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Back Country Horsemen of America
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**Back Country Horsemen of America Names New Advisor for
Wilderness and Recreation**
By Sarah Wynne Jackson

Back Country Horsemen of America, the organization leading the fight to preserve our right to ride horses on public lands, has experienced a changing of the guard. The legendary Dennis Dailey recently retired and endorsed Randy Rasmussen as his replacement as Advisor for Wilderness and Recreation.

A Natural Fit

Dennis and Randy met a number of years ago when Randy was working with American Hiking Society and trying to convince them to "work with the horsemen." In 2008, Randy made sure BCHA was involved in a conference focused on traditional or "quiet" trail use. Since then, Randy and Dennis have been working together to bridge the gap between hikers and horsemen. When it came time for Dennis to hand over the reins, Randy seemed a natural fit.

He comes to Back Country Horsemen of America with a wide range of skills gained throughout his lifetime of interest in protecting both the environment and our ability to enjoy America's beautiful wild places. He earned a Master's degree from Colorado State University in Natural Resources and Recreation, emphasizing Wilderness Management, and he has over 12 years of experience developing partnerships to protect traditional forms of recreation and to conserve important landscapes.

A specialist in public lands management and recreation policy, Randy has a proven track record in the arena of diplomacy and negotiation, as well as experience in media outreach and communications. His passionate yet open-minded approach has allowed him to develop a positive rapport with the leaders of federal agencies and elected officials.

A Lifetime of Dedication

Randy recently served as executive director of Umpqua Watersheds, a southwestern Oregon conservation group, and as senior policy manager for American Hiking Society. From his office in Corvallis, Oregon, he coordinated and unified the conservation community's response to recreation and "travel management" plans undertaken by each of Oregon's 11 national forests. In this role, Randy applied policy, grassroots organizing, science and economics in the protection of wildlands and traditional "quiet" recreational uses.

In the same spirit of cooperation that Back Country Horsemen of America values, he has forged partnerships with hunters, anglers, horsemen, mountain bikers and other stakeholders. His most recent non-profit consulting clients include Responsible Trails America, which promotes common-sense off-road vehicle law enforcement and management practices.

Randy currently serves on the Oregon State University Forests' Recreation Advisory Committee. He was appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to represent dispersed recreation on the Oregon Coast Range Provincial Advisory Committee, which advises local offices of the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). He served as field representative in the southwestern U.S. for two other national non-profits—The Wilderness Society and National Parks Conservation Association.

A founding board member of Trailkeepers of Oregon, Randy once worked as a seasonal ranger in western Colorado for both the BLM and U.S. Forest Service. He has over a decade of experience as a consultant to state and federal agencies throughout the western U.S. preparing environmental impact documents and resource management plans.

Randy lives with his wife, Lorri, and their three children in Corvallis, Oregon. Lorri is a natural hoof care specialist and serves clients throughout the Willamette Valley through her company, Hoofwise, LLC. Selene, aged 17, and Bryce, 14, are active with track and soccer. Sage, aged 10, is sweeping the county 4-H competitions with Sugar, her Pony of the Americas. All five of the Rasmussen's love to trail ride.

The Original Use

As a six-year-old and again as a nine-year-old, Randy went on a two-week pack trip into the Mt. Zirkel Wilderness Area of Northern Colorado, famous for its rugged cliffs and jagged ridge lines. The outfitter, a family friend, packed his horses and mules with everything they needed, including canvas tents and delicious food. The experience instilled in Randy a love for the back country and inspired his belief that horses belong on the trails. After all, that's how most of our trails got there in the first place.

He explains, "It's a traditional use. If you look back at the framers of the Wilderness Act and Aldo Leopold, they defined a 'wilderness' as an area big enough to accommodate a two-week pack trip. You couldn't take a two-week trip without pack animals to carry all your gear and supplies. So the idea of horses on the trails was a given."

Randy also points out that it was horsemen who pushed for the Wilderness Act in the first place. Many of today's trail sports such as hiking, backpacking, and mountain biking were entirely or nearly non-existent back then, but all modern day trail users enjoy the benefits gained from the efforts of horse folks of years past.

Tipping his hat to the amazing individuals who are Back Country Horsemen of America, Randy recognizes that, even now, it is still the horsemen who make it possible for all of us to be trail users. Every year, BCHA folks put many hours of hard work into maintaining existing trails and blazing new ones. Randy says, "The high level of BCHA volunteerism, over such a long period of time, gives me instant credibility when I enter meetings with agencies and other user groups. It gives me a strong voice in proposals and discussions." He encourages Back Country Horsemen to keep up the good work!

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, 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!

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