

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 28, 2009**

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**Equine Land Conservation Resource and Back Country Horsemen of America Form Alliance to Benefit All Horsemen**

Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) and the Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR) have formed an alliance that will benefit horsemen across the country.

Back Country Horsemen of America is a national membership organization whose mission is to preserve the traditional right to enjoy horseback riding and recreational stock in America's backcountry and public lands. BCHA work to achieve this through offering time, equipment, and stock on projects with public land managers that will benefit both horseback rider and non-user alike; educating people to reduce environmental impact; and advocating for equine rights on public lands. "It has become our responsibility as stewards to preserve the wealth of public land resources available, for our children and future generations. If these resources are neglected and misused, they will become a memory in a short time. BCHA will continue to shoulder the responsibility of wise horse use with minimum adverse impact to the land," states Terry Morrison, Chair of BCHA.

ELCR is a not-for-profit educational organization whose mission is to advance the conservation of land for horse-related activity. Since its establishment in 1997, ELCR has assisted the equine community in the conservation and stewardship of land for horse-related activity. The organization educates and facilitates partnerships to preserve land for horse farms, and access to trails. ELCR provides guidance to horsemen and landowners regarding the protection of open space through conservation easements, the purchase of development rights' programs (PDR's) and community land use planning. Additionally, ELCR promotes and distributes information on best farm management practices to protect soil and water quality.

Both organizations recognized that the missions and purposes of each were different, but complimentary; therefore, it made sense to work in cooperation. Nancy Hamill Winter of Illinois, President of ELCR, noted, "We are honored and pleased to be working with BCHA to ensure that both trail access issues and farmland preservation receive the attention critical to the future of the horse industry."

BCHA and ELCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the following purposes:

- To develop a stronger working relationship,
- To improve communication,
- To minimize the possibility of duplicating efforts to better protect horsemen's land and trail interests.

According to the terms of the MOU, BCHA and ELCR may exchange ideas, information and strategies related to equine land issues and/or access to public land and refer inquiries and requests for assistance when the requests can best be addressed by the respective partner organization. BCHA and ELCR may decide to collaborate on inquiries and requests for assistance when appropriate. For example,

BCHA will take the lead on trail development plans, projects or issues on public lands or are adjacent to public lands. ELCR will address constituent inquiries that involve planning for and development of equestrian access on private lands. When dealing with county and municipal land issues, ELCR and BCHA will communicate to determine which organization can most effectively assist constituent inquiries regarding access, planning and development on those lands. In some cases, it may be determined that the organizations will work together to assist horsemen with their issue.

This collaborative working arrangement will provide clear direction for horsemen seeking assistance with trail issues. Additionally, this relationship will allow both organizations to expend their resources in a most effective and efficient manner. The outcome of this collaborative relationship is expected to be better resources and improved services to horsemen nationwide.

### **About Back Country Horsemen of America**

BCHA is a non-profit corporation made up of state organizations, affiliates, and at large members. Their efforts have brought about positive changes in regards to the use of horses and stock in the wilderness and public lands. If you want to know more about Back Country Horsemen of America or become a member, visit their website: [www.backcountryhorse.com](http://www.backcountryhorse.com), call 888-893-5161, or write PO Box 1367, Graham, WA 98338-1367. The future of horse use on public lands is in our hands!

### **About the Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR)**

The Equine Land Conservation Resource is the only national not-for-profit organization advancing the conservation of land for horse-related activity. ELCR serves as an information resource and clearinghouse for land and horse owners on issues related to equine land conservation, land use planning, land stewardship/best management practices, trails, and equine economic development. If you want to know more about ELCR, visit our website at [www.ELCR.org](http://www.ELCR.org) or call (859) 455-8383