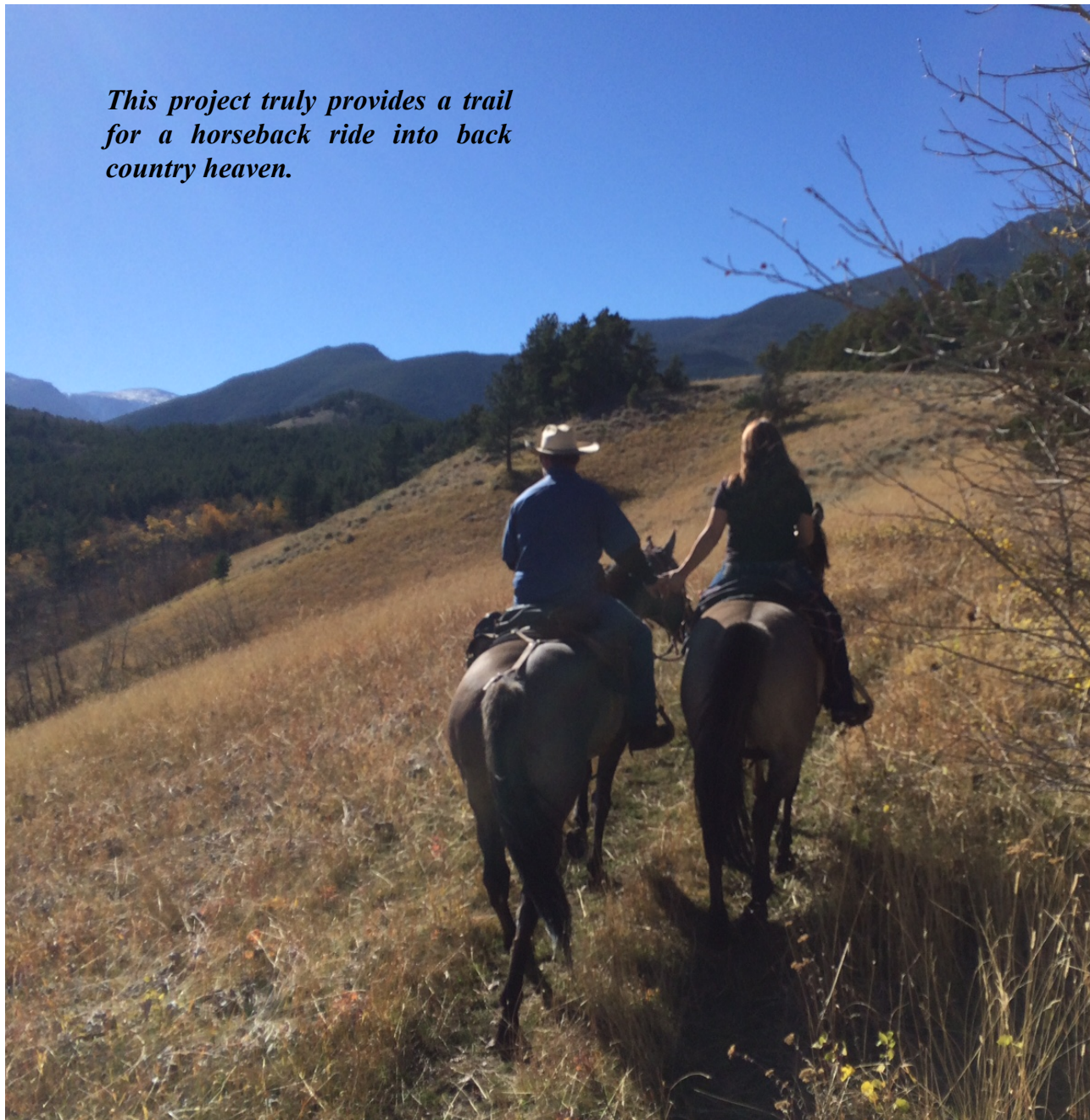


DOUBLE DIAMOND AWARD APPLICATION

Presented By: *Beartooth Back Country Horsemen*

*This project truly provides a trail
for a horseback ride into back
country heaven.*



DOUBLE DIAMOND AWARD APPLICATION

Presented By: *Beartooth Back Country Horsemen (BBCH)*

This is the story of the **Ernie Strum** Trail—a trail to Lily Pad and Crater Lakes—by possibly the largest coalition of volunteers-and government ever with BBCH as its HUB!

BACKGROUND

The idea of a four-part trail complex to provide public access to McDonald Basin and the North face of the Beartooth Mountain Wilderness took root in 1999. This area lies between the West Rosebud valley and the old Benbow mine. Located just outside of the official wilderness boundary, but just as remote, primitive and secluded as if it were officially wilderness, it contains the headwater drainages of Fiddler and Fishtail creeks including the forks of each. The West Rosebud is a magnificent, beautiful scenic valley leading to the heart of the Beartooth Wilderness that has never had horse trail access, apart from a short hunting season exception. However, it is one of the most popular and most used areas, with two developed Forest Service campgrounds but only one overused trail. Blocked by private holdings, the adjacent McDonald basin has no open public access short of a very tough bushwhack, and certainly not horse accessible. See attached Supporting Documents for map of the area.

Due to its high altitude, the upper reaches of the Beartooth country provides a short trail-user season; however, the North Face and McDonald basin area is a much lower elevation giving a seven to nine month user season.



“Spring” meeting of some coalition members

The terrain definitely lends itself to being an awesome recreational area, full of opportunities and was described to BBCH by Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks biologist as the most bio-diverse area in Montana. “It feels good to see something wild and free.” This is a new, non-

“The terrain was described by Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks biologists, as the most bio-diverse area in Montana.”

motorized, trail starting at the edge of a backcountry county road as it passes through a short section of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land surrounded on three sides by privately owned ranch companies. That land and our new trailhead entry had been posted and blocked by a livestock fence for well over 80 years. The fourth side abuts a Montana State owned school section, containing Lily Pad and Carter Lakes, which happens to be adjacent to the US Forest Service land.



Marge & Ernie Strum at what is now known as Strum Point

VISION

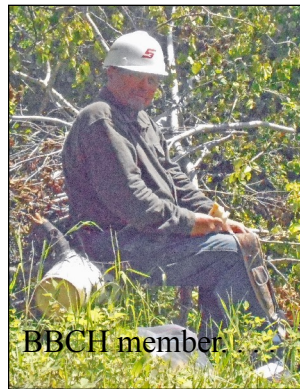
Ernie Strum and other BBCH members had been told by “ole timers” of old, long abandoned hunter and shepherd trails in this area. BBCH members began to talk the “vision” to all that would listen.

The seed sprouted and really began to grow in 2003 when the, NEW, BLM Recreational Planner was asked to contact the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FW&P) Regional Biologist about access to stock fish in Crater Lake. The following year she and the BLM Field Manager hiked from the West Rosebud road over the ridge into the State School Section containing the lakes, while talking about public access and seeing the added recreation opportunities potential. The FW&P stocked Crater Lake with Rainbow trout and they continued to consider a public access trail to the lakes.

In 2005 BBCH members, the new BLM Recreational Planner and a Crow historian were planning a group weekend campout for the BBCH and Montana Wilderness Association with tours of the Native American artifact sites of the area. During that day we learned by chance of each other’s desire to build a trail through their land to Lilly Pad and Crater lakes. Perhaps “fate” played a roll!

COALITION

With the circle now complete, the balance of 2005 was used to continue building a coalition of willing and motivated partners to bring this project to fruition. To start, a representative of Montana Department of Natural Resource Conservation (MT DNRC), BBCH members and **Ernie** set up a coalition meeting at the DNRC. At that meeting it was learned that the BLM land was not surveyed, so **Ernie** set about to fix that problem, which he accomplished. He asked Red



Lodge Surveying to be a partner, the answer was yes, and a \$20,000 survey was donated.

This project ultimately involved FIVE government agencies plus FIFTEEN private entities and

numerous individuals (see attached Supporting Documents for a complete list of participants), which took tremendous coordination by BBCH. As we look back, it was and is truly an All American accomplishment. Creating good and big dreams does take time but by putting



all of these minds together we definitely created abundant synergy.

During the period of 1999 to 2007 BBCH pitched the project to various groups and held group meetings, which grew larger as the coalition grew, and the project edged closer to reality. The public reaction was and continues to be overwhelmingly supportive.

In early May 2007 BBCH planned a spring campout and barbecue for the coalition of government agencies and volunteers. Camp was set up under beautiful skies that clouded over by early evening. By mid-morning a heavy spring snow caused us to cancel the planned camp out. But the Forest Service and the BLM are like the mail carriers—the snow didn’t slow them up—they are tough. Since the walk to the lakes was

The Strum family, government officials, coalition members and many friends at the July dedication



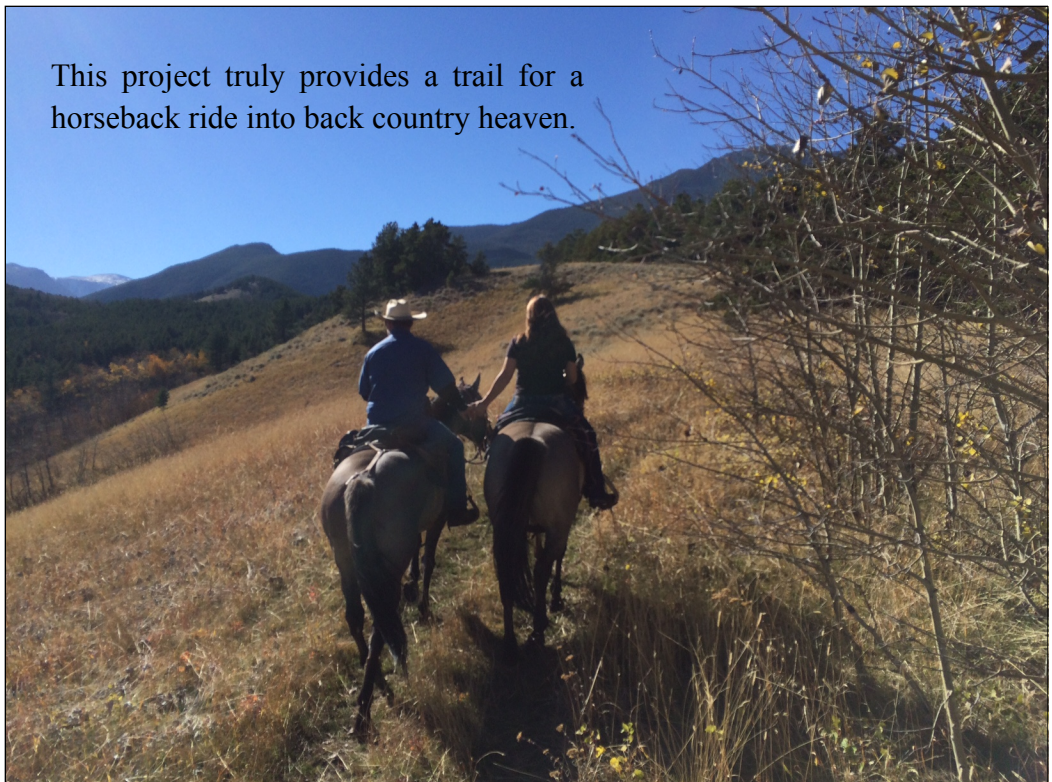
out of the question it was decided to talk about the Lily Pad trail and to go visit the possible trailhead locations. So 20 or more people gathered in a fifth wheel camper as the snow continued. We thanked the public servants on behalf of the BBCH for what they do.

We showed the proposed trail location on aerial photos. The USFS representative explained how there were 15 miles of Forest boundary between Dean and the West Rosebud Road with no access. He stated that the Forest policy strives for one access point in every 5 miles and agreed the McDonald basin needed a trail behind the private land. All concurred that a small parking trailhead was feasible at the BLM location and the Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will be back on site in July. After visiting the trailhead locations and the discussion of the morning a goal had been set and accepted by everyone.

The snowy campout was the beginning of the unbreakable bonding of that coalition, which holds today. We refer to this as a co-op project because of the long list of organizations and individuals now actively involved. The support of such a diverse group brings talent and resources to the table that

brought this project to fruition even in times of tight budgets. We believe that a project of this magnitude, with such an array of volunteer organizations working alongside so many governing entities can only lead to more seamless societal operation well into the future. This co-op support will ultimately provide sustainability of trail upkeep because of the ownership gained by these participants. We are confident that it will serve as a model for those that follow.

This project truly provides a trail for a horseback ride into back country heaven.



Completion

The following years involved the EIS process, and then the actual on the ground non-motorized trail building, as funding permitted. The BLM Field Manager and the BLM Recreational Planner guided the construction while the USFS surveyed, plotted and marked the trail location on BLM land. By now **Ernie** was on the BLM RAC committee which enabled better coordination from the inside.

Many horsemen and other organizations donated their time and hard labor during the next years. In 2014 alone, a very busy Spring and early Summer of final construction; 480 hours labor, equating to nearly \$17,000 plus 2,953 miles and signage were donated by BBCH members and partners in assisting Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) crews doing the trail building. In addition, BBCH chapter shared the actual dollar costs with BLM. MCC put us over the top by donating some weeks of crew labor in the construction process with a valuation in 2014 alone of 232 hours, equaling nearly \$10,000 and 935 miles. One 2014 event among many stands out; that of the MCC crew, all younger folks, deciding all on their own to save a mature, stately pine tree in the middle of the trail corridor. They built a roundabout for the trail, around the tree, thereby saving that tree in the median.

The Tribute

The trail was first called the Lily Pad Lake Trail but was officially named the **Ernie Strum** Trail after his passing in late 2013, to commemorate his long and tireless work on the project. This tribute brings significance to the project, as this naming practice has not been used for many years. **Ernie**, a Beartooth Back Country Horseman from the first days of the organization, also brings lasting recognition and tribute to Back Country Horsemen by this partnership. By July 2014 the trail was completed with an additional side trail to a beautiful scenic overlook

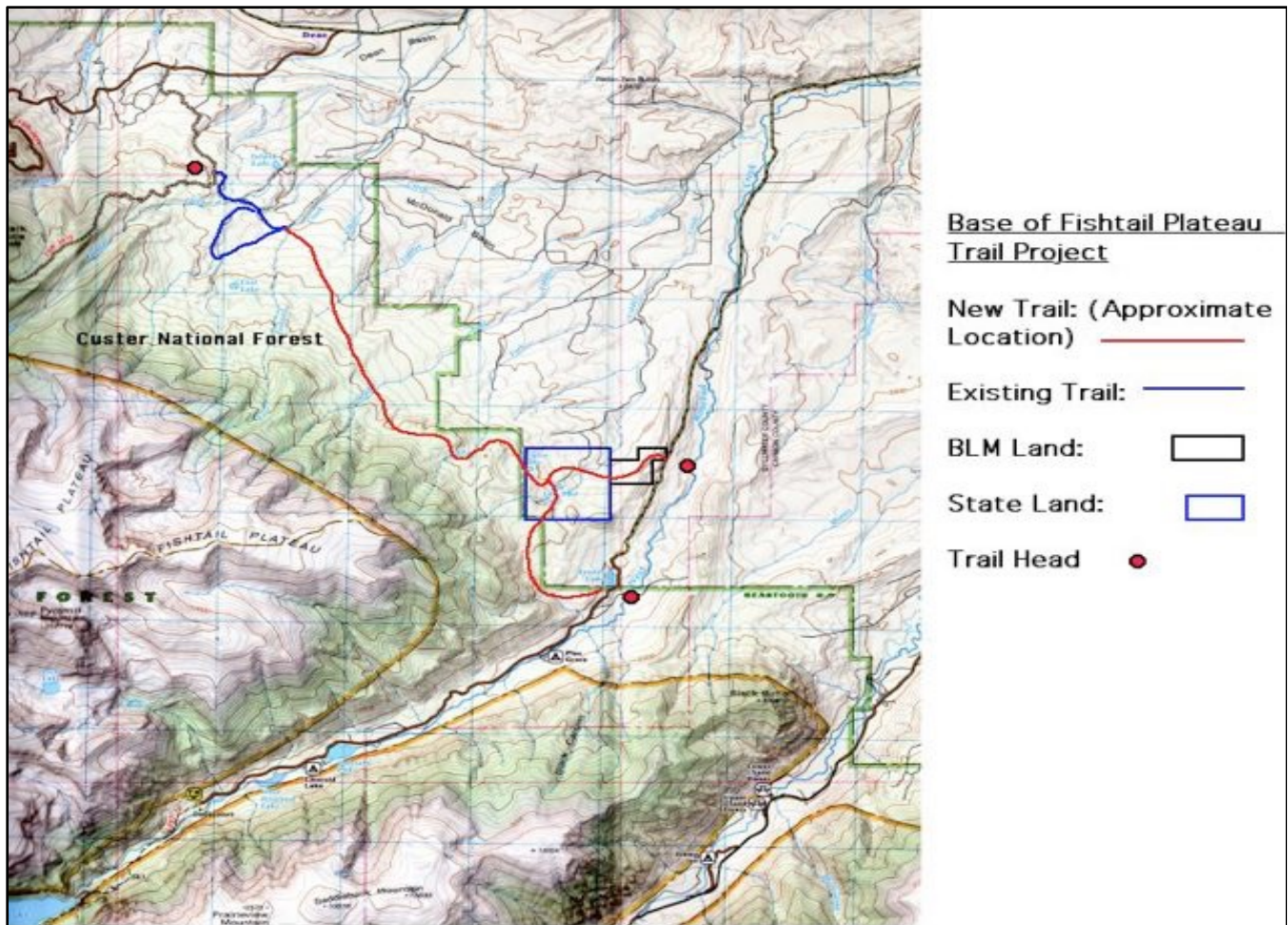
on BLM land we call **Ernie's Point**, a place that will awaken your senses. A volunteer built wooden benches on site from timber removed from the trail corridor for visitors to use as they take in the fantastic views. We hope to make this site an interpretive site because of the area's geology and awesome views of the North Face of the Beartooth Mountains. July 3, 2014 was selected for the official opening, and a dedication ceremony was held at **Ernie's Point**, the eve of July 4th was noted as very appropriate for this "All American Project". Approximately 90 people, including the Strum family, government officials, coalition members and friends made the nearly 1 mile uphill hike to attend and express thanks to all partners. The BLM Recreational Planner officiated at the ceremony. BBCH members paid a fitting salute to the late **Ernie Strum**, and numerous other attendees spoke about the effort of making this project a reality and how great they felt about their successful efforts. After the dedication many walked another two miles to the lakes, had a trail snack and quiet reflection on the shore of a beautiful high country lake. They returned to the camp ground for another BBCH hosted barbecue. The Montana FW&P provided free permit licensing for all the event attendees.

We know the contributions made by all individuals are a source of extreme personal pride and ownership in this project. It is that ownership that will ensure this project lives forever. The key to this project's success lies in BBCH being a group of people who have the well-earned reputation of placing their money, time, talents, and labor on the table, asking only for sharing partnerships. This project truly provides a trail for a horseback ride into back country heaven. In closing, we state that the recognition of this project with this award will provide immeasurable benefit toward the next two finishing projects of the vision. Montanans dream big, to match their sky.



Looking North West across McDonald Basin

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



Coalition Members

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen (BBCH)

(Participants in the Project)

Virginia Ball
 Grant Barnard
 Howard Boggess
 John & Bonnie Chepulis
 Frank Cory
 Wes Dingman
 Carolyn & Walter Eucker
 Tom Highberger
 Ron & Barb Nusbaum
 Paul & Kim Roccofort
 Dave Schilz
 John & Marilyn Simmons

Ernie & Marge Strum
 Larry & Susan Whitney
 Tom Williams

Beartooth Recreational Trails, Association

Grant Barnard

Bureau Land Management (BLM)

Lynn Anderson
 Tim Finger
 Mark Jacobsen
 Jay Parks
 Heidi Pfosch
 Jim Sparks

Billings Area Public Lands / Water Access Association

John Gibson
Lee Gustafson

County of Stillwater State of Montana

Jim Davis Aviation

Jim Davis

Keith Clark Excavating

Keith Clark

Magic City Fly Fishers

Montana Wilderness Association, Eastern Wild-lands Chapter (MWA, EWC)

Grant Barnard
Sue Duncan
Bernard Rose
Margaret Webster

Montana Conservation Corps (MCC)

Tauzha Grantham
Kevin Sylvester

Montana Department Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

Sharon Moore
Jeff Bollman

Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

Jason Rhoten
Doug Habermann
Gary Hammond
Jim Olsen

Northwest Energy

Our Montana

Mike Penfold
Howard Boggess

Red Lodge Hiking Club

Red Lodge Surveying

Skip Bratton

Rocky Mountain Surveys

Ralph Saunders

Trout Unlimited

Lyle A. Courtnage

US Forest Service, Custer National Forest

Jeff Gildehaus
Tom Highberger
Traute Parrie
Dave Schmid
Steve Williams
Allie Wood

Mike Whittington

LETTERS OF SUPPORT TO FOLLOW

United States Department of Interior

Bureau of Land Management

Jim M. Sparks, Billings, MT Field Manager

United States Department of Agriculture

Custer and Gallatin National Forest

Traute Parrie, District Ranger

State of Montana

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Jeff Bollman, AICP

Southern Land Office Area Planner

State of Montana

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Gary Hammond

Region 5 Supervisor

Montana Conservation Corps

Tauzha Grantham, Supervisor

Letter to MT BCH Webmaster

Steve Regele

Red Lodge Hiking Club

Marian Collar



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Billings Field Office
5001 Southgate Drive
Billings, Montana 59101-4669
www.blm.gov/mt



In Reply Refer To:

8300 (010.TF)

MARCH 17, 2015

Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen
Attention: John Chepulis
P.O. Box 614
Absarokee, Montana 59001

Re: Double Diamond Award Nominations

Dear Mr. Chepulis:

I am writing on behalf of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Billings Field Office, to commend the collaborative effort to complete the Ernie Strum Trail to Lily Pad and Crater Lakes in 2014. This trail provided brand new access to public lands managed by multiple agencies - MT DNRC, BLM, and Forest Service. We are honored to support our partner, the Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen (BBCH) for nomination of the National Double Diamond award illustrating their accomplishments on the Ernie Strum Trail project.

This trail was viewed as a missing link by several trail user groups in the local community for many years. Ernie Strum, Ron Nusbaum, and several other Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen members worked with multiple land management agencies to make this happen. It took a very collaborative approach to ultimately get the project off the ground, with each agency and organization agreeing to take on different pieces of the project, such as completing NEPA analysis, trail design and layout, and trail construction. Planning and field work were accomplished by members of the Montana Conservation Corps, Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen, BLM, MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, USDA- Forest Service, and private businesses and individuals.

The trail dedication was well attended by over 60 people representing a cross section of hikers and horsemen, tribal members and agency people, all of whom are very proud of their work, and excited to have this trail finally available for public use, and particularly for the opportunity to remember and honor one of the people who worked so hard to make it happen, Ernie Strum.

Our partnership with the BBCH is not limited to the Ernie Strum Trail, however. This partnership has assisted us in many other areas. They are always generous with their time, have immense energy and passion for what they do, and it is infectious to be with them.

Sincerely,



James M. Sparks
Field Manager



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Custer and Gallatin National Forest

Beartooth Ranger District
6811 Hwy 212
Red Lodge, MT 59068

Date: January 22, 2015

Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen
PO Box 614
Absarokee, MT 59001

Re: Double Diamond Award Nominations

To: John Chepulis

I am writing on behalf of the Beartooth Ranger District of the US Forest Service to commend the collaborative effort to complete the Ernie Strum trail to Lily Pad and Crater Lakes in 2014. This trail provided brand new access to public lands on MT DNRC, BLM, and Forest Service.

This trail was viewed as a missing link by several trail user groups in the local community for many years. Ernie Strum, Ron Nusbaum and several other Beartooth Backcountry Horseman members worked with multiple land management agencies to make this happen. It took a very collaborative approach to ultimately get the project off the ground, with each agency and organization agreeing to take on different pieces of the project, such as completing NEPA analysis, trail design and layout, and trail construction. Planning and fieldwork were accomplished by members of the Montana Conservation Corps, Beartooth Backcountry Horseman, Bureau of Land Management, MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, US Forest Service, and private businesses and individuals.

The trail dedication was well attended by over 60 people representing a cross section of hikers and horsemen, tribal members and agency people, all of whom are very proud of their work, and excited to have this trail finally available for public use, and particularly for the opportunity to remember and honor one of the people who worked so hard to make it happen: Ernie Strum.

Respectfully Submitted,

TRAUTE PARRIE
District Ranger



Caring for the Land and Serving People

Printed on F

**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND CONSERVATION**



STEVE BULLOCK, GOVERNOR

SOUTHERN LAND OFFICE

STATE OF MONTANA

PHONE: (406) 247-4400
FAX: (406) 247-4410

AIRPORT BUSINESS PARK
1371 RIMTOP DRIVE
BILLINGS, MT 59105-1978

24 February 2015

Beartooth Backcountry Horseman
P.O. Box 614
Absarokee, MT 59001

RE: Ernie Strum Trail Project – Double Diamond Nomination

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written in support of the Beartooth Backcountry Horseman (BBCH) and their nomination for the National Double Diamond Award for the Ernie Strum Trail. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) manages over 5.2 million acres of Trust land, under the direction of the Montana Board of Land Commissioners, for the benefit of the Trust beneficiaries. Montana Trust lands also provide valuable recreation opportunities for Montana residents and visitors alike, in addition to providing continuous income for the Trust beneficiaries.

Members of the BBCH are to be commended for their foresight and perseverance in working to get this trail constructed on BLM land in Stillwater County. The trail provides direct access to a section of State Trust land, including two stocked lakes on the section, in addition to thousands of acres of Custer National Forest lands that adjoin the State land. The construction of a delineated trail is of special importance in Montana as more and more private lands are sold and closed to public access, putting more pressure on those rare pieces of public land that have legal public access.

The Beartooth Backcountry Horseman deserve special recognition for pushing, pulling and prodding this trail project along while working with the Montana DNRC, the Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service and Stillwater County at various times throughout the course of this project, as well as for bringing together players from the private side so that this was not just a government project, but a true partnership for everyone involved.

The DNRC fully supports the Beartooth Backcountry Horseman's nomination and we look forward to working with BBCH on future trail projects in our Land Office.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Bollman".

Jeff Bollman, AICP
Southern Land Office Area Planner



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MT FWP Region 5
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
February 24, 2015

To whom it may concern,

Outdoor recreationists alike all share in the enjoyment of Montana's treasured landscapes and the fish and wildlife resources found here, whether their favorite activity is found riding on the back of a horse, backpacking, birdwatching, hunting or fishing. Access to lands where individuals can enjoy their favorite outdoor recreation pursuit is a shared priority for private citizens, NGOs, and public agencies, and the access challenges can sometimes be a daunting endeavor.

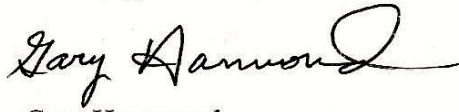
Typically, trail construction enhances access to these landscapes, and once in a while, a project does more than provide a more suitable trail system, as is the case with the Ernie Strum Trail project. The trailhead for this project is located on a small corner of Bureau of Land Management property that abuts a county road. In this case, there was uncertainty regarding the location of the private/public boundary line, and whether lands administered by the BLM extended to the county road right-of-way. The Ernie Strum Trail project answered that question when a survey confirmed that federal lands did in fact contact the county road, and could be utilized to access the otherwise isolated federal and state lands.

Many access projects are met with challenges and complexities, and the Ernie Strum Trail project was no exception. The project truly was a collaborative effort, and involved coordination with many entities, with the Beartooth Back Country Horsemen group leading the charge. The vision of creating this trail began in 1999, but complexities associated with the project delayed its completion. But the Beartooth Back Country Horsemen, state and federal agencies, and other NGOs persevered, resulting with the Ernie Strum Trail officially opening in 2014.

In closing, with the leadership provided by the Beartooth Back Country Horsemen, and with partners including the Billings Rod and Gun Club, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and Montana Dept of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Ernie Strum Trail has been successfully completed, and

provides a model whereby a complex access project, involving a number of partners, can serve to protect and enhance recreational opportunities and access into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gary Hammond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "G" and "H".

Gary Hammond
Region 5 Supervisor



FEBRUARY 28, 2015

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen
P.O. Box 614
Absarokee, MT 59001

On behalf of the Montana Conservation Corps, we are honored to support our partner, the Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen (BBCH), for nomination of the National Double Diamond award illustrating their accomplishments on the Ernie Strum Trail project.

We are honored to have worked alongside the BBCH the past several years on this engaging project. We first met some of the horsemen group in 2005 and saw instantly their passion and vision to make a trail in the West Rosebud area a reality. They put together presentations, rides and walks to visit the area and gauge interest. Following this, they sought out a diverse group of partners to assist in making the vision a reality. Our Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) crews first started completing trail work a few years ago and were treated like royalty. Several of the BBCH worked alongside MCC crew members, assisting with technical skills, while others taught education lessons and arranged and cooked free gourmet style meals. The trail has become a legacy with our roughly (50) + Montana teens and (20) + crew leaders who have been able to physically work on the trail. We are very proud to have partnered on this project with the BBCH, the Bureau of Land Management, the US Forest Service, the Wilderness Association, the Beartooth Recreational Trails Alliance, and many other land management agencies and partners. The number of partners involved is a testament to the efforts of the BBCH to reach out to others to assist in seeing this project come to fruition. Last year the BBCH group was able to arrange a dedication for one of their instrumental players in the project, Mr. Ernie Strum.

Our partnership with the BBCH is not limited to the Ernie Strum trail however. This group of individuals has assisted us in many other areas, always generous with their time, energy and passion for what they do. They have provided pack support to our crews on various backcountry projects, they have provided delicious meals to our crews thanking them for the work they do out of their own pockets, they have provided additional trainings at no cost to our crews (bear safety, how to pack stock, etc) and they have raised funds to assist financially in fielding crews and engaging young people in outdoor backcountry & frontcountry projects.

Should you have questions, please feel free to contact me directly at 406.672.3633.

Respectfully,

Tauzha Grantham
Montana Conservation Corps

Thank you for your lead effort in establishing the Ernie Strum trail. I will convey my thoughts to BLM, MDNRC and USFWS as well.

My wife and I hiked in to the area last week. I can't ride like I used to but hope to get in there with horses too.

Public access to and via BLM-administered public lands as well as via other public points is very important, and very valuable. A great example is the Ernie Strum trail that has now provided a sliver of carefully crafted access to a State (MDNRC school trust/public owned) section and thereby to USFS lands off of West Rosebud Creek Road. If those little pieces of BLM and other public lands are lost or 'consolidated' the public loses – forever possibly – opportunity to realize access to larger and special parcels of other public lands. The Strum Trail allows public access to beautiful aspen dominated basins, ecotypes very largely controlled by private parties along most of the Beartooth Absaroka lands. The State section and the adjoining USFS expanses were previously only accessible to public if they were able to pay or somehow gain the favor of the private land owners that otherwise had land locked access, or took convoluted primitive routes from distant USFS access points.

Thank you very much for making this trail a reality. In the future I hope to contribute some time, effort and maybe some \$\$'s to trail acquaintance, better parking ... and a better gate!

Best regards

Steve Regele
406-962-3115

July 15, 2014

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this on behalf of the Red Lodge Hiking Club. We recently had the honor to attend the dedication of the new trail into Lily Pad Lake. Ernie Strum was instrumental in developing this trail by bringing together several groups. Back Country Horseman, US Forest Service, BLM, Montana Conservation Core and others worked together to get this project going. Therefore, it was very appropriate that the trail be named "The Ernie Strum Trail" in honor of his hard work and perseverance.

This trail takes off from the West Rosebud drainage to Lily Pad Lake which is about two and a half miles in. The views of the surrounding Beartooth Mountains are spectacular. There are many gorgeous areas of Montana and this is definitely one of them. We love our hiking in these mountains and now we have a new trail to explore, thanks to Ernie.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marian C. Collar". The signature is written in dark ink and extends to the right with a long, thin horizontal stroke.

Marian Collar
Red Lodge Hiking Club
Red Lodge, Montana 59068