

# Back Country Horsemen of America

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Winter 2016

## Arkansas Buffalo River Emigrant Wilderness Pack Trip

Article and photographs by Nancy Deisch



Remember the 2014 Chattanooga BCH national board meeting crowd-funding extravaganza? Remember the extraordinary trips offered to the lucky contributors? Two Buffalo River Arkansas BCH cowgirls bought the pack trip to the Emigrant Wilderness in the Stanislaus National Forest in California, but couldn't manage to take it until August 2015. For Jacque Alexander and me, it was well worth the wait.

Dennis Serpa of the California Mid-Valley BCH unit was the trail boss aided by Lee Owing, Karen Lopes (also with Mid-Valley), and Thies Thoming, an eager future packer and Dennis's grandson. Dennis and Lee each brought four mules for riding and packing, Karen rode one horse and packed another, Thies rode his trusty Arab, and we rode two of Dennis's fine mules.

On Thursday, August 6, everyone gathered at the Crabtree trailhead to put packs together, group, and sort to be ready to ride out on Friday morning.

After what seemed to be an amazing amount of organization (to two novices), we hit the trail and headed out the 15 miles to Buck Lake for 4 days and 3 nights of paradise. The ride out was incredibly beautiful and varied—passing by alpine lakes (at roughly 8000 ft.), granite knobs, unusual trail construction and maintenance (from an Arkansas point-of-view), and getting used to the sweet gait of a mule (for two horseback riders). Camp was made in a lovely pine grove across the trail from Buck Lake where swimming was possible.

The next two days were spent taking rides from the camp to other lakes—Emigrant, Wood (upper and lower), Gem, Jewelry, to name a few. Our guides were knowledgeable on the local history and the current issues of the area and kept us informed each step of the way. Sitting around the campfire mornings and evenings was the perfect way to start and end each day in the wilderness.

“Now, in a dream, I am almost awakened by the trot-like jingle of far-off bells. Soon the air is full of dust and hoofbeats.”

Above: Heading home. Below: Nancy Deisch and Jacque Alexander.

All good things must end, so on Monday morning we packed up and took a different trail back to Crabtree where the real world awaited and the fantasy was over.

Our guides took excellent care, fed us too well, and made us feel like we were old hands. It was a trip of a lifetime.

Jacque noted, “Now, in a dream, I am almost awakened by the trot-like jingle of far-off bells. Soon the air is full of dust and hoofbeats. Happy, kicking, rolling, bucking mules perform in front of our tents: checking in to say, ‘We're here!’ and then racing to the lush green wildflower-decorated meadow that adjoins the campground, hiding their heads in the grass. I smile. It's not a dream—just morning in the Emigrant Wilderness.”



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## Message from the Executive Director



By Jim McGarvey, Executive Director

### Change is in the air...

After 20 years of dedicated service to the Back Country Horsemen of America, our Executive Secretary Peg Greiwe will be taking her shingle off the wall and looking towards a little bit less hectic day to day. Peg started with BCHA in 1995 when we were much smaller. Her responsibilities and dedication to our cause grew as our organization grew. If you needed an answer to a question, or even if you needed to know what the question was, you went to Peg.

Peg's tasks were many and growing and always well done. One example is Peg's work in preparing for our national board meetings. When she came on board, BCHA required a room big

enough to handle only 20 people. Now we have difficulty finding a venue that can handle all our national board members and member attendees. If you or your chapter ever hosted a national board meeting, you know Peg was an invaluable source of advice on how to do it right and at less costs. Peg's last official duties will be at the 2016 BCHA national board meeting in Las Vegas. We all will toast her and thank her for decades of helping the Back Country Horsemen of America become the force we are today.

To fulfill Peg's duties going forward, the Executive Committee decided to engage an Association Management Company. AMC's are companies that manage the day-to-day duties of professional and charitable organizations. These firms are staffed with people skilled in fulfilling the many duties of accounting, maintaining the membership roll, planning, communications and other operational tasks.

This past summer, we formed a search committee to identify an AMC suitable to the needs of BCHA. As you all well know, BCHA is a very different kind of an organization than others. We are unique and probably one-of-a-kind.

National Treasurer Freddy Dunn (UT) chairs the search committee. Committee members include Chairman Don Saner (WY), Vice Chair Tom Thomas (NC), Sherry Jennings (WA), and me. Sherry has proved particularly valuable with her prior experiences with AMCs and business sense. She is also the editor of this newsletter.

This fall the committee requested proposals from accredited AMC's. Of the nearly 2,000 firms in this field, only 79 are accredited by the AMC Institute. We received nine replies. As of mid December, we narrowed down the applicants to three firms. Early in 2016, will we conduct video interviews with these finalist firms and make a recommendation of our selection to the Executive Committee for approval. The project timeline is that the selected firm will begin the transfer of duties process in mid March with an introduction to our national directors at the annual board meeting.

In keeping with her years of loyalty, Peg will assist as needed throughout the year to make this transition seamless and successful.

Thank you, Peg, for everything.

## From the Secretary's Desk



By Peg Greiwe, Executive Secretary

Hello my friends,

BCHA gets busier and busier. Executive Director Jim McGarvey is keeping everyone hopping with his trips to Washington DC to visit our Congress and Senate, along with the public land agencies. Director of Public Lands Recreation Randy Rasmussen

is right in the thick of the public land agencies. He's working on Wilderness stewardship plans and helping to guide BCH states in their work to keep the lines of communication open with the agencies. Chairman Don Saner has his hands full with the Executive Committee and working with Jim McGarvey and Randy Rasmussen. Vice Chair Tom Thomas is right there with the others becoming more and more familiar with BCHA processes. Treasurer Freddy Dunn is working diligently to keep track of financial issues to make sure we follow the rules. Steve Lindsey is out and about meeting and communicating with potential BCH states. I too am busy depositing all those wonderful donations we are receiving from you daily.

Our National Board Meeting will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada at Sam's Town Resort on April 20-23, 2016. In-

formation on reserving rooms has gone out to the national directors. As soon as the rest of the information is compiled, the registration form will be on the website and sent to the national directors.

Speaking of the website, I must commend Marty DeVall for his work. He responds to our emails right away and puts items up on the website quickly. We are fortunate to have him. Check out the website if you haven't lately www.bcha.org

Rendezvous, annual meetings, conventions are coming up this spring for the various BCHA states. Try to attend. You meet the nicest people there!

Hope that your Christmas and New Year's were happy. Where did 2015 go??

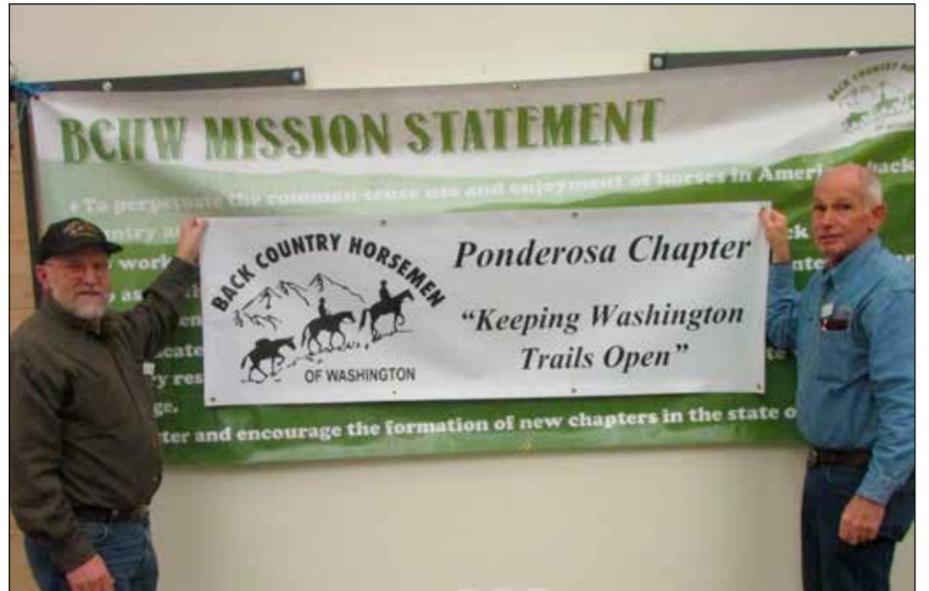
Peg

## Ponderosa Back Country Horsemen of Washington

By Ken Carmichael

On December 5, 2015 the Back Country Horsemen of Washington Board of Directors approved the newest chapter in Washington State.

The Ponderosa chapter, in Spokane, joins 32 other chapters in Washington to accomplish the Back Country Horsemen mission of keeping trails open. Through our organizational and planning meetings we are well on our way developing relationships with land managers and other recreational groups, planning work parties, scheduling educational programs, developing an advocacy strategy and creating a fundraising strategy to help fund our important work. We are not leaving out the fact that we intend to have lots of fun with each other and our horses along the way.



Jim Anderson (VP of Back Country Horsemen of Washington) and Ken Carmichael (Ponderosa BCH State Director) at the BCHA meeting where the chapter was approved.

## From the Chairman's Saddle



By Don Saner, Chairman

Greetings BCHA!

As I'm writing this, the year is coming to an end. It is time to reflect on my year as chairman of BCHA and my 15+ years of being involved at the national level.

I have seen the organization grow, along with leaps and bounds of growth in the scope of the issues we are involved in. Here are some examples of what we have worked on this past year at the national level.

1) We have full time Director of Public Lands and Recreation Randy Rasmussen. Randy has helped BCHA to be in front of the Public Lands issues as they arise, instead of being in a catch-up mode. We are able to hit the ground running!

2) We also have full time Executive Director Jim McGarvey. Jim took this position on with no compensation, which shows his dedication to BCHA. He has done a fantastic job in Washington, DC representing BCHA and on many other fronts.

3) We all have continued to work on the National Trails Bill and are hoping to see action on this Bill in the beginning of 2016.

4) BCHA has a new MOU with The Wilderness Society and the BLM. We have big plans to work with our partners in implementing this MOU. You will be hearing from us as we define equestrian and hiking trails that our membership can/will use on the BLM.

5) Mack and Connie Long offered another Packing and Wilderness Skills Scholarship for youth in our organization. Be on the lookout for more information.

6) BCHA became a partner with the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance. NWSA is offering a \$1500 grant for trail work in our National Wilderness. I'm hoping some chapter or unit in our membership can take advantage of this grant.

7) BCHA submitted a comment letter and is active in the creation of the new Saw Policy from the USFS.

8) Randy traveled to Berkeley, CA and attended the first public scoping meeting on Yosemite National Park Wilderness planning process. He was the only one there representing the equestrian interest.

9) And last, as Jim McGarvey wrote in his article, BCHA is looking to hire an AMC (Association of Management Company) to take BCHA to the next level in all aspects of the organization. The biggest aspect is expanding the capacity of BCHA to support all of its members.

Our National Board Meeting is coming up at the end of April. Information on the rooms has been sent out to all National Directors. If you have never been to a National Meeting before,



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I hope all of you had a safe and Happy New Year. Thank you for all you have done for Back Country Horsemen of America!

Donald Saner, Chairman

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## A Smile is a Powerful Tool in the Effort to Keep Stock Part of the Trail Scene!

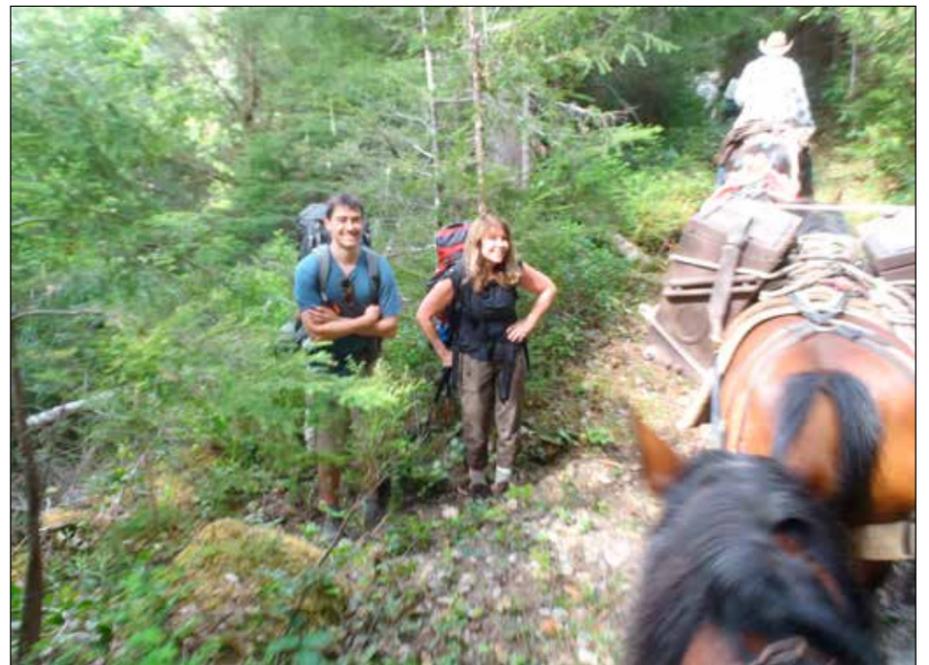
By Ed Haefliger

One morning at breakfast my wife Sue and I had a discussion how interesting and pleasant the interaction with hikers has been. Sadly for some stock trail users, hikers have been a problem. I have never viewed hikers as any kind of a problem! In all of my years of packing and trail riding, I have never had a cross word with or from anyone I met on the trail. From the very beginning, I expected a positive meeting instead of a negative one.

I believe it is my responsibility to take charge of the scene to guarantee all transpires safely. It all begins when I first see anyone ahead of us. I immediately sing out clearly that we have hikers on the trail. This alerts the pack gang and my helpers to wake up and get prepared for the encounter. Then upon getting within speaking distance, loudly and friendly I say "howdy." Slow down. Do not go rushing into a space that is rapidly becoming crowded. Now is the time for that big smile—show a lot of ivory. The best way to control the moment with your smile is to truly mean it. These folks are on an outing the same as you and want a safe, good time. The difference is that you should be more prepared to pass them in a way as to not endanger them or your stock. Whenever I need to stop and engage a hiker, I always explain why I'm asking them to respond to my needs and always add my requests are for their safety.

Now we are close enough to be able to clearly see and talk to each other. Here I look over the scene: Is there any danger to the pedestrians? Are they scattered along my route like a covey of quail? If so I ask with a voice of friendly authority to please move over together to the side or location that is going to be safest for them! The rule of thumb that says, "Hikers must move off of the trail downhill," goes to the devil very fast in the real mountain world. Many times uphill of the trail is a whole lot safer for them. You can never expect anyone to go somewhere they do not feel safe, so please do not attempt to send them there. If someone is not off the trail far enough, stop and give them sage advice on where to go. Do not hesitate to stop all of your movement if you see any danger to anyone.

Now I am about to move on or past them, the packing animals have begun to look them over. Here I again have instructions for them: I ask them to talk to the animals. Here is a cool tip. I ask them to help me! I say something like, "My last mule is nervous around hikers. His name is Gus. Will you please say 'good boy Gus?' Thank you so very much and have a wonderful day!" Now I have engaged them to help me with old Gus and they are becoming engaged or invested in my well being. Moments ago we were strangers. But now, for a short instant, we have become a team in the sharing of the trail!



The expressions say it all.

Okay, even if none of the horses or mules has a problem with hikers, a bit of a fibbing here will get them on your side. The bonus is I have them talking to the animals and proving to them that they are humans even with that pack hiding behind them. I have found most hikers do not know what to say to stock passing them or feel foolish just jabbering, so you must prompt them with something. I look forward to passing hikers because this kind of engagement makes me feel good and I get better at it with each passing. With these simple requests during our passing on the trail, I have communicated to hikers I care about their safety and horse or mule

riders they meet in their future can also be trusted.

The key to safe and friendly meetings of hikers on the trail is always the constant friendly smile and a constantly friendly voice. Give it a try. It works.

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## 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

- Jan 18: Martin Luther King Jr. Day - BLM, NPS, USFS, USFWS
- Feb 13-15: Presidents Day weekend - BLM, USFS (15th Only), USFWS
- April 16-24: National Park Week - NPS
- June 11: National Get Outdoors Day - USFS
- Aug 25-28: National Park Service Birthday - 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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## BCH of California LNT Masters Class

By Dan Horn

Our first year of being a Leave No Trace Masters Provider has been a great success. In June we held a class at the National Forest Service Center for Excellent Northern location, Bowerman Barn in the Trinity National Forest.

The June class was very exciting for us because of the robust agency participation. Eight of the ten students were from the National Forest Service. The story below is from one of our non-agency students Jim Leiterman from Thousand Oaks, CA:

The BCHC LNT (Leave No Trace) Masters class was a wonderful experience for me. I arrived Sunday night after driving up from southern California encountering a few other early arrivals in anticipation as well as our training instructors and several stock saying howdy from across the road. I was a mere assistant scoutmaster with trainings in many areas looking to gain my master classification as a LNT trainer.

In the morning when the rest of the staff arrived I found that I was the only non-stock person in the class. Despite that, I was welcomed with open arms by everyone. The strange part to me was, although everyone in attendance came from various parts of the state (though many USFS personnel were relatively local), everyone seemed to know everyone else.

I learned a lot from this class and everyone was very patient with me. Because my only connection with stock was a "rent-a-horse" on one occasion many years ago, I had gotten way ahead of my party. When I turned around to gallop back to their location, I found that the horse quickly obliged. But upon reaching my party, it became apparent the horse had other ideas and returned at that same brisk pace all the way back to the stable!

I learned many things, such as:



- When stock took bathroom breaks and proper techniques for rush hour on the trails

- Tread vs Hiker vs Stock and how perspective is everything—how one adventurer sees the other type adventurer and the perspective of how their experience is being wrecked or that nature is being ruined

- Techniques to passively teach those we encounter, alternatives to when they are being counter to LNT

- Those who administer trails need to keep in mind the needs of stock and not just hikers—not just pave over trailheads

- When hikers first start down a trail, they have their series of stretching and preparation as they start off, and when stock first starts down a trail, they have their own regimen.

- How horse or mule waste is nothing as compared to dog or human waste. Now cattle waste is another story! Again, it is all about perspective.

On a scale from 0 to 10, we can't get someone to jump up their LNT score, but we can get them to move incrementally up the scale. The big item was of the seven LNT topics, the biggest one was related to fire. If any of the others are violated, it's a problem, but when fire is not handled responsibly, the result is devastating for everyone!

During the weeklong training, we had great food, interesting weather, some hot and not-so-hot days. Although cooling oneself off at the creek

was nice, heaven was driving down the road, during a personal break time, to the local KOA campground before dinner for a heavenly shower. It was a learning experience and a fun one too! One of our USFS class members had a gazillion high adventure jokes and stories. And to top that, he and one of our instructors were cowboy poets! It was something to look forward to every evening.

A lightning storm mid-week unsettled our USFS class members since their stock would be used to resupply the backcountry fire fighters but fortunately it was a priority and not critical so they were able to stay to finish the class. The topper was near the end of the class when we joined the stock in their fenced area to get them as well as the Bowerman barn into the camera field of view for the class photo. It took three pictures to get one right. The stock wanting their cameo shot messed up two. The one that turned out all right appeared to have been taken by one of the mules. Camera timer set to go, run to get into position, and the mule walks up and starts pushing on the camera. Somehow it turned out okay.

In 2016 we have a Master Educator Course scheduled for April 4th to 8th. This class will be at the Mann Ranch in Bishop, CA. Anyone interested in attending this class, please contact Ruthie Heuer or myself.

Dan Horn                      Ruthie Heuer  
707-953-4903                      559-568-1260

## Spanish Trail Clearing by BCHC-SJSU Helps with Rough Fire Control Efforts

By Debbie McDougal, USFS

From July 28 to July 31, 2015 eight members of the San Joaquin-Sierra Backcountry Horsemen set out on a work party to clear the two mile long trail that runs between the Rancheria Trail and Spanish Lake in the John Muir Wilderness of the Sierra National Forest. This trail has not been cleared in a number of years and there were so many trees across it that in some areas it was difficult to even find the original trail.

The Forest Service manager for this part of the wilderness is Micki Didier. She and her crew, of one paid employee and two student interns, joined us on the project. When it was all done we had cut 64 trees and lopped over 1000 feet of trail to make it once again passable for pack stock and hikers. Little did we know at that time that our efforts would contribute to helping to control the Rough Fire and keep it from spreading into the wilderness.

The Rough Fire started on July 31 with a lightning strike in a very rugged and remote part of the Kings River drainage. Several "Hot Shot" crews were approached about being deployed to control the fire in its early stages but

all declined for very valid safety reasons. The fire quickly spread in all directions including north towards Spanish Mountain and the John Muir Wilderness.

In wilderness areas firefighters often use tactics called MIST (Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics), which enable wilderness values to remain intact when fighting fires. Some of these techniques include using pack stock instead of mechanized transport for supplies for crews inserted into the wilderness. Forest Service packers Debbie McDougal and John Sprik were called upon to supply up to four wildland modules that were camping in the wilderness and preparing to set backfires. The backfires would move toward the head of the fire burning out fuels to prevent the main body of the fire from getting into the drought stricken timbered areas.

Another MIST tactic is to use natural features or existing barriers to slow or control the advancing fire. Because of the efforts by BCHC-SJSU to re-establish a viable trail corridor to Spanish Lake, it was decided to use this trail as part of a fire line for the back burn.



Back burns are intentionally set to burn fuels between an established fire line and the head of a wildland fire. This technique worked well on this part of the Rough Fire because our trail clearing efforts not only gave the fire fighters a cleared area to set the back burn off but also made it possible for pack stock to get through to supply fuel, backpack pumps and water to various locations along the line.

Once the back burn started moving away from the trail towards the main fire the packers assisted in daily patrols to make sure no burning material came down across the trail which could have started a fire on the other side of the line. Overall this fire line was a major factor in preventing the Rough Fire from getting away and burning into the John Muir Wilderness.

# Public Lands Report

By Randy Rasmussen

BCHA worked diligently in 2015 “to perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America’s back country and Wilderness areas.” Our volunteers continue to represent the backbone of the organization. Here is an update on some of the important public land issues that will carry forward into the following year.

## Trails Stewardship Act

When Congress adjourned for the winter recess, the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act (H.R. 845 / S. 1110) had 76 cosponsors in the House and 9 in the Senate. One Washington, DC reporter labeled it “the most bi-partisan bill in Congress.” In addition, over 66 non-equestrian recreation and conservation-oriented organizations have thrown their support behind the bill. For more information, please visit BCHA’s website.

I spoke in September to bill sponsors Congressman Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) and Senator Michael Enzi (R-WY) to convey BCHA’s deep appreciation and our steadfast support in promoting the Trails Bill. Congressman Lummis announced her forthcoming retirement once the 114th Congress adjourns in late 2016. She remains committed to Back Country Horsemen and seeing the Trails Bill enacted into law. Now that the U.S. Forest Service and both the House and Senate Committee on Agriculture appear to be satisfied, we expect to see rapid and determined action on the Trails Bill in early 2016.

## Land and Water Conservation Fund

Congress pulled off a near miracle in mid December. Prior to adjourning, they came to an agreement on the fiscal year 2016 budget that included reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), albeit only for three years. LWCF is the nation’s premiere federal program to conserve our nation’s land, water, historic, and recreation heritage. For 50 years, LWCF is the primary means by which the federal government can purchase private inholdings in national parks and forests (from willing sellers), including consolidation of checkerboard ownership of private and public lands. Such consolidation makes land management easier and less expensive for both private and government land managers. The alignment of many National Scenic and Historic Trails sometimes includes private lands (in concept). Where willing sellers exist, LWCF monies can be tapped to allow for consolidation and/or trading of land title. Doing so has allowed for the completion of large stretches of the Pacific Crest, Continental Divide, and Appalachian trails, for example. Congress granted significant sums for these trails from the LWCF for 2016. See BCHA’s website for more information on why LWCF is important to horsemen.

## Bureau of Land Management

BCHA Executive Director Jim McGarvey recently signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that emphasizes a strategic three-way partnership with the BLM

and The Wilderness Society to promote hiker and horseback trails on BLM-managed public lands. This is a “first” for BCHA in many respects. The MOU emphasizes both BCHA’s traditional role to promote coordination with BLM field offices on service projects and creates the authority to expand on this relationship. With this relationship, BCHA can serve to help identify, promote, and advocate for the expansion of a system of trails for hiker and equestrian use on BLM lands. Expect to hear in the near future about how BCHA chapters might help to put this vision in motion.

## National Park Service

A number of iconic national parks have begun public outreach for input on the preparation of new Wilderness Stewardship Plans (WSPs). After extensive engagement accompanied by a high level of anxiety and trepidation on behalf of BCHA and BCH California’s High Sierra Unit, we were generally pleased with the final WSP issued by Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks. Our communications with park staff and its superintendent also resulted in a strengthened partnership and a commitment to include BCHC in the development of new front country horse camps and use of our volunteers in the maintenance of Wilderness trails in these twin parks that form the heart of the Sierra Nevada range.

BCHA and BCH Washington also are working to influence the outcome of a WSP for Olympic National Park. The park is expected to issue a draft WSP in early 2016. Our expectations are high because of the strong partnerships BCHW and its Olympic/Peninsula chapters maintain with park staff and regional recreation and conservation organizations. We have confirmed that few, if any, visitor conflicts or resource damage has been reported in the park as a result of stock use. We expect the WSP will further solidify BCHW’s role as a key partner and steward of the spectacular landscapes—from wilderness beaches, temperate rain forest, to alpine peaks—that comprise this national park.

In 2016, the National Park Service already has begun sorting through information offered by the public. Public input was given on Trail, Backcountry and Wilderness Stewardship Plans for the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, and Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Mount Rainier national parks. More planning efforts are sure to come. BCHA leadership and I stand ready to assist you in navigating the process. BCHA encourages its chapters to engage in these planning efforts in order to ensure that the needs and desires of saddle and pack stock users are well known. Your voice in the planning process can also demonstrate how horsemen can further serve to assist the National Park Service in efforts that might include: 1) public education and Equine Leave No Trace® training, 2) assistance in search and rescue operations and, 3) back country restoration and invasive weed control, and 4) a long-term commitment for the maintenance of trails

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# BCHA Education Foundation Grant

## Shoshone BCH Jack Creek Trailhead Manger Project

By Bruce Fauskee, Service Chairman

Shoshone BCH of northwest Wyoming had a very productive year. The SBCH has a core group of about a dozen people who enable us to accomplish many great projects. In 2015 alone we planned and built four new amazing corrals on the Wood River, repaired six feed bunks at Jack Creek, built a trailhead at Big Creek, and cleared 173 miles of forest trails.

The six feed bunks at Jack Creek were redesigned, rebuilt, and repaired with funding help from a BCH Education Foundation grant. These bunks had been in place for many years and had many broken rotted boards. The Jack Creek Trailhead is a popular destination for many horsemen from all over the United States and is heavily used by local horsemen. Horsemen were reluctant to use these bunks because of poor repair resulting in resource damage.

The repair and redesign of each manger cost about \$415 in material, plus all the labor and equipment required to complete the project. The SBCH requested \$1,000 from the BCH Education Foundation to help defer some of the cost. We contributed the additional money needed to cover the cost of the project and supplied the labor and equipment needed. We had an early spring and were able to complete the project in mid May. We had four



skilled welders volunteer their time and equipment plus seven eager helpers to complete this project. With all the great help and good weather we were

able to get all work completed in about 2.5 days.

The funding from both the BCH Education Foundation grant and SBCH,

plus the labor and equipment supplied by SBCH members made this project possible. Thank you to all made this very successful year for the SBCH.

# BCH of Washington Packing for the PCTA and WTA

By Rich Guthrie, USFS Liaison for Traildusters Chapter BCHW

In fall of 2003 there was an exceptionally severe rainstorm in the Cascade Mountains of Washington. One of the massively flooding rivers was the Suiattle (pronounced su'at'el) that originates on the east side of 10,628 foot Glacier Peak. The river flows north and then west in a narrow canyon. The Suiattle River Road follows the north side of the west flowing portion of the river for 23 miles and is a trailhead access to the Pacific Crest Scenic Trail (PCST) in the Glacier Peak Wilderness. Hikers, climbers, horse riders, and hunters use this access extensively. The storm washed out the road in several places and washed out a major bridge across Downey Creek, a tributary of the Suiattle River.

Due to funding problems and lawsuits by a chapter of the Audubon Society the road and bridge repair was not completed until the fall of 2014. The result of lack of access for maintenance is 12 years of fallen logs and other trail deteriorations on the Suiattle River Trail and adjoining trails. This past winter the Washington Trails Association (WTA) and Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) contacted me to see if BCHW could pack in supplies on horses and mules for four trail work events, each lasting a week and involving 10 to 14 workers. Our chapter did not have enough stock packers for this project, but we agreed to organize it.

Daryn Latham and Darryl Weidkamp who are members of both Traildusters and Skagit chapters were instrumental in recruiting other packers from Skagit and Whatcom County chapters. An appeal through BCHW for help put us in contact with Frank McMahan from Pierce County Chapter who pro-

vided us with ten stock days of help. This project involved packing in nearly 1000 lbs. of supplies. Supplies were for a weeklong PCTA work party and three following weeklong WTA work parties based at three different camps along the Suiattle River Trail.

On subsequent 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Saturdays we packed in more food, different tools, and more propane. We packed out garbage, excess tools, and empty propane bottles. Finally on the 5th Saturday we packed out everything. None of the packers worked every weekend in order to avoid burnout. Typically, everyone arrived on Friday evening for dinner, got up at 5 a.m., ate breakfast, packed stock and on the trail by 7 a.m. Packers returned late Saturday afternoon for another meal before the drive home.

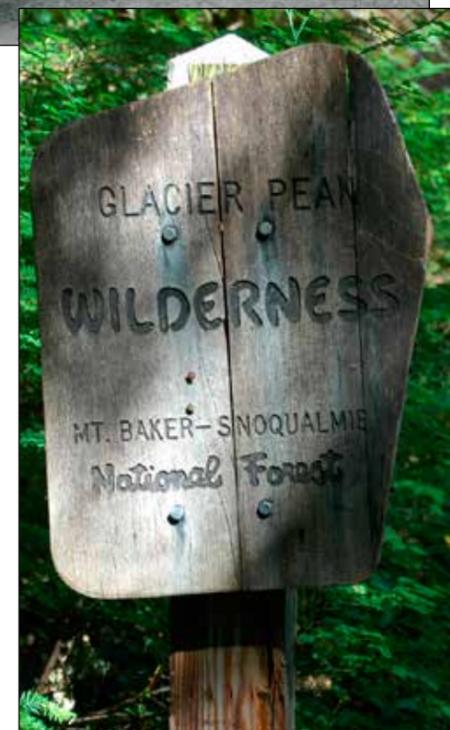
Traildusters Linda Karman, Rich Guthrie, and Louise Guthrie provided meals. Other stock packers working on this project were Cathy Nelson from Traildusters; Rob De Boer and Bob Claybo from Skagit Chapter; Walden Haines, Joseph Remenar, Bill McKenna, Rocky Leavitt, Roger Nelson, and Joel Zender from Whatcom County Chapter; and non-member Curtis Isaacson.

About 3,200 lbs. were packed in 47 miles (total over five round trips). About 2,400 lbs. were packed out a total of 29 miles and 18 empty pack animal miles. This project involved 130 basic hours of work and 300 skilled hours of work not including travel time. This cooperative series of work events involving PCTA, WTA, and BCHW was a satisfying accomplishment. We all enjoyed working together and getting to know one another. Some great sto-



ries were exchanged. WTA and PCTA people expressed much appreciation for our efforts.

Prior to the packing project Traildusters enhanced the convenience of the trailhead by installing four 10-foot long steel hitch rails. During the packing weekends Traildusters purchased and installed signs directing parking for hikers and stock users. During October several area chapters paid for 217.52 tons of gravel that were graded and packed by a USFS contractor that was constructing a nearby campground. This leveled up the trailhead parking for stock rigs and campers and expanded the usable area for parking.



# Back Country Horsemen of Kansas Report

By Marsha Hayes

When Steve Lindsey of Concordia Kansas started a chapter of BCHA in October 2013, he wasn't sure what the organization's effect would be. "I started the chapter because there was so little maintenance being done on Kansas trails and BCHA was a trusted, known organization that could lend structure and organization to the individuals who were already working," Lindsey explained.

## *Plays Well With Others and Makes Life Good*

In the intervening two years, Lindsey (who also serves as the National Director for Kansas) has learned many things about the organization and its nearly 100 members. Two points that stand out to him are how well the organization has partnered with other liked-minded individuals and groups and how the trickle down effect of the work the group has done has enriched the lives of so many.

The work that continues on the Big Hill horse trails on the Corps of Engineers property near Cherryvale in Southeast Kansas illustrates how his vision is playing out. "Susan Searles, our volunteer coordinator down there has just done an outstanding job of involving such a variety of groups and individuals in our trail work," Lindsey noted. "She organizes a fall work day, complete with barbeque dinner which draws riders and campers from Western Way Cowboy Church, a local cowboy ministry, the Friends of Big Hill Lake, and members of local riding clubs." Workers ranged in age from 9 to 73 and worked cutting brush, removing downfall and re-marking the 26 miles of trail. In 2015 the groups logged 680 volunteer hours at Big Hill.

## *A New Mower Arrives*

During the last workday at Big Hill in September 2015, the group's work was made much easier by the addition of a 44-inch Swisher Trail Mower pulled behind BCH member David Hayes's four-wheeler. Hayes explained, "Last year I pulled my little Ford tractor out and brush-hogged some trail, but having this little mower let me get places previously inaccessible. I cut four to five foot tall brush and weeds in places a person couldn't even see the trail." To the volunteers hiking with chainsaws, having a mowed path to follow was a luxury.

The mower was purchased with money awarded to the group through the BCH Education Foundation grant program. Lindsey recalled, "We received the maximum \$1,000 from the BCH Education Foundation, but were still about \$800 short to get the mower we felt would fit our needs. That's where the BCHA affiliate North American Trail Conference (NATRC)



stepped up. The local members who use Big Hill for sanctioned events contributed \$400 and then private donors supplied the rest."

## *More Trail Use*

As the trails at Big Hill improved, so did usage. Encouraged by the improved trails, Lindsey and his wife Priscilla decided to manage a sanctioned NATRC competition the weekend of November 14, 2015. It was the first use of the pavilion built in partnership with the Corps of Engineers, BCH, Friends of Big Hill Lake, and local families. Big Hill had not hosted a NATRC competition since 2009.

Thirty-one competitors from Texas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Nebraska started the two-day event. Area Lake Manager Mike Lapina visited an evening potluck dinner with his family and noted, "It was great to see our equestrian partners using the new shelter that they helped us install from the ground up. Everyone was so friendly and my three-year-old was very excited about getting to visit and pet some of the horses. From a manager's perspective, seeing the horse camp and trail in full use was great!"

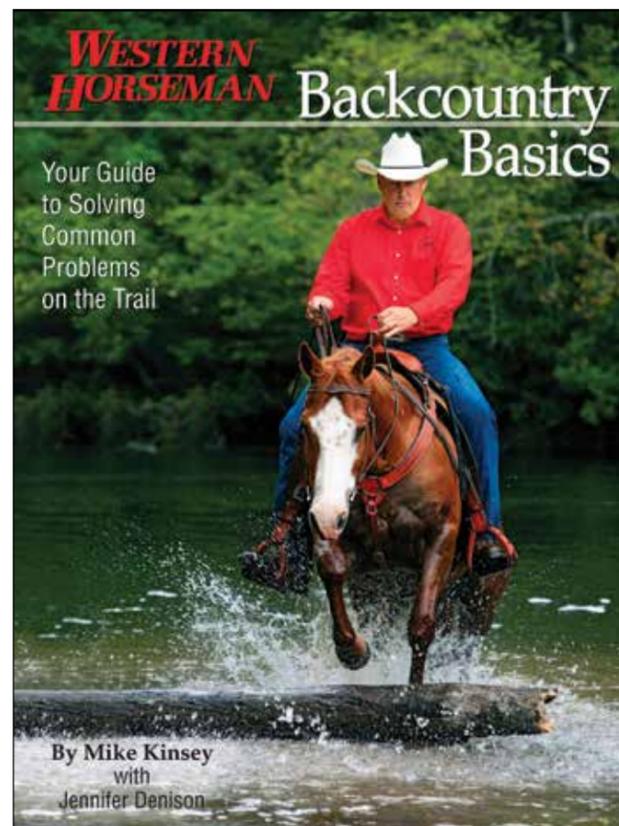
According to Lapina, Big Hill plans to apply for a 2017 Partnership Handshake Program grant to further improve the horse camps around the lake. "This is a program that helps encourage strong partnerships with the Corps." He added, "Big Hill and some non-equestrian partners are one of the 16 recipients nationwide of funds in 2016."

## *The Vision*

"When you are out on the trail, cutting brush, mowing, or dragging downfall out of the way, you don't realize what the trickle down effect will be," Lindsey mused of his recent hours working the Big Hill trails. "I was working about three weeks ago on the Timber Hill loop at Big Hill and these two women came riding down the trail. They asked who was doing all this mowing and marking. 'Back Country Horsemen' I told them."

The ladies told Lindsey how, on their previous ride, they had been lost for hours when they missed the trail in the overgrowth. "Thank you, thank you," they called as they headed back to camp.

"I think what we need to remember," Lindsey concluded, "is that the work we do benefits everyone who loves the outdoors, especially horsemen. It has been better than I could have imagined."



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# The Catch Pen

## California Mother Lode Unit's Escapades

By Lucy Badenhoop

### Fundraising Ride

On the weekend of July 24-26, MLU conducted their third annual fundraising campout known as the Fun(d) Ride. For a bargain price, participants got to enjoy the whole weekend without cooking or washing dishes, plus join in some fun activities.

Included were two nights of camping (Friday and Saturday) followed by two breakfasts complete with bacon, eggs, fruit, pancakes, and French toast. FUN activities were on Saturday. After breakfast, everyone packed a picnic lunch for the trail ride through the cool trees at elevations of 6000-6500 feet. This was a welcome relief from the hot drought conditions in the valley. The camp and first part of the ride were on private lands known as Mountain Meadows, adjacent to the El Dorado National Forest.

Back at camp, we offered a wine tasting, snacks, and music. During this relaxing time, there was an opportunity to browse the raffle prizes and bid on silent auction items. Next came the spaghetti supper followed by ice cream and baked dessert prepared in Dutch Ovens. At sunset we gathered around the campfire for the social hour and a final sip of wine before heading off to a good night's sleep.

### Yosemite Valley

About a dozen members of the MLU visited the Yosemite Valley Stable on October 14 for one of the last rides on the Yosemite Valley floor before the concession is removed at the end of this season. The park managers have discontinued this special service despite its popularity.

This was a bittersweet event for our group because, while it is the end of the stable operations, it was a magical first for one of our MLU members Melba Leal. Melba is a double below-the-knee amputee. Although she ambulates well on her prosthetics, she has only ridden her horse on her own property. This was her first real trail ride since the surgeries in 2011. The MLU is so proud of her continued progress and spirit.

The Yosemite Stable guides were

exceptionally attentive in selecting Melba's mule "Cash" and making sure she enjoyed the outing. When first approached about her special needs, they said "Not to worry, this is what we do regularly." The trail ride is one of the few ways that special needs visitors can access the spectacular sites in the Yosemite Valley, but it will be discontinued at the end of the 2015 season.

The trail is quaint with its cobble stone surface in many sections. Riders enjoyed a heavy canopy of old trees that made the afternoon ride shady and comfortable. It wound around and between huge boulders as it followed the almost dry creek. The trail took us to the site of Mirror Lake, but unfortunately, it had evaporated earlier in the summer. It was a memorable outing for all of us and one we won't be able to repeat.

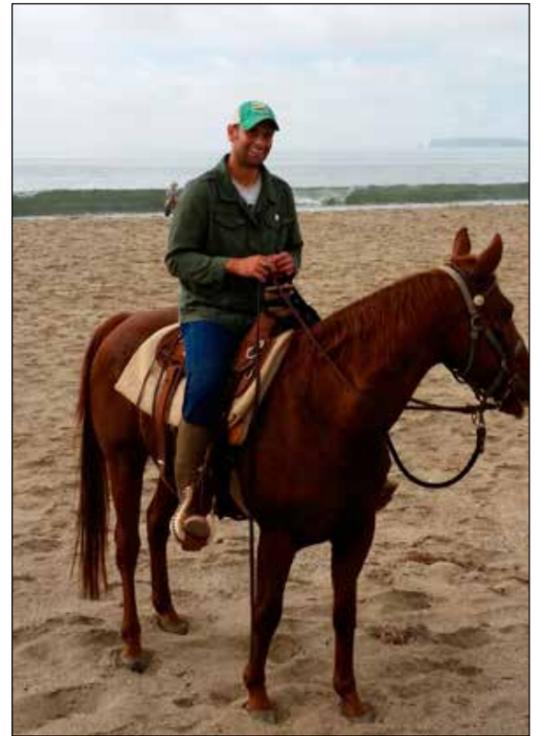
### October Training at Point Reyes

On October 23-25, we conducted our monthly training ride on the coastal trails near Point Reyes. It is our annual custom to visit our favorite horse camp: Stewart Ranch.

It was the end of the ranch's camping season, and school had already started, so it wasn't crowded and our group could spread out a little.

As for training, there were numerous gate opening and closing exercises on both hilly trails and pasture trails through a cattle ranch. Along with hiker foot traffic, there were other equestrians, so safe passing on single-track sections was an important focus.

On Sunday, most everyone packed up after breakfast and took a short detour to the beach before heading home.



Some of the mounts had never been around foaming waves and shifting sands, so it was amusing to watch their reactions. The most common sight was for them to be curious until the wave reached their feet and the sand moved... then they quickly danced away.

## Utah Wasatch Front Special Project at Weber County Park

By Tammi Johnson, Vice President

In March, Weber County provided a generous number of horse corral panels to be installed at the North Fork County Park in Huntsville. The panels were no longer needed at the county's Golden Spike Equestrian Facility in Ogden. Wasatch Front Chapter of the BCHU (WFBCHU) volunteered labor to build additional corrals at the Cutler Flats area of the park. The county transported the panels to their new location and chapter volunteers braved the snowy, cold weather to begin the process of sorting and assembling big, heavy-duty panels.

A few weeks later, a group of volunteer welders began the tedious task of securing what were once old, dilapidated panels into useful corrals. Non-welder volunteers pitched in by putting a fresh coat of paint on the pan-

els and clearing the ground of unwanted sagebrush.

North Fork Park and Campground is one of the many parks adopted by WFBCHU. The chapter teams up with other volunteer park users like Weber Pathways and Ogden Nordic to keep the bridges sound on the Ben Lomond and Mule Back trails. We also clear all trails of deadfall and treacherous low hanging limbs. Chapter volunteers donate the use of their pack animals to haul water and supplies to and from Boy Scout activities on the Ben Lomond trail and support the annual Skyline Mountain Marathon.

A couple of years ago, our group worked with the Weber County Parks department to plan and complete of a new trail, Mule Back. The name Mule Back acknowledges the Back Coun-

try Horseman and fits with other trail names of Mule Shoe and Mule Ear. Mule Shoe trail provides a short cut connecting trail from the Cutler Flats to Mule Shoe. The connection makes it safer for users by keeping them away from the frequently driven dirt road.

WFBCHU's future plans for the newly constructed equestrian area include tapping into the current water supply to bring water access closer to the corrals. Weber County will work on improving the trailer parking around them.

The WFBCHU is one of the largest and most active chapters in Utah, with thousands of volunteer man-hours annually dedicated to trail improvement and maintenance efforts in Weber, Davis, and Cache counties.

# The Catch Pen

## Front Range Backcountry Horsemen – Last Child in the Woods? Not Here in Colorado!

By Dee Lyons

*Campout with Kappa Alpha Psi – Mile High Denver Chapter*

The 6th annual weekend FRBCH campout in June with Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wilderness and Kappa Alpha Psi was another success. Kappa Alpha Psi was founded on January 5, 1911, at the Indiana University in Bloomington. It has become an international organization with 721 chapters reaching out to United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, South Africa, Virgin Islands, Korea, The Bahamas and Bermuda. Their inspiring motto is: "Achievement in every field of human endeavor."

Students from 5th to 12th grades continued their annual training of skills with trail maintenance training and horsemanship in the Pike National Forest. Carl Dixon from the Kappa Alpha Psi noted it is part of the students' education for community involvement and training leaders of tomorrow. He said the campout allows city youth exposure to nature and horses, along with living and dealing with the outdoors. Teams were formed to perform trail corridor clearance, create waterbars, resolve mud bog issues and trail tree removal. New skills were learned, e.g., how to use rock bars, moving large rocks with austins and how to load panniers for the pack horses.

Only five boys participated in the first campout. Since then the group has grown and is capped at 20 boys. Now the program is so popular, students compete for the ability to attend. Many thanks to Pam Doverspike and her crew for spending many hours in planning this important campout as the boys look forward to another adventure in 2016.

*Campout with Girl Scouts*

MLU held its 2nd annual campout in July with Troop 2732 from Centennial Colorado. Young Girl Scouts had an adventure in identifying and eradicating musk thistle and common mullein on the AG Ranch. The ranch is home



of the Region 2 Specialty Packstring for the Forest Service. The Girl Scouts earned a camping badge and learned horsemanship skills with the horses brought by the members of FRBCH. A whopping 365 pounds of weeds were eradicated followed by the evening of horsemanship and riding. Thanks to Kitty Bladt and her crew in the countless hours preparing for the campout.

*Pacific Crest Trail*

MLU also tackled a hard to reach spot on the PCT. See the full article [http://bit.ly/PCTA\\_MLU](http://bit.ly/PCTA_MLU)



## Tennessee Big South Fork Fundraiser

By Robert Andrys

On September 12th the BCH of the Big South Fork held their annual fundraiser at Zenith Stables. We raised over \$1,500.00 to continue our work of helping the Park Service maintain the trails in the Big South Fork. The event began with a horse ride, including lunch on the trail, and ending at the campground for a fantastic supper.

Local businesses and individuals donated during a silent auction and raffle. We also raffled off a beautiful homemade quilt and tanned cowhide with a drawing held on Halloween.

In the spring, our members spent hundreds of hours alongside members of the Park Service to clear trees from the entire O & W trail, most of Tar Kiln, Little Cliff trails and the Mount Helen trailhead road after the ice storm made them impassible.

This summer we partnered with the Park Service to install a concrete

crossing over White Oak Creek that had been washed away in the flood of 2010. It took many days to pour the concrete planks, move them and install them. Our organization donated over \$3,000 in material. The Park Service provided the equipment and labor. We estimated that if this crossing had been contracted out it would have cost more than \$10,000. After this donation, the Park Service was able to get a matching grant of \$10,000 for more trail improvements.

We want to thank our donors the Rogers Group and Rodney Cook for the gravel base; Glen Frosselli, Bruce Russell, and So Diggin' Inc. for the equipment; and Volunteer Energy Co-operative for the grant funding.

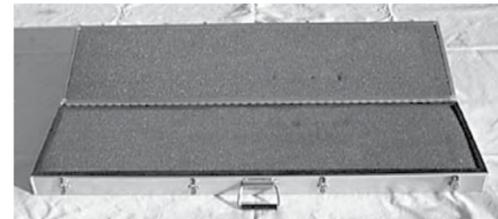
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Note: For questions or graphic design and layout of your ad, please contact Deborah Schatz at (406) 892-0200 or [deborah.bcha@gmail.com](mailto:deborah.bcha@gmail.com).

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# Is This Back Country Horsemen's Defining Moment?

Time steadily and slowly moves forward in our lives: second by second rolling into minute by minute, day upon day. Boringly slow at times, lightening fast at others.

Will 2016 be BCHA's Defining Moment? The critical, illuminating point in time where our steady growth over the years takes a giant leap forward. A time that we will look back on with pride and say "That was the moment when BCHA became a national force. That was the special moment when we pulled as one to make a dream come true."



Special defining moments often surprisingly appear out of continual steady progress. The right time, the right people and the right motivation for action come together as if by magic. Is this where we are now? Is this that magic moment? If not now, when?

The Greeks inscribed on their sundials:

*Ab hoc momento pendet aeternitas*, or "On this moment hangs eternity."

Is this the moment when BCHA members will say--

This is what we are. -- This is what we do.

This is what our legacy will be.

We will make sure that trails DO last forever.

If we do not do this now, in our lifetime, it will not be done.



Unless we lift together, we will be passing a poverty of spirit onto our grandchildren. While we are not looking, while we take care of our day-to-day chores, the freedom to explore and contemplate America's wild open land might quietly disappear.

Join this mass movement within BCHA to create new national educational programs, to begin defining chapter-wide youth activities, to create larger grant possibilities, to increase our presence in Washington where federal agencies make decisions day in and day out, with or without horsemen.

Join the crowd who believes that there is no cause more just than to keep our forests and natural lands open for enjoyment by the people and for the people.

The TRAILS FOREVER FUND. BCHA's doorway to the future.  
It will define our moment.



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# BCHA Booth at the NFR in Las Vegas

by Karen Lopes, Mid Valley Unit, BCH-California



Dennis Serpa and Rod Player

*“What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas!”* Well, not this time! BCHA provided one-on-one outreach to hunters and equestrians at the Hunter Christmas in Las Vegas in December. We want everyone to know what happened in Vegas!

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation held their Elk Camp and Conference in conjunction with the National Finals Rodeo “Cowboy Christmas” for the second consecutive year. BCHA had a presence at the inaugural collaboration last year and we were excited to participate again this year. In 2014 the conference was four days. It was expanded to a full 10 days to coincide with Cowboy Christmas. BCHA had a booth in the upper story of the Las Vegas Convention Center’s South Hall. We were located next to the “Elk Country Theater” where various presentations took place throughout the week.

BCHA gave a presentation titled “Packing Tips for the Hunting Horsemen” during the first four days of the 10-day event. I started with a brief introduction of “Who We Are and What We Do” and shared with the audience the number of members and value of our volunteerism over the course of one year. We had iron mules on the stage with all of our equipment, a big screen with informational slides, and many pictures from various members showing BCHA in action. Mack and Connie Long gave a wonderful demonstration of how to man a load and how to pack out your elk using the decker packsaddle. Casey Hufstader presented some history, how to use the sawback packsaddle, and the benefits of using the Walker hitch. He included tips on how to restrain your stock in the backcountry. Once the presentation was over, many from the audience came up to the stage to get hands-on practice.

Our booth had two iron mules and plenty of room. The space allowed our BCHA volunteers to work with visitors who wanted to get some hands-on experience with packing and tying loads. We had a television screen mounted in the corner showing the various pictures that had been collected from many different members. Most had captions

that explained what or where the work was taking place. Deb Mason from the Mid Valley Unit (CA) donated a beautiful custom made set of leather saddlebags with a BCHA stamp. Visitors to our booth filled out a card to be entered in the drawing for the saddlebags. It was a great time visiting with people as they walked through the many exhibits and sharing with them the goals and objectives of BCHA. I especially enjoyed visiting with BCHA members from different states and learning more about the types of volunteer efforts they focus on in their state.

Dennis Serpa from Mid Valley Unit orchestrated the entire booth. From soliciting members for pictures, organizing those pictures into the wonderful slide show, to getting the booth manned with volunteers for the entire ten days, enlisting the extra volunteers needed for the stage presentations, to hauling all of the equipment and setting up the display, Dennis did it all! Please give Dennis a HUGE thank you for making this happen. The booth was planned out with attention to detail. Dennis dedicated an enormous amount of time in preparation for this event. Mike Kohlbaker was available the entire ten days, filling in whenever the shifts to man the booth needed extra volunteers. Please extend thanks to Mike as well. Lloyd Erlandson volunteered to take down the booth and haul everything back home. Thank you! In addition, here are the volunteers that helped with the booth and/or presentations: **From California:** Dennis and Loretta Serpa, Karen Lopes, Mike and Norma Kohlbaker, Lloyd and Susan Erlandson, Sue Watkins, Bill Carter, Chip and Linda Herzig, Troy and Susie Patton, Merrill Weston, Paul and Gail van Velzer, Richard Waller, Randy Hackbarth, Carl and Julie Perry. **From Colorado:** Kathy Davey, Kitty Bladt, Shirley Howington. **From Montana:** Mack and Connie Long. **From Nevada:** Terry Jones, Elaine McPherson. **From Oregon:** Casey Hufstader, Matt Hope. **From Utah:** Wayne Luddington, Rod Player, Richard Webb, Craig Allen, Freddy Dunn, Debra Anderson, Alan Phister. **From Wyoming:** Bill Hackney.

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# Bitter Root BCH Members Construct New Horse Camp

By Karen Philips and Joe Rogish

Several ambitious members of the Bitter Root BCH chapter (located in the beautiful Bitterroot Valley of western Montana) took on a huge task when they developed a plan in 2014 to build a new horse camp adjacent to the existing Sam Billings Memorial Campground located in the Bitterroot National Forest. Working closely with the West Fork Ranger District, they designed a horse camp with pull-through parking areas, permanent high line structures with saddle racks, hitching rails, metal fire rings and picnic tables. Mark DeGrazier, Steve Greer and Fred Weisbecker gathered materials, wrote grants and worked with various entities to pull this off. In addition to the Forest Service, they also coordinated with Trapper Creek Job Corps whose students built many of the structures needed.

Members worked all summer getting things rolling with excavation work, leveling, gravel work and removal of vegetation. In September, project leaders Mark, Steve and Fred asked for help to complete the final leg of the horse camp project. And on October 1, members definitely responded. Twenty-one people, along with West Fork Ranger District recreation specialist Joe Butsick, showed up with work gear and tools, ready to get it done. Dan Brandborg and Brad Pollman operated tractors with buckets and backhoes, digging holes for the hitch rails, high line poles, fire rings and picnic table frames. Members maneuvered hitch rails and high line poles into place and then secured them with 2x4 rails, metal rods and duct tape. They placed and leveled fire rings and picnic table frames while others cleared trail to a watering spot. After lunch the cement truck arrived and members guided the troughs to fill all those holes. Mark and Steve camped overnight and removed rails, rods and duct tape the next day. Members completed additional work

on October 8 and then the cement needed to cure. Building a horse camp is a rare feat these days; we are proud of what these members accomplished!

What remained to be done in 2015 were final touches on the horse camp (completed last spring) and clearing Boulder Creek Trail from the horse camp to Boulder Lake. The trail had been previously cleared but since then had been hit by windstorms, the usual Montana winter weather, and downed trees from old forest fires, so there was no shortage of work to make the trail usable. The first crew hit the trail on August 8 and made it eight miles before running out of daylight. They arrived back at the horse camp that night to a welcoming party of folks who brought them food and drinks for which the crew was grateful! The weekend of October 17-18, five members undertook phase three of the trail-clearing project with an overnight on the trail planned. With phase two completed on August 8 and heavy storm damage occurring in the Sam Billings Memorial Campground later that month, the crew questioned what they would run into in the first eight miles they had previously cleared. It did not take long to learn that the storm damage was not isolated to the campground area and much of the trail previously cleared would have to be cleared again. The crew cleared 31 trees during the two-day project, including some very large trees of 36 to 40 inch diameter. All the work was performed inside the wilderness area, thus requiring crosscut saw work exclusively. One reroute was created and a tree suspended eight feet above the trail was reported to the West Fork Ranger District. Several downed trees outside of the wilderness area will require future chainsaw work, but all in all, the trail is in much better shape now for users of the new Boulder Creek Horse Camp and Boulder Creek Trail.



Brad sets hitchrails. Earl Philips (left) and Rita Atencio (right) assist Brad.



Joe Rogish, Taylor Orr and Carol Johns face a challenging obstacle.



Dan Brandborg digs holes.



Mike Foster and Joe Rogish level a high line and saddle rack post.

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