

Back Country Horsemen of America



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September 5, 2013

Tom Vilsack, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture, OSEC
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Email: tom.vilsack@osec.usda.gov

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I'm writing to thank you for your public display of support for America's National Wilderness Preservation System during its 50th anniversary through the October 2014 National Wilderness Conference and Workshop in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Back Country Horsemen of America has been involved in planning and supporting a variety of 50th anniversary education and training events including the Conference and Workshop. As the Chairman for Back Country Horsemen of America, I look forward to joining employees under your leadership from the U.S. Forest Service, at the Conference and Workshop. By supporting attendance by Department of Agriculture employees, you are recognizing and broadening the collective Wilderness community's understanding of the substantial benefits Wilderness areas provide to horse users as we work together to develop a shared vision for these sacred places for the next 50 years.

Since our organization's beginnings in Montana's Flathead Valley in January of 1973, we have used our specialized knowledge of stock and the back country to participate in land use planning, regulations, trail work and service projects and have become a strong voice for continued, responsible horse use on public lands. As the agencies strive to retain traditional skills including cross-cut saw use for Wilderness stewardship, perpetuating the rich traditions of stock use remain equally important, as both skills and recreational pursuits. Wilderness areas provide some of the most treasured places where horsemen can recreate and pass our stock use traditions to the next generation.

I am honored that Back Country Horsemen of America's part of the 50th Anniversary National Wilderness Conference and Workshop and that you recognize how important the Wilderness legacy is to horse users and our back country equestrian traditions. Through your leadership, you uphold the public trust by supporting attendance and engagement by your employees at the Conference and Workshop to craft the vision for the future of our Wilderness system. Thank you!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim McGarvey".

James McGarvey
Chairman, BCHA

JM:peg