

A Thank You to Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen

By Pam Floyd



Last year a small group of dedicated horsemen in northwest Arkansas spent a record amount of time working to keep the trails of the Buffalo National River open and accessible for all. While this thank you is directed to them and their many acts of service, the gratitude expressed can be extended to each of you BCH members who work tirelessly to protect and maintain the wild places that have been entrusted to you.

READ THE STORY ON PAGE 3

Building Stronger Chapters and a Stronger BCHA: *Trails Forever Fund*

A Message from Executive Director Jim McGarvey

By this spring, BCHA will have grown to more than 32 state organizations, with well over 180 chapters, from Alaska to Florida and from California to New York. We are becoming more of a national presence and having greater impact with our federal and state agency partners and other recreational user organizations.

One might say we are starting to make it into the “Outdoors Big League.”

To play in the Big League requires **Commitment** – of which we have plenty; and it requires **Time** – we have plenty of that, too, last year we gave 410,000 volunteer hours; and finally it requires **Money** – we never have had much of that.

Going into the future, we want to strengthen our ability to *Keep the Trails Open for All* through empowering **our chapters with grant funding** for tools,

equipment, training and more. Our chapters and our national organization must meet and overcome not only the challenge of *Keeping the Trails Open for All*, but also the challenges of interactions with the land managers and legislators.

In response, BCHA put together the *Trails Forever Fund*. The fund provides two paths for our members and fellow equestrians to do their part.

Trails Forever Estate Giving Program

In mid-March, the BCHA entered into an agreement with Crescendo Interactive of Camarillo, CA to provide Gift Legacy Services to our members and supporters. Crescendo’s hundreds of clients include the four U.S. Military Academy foundations, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, colleges and universities, the Grand Canyon Association, The Rocky

Mountain Elk Foundation, and The Wilderness Society. Founded nearly 30 years ago, Crescendo provides many opportunities to inform and educate our members about providing for and protecting their families and loved ones through comprehensive, flexible solutions. Their products will provide an opportunity for BCH members and supporters to consider a planned gift to BCHA. Similar to our successful crowdfunding grants program **30% of the net proceeds from any planned gift will go to the BCHA Education Foundation’s Grants Program.**

I have committed to stay on as pro bono Executive Director through April 2019 to manage the Estate Giving Program’s success.

Trails Forever \$5 a Month Club

For over six months, several BCH members including **Ginny Grulke, KY; Mike McGlenn, WA; Mary K Church, MO; Jerry Bentz, OR; Freddy Dunn, UT;** and me organized the *Trails Forever \$5 a Month Club*. Together, we members, with only a small monthly donation, can make a large impact on *Keeping the Trails Open for All*.

Fully 30% of the net proceeds from any planned gift will go to the BCHA Education Foundation’s Grants Program.

Jerry Bentz, president of BCH Oregon will be the national chairman of the *Trails Forever \$5 a Month Club*.

Consider Participating in the Trails Forever Fund

Former National Chair and BCHA Education Foundation Chairman **My-lon Filkins DVM** said, “The Foundation Grant Committee members are very much looking forward to awarding grants from funds raised by *Trails Forever*.”

The *Trails Forever Fund*, which includes both estate planning and the \$5-a-month campaign, will be rolled out at our National Board meeting in Las Vegas, April 20–23. You can join the \$5-a-month club right now by going to www.bcha.org and clicking on the *Donate* button or by completing the donation form on page 5.

Thank you! Please direct comments or suggestions to Jim McGarvey: execdiretor@bcha.org or cell: 706-669-1015



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Interested in Joining?

Contact BCHA or the organization nearest you for more information.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,
I read the article “A Study of Crosscut Saws or Power Saws for Trail Clearing” in last fall’s issue, and feel I simply cannot permit it to pass without comment. Mr. Applebaker went to great lengths to prove the obvious, that chainsaws cut faster than crosscut saws, but totally misses the point of why we use crosscuts in Wilderness.

Many arguments can be made for crosscuts over chainsaws from a technical standpoint, such as complexity, weight, reliability, and transportability of the equipment required, and many of Mr. Applebaker’s assertions regarding safety, fatigue, and technique can be readily challenged. Still, these arguments do not address the fundamental question of why the use of crosscut saws is important in Wilderness.

Under the Wilderness Act, these areas are “designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition” and “shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.” Mr. Applebaker conveniently quotes the phrase “for future use and enjoyment as wilderness”, but emphasizes “use and enjoyment” while ignoring the most important part, “as wilderness.” Non-Wilderness areas of public land are frequently managed for recreational use and enjoyment, but they are not designated for preservation in their natural condition in the way

that Wilderness areas are. Wilderness is not simply a place to recreate out of sight and sound of the modern world, but something much greater.

Any time we compromise the definition of Wilderness as set forth in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act, we have degraded what Wilderness was intended to be. To use chainsaws for the sake of speed, efficiency, and convenience compromises Wilderness and demonstrates a significant lack of commitment to it.

A local Wilderness experienced a significant wind event at the end of 2011, which flattened 500-600 acres of forest and affected a much larger area. Approximately four and a half miles of trail were literally buried beneath fallen trees and many more miles required major clearing. Because the blowdown was within Wilderness and, furthermore, was a natural event, a decision was made to cut it out only with crosscut saws. No MRA was prepared, no request for chainsaws was made. Furthermore, the area was not closed, but those who desired the challenge of finding a way through or finding a way around were allowed to do so.

Many hours of volunteer time by members of a number of different groups, including the local chapter of Back Country Horsemen, went into cutting out affected trails, and grant money was procured for a youth corps crew for five weeks of cutting. Four years and 1,000+ trees later, the trails

are again clear. Did it take a while? Yes. Was it worthwhile and a satisfying effort to do it only with crosscuts in keeping with the Wilderness Act? Absolutely!

Sometimes there are compromises for the sake of Wilderness. Without allowing prior grazing rights to continue, the Wilderness Act probably could not have been passed. It can be argued that trails themselves are a compromise to the “primeval character” of Wilderness but, particularly near large population centers, trails exist to concentrate use and protect the Wilderness environment.

Compromises made for the convenience of visitors without benefit to the Wilderness should be considered with only the greatest reluctance and skepticism. Each compromise, small as it may seem, whittles away at the idea of leaving Wilderness as a place “unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness” and sets a precedent for more compromise, e.g., helicopters or mountain bikes with trailers to haul in chainsaws, fuel, etc. next? Eventually, death by a thousand cuts to something important to us all. Wilderness is worth going that extra mile for.

“The idea of wilderness needs no defense, it only needs more defenders.”
— Edward Abbey

Sincerely,
Ralph Bradt
Kittredge, Colorado

A Thank You to Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen

By Pam Floyd

What’s your place on the Buffalo? That’s a question a fellow Buffalo River BCH member asked on a recent river ride. No one present had to ask what he meant or struggle for an answer. As folks who regularly ride the Buffalo we’re lucky like that, aren’t we? We all know that he was asking about the place on the river that speaks most directly to your heart, brings you peace, and draws you back again and again.

If you have a minute, think about your place. Maybe it’s high in the headwaters of the Buffalo where the trails can be a little wild and wooly and the pools in the river are that particular shade of blue-green that makes you happy to be alive and in the company of a good horse. Maybe your thoughts go flying along Sneys Creek in the springtime when the wildflowers are blazing and the waterfalls are sparkling and full. Or do you dream of a spot further along as the river is winding its way home, where you’re thrilled and surprised to see an Elephant’s Head?

OOPS! A correction with apologies.

In the Winter 2016 issue on page 9 was a Catch Pen article submitted by the Colorado Front Range BCH (FR-BCH). Unfortunately, two smaller items from the California Mother Lode Unit (MLU) were inserted into that article.

With apologies to the FRBCH for the mistaken entry and to MLU because they didn’t get the headline they deserved.

Thank you all for your patience and forgiveness.

Sherry

Whatever place has a special hold on you, there’s a good chance you helped make it even better. That’s what you do every time you ride out and clip, saw, and lop your way down river. Every time you stop to pick up someone else’s trash or take the time to teach a child how to tie a quick release knot, you make the future of the Buffalo National River a little brighter and more certain.

Think about the number 3,072 for just a moment. That is the number of hours members of Buffalo River Chapter BCH committed to the care and maintenance of our beloved river and its watershed last year. It’s a big number for a small group of dedicated people who choose to make a difference, isn’t it? This post is both a fan letter to



Above: Spring Creek. Right: Twin Falls

the Buffalo River (a love letter really) and a thank you note to each of you. Simply, thank you for every hour you spent riding and working to keep the trails of the Buffalo open and accessible to all. I hope you and your horse or mule had some grand adventures along the way to that 3,072 and you were able to spend some quality time in your special place.

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From the Chairman's Saddle



By Don Saner, Chairman

Hello BCHA!

Looks like winter is starting to lose its grip (or almost) and I know our thoughts are turning to getting out on our horses, hitting the trail, and doing what BCHA'ers do best—trail work!


I want to take the time to thank the National Directors and State Officers for making our twice-a-month chairmen calls such a huge success! Our regular teleconferences are a great avenue to get information out to the membership and for the membership to find out how BCHA can help you in your state. On each of these calls, I have mentioned how important it is for BCHA to have your individual e-mail addresses. If we need to get some important information out to our membership fast, this is by far the best method.

We are now in the process of transitioning over to our new office staff at Association Resources. A complete and updated list of members and their contact information will help BCHA serve our membership well. You have my personal assurance that BCHA will not now, or ever, sell your information. Your contact information will stay in house and only for our use. We will not bombard you with e-mails and will

only send important information. So, please, get those email addresses to us ASAP so you don't miss out on things you need to know!


I would like to say thank you to our past Education Chairman Peter Kriger for his leadership and time. We are now welcoming Mack Long into this position. Mack has some great ideas and new directions he wants to bring to his committee. He sent out a survey asking questions about your education program for each state. Your responses will help Mack and the committee better understand what and where BCHA needs to direct our attention. Please be sure to get that important information back to him ASAP so he can hit the ground running at the National Board Meeting.

As I am writing this, I have just finished the agenda for the National Board Meeting. It is so amazing how much work the Directors of the National Board get done in just four days! The Director of Public Lands and Recreation Randy Rasmussen has put together a great Public Lands Workshop. We will have the opportunity to visit and work on strategies with the BLM, US Forest Service, National Park Service, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Ben Pendergrass from the American Horse Council will be there to update us on the National Forest System Trail Stewardship Act. Our Executive Director Jim McGarvey is working hard on funding and I'm sure he'll be addressing this in his column. We just have so much going on I hope you get the chance to come to one of your National Board Meetings in person!



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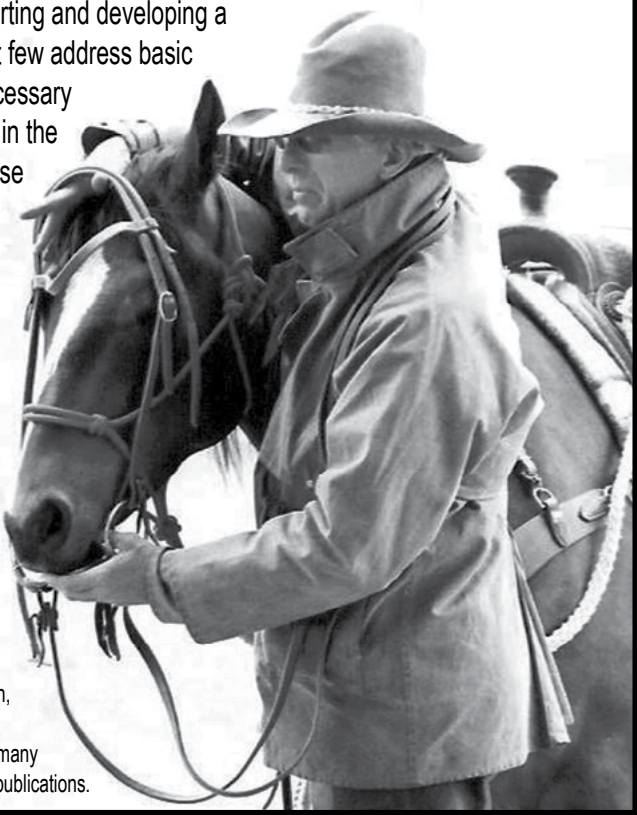
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Dan Aadland, Ph.D., is a lifelong horseman, rancher, and writer, author of eight books (including The Complete Trail Horse) and many magazine articles for equine and outdoor publications.





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Conference Schedule Highlights:

25 national keynote speakers and presenters invited - representing federal land management agencies (US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Land and Water Conservation, and more); national equestrian organizations, BCHA, AQHA, AHC, ELCR, and more); state parks, state and municipal land managers, and private land owners; Welcome by NC Dignitaries; Sponsors/exhibitors include FHWA, North Carolina Horse Council, and multiple national, regional and state agencies, companies and organizations; conference is featuring a limited-to-50-participants rolling bus speakers and sites tour/first come/first serve; topics relating to equestrian recreation successes and issues in the second decade of the 21st century, i.e. current discussions about access to public and private land, horses and drones, outreach to youth, Youth Corps, shared trails, and more!



BCHA 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.

Coming soon...

APRIL
20-23
2016

BCHA National Board Meeting - NV

2016 FREE-FEE Days on Federal Public Lands	
April 16-24:	National Park Week - NPS
June 11:	National Get Outdoors Day - USFS
Aug 25-28:	National Park Service Centennial - NPS
Sept 24:	National Public Lands Day - BLM, NPS, USFS, USFWS
Oct 9:	First Sunday of National Wildlife Refuge Week - USFWS
Nov 11:	Veterans Day - BLM, NPS, USFS, USFWS (11th-13th)

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In Loving Memory Denny Murray 1937-2015

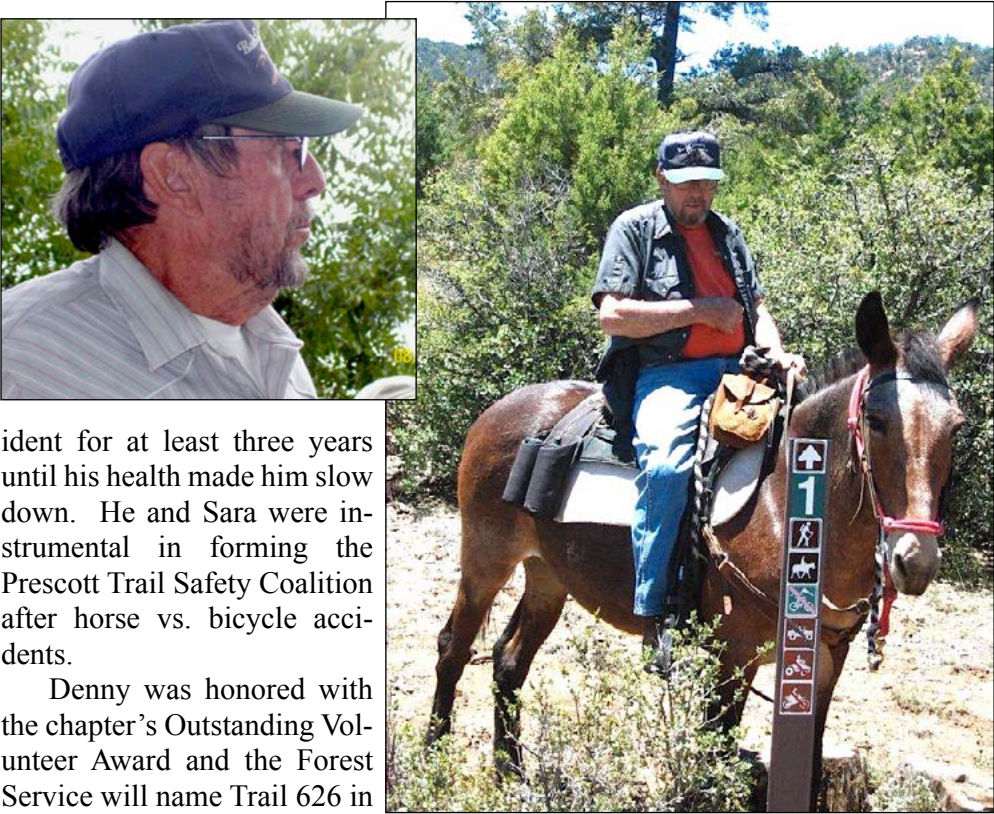
By Jim and Gayle Higgs

It is with great sadness that we in BCH of Central Arizona say goodbye to Denny Murray. At least he is in a better place and without pain.

Denny exemplified what every Back Country Horsemen organization would hope for in its membership – dedication to our mission statement and working tirelessly to achieve it.

Denny became a member of BCH-CAZ around 2008. He took on the challenging duties of Project Chairman and what a job he did! He worked hours on Forest Service paperwork, working hard on the Almosta Trail system, instrumental in the building of the pavilion at the Loop C group site at Groom Creek Horse Camp, took the lead with the Forest Service and the city of Payson to save Houston Mesa Horse Camp from becoming a motorized (OHV) camp, just to mention a few. He was great on his computer at researching pertinent information for the chapter.

Denny served as our chapter pres-



ident for at least three years until his health made him slow down. He and Sara were instrumental in forming the Prescott Trail Safety Coalition after horse vs. bicycle accidents.

Denny was honored with the chapter's Outstanding Volunteer Award and the Forest Service will name Trail 626 in the Almosta Trail system after him.

His accomplishments for the chapter are too numerous to mention. Den-

ny, we will miss you, rest in peace, you deserve it.

Meet Black Hills BCH of South Dakota Buffalo Hunt Raffle Finalist!!

By Renee Bechen, Public Affairs Officer

Everybody has special accomplishments on their bucket list but does yours include hunting a trophy buffalo? Well, maybe not. But to some it is a VERY big deal! A trophy buffalo was on Sheridan, WY resident Diane Boice's bucket list. Diane is an accomplished hunter in her own right, including several buffalo hunts previously. However, she had never taken a trophy buffalo. What defines a trophy buffalo one might ask? Typically an old herd bull of accomplished body size, stature and horn radius/length accounts for a trophy. Black Hills Backcountry Horsemen of South Dakota (BH BCH SD) in conjunction with Routier Outfitters of Buffalo, SD guaranteed a trophy buffalo that meant that Diane was all in for this hunt!!

Good hunting practices and skills typically come from one's family. All good hunters know there is more to hunting than just firing a gun. Hunting is a skill that takes practice to be a proficient with a firearm. Prowess and tenacity for hunting comes from spending an inordinate amount of time in the backcountry or prairie understanding weather, game patterns and habitat. For those that do not hunt it is tough to comprehend. In a unique twist of fate, Diane returned to her old hunting grounds. Although she grew up in California, her father would travel to Wyoming to hunt. Diane followed in her father's footsteps and eventually moved to Wyoming. Diane was sad that her father is gone but his presence was definitely felt on Saturday January 23, 2016 when she was able to take her first trophy buffalo bull.

The hunt on the Routier Ranch near Buffalo, SD is where Ryan Routier our guide met up with Phil and Diane Boice plus Doug and Renee Bechen. All are members of BH BCH SD. Diane was the lucky winner of BH BCH SD Buffalo Raffle that was a recent fundraiser for the organization. Originally, Diane's plan for this hunt was to attempt a stalk on a trophy buffalo using a cross-



bow. Guide Ryan was enthused about attempting to make this great crossbow hunt stalk happen. After several hours of glassing, driving and viewing potential trophy bulls, a strategy was initiated. A combination of prairie land, rolling hills/breaks with some short pine forest was part of the landscape on over 30,000 acres that several trophy bulls were located.

Diane initially had her eye on a trophy bull grazing in the short pine forest. While Doug, Phil and I lagged behind, our huntress and guide led us on an exciting two-mile hike and stalk. The first trophy bull had other ideas when the wind switched which made the crossbow and getting close obsolete. A much larger trophy bull was later located that proved to be on a mission to cover country across the prairie. Ryan was able to assist with weaving a stalk through several drainages, across a creek and over a knoll to where Diane placed a well-aimed shot with her 45-70-lever action rifle. Diane's hunting skills and accuracy with a firearm helped her take one of the top five trophy bulls of around a 100 per our guide Ryan. Out of 100 or so buffalo that Ryan has help guide, a female hunter has taken only about six. Guides do not impress easily because they "live and breathe" hunting with both good and bad hunters. However, it was clear to see that even Ryan was impressed with

his huntress that day!!

Diane is a marvel and one should be impressed with her accomplishment that day whether you hunt or not. Diane has had to overcome life obstacles not unlike that of the rest of us. However, what makes it a bit sweeter for Diane is that she is a cancer survivor. She also is a marathon runner and quite a competitor as well. How's that for inspiration! So for all of you, male or female outdoor enthusiasts, whether you like to: hunt, fish, horseback ride, bike, hike, run, set personal goals that take items off your bucket list. Diane just took one off of hers and it was an amazing hunting trip experience that all of us who participated in will never forget!

Thanks, Diane and Phil Boice, for allowing Doug and me the opportunity to share in a once in a lifetime hunt with you. Thanks to Randy Routier our hunt coordinator with Routier Outfitters of Buffalo, SD for allowing us a tremendous hunting trip on gorgeous backcountry of northwestern SD. AND we especially thank our guide Ryan Routier for his expertise and hunt camp stories that will keep us laughing for days to come!

Hello Fellow Back Country Horsemen –

This is my last article in the BCHA National Newsletter as your Executive Secretary. After over 20 years in this position, your Executive Committee has decided that it is time to go to the next level and have a full staff rather than just an Executive Secretary. Association Resources Inc. will be able to offer more services to BCHA than I can.

Being your Executive Secretary has been one of the delights of my life. When I found the BCH in 1987, I felt like I was “home”. And when the position of Executive Secretary came up in 1994, my husband said “That’s your job, Peg!” And I have lived BCHA ever since.

Getting a new “boss” every two years has been challenging at times but that’s the nature of association management. Since I am the one with the continuity and history of BCHA, I tried to gently guide the new officers during their terms – sometimes it worked, other times, well, that’s another story. Anyway, it was done with love.

I have met so many wonderful people in BCHA! I treasure the friendships that have evolved. And these are not just at the National Board Meetings but on email and the phone. Those devoted volunteers who send in their members’ contact information for the mailing list have become my friends, too. It is such a pleasure to email or talk to them and find out about their horses and lives. And there are the others that I get to counsel during the winter when there’s not enough horsing around to do and the winter doldrums take over.

I will miss BCHA and its activities but I will have more time to ride good ol’ Rosy Red Hot and see those trails that we love. (Of course, I will stay a member of my chapters – Pierce County and Nisqually – and maybe have time to go to a meeting or work party...)

By the way, I will continue to work with the BCH Education Foundation.

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Peg



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Arkansas Buffalo River BCH National Park Centennial Ride/Clean-Up in the Works

By Nancy Deisch

On the 40th anniversary of the Buffalo National River Park in 2013, the Buffalo River BCH of AR celebrated by riding the 131-mile length of the river—a ride that took 12 days, lots of planning, and a good bit of stamina. Recently when the Park asked its partnering groups to plan centennial celebrations for 2016, the first thing that came to mind was another river ride—this time in reverse.

So the planning has begun for the October 2016 ride. The trail will change a bit, for the better, this time, but the BCH'ers still plan to pick up lit-

ter all along the entire length of the river as well as remove trees, brush, and other debris from the trails. The rewards will be many. Fall in the Ozarks is a time of unbelievable beauty with the forests turning and the river clearly reflecting the crystal blue sky. All colors of the rainbow are represented, along with camaraderie of good friends and good horses, and the satisfaction of taking good care of our Park. These are just some of the things we look forward to with our Centennial Ride. There is still an incredible amount of work to do, but it has begun, and it will be worth it.



Photo: Going over maps and ideas, members of Arkansas' Buffalo River BCH and personnel of the Buffalo National River Park put together plans for the October Centennial Ride/River Clean-Up.

BCH of Reno Nevada

Share Your Christmas Food Drive and State Recognition

By Don Daniel, State Chairman

The High Sierra Chapter of BCHNV (Reno) has participated in the local Share Your Christmas food drive for the past five years. This year we collected over 550 pounds of food and \$100. As always, we delivered it to the drive up collection point on horseback, with a pack string. Nine members and seven and a half animals participated (we had a miniature horse in the string).

Hosted by our local Channel 2 television station, the station always has one of its members ride with us and interview the riders. Each year we receive great television coverage of the

all day live event, and we are invited for next year.

In addition, the Friends of Nevada Wilderness recognized our chapter as the Partner Organization of the Year 2015. Several of our members attended their awards banquet and accepted a framed print of Nevada's Table Mountain Wilderness in appreciation for our work with them in Central Nevada.

We are all looking forward to hosting you at the National Board Meeting in Las Vegas in April, 2016.

Hope to see you there.



BCH Wyoming Annual Rendezvous 2015

By Dan Stroud

Well it's January 2016 and I'm just now sitting down to write something about the 2015 BCH Rendezvous in Wyoming. The Rendezvous at Upper Green River Lakes was hosted by the Pinedale Chapter, called the Mountain Man BCH, fitting for the area with its past trapper rendezvous.

The Upper Green River Basin contains the headwaters of the Green River, fed by seeping glaciers such as Mammoth, Minor, Sourdough and others. The area has the trailhead at the lower lake, binds with trails that tie in to the Continental Divide Trail, and traverses not only to the south end of the Wind Rivers and beyond, but also north, even to Yellowstone Park.

Eighty-six people signed up and attended the event, from many places, including other states such as South Dakota, Arizona and Oregon. Every Wyoming chapter was also represented. Festivities included both on-your-own rides as well as guided rides to various locations in and around the area. Also included at the Rendezvous were dinners, sing-alongs, cowboy poetry, an auction, and live music provided by Jared Rogerson the last evening after the auction.

The first evening featured a group of three entertainers, with participation

from the audience, and included songs by three and cowboy poetry thrown in. The three that volunteered to provide entertainment included Dennis Dailey, Al Sammons, and John Sweem. All are characters and were very enjoyable!!

Barry Reiswig (BCH in Cody) gave a presentation on the public lands issues. In particular were those related to giving public lands to the states for management and how seriously BCH is taking this issue.

An auction that featured some amazing items was held the final evening. Seems like there was something for everyone at this auction and a good time was had by all with the event; many went home with purchases of one kind or another...I know I'm set for the next four oil changes on my diesel which was a purchase of mine.

Finally, the Sunday before everyone headed out, a Cowboy Church Service was held to give thanks for everything around us and for everyone with whom we had the pleasure of spending the three days!



The Catch Pen

BCH California MLU Day Ride Was T-o-o-o Cool

By Lucy Badenhoop
Photos by Jamie Canon



Photos by Jamie Canon.
Above: Vista.
Right: Four horses.



The Mother Lode Unit rode from Auburn to Cool, ate lunch, and returned to Auburn on Wednesday, February 10. There were four riders to enjoy the fantastic weather and almost empty trails for the 15-mile round trip...two and a half hours each direction.

Everyone started out with jackets or a hoody, but soon took them off. The trails had a few muddy spots from recent storms and they were easily by-passed. The morning ride to Cool encountered maybe two dozen hikers/bicyclers and only half that number on the return ride in the afternoon.

Early in the ride, the group saw some signs warning of a work crew and

loud equipment ahead, but when actually approached, they shut down the chain saws and waited for the horses to pass. They were thanked enthusiastically.

A sandwich and salad in the restaurant were chosen rather than picnic at the trailhead behind the firehouse. The horses enjoyed a drink and rested before heading back to Auburn.

It was a peaceful day that spotlighted the busy birds and squirrels in the trees along the trail. Good companions, sunny skies and spectacular vistas made this ride

t-o-o-o c-o-o-o-l.

Caples Creek Gets a Post Planting Party

By Lucy Badenhoop
Photos by Daryl Shankles & Jerry Heitzler

The Caples Creek Equestrian Trailhead near Kyburz, CA was open for use in June 2014. The official entrance sign was received in March, but required two wooden support posts. Russ Niesz donated six steel hitching posts for the trailhead, so a post planting work party was scheduled for May 6, 2015. Seven volunteers and Cathy Bounds of the USFS started with a safety briefing and worked from 8 am to 4 pm to get the posts in the ground before the forecasted thunder storm arrived. The goal was met!!

The team brought their professional equipment that made the job go faster. Jerry Heitzler brought his tractor/auger towed by Daryl Shankles with his truck/trailer, which made quick work of digging the 3-4 foot deep holes. Russ Niesz brought 40 bags of concrete, the steel posts and his welder on his heavy-duty flatbed truck. He saved the day when a support arm on the tractor needed a welding repair.

Cordell Van Reese came in his "shop" van with all sorts of tools for assembling the sign, mounting it to the 4x4 posts and making sure everything was square and level. I brought my landscape trailer filled with seven tubs of water, wheelbarrows, ladders, and hand tools. Mike Kohlbaker came with his truck bed loaded with similar items needed for the work. Chris Chaloupka put in a surprise appearance and was a big help setting the posts.

The next time you visit the Caples

Creek Trailhead, you can't miss the large new sign located a third of a mile down the dirt entry road to the main parking area. Cathy Bounds delivered the sign components, helped assemble it and approved the location of the sign and hitching posts. She added a small sign at the equestrian connector trail.

Visitors should then proceed toward the right to the cul-de-sac (day-use parking) and look for the four steel hitching posts. As you enter the turn-around area, there are two on the left side and two on the right side. They are suitably spaced to provide separate hitching or to string a highline between each pair of posts. The last two hitching posts are located across the bridge at the hiker's trailhead. They are on the slope, across the driveway from the vault toilet.

Once all the holes were dug, the group took a lunch break at a table and chairs borrowed from the newly outfitted Mother Lode Unit trailer. Everyone packed their own lunch, but bottled water on ice and cookies were provided. After lunch, the finishing touches were put on the hitching posts, tools loaded in the various rigs, and the area policed for trash... everyone was ready to head home.

On July 7 and 21, 2015 further improvements were made to the Caples Creek Equestrian Trailhead in the El-dorado National Forest in a joint effort by the Elegant Ears Mule Association, the Mother Lode Unit of BCHC and

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Above: Cement.
Right: Welding tie rings.



two ranger districts of the US Forest Service. Five members of the Mother Lode Unit of BCH of CA, picked up the supplies and spent the day digging holes, mixing concrete to erect two bulletin boards—one in the picnic area and a second in the day use cul-de-sac.

The first posting on the bulletin boards was a laminated copy of "HOUSEKEEPING TIPS FOR LEAVE NO TRACE". Hopefully, this information will eliminate some of the early issues associated with uniformed users of the trailhead.

On your next visit to the trailhead, check out the new equipment installed in the central picnic area—all are the results of our long term partnerships between volunteer groups and government land managers.

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The Catch Pen

BCH Idaho Squaw Butte Chapter Donate to Community

By Marybeth Conger

On January 12 Robbin Schindele and Marybeth Conger, members of the Squaw Butte chapter of BCH of Idaho, delivered a donation to the Emmett Valley Friendship Collation. The goods delivered included 259 pounds of food to help stock the shelves. Earlier on December 23, chapter members Phil and Kay Ryan delivered to the Pet Adoption League another 150 pounds of food and pet supplies. These donations were gathered at the Chapter's end of year Christmas party on December 19. For more information visit the website at sbbchidaho.org.



Pictured left to right are members Phil Ryan and Kay Ryan.

Public Lands Report

By Randy Rasmussen

BCHA and the BLM Sign Visionary Agreement

When someone shares pictures of an open and scenic landscape in the American West, I usually think immediately and fondly of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. That's my bias. For the American public, the BLM manages a great diversity of federal public lands and rivers.

My great uncle and "adopted grandfather," the late Russ Penny, was a BLM icon who served as state director in four different states. Today, he is celebrated as a visionary who helped usher in the era of recreation management—or "people management," as he put it—to an agency known at the time for facilitating mining and livestock grazing on the public estate. Uncle Russ set the stage for the protection of landscapes as varied as California's Alabama Hills, the coastal King Range, and numerous Mojave Desert landscapes that today are protected as national parks/preserves and as Wilderness.

My bias runs further. I recall my first summer in Colorado, when my wife and I served as volunteer river rangers for the BLM. That opportunity yielded a summer of floating and camping, free-of-charge, in the renowned Gunnison Gorge. I'll also never forget floating through the labyrinth of canyons carved by the Dolores River and its tributaries. Our flotilla, accompanied by botanists from The Nature Conservancy, scouted and mapped petroglyphs, dinosaur tracks, and rare hanging gardens on the red sandstone cliffs.

Most of the nation's BLM lands are located in 12 western states, including Alaska. They range from historic lighthouses on the Oregon coast and within Washington's San Juan Islands; wild and scenic rivers; national scenic and historic trails; and significant portions of the Great Basin and the Mojave, Sonoran and Chihuahuas deserts; to expanses of alpine tundra throughout portions of Alaska and atop Oregon's Steens Mountain and Colorado's Powderhorn Wilderness. Importantly, horsemen have ready access to most of these landscapes.

For these reasons and more I'm excited about BCHA's new recreation partnership with the BLM. Earlier this year, Jim McGarvey signed a 5-year Memorandum of Understanding that

encourages joint work parties with BLM field offices and will allow us—and our partner The Wilderness Society—to "identify, promote, and expand a system of trails for hiker and equestrian use" on BLM-managed lands. You read that correctly: "expand a system of trails" for our use. We have a unique opportunity to work in partnership with the BLM to formalize a system of trails throughout the awe-inspiring landscapes of the American West. Opportunities to do so would be realized primarily through our active participation in the agency's land use planning process.

The MOU builds upon earlier service agreements that encourage BLM field offices to enter into agreements with local BCHA chapters for the maintenance of trails, trailheads, and other related facilities. That will remain the primary motivation and benefit behind such MOUs. Yet the new MOU encourages other noteworthy outcomes.

A first step in implementation of the MOU is to help the BLM develop a new website highlighting the "Top 20" hiking and horseback riding on trails on BLM lands. With your input, we've received trail nominations from most of the 12 Western states. The next step will include working with the BLM to whittle the list down to about 20 trails for which the agency has sufficient information to highlight on its national website. This exercise will serve as a pilot as the BLM continues to improve its website by providing enhanced trails-related information.

The MOU also allows us to jointly identify landscapes where opportunities exist to promote new hiking and horseback riding trails. In partnership with TWS, we will assess where our grassroots membership (i.e., chapters) is well-organized and motivated to promote new trails through one of either two public forums: 1) comprehensive Resource Management Plans that might make significant land allocations for recreation; and 2) specific trail or "implementation plans" for which an approved RMP identified a need for new trails or facilities.

An example of the latter is already playing out in southwestern Idaho, where BCH Idaho and TWS are prodding the BLM to construct new trailhead facilities for hiker and equestrian use on the boundary of the Little Jacks Creek Wilderness. In this case, BCHA's

national MOU provides added impetus for the BLM field office to expedite a project approved via the RMP process several years ago.

For RMP processes that are upcoming or have recently begun, the MOU encourages BCHA and TWS to seek opportunities to "cultivate a community of hiker and equestrian trail users to help respond to planning, management, and maintenance challenges" faced by the BLM, including... "addressing recreational conflicts, and planning and management in light of budget constraints." In other words, a BLM field office might ask us to bring together and educate hikers, horsemen and other interests on the opportunities and challenges related to the public planning process.

The MOU also envisions BCHA and our chapters assisting in the development and conduct of BLM educational training (e.g., Leave No Trace) and technical skill workshops, including trainings on trail maintenance standards, first aid, CPR, and saw training/certification. These will be forums where mutual learning can take place, made available by the excellent skill set and technical know-how of BCHA volunteers.

To me, BCHA's new MOU reflects the heartfelt passion and diversity of skills demonstrated by BCHA's 13,000 volunteers—with a depth and breadth that matches the range and grandeur of BLM landscapes. The MOU looks toward a future wherein the agency provides the public with enhanced and sustainable opportunities for outdoor recreation and all the benefits that flow from it, from relaxation and physical health to increased tourism and an expanding recreational economy. It's visionary.

Looking back 20 or 30 years ago, who would have thought that outdoor recreation would become such a valued and important aspect of what the BLM can offer the public? Who would have foreseen the need for the agency to provide the public not simply with trails here and there, but with high-quality recreational experiences that will be remembered and shared for a lifetime? Given my bias, I have little doubt that Uncle Russ and his contemporaries shared that vision. There is no doubt that our and forthcoming generations will be the beneficiary.

Mammoth Cave National Park's First Creek Trail in Kentucky

February 4, 2016

A passionate trail rider from the Mammoth chapter of the Back Country Horsemen describes a trail riding experience we all might hope to enjoy in Kentucky's Cave Country.

by Doris Dorsey



How does one begin to tell tales of a trail when living adjacent to it most of their life? Mammoth Cave National Park, the longest cave system in the world that's home to more than 400 miles of explored cave and the second oldest tourist attraction in the U.S., has been my backyard for half a century and for that reason, it seems to be a hard trail to discuss. So many memories and perspectives come to mind when trying to put my words on paper. How to describe a trail that has become second nature to travel? There is nothing ordinary about this area of south central Kentucky—whether riding one time or a hundred, there is never a time to call these just your average trail rides.

Going back in time now and growing up next to Mammoth Cave National Park, I shared many happy treks as a child, especially camping at the park and boating on the beautiful Green River with my family. One of my favorite things was gazing up the sheer cliff walls of the river and wondering what it would be like on a trail up there, looking down on the river below. After starting a family of my own, we hiked many of those upward paths that are now horse trails. My love for horses grew stronger with every ride, and I became immersed in discovering more about trail upkeep and maintenance, so I started volunteering at Mammoth Cave National Park.

Now much of my trail time is spent leading the Mammoth chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen, serving as a voice for riders and an aid to the national park. Horseback riders like us are often the first to access a downed tree or litter, and we've quickly become a second line of defense in the continual work of keeping trails fit for users. We call these trails home and want them to feel the same love and care as we do for our horses.

Riders become immersed in these quintessential southern Kentucky landscapes and geologic wonders. Mammoth Cave National Park contains about 60 miles of horseback trails, all offering a wide range of conditions for riders. Riders have the ease of wide avenues and gravel surfaces on several beginner trails. But for those with more

adventurous spirits, the Green River trails offer sheer cliffs, narrow rocky ledges, muddy seasonal trails and creek bottoms. Riders become parts of the landscape of green, take a look within caves, rockscapes, virgin timber, karst sinkholes, farmsteads and settler cemeteries, all intertwined with the tributaries of the Nolin and Green rivers. Trails are open year round, with several horse camp options adjoining the national park.

A change in season offers a new view. Winter's stark landscape means a lack of tree foliage and dramatic views of the nearby karst, sinkholes, caves and rock shelters. Springtime dawns with a bountiful wildflower show with wild orchids and pristine flora. Summer and autumn are the busiest seasons of the year for horseback riders and feature abundant views of area wildlife like wild turkey, deer, the occasional coyote, rattlesnakes and copperheads.

One of my favorite trails is First Creek Lake Trail, a 12-mile round trip. The trail begins with a descent into the forest via a trail that was once an old settler roadbed that followed the original ancient buffalo trails. Many modern Kentucky highways were once these old buffalo traces. Here, those deep, wide tracks formed many of the early settler roadways that existed near Green and Nolin River watershed in central Kentucky. Looking closely, you can still catch a glimpse of some of the buffalo trails in the river bottoms as deep traces in the forest lead toward the river, still wide enough for the original covered wagon trails. These historical routes were once avenues for the abundant wildlife to find drinking water in the nearby rivers. These trails often lead to daydreaming for this history-loving trail rider.

Many of the Mammoth Cave system's trails include remnant sounds of early Kentucky settlers, and rider views include old farmsteads, which, after more than 80 years of national park occupation, all but echo the presence of human habitation. A sharp eye will pick out old foundation stones where a home once stood, a lonely settler graveyard, perhaps a rusty wagon wheel or a piece of a horse-drawn farm implement in the



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distance. Look close and pick out extra large rows of ancient trees that would serve as a property line or fencerow for the early settlers. Signs of a once thriving community of farmers and traders are now long forgotten.

First Creek Trail becomes more rugged now, winding down past rock overhangs that were once Native American shelters. Trail surface now becomes hardscrabble with sizeable sandstone rocks and loose under footing making travel on horseback more of a challenge. After a rider navigates through the rocky ledge, the travel heads uphill and footing becomes cliff-side with dramatic views of nearby Sugarcamp Hollow.

First Creek and Second Creek Hollow are beautiful reminders of the magnificent wilderness that all of Kentucky once was. After crossing a stretch of solid sandstone under footing at bluff-side, once again the trail descends into valleys rich with large growth forest and softer footing. First Creek Trail is now merging into Second Creek, where the small stream of water once again comes into view and riders tend to slow their pace. Tie posts are trail-side as Second Creek runs directly into Nolin River, the perfect spot to stop and stretch your legs with a view of the river below.

Hop back up and keep riding the descending trail further into the flat river bottom, catching a glimpse of old hearthstones, the waterfall and small

streams with fields overgrown with native bamboo and large maples, beeches and sycamores. The river bottom has a fresh mile trail loop offering various trail surfaces depending on the season, from muddy to swift water crossings in wet spring to dry stream crossings autumn. There are two campsites on the loop with horse tie posts, and they are full of so many riders in the peak seasons that you'll need a reservation to stop. Midway around the loop, there are other trail crossings, leading riders to options like the Temple Hill Trailhead, the McCoy Hollow Trail and Wet Prong Loop. Some of these trails make for six to eight hours of more riding and aren't for the faint of heart. For those wanting more of an easy trail ride, stay on the loop and return to First Creek Trail to circle back from where you came.

The peaceful wilderness landscapes and the bountiful trail rides are calling your name at Mammoth Cave National Park in south central Kentucky. Once they call, it's impossible not to answer. If I've learned one thing in over the 50 years I've dedicated to this national park, it's to always give in to the beckoning beauty of the trails.

This article is reprinted with permission from EquiTrekking at <http://www.equitrekking.com/articles/entry/mammoth-cave-national-parks-first-creek-trail-in-kentucky/>.

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NextGen

CSU and BCH of Colorado Team Up

By Chuck Peterson

In the summer of 2015 a great packing experience happened in the Mt. Zierkel Wilderness near Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Seven Colorado State University students and two BCH members spent a week packing and volunteering for the Routt National Forest. Led by US Forest Service Ranger Steve McCone, the troupe spent five solid and long days packing signage in and removed more than 2,200 pounds of trash out of the backcountry.

The students were all graduates of my Packing and Outfitting Class in the Equine Department of the University. All spent more than 16 weeks in class learning about, practicing the skills, and then taking a four-day pack trip at the end of the course. Then students who applied were selected to partici-

pate in this great experience. With Dr. Andy Dean DVM, a member of the Northern Colorado Chapter, and nine mules with ten head of good mountain saddle horses they rode long and difficult trails each day.

This great event was partially funded by the Rocky Mountain Riders of the Rockies, a wonderful horseman's organization who annually helps support young people and the wilderness in the way of packing and trail maintenance and helping the different agencies such as the United States Forest Service and the Rocky Mountain National Park.

Everyone was pleased that so much trash from the wilderness was removed and how well the students and the stock did in the endeavor. And from recent comments the public

very much appreciated our help.

Some of the goals for this event were quite obvious in that we were there to help the USFS in the back country. But as important we wanted to give our students some true and real packing and trail riding experiences. We did that. We wanted them to see the wilderness and get an appreciation of a true American Wilderness and learn how important it is to save and protect the country many love. If a picture is worth a thousand words then riding high for five hard and wonderful days is worth so much more. We know our students went away with many things and a week in the woods is one they will never forget.

BCH Idaho Guest Speaker at Cayuse 4H Education Camp

By Marybeth Conger, BCHI's Roving Education Chair Reporter

On December 11, 2015 Charles Chick, a member of the Squaw Butte Chapter of BCH of Idaho (SBBCH), was the guest speaker at the 4H horseless overnight educational camp for kids. His wife Lorraine set up the SBBCH chapter display, the BCHI banner, and handed out the BCHI placemats that show statewide all BCHI chapters. The camp was hosted by the Payette Country 4H Horse Leaders Association and was held at the Payette Country Fairgrounds in New Plymouth. It was a fun educational winter overnight campout for the horse kids to learn about the BCH organization and work on their 4H projects.

Forty-eight horse kids, along with their parents, and 4H leaders were in attendance. Charles began with an introduction of BCHA, BCH of Idaho, and then brought it down to the chapter level. He discussed the BCH mission and what members do, such as having fun clearing trails, building things on trails, being responsible on the trails, our volunteer service and partnerships to help keep trails open. Next was a discussion to help the kids learn the traits of a backcountry horseman's horse. The presentation lasted



about 45 minutes with great questions coming from the kids.

The Chicks had a giveaway drawing for a BCHI calendar that provided another way to educate. They had terrific fun with this community outreach event and encourage other members of the BCH organization to promote expansion through education. "The tools to do this type of thing are out there for us to use," said Charles Chick. He

prepared by reviewing BCHA and BCHI website information, and got copies of BCHI placemats for handouts. Keep in mind there is a provision in the BCHI budget to reimburse chapters for copies of these placemats.

Kudos to Charles and Lorrain Chick who have shown us a way to have fun with education and promote our organization.



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Reporting Volunteer Service

By Larry Zauberis, BCHA Volunteer Hours Committee

Now is the time for all National Directors to make sure the volunteer efforts of the members of their state have been reported to Back Country Horsemen of America. As the Volunteer Hours Committee Chairman I am compiling the Volunteer Service report for presentation at the National Board Meeting in April.

Volunteerism is one of the most important activities Back Country Horsemen can use in our effort to perpetuate enjoyable common sense use of pack and saddle stock in the backcountry. A central point of our mission statement is to assist government agencies in maintenance and management of public lands.

It is important to remember that our volunteer effort goes far beyond the satisfaction provided by the trail work itself. The hours spent and expenses volunteered add to the credibility of our collective voice in policy discussions with public land managers, whether on the local ranger district or in Washington D.C. The value of being able to speak from the position of having provided volunteer service cannot be overstated.

However, the value of volunteer

service by Back Country Horsemen is consistently underreported. While our members are more than willing to volunteer to maintain trails all across the country, many are reluctant to report the hours and expenses incurred in that effort. Even when members report their basic work hours on projects, they often fail to report the associated contributions like the travel time, vehicle mileage, and pack and saddle stock use. Each of these categories adds considerable value to the volunteer effort of the individual member.

It is up to us at the chapter level to track and report our service. Each chapter should appoint a Volunteer Hours Coordinator (VHC) or committee responsible for reporting the hours that members work and other expenses they incur during their service. Please feel free to contact me (Larry Zauberis, larry@77outfit.com) at any time if you have questions concerning reporting your volunteer service.

For more information and downloadable documentation go to the BCHA website:

<http://www.bcha.org/get-involved/volunteering/hours/>



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

AERC Welcomes BCHC

By Lucy Badenhop

BCHC was represented at the American Endurance Riders Conference in Reno, NV on February 19-20 (a Friday and Saturday). The booth was sponsored by BCHC and four members of the Mother Lode Unit attended to setup and man the booth for two days. Carol Gilmore and Randy Hackbarth organized/transported the materials, while Bob Sydnor and I assisted in manning the booth.

At 8 am Friday morning, the action started and continued until 5 pm Saturday. There were seminars, a tack swap, vendors, a continuous raffle, a meet 'n greet, a concert, and lots of friendly equestrians. One AERC officer visited our booth and thanked us for coming... she really seemed to appreciate our organizational presence.

The booth operated very well with the representatives taking turns listening to the seminars, manning the booth and soliciting other vendors to attend

the Rendezvous in Angels Camp in mid-March 2016 (the soliciting was disguised as shopping).


In the booth itself, three new members were enrolled in the Mother Lode Unit, and about 40 applications were handed out for other CA units along with the brochure for Rendezvous. Dozens of visitors from other states were referred to the BCHA website to get information on their state organization. Disappointingly, we sold only one Lucky Calendar raffle ticket.

The bowl of chocolate kisses and baggies of horse treats enticed numerous visitors to stop and chat. Discussions with folks who visited the booth revealed that the AERC members have similar concerns as BCHC members about the loss of trails and equestrian access to public lands. We found a lot of common ground.

When the trade show ended at 5 pm Saturday, the booth display mate-


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rials were quickly packed in boxes and hauled to the parking lot for the evening ride home.

Our BCHC booth at AERC.

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For the first time in its 55-year history, the North American Trail Ride Conference is offering free 2016 memberships to people who have never been NATRC members.

Executive Administrator, Laurie DiNatale, explains, “We are a distance competitive trail ride organization that values conditioned, sound, trail savvy horses that are a pleasure to ride. We value light and balanced riding and encourage the good care of horses over the distance and in camp. We want to share that with people.”

Camaraderie, fun, beautiful scenery, exhilaration, pride in accomplishment, confidence, overcoming disappointments, stretching our abilities, and deepening partnerships with our horses, are offshoots of the experience of riding in NATRC sanctioned competitions. Says DiNatale, “There is nothing like miles to cement the bond between horse and rider!”

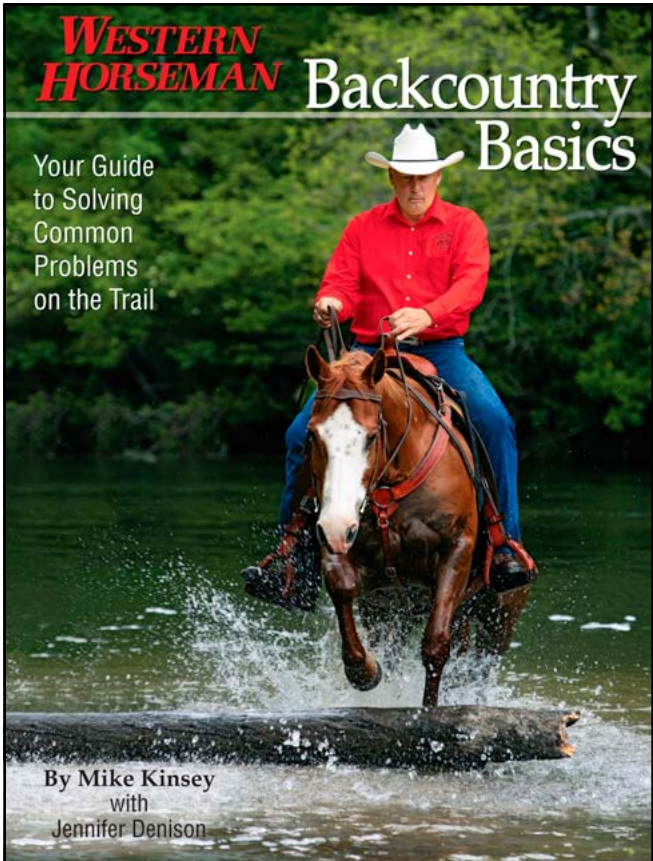
As a non-profit educational and distance CTR (competitive trail ride) sanctioning organization, NATRC education takes on many forms. The most unique of these is the direct feedback to competitors of scores and comments on their veterinary and horsemanship scorecards, which each rider receives at the close of a ride competition.

Other resources include clinics, a new competitor section on the website, mentoring new competitors, informative articles in regional and national newsletters, an introductory video, social media, and the soon to be published second edition of the “NATRC Rider’s Manual, A Complete Guide to Competitive Trail Riding.”

For more information on the free membership offer, go to www.natrc.org.
Contact: Bev Roberts
matefey@gmail.com
870-420-3244



Photo by Mike Collins. Rider Tammy Lineback on her Missouri Fox Trotter mare, Susie's Stardust, at the moment in 2012 when she realized her dream of winning the NATRC's highest annual award, the President's Cup.



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