from each other. Current 100 mile rides are grandfathered in.

Sanctioning of your personal rides

Sanctioning Directors that are ride managers or alternate ride managers will send their own ride sanctioning request to the Sanctioning Committee for approval in order to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest. They may discuss the ride the committee but may not participate in the vote.

All denied sanctioning requests will be sent to the Sanctioning Committee for review.

Special Event Rides and Special Qualification rides

Special Event rides are defined in Rule 16.2. Managers of Special Event rides must apply for sanctioning as described in Rule 16.2.1

- 2. Special event rides are series of rides on consecutive days, totaling three days or more, and a minimum of 150 miles. Sanctioning of such rides must be sent to the AERC Executive Director for distribution to the Sanctioning Committee at least 90 days before the ride date. Special event rides shall require approval of the Sanctioning Committee for the first two years or at any time a request to change the ride dates.**

Special Event rides must have Board approval for the first two years. If the ride has been successfully managed during that period of time, the event manager may then apply for sanctioning in the usual manner. The guideline for consideration of Special Event rides should be at least two weeks between the starting dates of any two such events.

Special Qualification Rides

- 2.1. Special Qualification rides are rides with entry qualifications other than those contained in Rule 3. A petition for approval of a Special Qualification ride must be sent to the AERC Executive Director for distribution to the Sanctioning Committee where the event is to be held at least 90 days before the ride date. Upon approval the petition will be distributed to the Board for comments. Such petition must include clear rationale for the qualifications and justification for this specialty ride. The board will render its decision within 60 days. The equines must be under the control of control judge(s) experienced with equines and endurance rides from pre-ride control checks through the post-ride final**

control check. Special Qualification rides shall require approval of the AERC Board of Directors for the first two years.

Special Qualification events are fewer in number, and they are events which are limited in some manner. Usually, riders and horses must have a certain experience level, i.e., X number of miles and/or X number of 100-mile rides to their credit. Managers of these rides must also apply to the Sanctioning Director and approved by the Sanctioning Committee. As noted above, Special Qualification rides require Board approval each time they take place.

Withdrawal of sanctioning:

Rule 16.9 states “Sanctioning Directors may withhold or remove sanctioning before or during the competition if a ride does not meet AERC standards, including but not limited to AERC Rules and Regulations and measures dealing with equine and rider safety.” This right to withdraw sanctioning must be used very carefully. Sanctioning should be withheld if there are apparent serious problems that cannot be resolved in any other manner. Keep in mind that the violations and penalties section of the rules provide other methods of correcting ride deficiencies.

While it does not seem feasible to establish a definite time limit after which sanctioning cannot be withdrawn, bear in mind that this option should not be exercised close to, or during the ride except in cases of emergency concerning the safety of equine and rider.

It is important that the current Sanctioning Directors keep a file on rides in their regions, noting any problems, violations, etc., so that the future directors filling these positions will have a background of what to look for in the sanctioning process.

Trails/Land Management Committee

Many miles of trail in the public and private sector are being lost annually from non-use, lack of interest, lack of involvement, or via development.

Committee Make-Up: Chairperson: Chosen by the President; Members: Selected by the Chairperson

Number of Committee Members: 9-15, with representatives from all regions whenever possible

The Committee will:

- * encourage riders and ride management to hold rides on and establish use of existing trails whenever possible
- * encourage trail users to coordinate with projects in the public/private sector to provide for retention of and access to trails
- * encourage and train regional organizations to become familiar with and involved with land use plans and to become actively involved with trail planning and maintenance, whereby they will develop ownership in trails and establish rapport with land managers
- * encourage and train regional organizations to become actively involved with the National Trails Day Program in support of National Trail Preservation

- * work to establish coalitions with all trail user organizations (e.g. environmental, hikers, other equestrians, ORV, bikers, etc.) to promote the retention, development, maintenance of our national trail system, and multi-use trail etiquette.

- * encourage trail users to create or expand trails where none exist in the public/private sector

The American Endurance Ride Conference, in support of trails, will be an annual member of the American Horse Council, Inc. (approved February 1992 by the AERC Board of Directors).

The Trails Committee maintains separate financial accounts within AERC to accept donations and provide a source of funds in the name of trail preservation, education, maintenance, use, and development. Funds are allocated in accordance with AERC's status as a 501(c)(3) corporation; this budget is approved annually by the Board.

AERC Trails funds to be used exclusively for Trails Grants, Trail Master classes, AERC Trails Convention Programs, registration fees for AERC representation to National and Regional Trail Seminars, funds associated with advocacy efforts. Funds are dispersed only by the AERC Executive Director. An annual report will be filed.

Veterinary Committee

The Veterinary Committee is an advisory committee, providing advice to the Board of Directors, ride management and the general membership. The Veterinary Committee is also responsible for the implementation and management of the drug testing program, set forth in Rule 13, Prohibited Substances and Treatments.

Committee make-up: Chair is chosen by the President and the members of the committee are selected by the Chair along with one elected vet member from each region, elected by their peers. A non-veterinary member of the Board of Directors is also appointed by the President to be the liaison between the Vet Committee and the Board of Directors. This person is to be informed of any judicial actions of the Veterinary Committee, including but not limited to any actions involving riders, rides, veterinarians, and the drug testing subcommittee (this procedure is outlined in the drug program).

Number of committee members: As needed.

Responsibilities: To develop, monitor and provide guidelines and education for the optimum welfare and health of the equine athlete. To act as the supervisory committee in providing consistently fair and equitable judging standards of horse and rider teams, as well as best practices for veterinary officials and treatment veterinarians. To act as a source of objective and evidence-based education for the AERC membership, Board of Directors and the general public.

Welfare of the Horse Committee

The Chair is chosen by the President and approved by the Board. Committee members vary and are chosen by the Chair.

The Committee for the Welfare of the Horse acts as a sounding board for informal complaints by AERC members about horse abuse and to contact overzealous riders to warn and educate them of potential problems. This helps serve the committee's overall mission of fostering peer pressure and a culture of protection of horses through non-coercive means.