

Back Country Horsemen of America

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The Great Challenging Trail

Submitted by Rick Mathies, BCH of the Flathead, Montana



“I led my first pack string ever... me at 12 years old!!! Overall the trip was worth it, because I will NEVER forget it.”

Left: Kobi and Rick Mathies. Right: Challenge Cabin.



NextGen BCHA (Youth)

Next Generation (NextGen) BCHA highlights our members' efforts to engage and educate younger people about the joys and natural wonders of the back country. BCHers are also raising awareness about the challenges of maintaining access to back country trails and responsible stewardship of the land. The legacy today's BCHers leave to those who follow in their boot steps and hoof prints is being forged through amazing and creative projects and programs around the country. There are some mighty big boots to fill out there. It may take the NextGen a while to get comfortable in them, but with your help, they will.

PREFACE

Before you read the following articles I would like you, the reader, to know a few things. My name is Kobi Mathies and I am 12 years old. I am from Kansas, and had never ridden a horse until June 23rd. My first true Back Country Horseman trip was with my Grandfather on July 11th, 2014.

The Great Challenging Trail

Boy, Mule Ridge Trail was an extreme challenge. We all woke up to a delicious breakfast, and a nice morning. The way up was fine, and the preparation was easy. When we finally reached the trailhead, it looked easy, but as soon as I turned the corner, it was a nightmare. The horses had to lunge forward attempting to climb the slope as the trail was covered by debris. The string had a small wreck, but no one was hurt. That's when the clearing began. We most likely cut enough wood for a family for an entire winter, possibly more. We then came to the first creek of many. Foot traffic would be fine crossing them, but stock traffic, not so much. They seriously need stock friendly bridges. Next we came across

log pathways. Again, okay for foot traffic, NOT safe for stock use. The stock can't navigate the roundness of the logs. There are some boggy areas in there that badly need proper turnpikes. The part of the trail up in the burnt section didn't have much tread. They need work done so there is ample tread for stock use. At about this time on our journey I led my first pack string ever...me at 12 years old!!! After that, there is a pass into trees, with a small creek. After about a half mile we ran into an area on this trail that had very little tread, this area needs work and we marked it with our GPS so that the Forest Service would be able to fix it.

Overall the trip was worth it, because I will NEVER forget it. The Challenge Cabin was amazing to stay in, and I highly recommend it to all. I had fun, with a few good spooks, and I was glad to get back to the cabin and take a nice hot shower.

[Read Kobi's second article on page 2]



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The Easy Breeze

Geifer Creek Trail was an easy breeze. Unlike Mule Ridge Trail, Geifer Creek was simple. The trail was great, and had plenty of tread, and it was a lot safer. Cutting wood in there was easier too, because the sun was not beating on us constantly. The ride was very relaxing as well, while we could hear a faint sound of a pounding waterfall. We had a bit of excitement on the way to the trail, because a man lost a tire on his trailer.

We cut trees on this trail with my Great Great Grandfather's crosscut saw and our other primitive tools. On the second creek crossing, we had to re-route the trail because the old trail was in an unstable condition. Unfortu-

nately, we had to call it an early day so we could clean up the Challenge Cabin for the next folks coming in tomorrow.

Overall, the trail was amazing, and I won't forget it. We also cut a few trees on Snake Creek Loop, but couldn't go all the way because of time. Geifer Trail was a regular straightforward trail, and we looked at Zip's Cabin as well. We couldn't go inside, and there was no place for stock, but it looked like a nice place to stay in. Again, I was glad to get back to the cabin and take a nice hot shower.

Editor's note: Kobi's proud grandfather is Rick Mathies. These two articles were written after grandson Kobi accompanied his grandfather and Ron



Kobi Mathies

Trippet on a trail-clearing project in the Great Bear Wilderness in Montana.

Flathead Chapter Youth Program—Kalispell, MT

By Rick A. Mathies, Treasurer

Attracting and maintaining younger members has long been a conversation piece for our chapter. If you looked at the general membership of the Flathead Chapter five years ago, it was a group of aging members with probably an average age of 55. With this kind of membership average many of our members just couldn't pull a string, get up on the saddle or were experiencing what we all will as we get older, life's challenges as our bodies wear out. Many of the older members have been very reluctant to address the coming crisis.

Many of our members just wanted to hang on to the "way it has always been" and only support those members who could support a large string of stock. These members were given preferential treatment and in some cases fuel reimbursements in lieu of members with a single packhorse. Over the years with this attitude many of the potential younger members simply left because they were not made welcome.

To reach younger people, Andy Breland and Chuck Allen started a packing clinic five years ago for the vocational-agricultural students of the Kalispell Public Schools. These students are in their junior year from Flathead High School and Glacier High School. Chuck and Andy teach them about the basics of packing, how to manly, fit a pack saddle, tie on a load and general defensive horse safety along with Leave No Trace (LNT). Typically, they have between 30 and 35 students each year. Two students went to the Forest Service, one to a Hot Shot Crew, one is a Vet Tech, and two are wranglers for an outfitter. This is an outstanding program that begins to expose our high school students about what BCH does best. For the past six years, Andy and Chuck have been involved with Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW). Approximately 30 women participate in a packing clinic, LNT, and outdoor cooking.

With these two programs as a foundation, the Flathead chapter made a huge commitment to attracting some younger members. Let me be clear on what we mean by younger members -- anyone younger than 50 years old. It is imperative that we attract and maintain members in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. The demographics of these younger members have changed in relationship to what has been the norm over the last 40 years. They work, typically have one or maybe two pack animals, and may have younger children who require a

lot of their attention.

If we want BCH to continue into the next and future generations we must get these age groups involved at every level. This year several of the board members made it their mission to get younger members involved, asking them to go on projects with them, taking them by the hand and teaching them the skills of packing, and helping them on their first packing trips to build confidence.

The chapter also planned a lot of fun activities, beginning in February with a bonfire to kick off the New Year. Many of our newest and younger members attended. Then we had the Meadow Creek trail clearing/campout/clean up annual project. As the time neared, many of the board approached our younger members to attend. We had a great turn out. Nearly all of our new younger members attended and brought their kids and grandkids. We had 11 youngsters around the age of 12 attend the event. Oddly, hardly any of our older members were there.

We also planned another trailhead project. The Swan Ranger district needed help in putting Owl Creek Trailhead and Packer Camp back to the original purpose as a packers' trailhead. We had plenty of work to do at the trailhead and a lot of gravel to pack for the main trail into the wilderness. We made this a packing training for our new members and many of those packed for the very first time. It was a great weekend. We had 55 members attend and the bulk of those were new members. Our new members gained much needed experience and confidence.

We also started a program with the 4H in the Flathead Valley; Alden Totten became a certified leader so that he could conduct a packing clinic at one of the 4H events. The clinic took place at the Valley's 4H camp and had about 15 young 4Hers attend the clinic. They were all excited to learn about packing and how the BCH does work for the Forest Service.

I was asked to give a packing demonstration at the Family Life Church's first Kids Camp. Kids were exposed to lots of activities including, horseback riding, horse training, camping, swimming and packing. I showed about 15 kids how to fit a packsaddle, how to manly, and how to tie on a load. Then each of the kids got to manly up a bar of soap with miniature mantys and string that they could take home as a memento of their experience.

We are starting to work on ways to expose new youth or young adults to the backcountry. We strongly believe that if they can experience what got most of us hooked in the first place, we will attract more who want to protect it and keep the trails open. We encourage our members to bring their kids or their grandkids on some of the projects, especially the trailhead ones so that they start to get the idea of what BCH does. With this foundation we can build more awareness and more understanding of the backcountry.

As I look around at the ages of the members who are now active in our chapter I find that our average age has started to shift, we are having some success in maintaining our new members. We must continue to try new things and to involve and make welcome any younger members that come to our chapter with the goal of handing off the torch to them to continue what this great organization was built on...to keep the trails open in the backcountry.

[Read more Nextgen articles on the back page.]



From the Chairman's Saddle



By Jim McGarvey, Chairman

Hello Everyone...

As chairman, I have learned an interesting phenomenon occurs each summer within the BCH community. Email traffic drops off, issues do not seem as urgent, and all seems a bit better in our world. Of course, the issues, challenges and concerns are still there; it's just we put those problems on the back burner through the summer so we can be with our horses, mules and trails which is, after all, the purpose of what we do as Back Country Horsemen.

BCH members. However, getting the word out and explaining crowdfunding to our members took more time than we planned. Therefore less time was available for our members to carry the message to other trail-riding clubs. Only about 10-15% of our contributions came from non-members.

Among the many incentives to contribute to the campaign, the premier incentives were the trail riding and packing trips. The week before Labor Day, my wife Cindy and I took two BCH – NV members for two days of riding at Great Smoky Mountains National Park as a reward for their \$2,000 contribution to the BCH fundraiser. Jill Bradley, publisher of the Valley Horse News and Bev Pohlmann both of Las Vegas rode and enjoyed the considerable change of scenery that is in this National Park. All four of us had a really great time.

A Special Thank You to Ami McBride of California BCH

Ami McBride, BCH CA member

has for the past several years volunteered a great deal of her time to the social media needs of the BCHA. Ami has grown our FaceBook page with her enthusiasm, her grasp of what is important, and timely news for our members. One of Ami's greater and more difficult tasks was educating our national board members in the value and intricacies of social media – she always did an admirable job with a difficult student body. In my mind, where Ami did her best work was this year's

national board meeting in Chattanooga. Ami operated the live streaming equipment nearly flawlessly. Live streaming was new to all of us and she made it work. Ami is handing off the social media responsibilities of BCHA as she is now onto another challenge - studying for her second B.S. in nursing. Thank you, Ami, and God speed.

BCHA and Our Public Lands Advocacy Work

As you will read in Randy Rasmussen's article, we have been very busy working with The Wilderness Society and the American Horse Council on putting together HR 4886 the National Forest Trails Stewardship Act. At this time, the bill has 17 co-sponsors in the U.S. House and we are hopeful of more co-sponsors signing on. Past Chairman and current Public Liaison Committee Chair Alan Hill has also been a great part of this effort, as has Phil Ryan of BCH Idaho.

Randy will also have news on our efforts to continue riding at Bryce Canyon National Park and the tremendous amount of work he and the High Sierra BCH unit in California have done on the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks Draft Wilderness Stewardship Plan. A final piece of good news; we were notified that the Director of the National Park Service Jonathon Jarvis has signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BCHA. I will have more information on this development in emails to you and in the next newsletter.



Horsemen, Change and a World Lit Only by Fire

At the close of the Indian Wars in 1889, nine-year-old Douglas MacArthur, the future five-star general, rode cavalry patrols with his father, the commandant of Ft. Selden in the New Mexico Territory. Born six years before MacArthur, a sub Lieutenant named Winston Churchill rode with the 21st Lancers in the last cavalry charge of the British Empire at the Battle of Omdurman, Sudan in 1898.

Both of these men were born into a world lit only by fire. The telephone, light bulb, automobile, airplane and mass production were still in the future.

These two horsemen, who died a year apart in the mid-1960s, came into a world lit only by fire but left the world when it was planning to put a man on the moon.

Churchill and MacArthur did not just accept Change or modify Change; they wrestled Change by the collar and literally dragged Change kicking and screaming into the future. But in all that period of astounding change their lives encompassed, they never lost sight of their values or purpose - ever. And like these two great horsemen, I see the members of the Back Country Horsemen capable of making change work while keeping our values and purpose.

Keeping the Trails Open

Funds Allocation



Some Final Thoughts on "Keeping the Trails Open for All Campaign"

The total raised for our online fundraising campaign was \$100,021! This amount is such a great statement of the commitment by the members and supporters of the BCH – a job well done. The question arises, "So, what is the money going to be used for?" The disbursement of the funds will be divided into four equal parts:

- \$25,011 will go to the BCH Education Foundation to be distributed as grants to BCH chapters. Please see Mylon Filkins' article in this newsletter explaining the application process.

- \$25,000 will support the position of our Public Lands and Recreation Advisor Randy Rasmussen. This allotment follows the guidelines set by the Foundation that provided the challenge grant monies.

- Another \$25,011 will go to the BCH general fund. The purpose is not for spending but rather to buttress our finances for the future as we build our cash position to fill the much-needed position of Executive Director within the next 18-24 months.

- The last \$25,000 will go to cover the expenses of the campaign including processing fees, the incentives, and outside contracting. On a national scale, this expense (approximately 25% of revenues) is a reasonable ratio for all types of fundraising campaigns.

When we were putting the crowdfunding plan together, I was thinking that half of the contributions would come from trail riders who were non-

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Mission Statement

1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness areas.
2. To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational use.
3. To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustaining use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
5. To foster and encourage the formation of new state Back Country Horsemen's organizations.

BCHA Calendar

<u>2014</u>	
	50th Anniversary of The Wildernss Act
October 14-19	National Wilderness Conference Albuquerque NM
December 4-7	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's Hunter Christmas Expo - Las Vegas NV (BCH booth)
<u>2015</u>	
April 22-25	BCHA National Board Meeting - CA
May 17-20	American Trails International Trails Symposium - Portland OR (BCHA will have a booth)
<u>2016</u>	
April 20-23	BCHA National Board Meeting - NV

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National Reports

Public Lands Report

By Randy Rasmussen

New Bill in Congress Promotes Volunteers as One Means to Address Forest Service Trail Maintenance Backlog

As Jim McGarvey noted in the Chairman's report, BCHA and its partners continue to demonstrate support for the forest trails bill currently before Congress, known as the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act (H.R. 4886). The bill was introduced in June 2014 and carries strong bipartisan support. If enacted, it would require the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to develop a strategy to double trail maintenance undertaken by volunteers and partners within five years.

Call to action: Please call or write your member of Congress today to express support for H.R. 4886! You can locate contact information for your representative at www.house.gov/representatives/find/

A key objective of the USFS supported by the strategy would be to increase volunteerism and partnerships in Forest Service regions with the most severe trail maintenance needs and where the current backlog in trail maintenance is jeopardizing public access to national forest lands. The strategy also would:

- Explore opportunities to use fire crews in trail maintenance activities in a manner that does not jeopardize firefighting capabilities, public safety or resource protection.
- Spur the creation of a pilot program to determine how and under what conditions outfitters and guides might contribute to reducing the trail maintenance backlog.
- Establish, with public input, 9 to 15 priority landscapes for increased trail maintenance accomplishments.

Clearly, H.R. 4886 would do much to elevate the role of volunteers and partners, like BCHA, to address the Forest Service trail maintenance backlog. Yet volunteers alone cannot be expected to fill the current gap created by insufficient funding and dwindling agency resources. Volunteers can continue to play a supplementary role, but should not be viewed as a replacement for trail crew-related funding from Congress.

There remains hope that our congressional champions, representatives Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) and Tim Walz (D-MN) can secure hearings for H.R. 4886 this fall. Trail champions in the Senate have signaled interest in introducing a bipartisan companion bill. So we hold out hope for continued momentum in Congress this fall.

At a minimum, the flurry of activity on H.R. 4886 has secured a leadership role for BCHA and its partners in ongoing negotiations to resolve the trail maintenance crisis. We expect that Congress in 2015 would quickly pick up where we left off.

National Wilderness Conference, Albuquerque, NM (October 15-19)

BCHA, along with our partners and federal land management agencies, will formally celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act at the National Wilderness Conference to be held this fall in Albuquerque, NM. BCH of NM has secured a vendor's

booth for the conference and BCHA's Advisor for Public Lands & Recreation will participate in a panel discussion titled "Engaging the Full Spectrum of Wilderness Stewardship: Partner Viewpoints." For more information, visit www.wilderness50th.org

BCHA and State BCH Alliances Keeping National Parks Open for You

The power of BCHA and its network of national, state and chapter organizations never cease to amaze me. We continue to prove the long political reach of our grassroots-based organization when we combine our energy toward ensuring that "public lands remain open to recreational stock use." The past nine months yielded several noteworthy examples of how we successfully combined our voices to protect saddle and pack stock use in our national parks.

Bryce Canyon National Park

We issued an action alert via email and on the BCHA website about a proposal that would have fundamentally changed the way private equestrians experience Bryce Canyon National Park. The proposal would have required the park's commercial wrangler accompany all private equestrians. Fees would have ranged from \$100 to \$345 depending on party size.

BCHA and BCH Utah reached out to park staff at Bryce Canyon to offer thoughts on other solutions that would resolve potential safety and park resource concerns without the need to hire a wrangler. Park personnel were receptive to hearing alternatives and welcomed our constructive input. Further, our action alerts prompted an outpouring of BCH member letters (nearly 400) that questioned the need for such an unprecedented proposal. The volume of letters, coupled with in-person meetings by BCH Utah's leadership to discuss issues and devise solutions won the day!

The park superintendent announced he would drop the proposed rule and work closely with BCH Utah to structure a Leave No Trace and trail etiquette orientation for private equestrians visiting the park. Park personnel thanked us on multiple occasions for generating an outpouring of citizen letters that were courteous and constructive. The success serves as testimony for how BCHA can tap into the strength of our grassroots membership and spur a search for solutions in a manner that is welcomed by the agency.

Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks

BCHA teamed up with the High Sierra Unit (HSU) of BCH CA to develop detailed public comments regarding the draft Wilderness Stewardship Plan for the Sequoia-Kings Canyon (SEKI) National Parks. You will recall that SEKI has been on BCHA's radar for years as a result of litigation from a group that is anti-recreational stock use and that sued the Park Service over commercial pack trips in the parks.

In 2012, we teamed up with The Wilderness Society, American Horse Council, and BCH CA to move a bill

through Congress, which President Obama signed into law, to stop the Park Service from cancelling commercial outfitter permits for a few seasons while it sorted out its response to the litigation (the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Backcountry Access Act). The bill also required the Park Service to complete by June 2015 a Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP).

BCHA and members of the HSU met with the park superintendent and staff on several occasions to share information and convey expectations for the forthcoming WSP. Park personnel were open and amiable. We continue to maintain positive dialogue with SEKI's exceptional staff.

The parks' draft WSP, issued in June 2014, addressed more than just commercial outfitters and their clientele. Plan alternatives included potentially sweeping changes to how private recreational stock users experience park Wilderness, including:

- Smaller party sizes;
- Additional meadows closed to grazing (with one alternative where grazing would be prohibited throughout park Wilderness);
- Designation of 42 miles of existing trails as hiker-only; and
- Elimination of "structures" such as drift fences and hitch rails.

We found these alternatives hard to swallow, particularly when the draft WSP recognizes that: "Private and recreational stock use is a historically and culturally significant traditional use that is an appropriate means for fulfilling the recreational purpose of wilderness" (draft WSP, page 32).

Public comment letters submitted by BCHA and the HSU invoked numerous law and policy arguments against the proposed restrictions. For example, some of the restrictions were proposed merely because a vocal minority of hikers/backpackers reported that they would prefer to view ungrazed meadows. This, despite the fact that visitation by private stock users is only two percent (2%) of all overnight visitation in park Wilderness. Moreover, recreational stock use in the parks is down significantly, with recent stock use levels by private individuals less than half (58%) of the levels documented by the parks in the 1980s (when much of the current park Wilderness was formally designated by Congress).

The outcome of the SEKI WSP remains an issue of high concern to BCHA, as stock use in the parks already is among the most restricted among any units of the National Park System. BCHA and BCH California support the Park Service's stated goal of the WSP to undertake management that preserves wilderness character. Yet we take issue with many proposals, including those within the agency's Preferred Alternative that would disproportionately and adversely affect recreational stock users. We believe that the purported benefits are unmeasurable and cannot be demonstrated to preserve or enhance wilderness character, particularly when compared to the Park Service's stated baseline condition when park Wilderness was designated.

National Reports

Public Lands Report

[continued]

Olympic National Park

This is another example where local BCH officers with on-the-ground knowledge teamed up with BCHA to provide public review and comment on a plan that would substantially affect access and the use and enjoyment of park Wilderness by private stock users. In this case, the Park Service issued for public review and comment preliminary draft alternatives for the Olympic National Park Wilderness Stewardship Plan.

The public lands officer of BCH WA coordinated with a broad outdoor recreation coalition, which included climbing, boating, hiking and mountaineering organizations. They met with park staff and developed a joint comment letter that addressed specific proposals, including restrictions to recreational stock use that collectively would limit recreational access to Olympic Wilderness.

BCHA interviewed the park superintendent, who was receptive to dialogue and problem solving. We submitted a public comment letter that augmented the coalition's letter and invoked specific policy and law arguments that we believe set firm sideboards for the agency's pending decision. We view such sideboards as critical, particularly given that some draft WSP alternatives considered significant reductions in access related to recreational stock use. Yet these restrictions were proposed in the absence of verifiable data that unacceptable impacts are widespread and cannot be mitigated via other means, such as visitor education, minor trail reroutes in sensitive areas, and through use of monitoring and best available science.

As with the recent issue at Bryce Canyon and the current SEKI Wilderness Stewardship Plan, we remain hopeful that we can continue to work cooperatively with the National Park Service to develop solutions that minimize the adverse effects of recreational stock use while preserving and enhancing wilderness character. We recognize that every user group imparts an impact on the landscape. In general, we know the greater the level of visitation to a park, the greater the impact to the trails and surrounding landscape. Horsemen and others have made great strides in

practicing and promoting Leave No Trace™ and other Tread Lightly techniques. We hope to impress upon the Park Service that the views and social preferences of saddle and pack stock users are just as important as those of other Wilderness visitors.

Yellowstone National Park

As reported in BCHA's Spring 2014 newsletter (Good News from Yellowstone National Park), BCHA teamed with WY BCH to submit detailed public comments regarding the environmental analysis for Yellowstone National Park's renewal of its contacts for commercial stock outfitters. Responding to an action alert from BCHA, BCH members submitted the majority of 156 public comment letters received by the park from individual citizens. Importantly, long-standing relations and mutual respect shared among park personnel, the outfitter community and local BCH chapters created a positive atmosphere in which the park service sought not to unduly restrict commercial outfitters but to instead preserve a valuable visitor service that "is often recognized as part of the Yellowstone experience."

Efforts to Continue Building Bridges with the National Park Service

And the success stories continue. In addition to the national Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be signed in October by BCHA Chairman Jim McGarvey and the Director of the National Park Service, the Buffalo River BCH AR maintains a MOU with Park Service at the Buffalo National River for trail and river stewardship, education and search and rescue activities.

We hope that the new BCHA-National Park Service MOU will serve as a model and springboard for other BCH chapters to enter into agreements with local national parks in the spirit of cooperation and to ensure that these public lands "remain open to recreational stock use."

Keep up the good work, BCH volunteers, chapters, and state organizations! Our combined voices and your energy and passion for the backcountry and Wilderness are making a substantial impact.

Note: The NPS MOU will be on the BCHA website as soon as possible.

BCH Education Foundation Announces 2015 Grants

BCH Education Foundation is now accepting applications for \$1,000.00 grants. Grants will be awarded to 25 BCH Chapters and/or BCH State organizations for qualified projects. Grant funds are made possible by the successful BCHA crowdfunding campaign. Applications are due by February 1, 2015. Successful applicants will be notified no later than March 15, 2015.

Qualified grant projects are:

1. Trail and/or trailhead construction and maintenance.
2. Training, certification and/or presenting minimum impact practices with saddle and pack stock, i.e., "Leave No Trace".
3. Educational programs that promote cooperative interaction with other user groups and public land managers regarding safety, care, and protection of our backcountry resources.
4. Educational brochures and/or BCH promotional literature
5. Research concerning the wise and sustainable use of the back country resources.

The grant application form is available on the www.backcountryhorse.com website by following the Education tab and link to the Education Foun-

ation. Special consideration is given to applications that offer partnerships with public land agencies and or other user groups.

Letters of endorsement from public agencies are encouraged. Grant applications and letters of endorsement can be mailed to Back Country Horsemen Education Foundation, P.O. Box 1367, Graham, Washington 98338-1367. Emailed application packages should go to peg@backcountryhorse.com.

Mailed applications should include five copies of your entire packet.

Any questions about applications or the grant process can be directed to: Peg Greiwe at

Peg@backcountryhorse.com or Foundation@backcountryhorse.com
Mylon Filkins, D.V.M., Chair at MFilkins@BAK.rr.com.

Thank you for all you do.

Back Country Horsemen Education Foundation Directors

Mylon Filkins, D.V.M. (CA)
Randy Darling (WA)
Becky Hope (OR)
Michael Murphy (CA)
Karen Saner (WY)

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Volunteer Hours



State volunteer hour reports are very important to BCHA.

- ☞ Volunteerism is one of the most important activities BCHA can use in our effort to perpetuate enjoyable common sense use of horses in the backcountry.
- ☞ Volunteerism earns horsemen a seat at the table where decisions concerning access to public lands by pack and saddle stock users are made.
- ☞ Individual volunteer efforts support the Back Country Horsemen of America mission statement.
- ☞ Volunteer service by BCHA is consistently underreported.

All National Directors:

are reminded it is time to have their state volunteer hours coordinators submit reports to the BCHA Volunteer Hours Chairman:

Larry Zauberis (larry@77outfit.com) • (970)247-3231
or to Peg Greiwe, Executive Secretary

Becoming Responsible Visitors

By Roland Cheek

Roland Cheek is one of the founding fathers of BCHA. In the summer newsletter (Vol. 25, Iss. 3), Roland considered the rights and privileges of riding our horses on public land. Now he asks us to consider ways to more firmly seize that opportunity by becoming responsible—perhaps indispensable—visitors.

What of the big picture? How can we secure the opportunity to ride horses on public lands throughout posterity?

Good question. This question was one with which the first pilot group of Back Country Horsemen wrestled. Arguing for the preservation of historical use seemed insufficient to be entirely convincing, no matter how forcefully presented. We adopted a strategy of service and education as guiding principles.

We recognized that there were indeed many cases of poor stock handling practices leading to resource degradation by some individuals (usually novice riders). Our initial group invested over 80 percent of their first-year's operating budget in producing printed materials (guide booklet, newsletters) on proper handling of stock in the backcountry, as freely distributed handouts. Over 5,000 booklets were printed that first year, largely distributed through U.S. Forest Service offices.

We also held demonstrations incorporating proper stock handling techniques while trail riding and overnight camping.

And we developed an in-club program of volunteering our services to both National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service to work on clearing trails, building trailhead facilities, and wilderness campsite cleanup. During that first year, the club contributed hundreds of man-hours in effective work projects to aid the agencies to accomplish their management responsibilities.

Our service and education programs worked well to achieve credibility for that nascent group. Land managers were impressed when we dedicated muscle and money into resource protection and

maintenance. We received much favorable media coverage. Word of mouth spread. And wonder of wonders, other folks in other communities—even from other states—demonstrated an interest in utilizing our techniques to ensure continuing opportunity for stock use in their areas!

At the time we could not have dreamed the organization would mushroom with chapters all across America. However, our program development, incorporating resource service and education, still serves. This is evidenced by the 372,000 documented hours of service to the resource that Back Country Horsemen all across America produced in 2012. That's more than just a *feature*, it's one hell of a *benefit*, translating out to an estimated cash equivalent value of twelve million bucks! And that ain't pocket change—even during our nation's present era of dollar decline.

To even suggest in our wildest dreams that BCH would develop into one of the most vigorous and respected outdoors service and educational organizations in America would've boggled the imaginations of that first club's founders. But that's what's happened! It happened in California and Colorado, Wyoming and Washington, Indiana and Idaho. All across America it happened—and is still happening. So how can there possibly be a question in any land manager's mind that we belong?

So much for the past. Now let's discuss the future ...

In the four couples' rap session that the McGarveys, Ausks, and Schatzs engineered my wife and me into at that evening pizza party, came the question of what can be done?

Never one to secrete my opinions, I mused that somehow BCHA needed to work on a paradigm change among agency managers at the topmost level. It's a concept that rattled like a pinball machine all the way to Utah for Jane's and my Canyonlands' vacation. My conclusion is that it's hard to refute

the belief that the present institutional regime, within certain top-down directions, permits each management level to exercise their own on-the-ground applications. It's a loose governing policy that most of us can probably agree is commendable: find the right person to do a job, then get the hell out of way and let him or her do it. What is lacking, however, is that it's a policy that can leave the opportunity to ride our horses on public trails subject to limbo at the whim of a low-level manager who might have a bias.

What's needed is an institutional paradigm that favors trail riding where appropriate, and especially where there's history of pack and saddle stock trail use.

Right now, it seems, there's a huge vacuum—maybe even a black hole—on the subject. Where there should be a top-level mandate for lower-level managers to carefully explore other solutions to potential problems, there's an all-too-often tendency to embrace knee-jerk riding restrictions as the first rattle out of the box. Surely the 372,000 hours of service Back Country Horsemen contributes in a single year warrants better consideration!

Paradigm change is the ticket. What's needed are a Forest Service Chief and his ten Regional Foresters who recognize—and embrace—BCHA members and our four-footed friends on public lands. Without that kind of consideration, controversy will continue to erupt in isolated places, from Assateague's seashore to California's High Sierras. We need Forest Supervisors and District Rangers to recognize us for our value to their resource responsibilities. We need Park Rangers as welcoming managers. U.S. Fish & Wildlife reserve managers. Bureau of Land Management managers, state foresters, and state game preserve managers. Private forestland managers can sometimes be receptive; the list seems endless.

Certainly many such opportunities must exist as privilege and not as a

right. But it's a privilege we've already earned in some places, and can earn in others if there's that paradigm change to recognize our service and educational value, instead of just that of another pressure group.

Okay, sounds good, Roland. So all we must do is instill a love for—or at least an acceptance of—horseback riding on public lands.

Uhh, how?

I don't know—that's a purview beyond my job description.

I might be a pretty good historian. I may even be a fair-to-middlin' crystal ball gazer. But you don't have to peruse these "epistles" very far to understand that I have few diplomatic skills. I have none at all when it comes to politics. And it seems to me that's where BCHA needs to be now. Perhaps it's likely they're already moving in that direction. After all, if I understand it correctly, you currently have a Washington D.C. presence with potential political and bureaucratic contacts? Maybe through already in-place efforts, the organization is approaching the credibility "tipping point" that will lead to the much-needed institutional paradigm change advocated above. If so, great!

Now let me make another preparedness suggestion: That you develop a "playbook" to aid BCHers beset by what they deem as unacceptable restrictions. Perhaps that playbook should be augmented by a flying squad of volunteers trained in the techniques of evaluating and addressing management concerns; actual support people who could offer real-time assistance to beleaguered members in isolated cases to help themselves.

Okay, I'm done ...

... Except that after having explored the "Right or Privilege" question, I have this other equally important conundrum: *What comes first, opportunity or responsibility?*

BCHA – Working Together to Protect Your Right to Ride

By Darrell Wallace and Randy Rasmussen

Thirty years ago, founders of the Back Country Horsemen knew that they needed to band together to keep trails open to stock use and the power of association remains true today. Today, local riders become aware of an issue and try to work out a local solution. Sometimes it just isn't there. Sometimes the issue comes from a national or regional policy change, or even from the courts.

When the Olympic National Park in Washington State issued its draft Wilderness Stewardship Plan, local riders were astounded to see that one alternative reduced trails open to stock use by 27% and another alternative by 46 percent! This happened despite BCHW members devoting thousands of hours to trail maintenance in the Park and what BCHW members thought was a great relationship. BCHW leaders sought help from BCHA and BCHA Advisor for Public Lands & Recreation Randy Rasmussen was quick to make suggestions. Randy contacted the Park Superintendent and worked with state and local leaders to ensure that back country horsemen's voices were heard

and more reasonable alternatives considered.

As Randy's report in this newsletter discussed, changes proposed by the agency at Bryce Canyon National Park and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks called for a high level of engagement and accompanying BCH public comment letters. Without BCH teamwork, long-standing tradition and freedom to access these parks might have been curtailed.

Banding together to support stock use on public lands is nothing new to BCHA – it is one of the primary reasons that BCHA has grown to include so many states in recent years. Our success stories from the efforts of now-retired Dennis Dailey have prompted several states to organize chapters and to seek help with local issues that have regional or national importance. A big part of that success comes from our practice of first seeking the local and state views of the situation. Then we consistently work with state and local BCH leaders to ensure that we know and effectively use the facts pertinent

to the issue.

Chairman McGarvey has done much to enhance the flow of communications between BCHA and state organizations. In addition to regular communications with BCHA's Executive Committee and National Board members, he convenes monthly calls with state BCH presidents and chairpersons to share updates on key BCHA programs and initiatives. The calls provide for feedback on our national programs and sharing of emerging issues from the states. A key component of those calls is the public lands updates provided by Randy. State officers, in turn, feed him information on public land and access issues of importance to them and their chapters.

If you catch wind of emerging issues related to public lands that you enjoy, whether they positively or negatively affect your access, the first course of action is to contact your chapter's public lands officer or liaison. In the absence of a chapter contact, reach out to your state BCH public lands officer. They can help you gauge

whether an issue on public lands might have regional or national implications. Your state BCH contact can also facilitate dialogue with BCHA. Sometimes, it might simply be advice from either that gives you confidence in taking the next step with the agency. Their role is to assist BCH's valuable volunteers, so reach out to them when needed.

You are not alone when dealing with state and federal agencies. You can enlist the support of your state organization and/or BCHA. Both have considerable experience developing partnerships with agency personnel and in dealing with thorny issues. That's one of the benefits of the chapter-state-national BCH structure. Our muscle at the grassroots level is what makes us strong and unique among the national trails community. Yet we benefit greatly by linking our efforts with our state and national BCHA organizations when times arise when a little extra muscle might be needed.

Three Women Ride Across Kentucky for Charity

Three women from Central Kentucky will be riding 137 miles on horseback and carriage from Greenup, KY to Sadieville, KY this fall. The ride benefits the Kentucky Back Country Horsemen (KyBCH). KyBCH is an organization that works to keep trails in natural areas open for all users through volunteer maintenance, trail design and use education, and land manager relations.

Edith Conyers (Mt. Sterling), Ginny Grulke (Lexington), and Anne Husted (Paris) will take 12 days to cover approximately 137 miles. They will be riding horseback as well as driving a carriage pulled by two ponies. The route chosen goes along small rural roads, and the group hopes to meet and talk to rural Kentuckians on their way.

"We all enjoy riding on trails," said Edith Conyers, "and we enjoy rural Kentucky life, so this trip allows us to experience both and benefit a worthy organization." Ginny Grulke added, "You can't appreciate the beauty of Kentucky until you get far away from the interstates and large cities. This trip will take us right through that beauty, as well as give us a chance to talk to rural residents while enjoying our horses."

The women will be staying overnight on both public and private property in an RV driven by Anne Husted. Getting permission for staying overnight has been challenging but the women found that most Kentuckians are gracious when they hear about the riding project.

Ginny Grulke will be blogging about their experiences as they cross the state at www.crosskyride.com. The ride begins September 18, 2014 outside of Greenup, KY.

For more information about the ride and to donate to the cause, visit www.crosskyride.com.

For more information about Kentucky Back Country Horsemen, visit kybch.com.

Tales of the Trails

Doug West's beautiful storytelling and photos perfectly capture why BCHers invest so much in public lands. A heartfelt thanks to Doug for sharing his experiences and reminding us that the work is worth every penny donated and every bit of volunteer sweat equity BCH members put into trail maintenance and stewardship of the land.

Lamar Valley Soda Butte to Pelican Creek

By Doug West

Two things stand out when visiting Yellowstone National Park – the incredible scenic grandeur and the traffic. Traffic jams are common as vehicles slow for buffalo walking in the road. Cars and trucks pull over to catch a fleeting glimpse of a bear. While that may be the Yellowstone along the highway and at the various overlooks, another Yellowstone starts a few hundred yards off the oiled road. Horse packing 40 miles from Soda Butte to Pelican Creek gives you the back country adventure that is the real Yellowstone.

Any park visitor with good sense would have looked at the dark, overcast sky and driven back to a comfortable motel room. But, after hauling six horses 400 miles, waiting for clear skies was not an option. Back country permits must be obtained months in advance. Camp sites were specifically assigned for each night on the trail. So we ignored the weather, saddled our horses, loaded the panniers, tied everything down with double diamonds, and headed up the Lamar River.

The headwaters of the Lamar are in the Absaroka Mountains, the river runs generally northwest to Tower Junction where it enters the Yellowstone River. The Soda Butte Trail Head where we started our back country horse packing is east of Tower Junction just off the North Entrance Road (Highway 212). Seeing the Lamar for the first time, I assumed we were going to ride a flat river valley all the way to Pelican Creek at Walking Horse speeds. I soon discovered that while the trails are well



Soda Butte Trail Head, Lamar River.



Stormy weather.

maintained, they aren't flat. The trail follows the river, but is usually 100 feet or more above it. While the drop to the river isn't sheer, you cautiously watch where your horse puts her hooves.

Bears are a big worry when riding in Yellowstone, and it's easy to imagine meeting a grizzly on a narrow trail a hundred feet above the river. It's more difficult to picture the maneuver required to retrieve your bear spray from its holster. The instructions included with my canister didn't include how to discharge an accurate stream from the back of a panicked mare. At best, I imagined producing an impenetrable, choking fog around Gen and me that might discourage a charging bear.

While I didn't get to test the theory, I did get some sense of it when Gen came face to face with a bull buffalo. Fortunately, we were in an open meadow and not hanging precariously above the river. As expected, Gen immediately started to spin and back, causing me to drop Dottie's lead rope. The lone bull soon lost interest and wandered off.

As serious a threat as bears and buffalo are the storms that always seem to catch you in the open. At these northern latitudes, rain usually turns to hail, which pelts you mercilessly. More frightening than hail and rain are the periodic afternoon thunderstorms. Every horseman's fear is being caught in the open with lightning cracking around you. Fortunately for us, our horses knew exactly what to do. They turned their butts into the wind, and patiently waited for the storm to pass. While waiting you think about how tight you covered

your pack, not wanting to spend a cold night in a wet sleeping bag.

At the junction of Mist Creek and the Lamar River, you leave the river and climb over Mist Pass. In 1877, the U.S. 7th Cavalry pursued the Nez Perce through this area as they headed for Canada to avoid being forcibly placed on a reservation. Chief Joseph and approximately 800 of his followers rode over the pass from Pelican Creek with General Howard's troops in close pursuit. While we saw no direct evidence of the historic chase, we did find a lone rider at our last night's camp who had lost her horses.

When we met Hetty, she had already ridden 900 miles of the Nez Perce Trail, starting in Washington State. Hetty was an experienced rider who had ridden the entire 1,200 mile trail in 1994. However, she made a rookie mistake and turned her horses out to graze without hobbles. Needless to say, Hetty was extremely glad to see us riding up. Fortunately for her, she didn't have to wait another day to be rescued while we rode out to the trailhead to report her predicament. Somehow, she got an SOS text message out to the Park Service and Ranger Bill Frost was sent to retrieve her and her equipment.

While our adventure didn't include grizzly bears or wolves, the river crossings, a rogue bull buffalo, some inclement weather, and a lost rider provided all the adventure we needed. The incredible sense of solitude and magnificent panoramas made up for not hearing a wolf howl at night while we camped in the valley. Maybe next year.

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40th Anniversary

BCH AR – Great Buffalo River Ride and Clean Up

Sixteen seasoned riders and members of Arkansas' Buffalo River BCH (BRBCH) participated in a Great River Ride and Clean Up. We started at near the headwaters of the majestic Buffalo River (Ponca) and ended at where the Buffalo flows into the magnificent White River (Hathaway). During the overland trip, the little band rode an average of thirteen miles per day and made a record 51 river crossings. Most of the seven men and nine women rode various legs of the trip – only three of the hardest riders and horses made the entire 131-mile journey.

BRBCH board member Nancy Deisch was one of the two women who made the entire trip with her trusty Missouri Fox Trotter gelding Rambler. Deisch spent many hours from February to October in 2013 at her kitchen table, sipping cups of coffee, while tapping away on her laptop as she planned the historic ride. The planning was a labor of love because this ride was in celebration of the BCHA's 40th anniversary and BRBCH's brand new status as an official chapter of the national association. But her job didn't end there.

Deisch made numerous scouting trips. "I counted my scouting trips – 35 in all," she said. "Six were by car, and 29 were on horseback." Other BRBCH members accompanied her, helping her locate the designated trails and scouting them for safety. "We had to see if there were trees that needed to be dragged or cut out, or if bluffs were too narrow and needed to be shored up," Deisch explained.

On one scouting trip, Deisch and her friend Jacque Alexander (the other woman who made the entire journey) encountered a section of trail that proved to be especially onerous. While going up a steep incline, the women came to a large tree lying across the trail. They dismounted and spent a couple of hours forging a detour around the tree. When they finished they felt it was passable, but they realized it would still represent a challenge. When the BRBCH riders started up that trail, Deisch warned them it was the roughest place on the whole trip. "In the end, the horses all made it to the top but some of the riders

were sporting some very white knuckles," Deisch said with a chuckle.

Teamwork was key to the success of the Great River ride. The partnership and trust between each horse and its rider, and the camaraderie the riders had with each other, served to keep them safe, and to make every aspect of their ride enjoyable and running smoothly. Along the lower Buffalo, Deisch depended upon several old friends who lived in the vicinity to ride out and guide them. "Thank goodness I could rely on them. I would never have found those trails by myself," Deisch insisted. Other areas simply had no trails. In those instances, traces of old railroad beds as well as remnants of historic Indian and covered wagon trails provided clues. Deisch said, "That's what the scouting was all about really - trying to connect all of those unknowns."

Deisch brought a GPS along in order to have a map of the entire river, but there was never a time when she had to use it to guide them. She had ridden Rambler on all of her scouting rides, so when they came upon a couple of places where she wasn't quite sure which way to go, she simply gave him his head and he led them down the correct path. "He never paused and he kept us on the right trail every time. Rambler made me look good," she said proudly.

Along the trail, the riders leaned down sideways in their saddles and used "extension grabbers" to pick up pieces of litter, which they deposited in trash bags held open for them by their fellow riders. Each day as the sun started its slow downhill slide, they arrived at the night's campground where they unloaded their bulging trash bags, unsaddled, fed, and watered their horses, hitched them to a highline, and made camp for the night. As darkness descended each night, there were delicious pot-luck suppers, crackling campfires for warming cold feet, and even live music provided by Lloyd and Heidi Penka, who brought along their guitar and dulcimer.

Deisch noted that the BRBCH are grateful to Kevin Cheri, the Buffalo National River Park superintendent who facilitated their camp plans by issuing



Only rainy day but still picked up our quota of several bags of garbage along the trail--Arlus Trice, Jacque, Evelyn, Nadean Houghton, Lloyd Penka, Ted

a special use permit allowing them to camp in places that do not normally allow horses. "The trip absolutely could not have happened without his help and attention," she said. The Great River Ride and Clean Up was truly a once-in-a-lifetime event, made even more memorable by the glorious beauty of the Ozark Mountains draped in their finest gold, orange, and crimson splendor. And all of the riders chorused that getting to see the entire Buffalo River from the back of a horse was an experience they would never forget.

Submitted by Lona Raymond



Lloyd and Heidi Penda who entertained at night on guitar and dulcimer. Heidi is actually singing a song that she wrote about the ride.



Ted, Nancy, and Jacque where the Buffalo River empties into the White River--end of the long ride!

The Catch Pen

Do you know these savvy TX BCHers?

Ted Griffith, a BCHA member, wrote:

Earlier this year my wife Heather and I volunteered for three months at Big Bend National Park in southern Texas. One day we were hiking on the Chimney's Trail within the park when these riders and their mounts met us. We asked if they were members of the BCHA and they told us they were. They rode on before we got any further information from them.

These horses and mules were very desert trail savvy and carefully staying on the trail. This is essential in the desert of Big Bend because there is cactus everywhere, including one variety known as horse crippler.



The Catch Pen

Horses and honeybees – KS BCH saves the hive

In February 2014, Diana Skinner and Susan Lechtenberg discovered a honeybee hive just off the trail while our group was hanging painted skulls on Spirit Trail. Spirit Trail is on the South Shore horse trails at Clinton Lake, just west of Lawrence, KS. Diana and Susan are members of Ride Kansas and charter members of the newly formed Kansas chapter of BCHA. What was unusual about this hive was that it was in a 30-gallon metal drum that was mostly buried in the ground. Because the bees were slightly swarming us, we decided that we would need to remove the hive so it wouldn't cause problems to the horses riding by later in the year.

Susan called around to try and find someone to take the bees. She was repeatedly told that they couldn't possibly be honeybees as they do not nest in the ground. We had a few pictures of them and finally convinced someone to come out and take a look. Sure enough, the expert said they were honeybees. To avoid getting stung, the expert told us the bees could be removed when the weather was less than 30 degrees and the bees would be dormant. We never heard back from her so Susan found Richard Bean from Blossom Trail Bee

Ranch in Baldwin City to come and investigate. Richard came even though he did not believe they were honeybees.

Susan met Richard and then hiked a mile into the trails on foot. Richard's gear consisted of a bee suit, bee hat with veil, shovel, burlap sack, twine, and a smoker. The kindling for the smoker was hand packed dryer lint, dried pine needles, pecan shells and a couple of sticks. After we hauled this all in, Richard sat down and observed the bees. Diana and I had cut some of the pine trees down earlier to clear a path, but Richard needed a little more cut to get the metal barrel out. Richard shoveled all around the barrel with Susan watching around five feet away. Richard and Susan were very surprised at how calm the bees were during this whole process as it was a fairly warm, spring day with the temperature in the 50's. Richard finally took off his bee hat with veil because he was getting warm and the bees were not bothering him or aggravated.

When we finally got to the bottom of the barrel and pulled it out of the hole, we discovered it was too heavy to carry out. Richard then fired up the smoker to try and keep all of the bees

in the barrel for transport. We waited about 30 minutes for the bees to return. Susan called Diana to bring in a wheelbarrow. The three of us finally got the barrel full of honey and bees loaded into the wheelbarrow and pushed out of the trails and loaded into Richard's truck.

Richard reports that the bees are doing fine. He has tried to relocate them to a hive, but most of them continue to use the barrel. Anyone who has encountered bees on the trails knows that they can be a major problem for both horse and rider. We are thankful that we were able to successfully relocate these bees and continue to make the trails safe.

Submitted by Diana Skinner



BCH CA Mother Lode Unit & US Forest Service Partnership

A November 2013 storm with high winds in excess of 140 mph in the Sierra Mountains caused many popular campgrounds and trails to be closed due to the many toppled trees blocking the public access roads and trail systems. On the last weekend of June 2014, Mother Lode Unit (MLU) volunteer sawyers (and one helper) trained by the US Forest Service performed trail maintenance on a popular trail in the El Dorado National Forest. Our most experienced



Heading back to camp along Bassi Creek.

crewmember commented that this was the worst damage he's seen in 18 years of trail maintenance.

The Tells Creek campground and 6-mile access road showed recent efforts by other crews to reopen the area to the public. The mission this weekend was to clear some of the surrounding trails. First on the list was the 2-mile section from the Tells Creek equestrian campground to the Bassi Creek crossing on the Two Peaks Trail. After the prescribed safety briefing, four men and three women started off Saturday morning on seven mounts and leading four pack animals hauling an assortment of chain saws, axes, shovels, and other useful implements. The MLU unit recently purchased two new chain-saws. Another extremely useful piece of equipment is the Peavey pry bar. It's an odd concoction that looks like a five-foot pry bar with a hinged fish hook on the side near the end which enables a single person to roll large log segments off the trail without back strain.

Using the leapfrog technique, the group separated into two teams. The

first team unpacked and cut the first obstacle. Then, while the first team cleared the area of debris and repacked the gear, the second team proceeded through or around the first team to the second obstacle, unpacked and cut that one. A team of three or four people is the optimum size because usually there isn't room for more to approach and safely work an obstacle. Once we encountered a "nest" of tangled logs and the two teams took turns cutting, after there was much discussion among all the sawyers about which of the logs should be removed first.

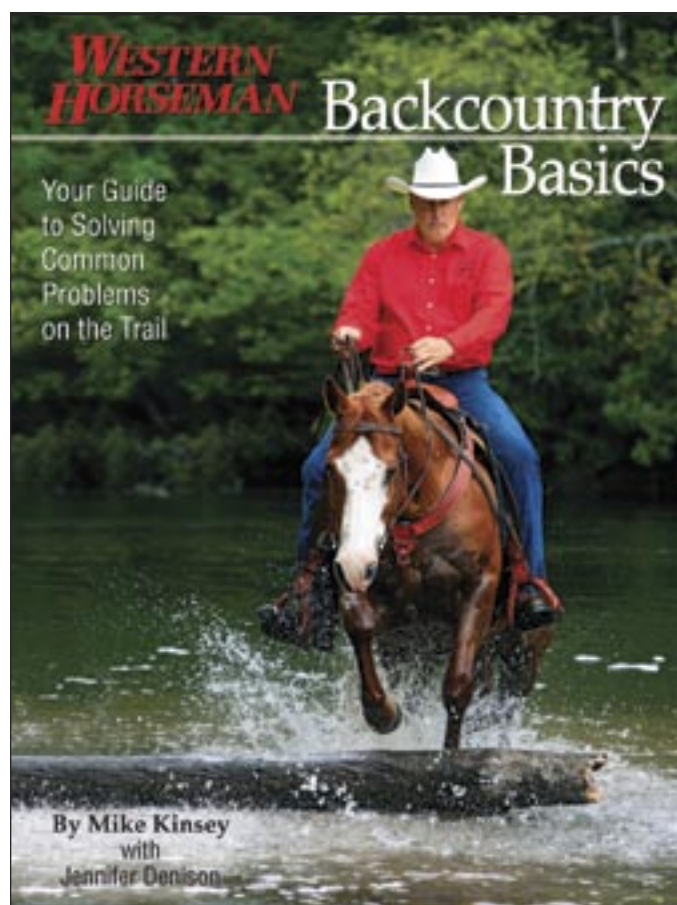
At the end of the day, it took six hours to clear about 3-dozen trees from two miles of trail. After watering the stock at the Bassi Creek crossing, the return trip took only 45 minutes on the now open track. Since the base camp at Tells Creek boasts a 6100 foot elevation and the trail climbs from there, six hours of physical labor at the mile-high altitude assured that everyone slept like a log Saturday night.

The next morning the group headed out again. They enjoyed the 45-minute

ride on cleared trail and, after crossing Bassi Creek, the higher elevation did not present as many downed trees. By 2 pm the group had cleared the remaining 20 or so trees from the Two Peaks Trail and met up with another work party of four approaching from the other end of the trail. The other party had also cleared trails around Barret Lake and Pearl Lake.

Most of the MLU crew headed home Sunday evening, but a few stayed an extra night to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Submitted by Lucy Badenhop



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The Catch Pen

Show-Me MO BCH Partners With PepsiCo

SMMBCH works with five different federal and state public land management agencies. Missouri's trails vary in length from the short day ride to cross-country rides of much greater length. Other trail users and hunters share the trails. Unlike the wide-open spaces of the western states where you may not see another human for days, on Missouri trails your chances of meeting other users is common. With more trail users comes more trash and unwanted evidence of human negligence. Carrying a trash bag in the saddlebag is a common practice for SMMBCH members.

Show-Me MO BCH (SMMBCH) found a great partner in PepsiCo with an environmental project. PepsiCo is known for its dedication to protecting the environment and promoting good land stewardship. Members of SMMBCH Tri-Lakes Chapter approached the Pepsi plant in Springfield to help fund the purchase of mesh bags that are easily carried on horseback. After a year of cooperative dialogue and planning, PepsiCo and SMMBCH purchased 5,000 reusable mesh bags printed with the Pepsi and SMMBCH logos, along with trail ethics statements. The project will help keep Missouri trails



clear of trash left by negligent humans and weather-related debris.

SMMBCH distributed the mesh bags to its chapters across the state to be used in trail maintenance. The bags are proving not only to be very useful and practical but also good for spreading the message of Back Country values and purposes. The bags will also be made available at trailheads, saddle clubs, and to any interested equestrian individual or group. The bags were given out at the Missouri State Fair at our

Leave No Trace display tent. Without generous funding from PepsiCo and a grant from the BCHA Education Foundation, the project would not have been possible. A special thank you to Larry Dishman, Tri-Lakes Chapter member and Lead Mechanic for Pepsi in Springfield. Larry was the first link in the partnership opportunity with PepsiCo. We are grateful for PepsiCo's support and look forward to other projects with them.

Submitted by Marsha Copeland

Escalante Chapter of BCHU greets Tour of Utah 2014

Two members of the Escalante Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Utah rode their horses and carried American flags to greet and salute the awesome Tour of Utah 2014 bike racers who went through our area on Tuesday, August 5. Carol Kracht on her gelding, Tux, and Gwendolyn Zeta on her mare, Lucy, wore their Bike Tour tee shirts and loped alongside the peloton when they crossed Big Flat just east of town. It would be hard to say what the bike riders think of horses and flag-

waving riders, but the many honking horns and waving hands from the support vehicles lead one to believe the horsewomen's enthusiasm is appreciated. And, of course, it's just great fun.

Submitted by
Gwendolyn Zeta



Leaving the Horses At Home – Uinta Basin Chapter BCH UT

Sometimes building a relationship with your public land managers means pitching in, even if you have to leave your horses at home. Members of the Uinta Basin Chapter of Utah decided that it was the right thing to do in order to meet and start working with their local Dinosaur National Monument managers. The National Park Service manages National Monuments and often their missions do not include preserving or focusing on horse use.

I contacted the Monument six months prior to set up a meeting to discuss any projects that we might assist on. A particular ride that we liked to do was on the Dinosaur National Monument. I was told to call back after the holidays, then to call back after their new rules (Superintendent's Compendium) was published. The employee I spoke to said he was familiar with BCHA, with what we do, and that a face-to-face meeting wasn't necessary. He said I should just continue calling. When I wanted to discuss the trail ride that we did on the Monument, I was told to basically keep a low profile about it and that riding it should be fine as long as we kept it quiet about it.

My persistent phone calls finally

paid off and the NPS contact said he needed help on a hiking trail. Chapter members decided to come help on the trail even though it was hiking only trail. Chapter Public Lands Coordinator Gordon Hirschi noted that this was the first time we met our contact face to face and "we wanted to show that we were willing to pitch in and work, even if it wasn't within our mission. After seeing the rule change that Bryce Canyon National Park had proposed to require private stock riders to hire a commercial guide when riding in the Park, we wanted to make sure that we had a working relationship with our local Monument managers, even if it meant leaving our horses at home."

In honor of National Trails Day on June 7th, BCH members met with hikers, youth volunteers, and NPS employees to build rock cairns and a rock stair-step on the hiking trail. The Sound of Silence Trail is just past the Visitors Center and gets a lot of use from Park visitors – over 274,000 visited the Dinosaur National Monument in 2013. I hadn't ever built rock stairs before and that was fun. After the workday was done, we briefly discussed our horse-riding trail, and got an invite to call the



NPS employee on the trail prior to starting work.

new Monument Manager to discuss what we wanted to do on it. Our NPS contact said to be sure to mention that we helped on this trail project when we met with the Manager. So now, hopefully, the door is open and that relationship has been started.

Submitted by Jody Holmes

The Catch Pen

TVBCH of Nampa, ID Working with the Salmon-Challis National Forest on Norton Lookout Restoration Project

Treasure Valley Back Country Horsemen (TVBCH), located in the west end of the Boise Valley, entered into a work agreement with the Salmon-Challis National Forest on the Norton Lookout located in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. The project was carried out under the supervision of Archaeologist John Rose with the Challis office of the Salmon-Challis National Forest. Rose met the TVBCH group on the trail to the lookout. The purpose of the project was to begin restoration work on the fire lookout to maintain its historical value and for the use and enjoyment of the structure by the U.S. Forest Service and the public. The first phase was to pack in the wood shingles to be stored inside for re-roofing at a future date. Also, in the future there is other restoration work planned by the Forest Service, such as general repairs, replacing window shutters, painting the exterior, etc.

The project began on July 18 with seven TVBCH members driving from the Boise Valley to Challis, ID and from there to the trailhead at Meyer's Cove,

about a 7-hour trip. From the trailhead, the members rode and packed 14 miles the next day down Camas Creek to where it flows into the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. The next day the group rode approximately 11 miles upstream on the Middle Fork to the Simplot Ranch & airstrip. A base camp was set up close to the airstrip where the bundles of shingles were delivered by plane. At this point, it was learned that the trail at White Creek had not been cleared, which added another facet to the project. The trail from the airstrip is approximately 11 more miles to Norton Lookout. Most of the TVBCH group spent from July 21 - 24 clearing the trail and packing the shingles to the lookout. On July 25, the group started the two-day pack out back to the trailhead, then back home on July 27th.

Although there were a few challenges met by the TVBCH members, such as re-adjusting packs, nearly losing a pack animal off the trail the first day in, a rock slide nearly hitting a rider and his pack animals, losing a pack horse and mule off the trail on the way



out, the project is considered a success. There were no serious injuries to any workers or to any of the riding or pack stock. The trail down Camas Creek is quite scenic as is the trail along the Middle Fork. There is a nice hot spring near the Simplot Ranch to be enjoyed by all who venture into this country. Though it is a fairly long pack in and out, it was an enjoyable and memorable trip for all. Thank you to USFS Archaeologist John Rose for his guidance and

support and to the owner and outfitter of the Middle Fork Outfitters at the Simplot Ranch who was very helpful to the TVBCH group.

Submitted by President Terry Burgess, TVBCH

Collaborative project with Bitterroot Ski Club a success

Ten members of Bitter Root BCH worked with twelve Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club members to clear a .75-mile stretch of old logging road located near Gibbons Pass on Saturday August 16. The Gibbons Pass area is recovering from the fires of 2000 and plenty of dead trees had fallen. Our sawyers, Brad Pollman, Joe Rogish and Dave Welch, chain sawed over 1,000 trees in their stretch of the road, with sawyers from the ski club working just as hard from the other end. Other BCH members followed Brad, Joe and Dave, pulling cut log sections and small trees off the trail and hand sawing other trees.

This cleared section connects with Overlook Trail and Gibbons Pass Road to create a 12.75-mile loop, located

within the Chief Joseph Cross-Country Ski Area. This is also a nice riding area with the Continental Divide Trail and Nez Perce (Nee Me Poo) Historical Trail located nearby.

After the work was done, volunteers gathered for a potluck meal featuring barbecued ribs cooked and transported to the site by members Judy and Rich Morrisey (chefs extraordinaires), assisted by their guests who pitched in to help. Many thanks go to our sawyers, cooks and trail clearers Lynn Kiess, Bonnie Morgan, Karen Philips (project co-chair with ski club president Mike Hoyt), Nancy Pollman, and Pam Torgerson. This was a successful collaboration with the ski club and we had fun too. Awesome work by a great crew!



Above: Dave Welch and Joe Rogish attack a bird's nest of downed trees.

Below: The tired but happy crew.



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The Catch Pen

Two Central KY BCHers Open Blocked National Recreational Trail

On a rainy August weekend two members of Central KyBCH (CKy-BCH), Bobby Russell and Roy Cornett, responded to a call for help from the Sheltoewe Trace Association. Russell and Cornett headed to southern Kentucky to clear a large tree that was preventing even hikers from using the trail in that part of the state. The Sheltoewe Trace is a linear trail running from northern Kentucky to its southern border with Tennessee, through the Daniel Boone National Forest. It is generally open to hikers, horses, and mountain bikes. There are sections of it that are not open to horses because it's simply impassable to horses or there are some environmentally sensitive areas that are protected.

Russell and Cornett rode the blocked section of the trail in May of 2013. They figured that there could not be too much to clear it up. What they discovered surprised them. There were many more trees across the trail than expected. They lost count, but they cleared about 15 trees off the trail that were of decent size (8" diameter or larger). In addition, they cleared smaller obstacles that only required a small handsaw. Their work area spread out over 7 miles, and their workday lasted 8-9 hours, all done in the summer rain and mist of the Kentucky Mountains.

Submitted by Roy Cornett, CKy-BCH Member and BCHA Executive Committee; and Bobby Russell, CKy-BCH Director and KyBCH Board.



Ride Kansas Clinton Lake Clean Up

Trail maintenance is an ongoing job. Here in eastern Kansas it is no different. The heavily wooded equestrian trails on the South Shore Trails at Clinton Lake had been in great shape until several spring and early summer wind storms. Normally, Ride Kansas BCH members do the majority of work on our trails during the winter because high temperatures, insects, poison ivy, and poisonous snakes make trail work dangerous during the summer. However, winds in excess of 70 mph during several storms downed numerous huge trees that blocked trails in dozens of locations. So a dedicated group headed out with chainsaws during a week of below average temperatures this summer to get all the down trees cleared off the trails. Thanks to the large number that went out we were able to rotate the workers and get all the work done safely and no one got overheated.

Clinton Lake is a Corps of Engineer lake and they finally got our horse camp on their national reservation system in July. Now that you can reserve camping sites, ridership has really taken off with groups coming in from out of state. Our dedicated volunteers from Ride Kansas are all charter members of our new Kansas BCHA. We have been working for the past three years to improve the campground at Rockhaven Horse Park. We put on a benefit ride the first full weekend in October every year. With the money raised, we have built over 30 steel pipe pens at the camping sites to go with the 18 electrical sites, 32 primitive sites, 14 centrally located pens, shower house, and shelter house that now exist in our park. With our 70 miles of trails, this makes Clinton Lake one of the best trail riding areas in Kansas. It is also a great layover stop for horse people traveling across the country with their horses. Clinton Lake is located just 15 miles from I-70 and seven miles from Lawrence, KS. You can make reservations for Rockhaven Park by going to www.recreation.gov and choosing Clinton Lake.

Submitted by Diana Skinner

Kentucky BCH Growing

In the last 12 months, Kentucky BCH (KyBCH) added three new chapters, doubling the number of chapters in the Commonwealth. New chapters are:

- Mammoth Cave BCH working with the Mammoth Cave National Park
- Land Between the Lakes BCH working with LBL National Recreational Area (USFS)
- Mountain Lake BCH working the northern section of the Daniel Boone National Forest and with Kentucky State Parks horse trails in eastern Kentucky

These chapters join the other three (Central Kentucky BCH, Fort Harrod BCH and Eagle Creek BCH) to enable KyBCH to cover the state from east to west.

"We are glad to welcome these new chapters, and they have all jumped in with great enthusiasm and knowledge. They are already working with the land managers, developing solutions for strong long-term relationships. The trails in Kentucky will be protected and cared for by these dedicated horsemen and women," said Ginny Grulke, Chair of KyBCH.

KyBCH was formed in 2007 with a single chapter – Central Kentucky – and was led by Edith Conyers for six years. The fruits of her efforts are paying off seven years later with growth not only in numbers but also in reputation.

Chainsaw Certification Hoosier BCH IN In Kentucky

Several BCH chapter members from KyBCH participated in a chainsaw certification and recertification class with the U.S. Forest Service on August 27 and 28. A big thanks goes out to Charlie Rowe with Daniel Boone National Forest for teaching the class that was held at the Caudill Farm. Participants were Roy Cornett, Mike Bossert, Greg Jones, Mike Chadwell, Myers Caudill, and Kathy Caudill. Throughout Kentucky, there are now six certified chainsaw BCH members.

This fall, there will be a second chainsaw class at Mammoth Cave National Park to train a few members from the new Mammoth Cave BCH as well. The Mammoth Cave chapter is searching for grants to purchase Personal Protection Equipment needed by the newly certified sawyers.

The Hoosier BCH works on trails one day a month. On May 3, 2014 we worked with the USFS in the Charles Deam Wilderness in southern Indiana. The work was repair of a muddy, water-damaged, multi-use trail near the Grubb Ridge trailhead. The first order of business was to muck out the soggy debris and mud in the trail tread. Then the damaged area was back filled with limestone. Finally, two water bars were constructed to divert water from the trail uphill from the newly repaired trail.

The work crew consisted of eight BCHers: Bob and Ann Graves from Nashville, Susan Miller from Indianapolis, Gary Mundy from Bedford, Yvette Rollins from Springville, Carla Riggins from Bloomington, Zack Smith from Indianapolis, and Maggie Whitlow from Paragon. We loaded and dumped 52 mule loads of stone – over 10,000 pounds. Not only did the Wilderness area require the use of mules but also the use of the crosscut saw to cut the water bar material.

Submitted by Bob Graves

The Hoosier BCH work crew consisted of eight BCHers: Bob and Ann Graves from Nashville, Susan Miller from Indianapolis, Gary Mundy from Bedford, Yvette Rollins from Springville, Carla Riggins from Bloomington, Zack Smith from Indianapolis, and Maggie Whitlow from Paragon.



Letters to BCHA

Dan Applebaker's letter represents views that several BCHers in Oregon sent in. Phil Hufstader provided photographs to illustrate the problem.

I GUESS I'M A THROWBACK

My chapter, the High Desert Trail Riders, is involved in education efforts for stock users and others, government meetings, and volunteer projects to keep trails open from the get-go. In 1996, our club joined several other similar minded organizations and started the Back Country Horsemen of Oregon (BCHO). The reasons for that decision were simple enough. We agreed with the mission statement of the BCHA. We felt we could provide and receive more direction, information, and strength by combining our efforts with a larger national organization. We hoped it would make us more efficient in meeting our mission statement and keeping our trails open. Over those years, and at the 10 BCHA annual meetings I have attended, I have been proud to say that has been the case. We have been successful in at least maintaining our saddle and pack stock use on most trails.

That situation is now changing as we face a tremendous new challenge.

As the recent General Accountability Office (GAO) report has discovered, the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) has more trails than they are able to maintain. The backlog of unmaintained trails is growing significantly each year. Those of us out on the trails are aware of that fact. Many of our local trails are plugged with down logs as a result of forest fires and massive insect and disease mortality. On the west side of our Cascade Range down logs reach 4-5' in diameter. The USFS simply is not funded to adequately clear these trails with cross cut saws along with accomplishing necessary erosion control, brush encroachment, or reconstruction. The obvious result is that many trails are not available for stock use and many will be closed because of the lack of the responsible agencies' ability to provide legally mandated access and enjoyment of the public. This may not be the case where you ride, but the GAO reports states, "Only one-quarter of the agency's 158,000 miles of trails meets agency standards for maintenance and nearly two-thirds receive no maintenance at all," so it is happening somewhere.

The entire BCH organization is working to resolve this deficiency. Local volunteer efforts are increasing. Our state and national organizations are working in the public arena and networking with other organizations interested in backcountry and wilderness use to increase funding and improve the productivity of volunteers in maintaining trails. The BCHO supports and applauds that effort as absolutely necessary. We must keep in mind, however, that only a quarter of USFS trail maintenance comes from volunteers, state funding, and other federal and non-federal sources. We question whether the good work done to date by BCH will reverse the increasing backlog of unmaintained trails or only slow the rate of the increase? Will trails now unmaintained remain so while more trails are being added to the list of those unmaintained or closed? We think more can be done.

So this old throwback decides that

something needs to be done now. It needs to be done on the ground (at the Ranger District level) or we will not have many trails left to get where we want to go. Isn't that a basic premise for which BCH stands, to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use and to keep America's trails open for all? When we formed the BCHO and became a state organization in BCHA 18 years ago, we thought so then and we think so now.

The BCHO is aware of examples of power saw use in wilderness to provide for existing access and not for "emergency" situations. So we passed a resolution for limited and managed power saw use in wilderness. The District Ranger would make the determination that one-time use of the power saw as the minimum tool necessary to provide for access and use of a wilderness trail that would otherwise be closed due to lack of maintenance. We felt that could at least quadruple the miles of trail maintained, or at least logged out.

If we are to lose a recreation opportunity on an existing trail due to the agencies' failure to maintain it for public use, we feel it makes sense for volunteers to:

1. Get the District Ranger's permission for a one-time use of power saws to open the trail
2. Provide a plan to minimize the social impact of the saws and make a middle of the week run through the trail for a day or two and buck the logs out of the trail
3. After the trail is cleared it could be returned to annual primitive tool maintenance

Bingo! That trail is off the backlog list of unmaintained trails. The combined efforts of all the BCH organizations could then change our relatively small percentage of total miles of government trails maintained to a more significant and higher number. In 2012 BCH did \$12.5 million worth of volunteer trail work. That is a meaningful and impressive number, especially when we add the work of other volunteers. We must keep in mind however, according to the GAO report, that the Forest Service now has a backlog in trail maintenance of over \$500 million and it is growing at \$200 million annually. In our minds, this is an emergency. We need to pull some plugs and use more creative thinking to do all we can to catch back up, or we will write off a lot of trails that could have remained open.

Maybe I am a throwback, an artifact, but still alive and well in the wilderness. I'm just a guy with a wife, a couple dogs, and a string of mules that spends most of the summer and fall leading this outfit over government trails. A few others and myself are a whole lot like Jim Bridger, Osborne Russell, John Colter, and a host of other men in more recent times that preceded us on many of these trails. We're very likely just as independent and near as hardheaded as those men were. The history of using our pack and saddle stock in the back country runs long and deep. I admit that I'm proud of that history. I'm enough of a throwback that I



expect our wilderness trails, with a history of equestrian use, to be open and available to provide for that experience on a timely basis each summer as they once were.

The BCHO thought the idea of limited and managed power saw use on wilderness trails, which would likely be closed otherwise, had enough merit to present as a resolution to be considered by the BCHA national board of

directors (NBD) at this year's national meeting. Our state's resolution was not allowed to be brought before the NBD. The resolution is not dead, however. There is still a lot work being done to promote this idea to help keep our trails open and accessible.

Dan Applebaker

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BCHA Outreach Campaign

During BCHA's successful crowd-funding campaign, Chairman Jim McGarvey encouraged state organizations and local chapters to reach out to other equestrian groups and trail users of all types. The crowdfunding campaign was a great fundraising event, but the outreach should not be an event – it should be ongoing. Lynn Golemon of Big South Fork Chapter in Tennessee provides a great example of how such outreach should be an ongoing project for all BCH organizations. The outreach also raises awareness of how much BCHers are doing to help maintain trail access while protecting the landscapes and viewscapes we all enjoy.

Over the fall and winter, think about how those you know can benefit from some type of membership in your organization. Even if they don't own a horse or a mule, they can support and be a member of a BCH organization. You may already have something in place.

But if you don't, how about a special "Friends of the Back Country" supporting membership? Many professional organizations have non-voting members. Friends and other community members who are not stock owners don't need to be voting members to volunteer for, or participate in, your fundraising events or trail work. Some member benefits can include:

- Subscription to your newsletter
- Subscription to the national newsletter
- Alerts and notifications about trail use issues
- Discounts on products and services offered by your sponsors or participating vendors
- Eligibility to participate in BCH task forces on trail issues or trail work groups
- Invitations to socials or other special meetings that don't involve needing four-footed transportation

You might also give people access to the "members only" pages on your website or let them know about all the value available through the BCHA website and social media:

- Calls to action or information at <http://www.backcountryhorse.com/public-lands/bills/> or <http://www.backcountryhorse.com/public-lands/park-issues/>
- Invite people to Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/bcha.org> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/bcho-america> for regular updates and more information.

Thank you, Lynn, for stimulating some ideas about involving members who might not otherwise think about joining BCH!

Lynn gives permission to any BCHA organization to use her letter with appropriate changes in a membership campaign.

Hi Trail Riders,

Our local chapter of Back Country Horsemen of the Big South Fork is making huge efforts to maintain and improve our trails, as well as getting new trails dedicated for horse use. We have created several new trails in the last few years, and we are currently making the crossing of White Oak Creek at the Zenith Crossing much safer by the use of cement blocks created entirely by our volunteers. This is with the full cooperation of the Big South Fork Park authorities, and at considerable cost to our organization. We are very aware of your continuous trail efforts as well.

My name is Lynn Golemon. My husband, Bill, and I live in White Oak, in Allardt, TN. I am also the membership chairman of the Back Country Horsemen Association of the Big South Fork. I know you are constantly asked to "join", to "give", to "help", and so I would like to explain why it is so important for all trail riders to join Back Country Horsemen through our local chapter: BCH of the Big South Fork.

The US Congress and the US Senate, along with state and local governments are constantly approached by lobbying groups such as various Wilderness groups, hiking groups and bicycling groups, and who knows how many more. Most of them would like to eliminate horseback riding for any number of reasons. Many of you have seen this happening, and it is actually one of the reasons I moved from West Virginia to the Big South Fork area.

The horse industry has very few lobbyists who are interested in maintaining our trail systems, and we have very little money to lobby. I have seen the Wilderness groups and those concerned with endangered species in action over the years because of my endurance riding. Their intensity and persuasive abilities are absolutely amazing. These lobbying groups are much larger than the horse lobbyists, and they have a great deal of money to spend lobbying. They constantly receive huge donations, as well as extensive grants from individuals and corporations, and far too often their plans include the elimination of horses from the trails.

Back Country Horsemen is a national non-profit (501c3) organization with offices in the State of Washington, and www.backcountryhorse.com is the web page. We are a local chapter of this national organization, and we need the membership rolls of BCH to be large enough to have a national impact in Congress and the Senate. This is the only way we will keep our trails open in years to come. The folks in Washington need to see that we are out there riding the trails, and that we care. This is the only way to get their attention.

The cost to join BCH is only \$20 per year, or \$30 per year per couple. This is such a small price to pay for what we have, especially compared to the cost of everything else we need to maintain our horses. All donations are tax deductible. Of course, we would also love to have you participate and enjoy our events, and also your help working on trails. However, we realize that sometimes this is not possible. But I simply cannot stress enough how important it is to have your names on the roles as members when we are represented in Congress.

Attached is a membership form. Please join and please pass this information along to any others you think might be interested. And I would also like to invite you to our annual fundraiser at Zenith Campground this coming weekend. We will have excellent meals, a raffle, a silent auction, and, of course, a trail ride including a scavenger hunt. Please come.

And I would like to thank you personally for taking the time to read this lengthy e-mail. And please forgive me if you get duplicate copies, I am trying to reach everyone.

Sincerely,

Lynn



**BIG SOUTH FORK
BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN**
Membership Application

Name _____ Date: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____ Email: _____
 (____) \$20 Individual - 1 Year (____) \$30 Family - 1 Year
 Names of Family: _____

Information about yourself that may be of benefit to the club (such as chainsaw certified, GPS proficient, grant writing, fund raising, advertising, etc.)

(____) Check if you are willing to participate in a work crew for trail construction/maintenance.

In consideration of my membership, I agree not to hold Big South Fork Back Country Horsemen (BSFBCH) or its members or organizers liable for any injury or damage, however caused, which may result from participation in any event sponsored by BSFBCH.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Make checks payable to:
Big South Fork Back Country Horsemen
 929 Cole Place Road
 Allardt, TN 38504
 931-879-5252



Wilderness Act 50th Anniversary Celebration in Washington DC. Randy Rasmussen, BCHA Advisor, and Mack and Connie Long, MT.

Trailer Maintenance

By Robert Eversole, Chief Trail Boss, Trailmeister

It's hard to believe that fall is already here. It seems that it was only yesterday that the snow finally cleared from the high mountain slopes. So what to do now that a white blanket has returned to many of the backcountry areas that we enjoy? Some of us will take refuge in front country rides and trail maintenance efforts; others will enter arenas to keep both human and equine in shape for the coming year. Another thought is to also use this bit of enforced downtime to make sure that the steel components of our treks are tended to. The trailer is a vital component of any trip; after all very few of us can ride from the barn into a wilderness area. Even if you're not mechanically inclined it's easy to inspect and identify trailer problems long before they become an emergency next spring.

Let's start with a straightforward visual inspection of the trailer and first examine the floor. This is bearing the weight of our precious beasts and it's imperative that it's sound. Pull out all the mats and examine the surface. If the floor is wood, take your knife and try to stick the blade in. If the blade goes in easily and the wood crumbles the board

needs to be replaced. Also look for cracks in the wood, especially around the screws. If you have a metal floor, look for corrosion or pitting.

While you're checking the underside of the floor look at the undercarriage. The undercarriage is everything under the floor except for the tires. Surface rust that doesn't cause structural weakness isn't a problem, but should be taken care of. Cracks in the welds and joints are a cause for concern in addition to loose bolts, and broken springs.

It's a sad fact but more horse trailer tires fail from dry rot and age than from road miles. Fortunately, dry rot is usually identified by fine cracks in the tire and frequently is most noticeable on the sidewall. You'll want to replace tires that are cracking. Also, make sure tires are inflated to the recommended pressure. An important consideration is the age of the tires. As we already mentioned chances are that we'll never wear out our trailer tires. Instead we need to be concerned with the age of the tires. A quick check of your tire's sidewall will give you an identification number. The last four digits represent the week and year the tire was manufactured.

From the Secretary's Desk



By Peg Greiwe, Executive Secretary

Wow! Check out all the activity reported by Public Lands Recreation Advisor Randy Rasmussen and Chairman/Acting Executive Director Jim McGarvey! You have a lot to be proud of and some follow up to do. Be sure to call your Congressman and request that he/she sign on to HR 4886, the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act.

In your state, chapter, and unit newsletters, it is exciting to read about all the work done this summer for the public land agencies. Our BCHA family is an amazing group of devoted volunteers.

The BCHA Executive Committee (Jim McGarvey, Mike McGlenn, Don Saner, Freddy Dunn, Alan Hill, Roy Cornett, Chuck Miller, Darrell Wallace, Ken Ausk and Randy Rasmussen) has a conference call on the third Tuesday of each month. Conference call minutes are distributed to the National Directors for distribution to state leaders and members. However, there is another way that BCHA keeps states in the loop. On the third Tuesday and Thursday evenings each month, Chairman Jim McGarvey and Randy Rasmussen hold open conference calls with the presidents, chief elected officers, or appointed representatives from the 27 BCHA states. In an effort to improve BCHA communication with the states, as of September 23rd, the Executive Committee approved adding the BCHA committee chairs and the national direc-

tors to these calls. On the calls, Jim and Randy update the participants about the work BCHA is doing and public lands recreation issues. The calls are just over an hour each. Participants can ask questions and bring up problems in their states.

I am impressed with all the articles about BCHA's working with kids - good job!

It has been really quiet in the BCHA office this summer. All our members must be out on work parties, pack trips, trail rides and getting ready for the upcoming hunting seasons. My husband and I took our camper (no dogs and no horses) around the Olympic Peninsula for a week. The Olympic National Park and National Forest are beautiful. The trees along the coast have such interesting shapes. The Olympic National Park has no roads through the heart of the park. Highway 101 goes around the outside with several forest roads that go into various areas of the Park and Forest for camping and to lakes and the rain forest. We missed out on Hurricane Ridge (the jewel of Olympic National Park) since it was socked in with clouds. We stopped at outdoor eatery Hama Hama for fresh oysters on the half shell and a clam chowder to die for. Jim and Cindy McGarvey stopped here, too, while they were in the Pacific Northwest earlier this summer. We took the Coho Black Ball ferry across to Victoria BC to do a little sightseeing and visit Butchart Gardens. We couldn't see everything and will go back.

We are working on getting t-shirts and bandannas with the new BCHA brand here in the BCHA office for purchase.

I hope that your summer has been great and you're ready for a wonderful autumn coming up!

Your friend,

Peg

For example if the tire ID number reads LMLR5107 we would decipher the last four numbers to learn that the tire was manufactured on the 51st week of 2007 making it now over seven years old. Tire life varies by manufacture but the average recommended age for replacement is between 7 and 10 years.

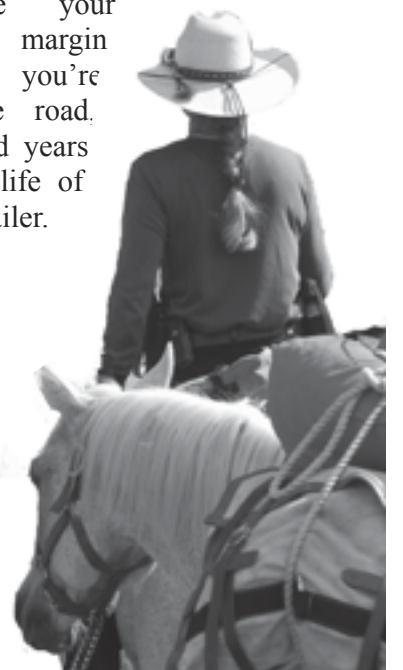
Once you're done under the trailer take a quick look at the coupler. The coupler attaches the trailer and towing vehicle together. All the force from the trailer is transferred through the coupler to the ball of the hitch and then to your truck. The coupler closure and locking mechanisms must be in working order and include a pin or clip to lock the coupler closed on the ball. While you're there check the safety chains and the breakaway brake system by pulling the pin on the breakaway, then slowly pull the empty trailer with your truck, the trailer wheels should not roll. Make sure to check all welds and bolts where the hitch is attached to the tow vehicle.

Now that you've examined the trailer's structure check the electrical system by turning on all the lights. Are all the lights and turn signals working

properly and do you have a few spare bulbs in the glove box?

After you've identified any issues that need tended to you can perform the repairs yourself or let the pros with the knowledge and equipment handle them as well as more in depth maintenance such as greasing bearings or inspecting brake drums.

Take time for these yearly maintenance checks. You will unquestionably increase your safety margin when you're on the road, and add years to the life of your trailer.



NextGen BCHA (Youth)

Kids in the Woods: Celebrating 50 Years of the Wilderness Act

By Bill Lyke (with a lot of help from friends)

What fun it was to watch 85 five to twelve year olds roasting their own hot dogs, splashing in streams, walking on logs, using fake bear spray and learning about Wyoming wilderness! With lots of preparation and planning, engaging these kids was easy and fun.

Shoshone Back Country Horsemen (SBCH) is the Big Horn Basin chapter of the WY BCH. Our area of operation is the Wyoming Absaroka Mountain range and the west slope of the Big Horn Mountains. We enjoy a great relationship with the folks at the Shoshone National Forest District office. We commit to clear about 100 miles of trail annually and frequently clear much more. In addition to the Forest Service we partner with local Recreation Districts, our Community College welding department, and the BLM to construct and maintain equine trail head facilities such as corrals and feed bunks on public land.

Last January, Natural Resource Specialist Shannon Pils and Forester Amy Haas of the Wapiti Ranger District approached SBCH for help with their idea for a commemoration of the Wilderness Act of 1964. What evolved was a program designed to introduce pre-teen youngsters from Cody and Powell to the skills and mindset to use the wilderness in a safe, sustainable way. In April, we learned of potential funding from the Back Country Horsemen Educational Foundation and applied for a \$500 grant to help offset expenses. We were awarded a grant from the DEW foundation that allowed us to put on a great weenie roast in the back country.

Our source for the kids was the Park County Boys and Girls clubs and the Cody Recreation Department's Kidz on the Move program. We scheduled the last four days of July for two separate groups. Each group received one day of in town training and another day of in the woods experience. The Boot and Bottle Club, a local riding club, hosted the in-town training at their clubhouse and grounds. Here six exhibits were set up, offering demonstration and participation in different subject areas:

1. Hug-a-tree. How not to get lost, or what to do if you are.
2. Leave No Trace ethics and techniques.
3. Crosscut saw and traditional tools demo with kids getting to use the saws.
4. Bear encounters and bear spray use, with kids practicing using their own inert canisters.
5. Horse packing demonstration with each kid participating in loading the packs and sitting a horse.
6. Horsemanship: the seven games of horsemanship featuring the Parelli method of communicating with your horse.

The wilderness portion, or experience day, took place at the Little Sunlight trailhead and adjacent North



Absaroka wilderness area. Kids were bussed from Cody to the trailhead and assembled into groups of less than 20 that departed at staggered intervals. While waiting to leave the trailhead they participated in knot tying, learning the clove hitch, figure of eight and slipknots. There were also lessons on tree identification, a scavenger hunt to locate specific scat, birds, spiders and insects.

The 1.8-mile walk to the wilderness boundary featured two mock horse campsites. The first campsite demonstrated poor site location, poor horse management and sanitation issues, as well as improper food storage. The second campsite demonstrated correct Leave No Trace practices as well as proper bear proofing. The next stop after fording Little Sunlight creek was the picnic area where the kids got to roast their own hot dogs and marshmallows over open campfires. After lunch, groups proceeded to the wilderness boundary where they helped in erecting a new wilderness boundary sign. The kids then tramped back to the trailhead for watermelon before departing for home.

Volunteers set up camps, spoke about wilderness ethics, provided guidance with the sign construction, plus ran the commissary and campfires. The event was supported with about 20 Forest Service personnel, 16 Shoshone BCH, and one person from Wyoming Game & Fish. Planning and implementation on our part amounted to 285 man-hours and 34 horse days. Cash expenses were \$502.65, all going to the weenie roast. The camps, poles, signage and tools, as well as foodstuffs were packed in earlier by SBCH.

In summary, our objective of demonstrating and including the next generation in the wilderness ethic was met in an engaging and fun way. With SBCH volunteering their members, horses and mules, equipment, knowledge and time, this event was truly an educational experience.

WY Mountain Man BCH Builds Corrals, Holds Youth Packing Clinic



Dexter Smith (center) and Kim Bright (R.) assist children in tying hitches on a packsaddle.

The summer months were busy for the Mountain Man BCH (MMBCH) of Sublette County, WY. In June they braved the elements in sleet and snow to build three new corrals at the Scab Creek Horseman's Campground in the Bridger-Teton Forest. They also developed a trail connecting the packing area with trails in the Bridger-Teton Wilderness Area.

Ultra Resources donated used casing pipe to the chapter for use in the corrals. Three MMBCH members who are welders cut and assembled the corrals. Several other chapter members assisted with the corrals and worked on the trail. The Scab Creek Horseman's Campground is one of the most popular trailheads into the Bridger-Teton Wilderness. The corrals will be a big asset for overnight campers with horses at the trailhead.

The new trail will help riders avoid a busy stretch of road.

Overall, the project provided approximately 35 hours of volunteer skilled welding time and 70 hours of volunteer unskilled labor. The leftover pipe will be used to build additional corrals in this area.

The club also sponsored a Horse Packing Clinic targeted primarily at youth, ages 6 to 16. The clinic covered basics related to horse packing and camping, horse safety, proper saddle and tack fit, preparing loads, types of packsaddles and hitches, bear safety and camp etiquette including Leave No Trace.

Horse Safety – Trainers emphasized how to approach a horse, the direction to approach from, ensuring that the horse knows you are there, how to move around the horse, and the reasons

why you take those precautions.

Proper Saddle and Tack Fit/Types of Packsaddles – Students learned where the saddle and blanket should be placed on the horse, the fit of the saddle, and how much weight should be placed on a horse in order not to harm it.

Bear Safety – The children were taught that bear-resistant panniers should be used, and if not, why food should be hung in trees high enough that a bear can't get to it. Instructors emphasized camping away from where you fix dinner and eat, and remembering to put all food items into the bear panniers and not in your tent.

Packing the Horse and Hitches – Three very experienced packers from MMBCH -- Dexter Smith, Dennis Dailley and Kim Bright -- demonstrated various hitches for packs.

Leave No Trace (LNT) – Good camping etiquette means leaving no trace of ever having camped in an area. LNT includes taking out what you bring in, not making a new fire ring if there is already one present, not tying horses to trees and how to tie them to a highline.

After covering these subjects, the group split up and the kids were able to get some hands-on experience actually packing a load and tying a hitch. The youth not only packed a horse but experienced what they learned about horse safety and being around horses. Fortunately, three of the best mannered horses were used for the clinic.

One of the missions of MMBCH is to encourage children to know how to enjoy a horse in the mountains. This clinic helped expose the attendees to packing horses for backcountry fun.

Submitted by Betty Cundy, Publicity Chairman

Buffalo River BCH AR Kids Weekend Campout

By Nancy Deisch

The Buffalo River BCH had a fun and rewarding July weekend with kids, grandkids, and friends at Woolem horse camp on the Buffalo River. Friday was the monthly workday and with 14 workers (5 of whom were kids). We were able to find enough to do even though a river level too high for crossing thwarted our original trail plan.

The river came down enough to cross on Saturday morning for our fun ride that included a hike up to the Nars or Narrows. The Nars is a thin rock path that overlooks both the Richland Creek and the Buffalo River valleys. We had lunch on an overlook with a view to forever. The afternoon was filled with games and lots of prizes for a dozen or more participants and their horses. There were plenty of helpers and some came just to watch the afternoon festivities. Members Majorie Heacock and Bill Kenter planned and provided all the games, prizes, and props. Just getting to watch was very entertaining! Saturday night's full moon made a perfect light for that moonlight ride along



Dyllan, Cole, Torye, and Tenelle got off their horses long enough to climb a mountain for a great look around.

the river with reflections and shadows extraordinaire. The horses and riders were each decorated with dozens of glow sticks that made for a mesmerizing, bewitching sight as they rode out of camp.

Sunday morning gave time for one more ride before packing up and heading home.

This MAY be the start of something big.