

Are There Horses in Zion?

By Doug West, Southwest Chapter of BCH Utah

Top photo: Aerial view of Zion by Richard Cline; bottom photo: Canyon view of Wildcat Trail



My truck and horse trailer look out of place as we pull into the Zion Lodge parking lot. I open the horse trailer doors and see a parking lot full of rental cars and SUV’s displaying California, Nevada, and Arizona license plates. Heads turn and cameras roll as I back Gen, my 17-hands-tall, 1,200-pound Walking Horse mare out saddled, ready to go. While I can’t identify all the languages spoken, I guess from the tone they are wondering how a short, 70-year-old man will mount and ride such a big horse.

Zion National Park is one of five national parks located within Utah. Found in the southwest corner of the state, the 229-square mile park is approximately 40 miles east of St. George, Utah. The park is an extremely popular tourist destination, since it is easily accessible from Las Vegas and only a few hours’ drive from the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. In 2016, it attracted over four million visitors, close to what Yellowstone National Park, a park 15 times

larger than Zion, experienced.

Perched on the western edge of the Colorado Plateau, hordes of visitors come to view the towering red, white, brown, and pink sandstone cliffs deposited by ancient inland seas and deep canyons carved by the Virgin River and eons of wind and weather. They crowd along Zion Canyon Scenic Drive gapping up at towering landmarks with exotic names like The Great White Throne, Angels Landing, and the Temple of Sinawava.

You probably wonder how horses fit among these towering sandstone cliffs and crowding tourists. Well, like most national parks where I ride, there are actually two parks – the park easily accessible to the Birkenstock-shod tourists and the backcountry where the backpackers, rock climbers and horsemen like me spend their time. In fact, 84 percent of Zion is designated and managed as a backcountry wilderness.

Once a year, I haul my horses to the parking lot next to Zion Lodge across



the highway from the private horse concession that offers rides to the tourists in Zion Canyon. Spring through fall, Zion Scenic Drive is closed to private vehicles. Visitors must ride the shuttle buses to visit the canyon. The concessionaire leaves with the shuttle buses, after which the Park Service opens the Sand Bench Trail to private stock use. The Sand Bench Trail is the only trail in the canyon open to horses and only late fall to early spring.

The Sand Bench Trail, a short six-mile roundtrip, parallels the Virgin River from Zion Lodge to the junction with the Zion-Mount Carmel Highway. Riding above the river provides great down canyon views and I always see mule deer and wild turkeys. While relatively easy to ride, there are some dangers. Your horse has to tolerate deer standing or lying in the trail. My Gen is gentle by nature, but gets agitated

[continued inside on page 2]



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Inside...

From the Chairman’s Saddle.....	3
Federal Public Lands Under Assault: What’s at Stake?	4
Message from the Executive Director	6
BCHA 2017 Convention.....	8
State Articles.....	10-11
The Catch Pen.....	11
Keeping Paradise Possible.....	12



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Are There Horses in Zion?

[continued from front page]

when walking around a large four-point buck or having a wild turkey flush over her head.

By taking the Zion-Mount Carmel Highway, you can access the park’s east side. Prior arrangements must be made to haul your horse trailer through the mile-long tunnel on this scenic, narrow highway. Only one-way traffic is allowed through the tunnel for large vehicles like my Dodge pickup and 26-foot horse trailer. The Park Service charged me a \$15 round-trip-fee to stop traffic from the other direction while I drove through the tunnel to the East Rim Trailhead. Unfortunately, there is little room to park horse trailers at the trailhead.

The East Rim Trail is wide, smooth, and well maintained. It gains 1,000 feet over three miles. At the top, a stream cascades over the rim. It wasn’t much during the dry season when I rode there, but I would like to see the waterfall after a Zion thunderstorm. You’re rewarded after reaching the top with magnificent views and miles of additional trail. Again, you have to return the way you came because the trails that drop into Zion Canyon are closed to horses. You can’t linger on the East Rim because overnight horse camping is prohibited.

On the west side of the park, a number of trails – Hop Valley, Connector Trail, Wildcat, and West Rim – are open to horses. Before entering Zion Park from the west on Highway

9, watch for the junction of Highway 9 with the Kolob Terrace Road located in the small town of Virgin. Turn north and follow the two-lane, paved road. Each trail exhibits its own unique character as you will discover. Hop Valley, my favorite, is characteristic of these more remote and primitive trails on the west side of the park. You will find your favorite after exploring them on your own.

Technicolor blue skies and red rocks surround you as you ride the Hop Valley Trail. Most of the trail is in the bottom of an open, sandy wash that has water year-round. You should exercise caution and care in the spring when water is highest in the wash. There are areas of quicksand that can trap your horse. It is approximately six miles one way to the only overnight horse camping site in the park – permit required. From the campground, you can ride further down canyon to Lee’s Pass in the Kolob Canyon District. However, there is a very steep, rocky descent that I usually avoid. Horse trailer parking is limited at the trailhead.

The Kolob Canyons are located approximately 34 miles north of St. George, Utah, off Interstate 15. The visitor center is a short distance east of Exit 40. To ride the LaVerkin Creek Trail, you must check in at the visitor center before driving the Kolob Canyon Road to Lee’s Pass. The trail is popular with day hikers and backpackers, so parking your truck and trailer

sometimes is a problem. With some hikers, horses are a novelty. A while back, I encountered a tour group from Asia after splashing my horse through a stream crossing. This group had only seen horses in the movies or on TV. I had to repeat the crossing a number of times so they could capture the event on video. It is approximately 6.5 miles one way to where the LaVerkin Creek Trail meets the Hop Valley Trail.

From my narrative, I think you know I love Zion National Park. My horses don’t stand idle. Since returning to St. George, I have ridden 30 of 63 days, making the 80-mile round-trip-drive to the park five times. I have spent my life riding and hiking all over the west, but the one place that always draws me back is Zion. With the freedom I have, you might think I would move on to a less crowded, more horse-friendly place. But for me, the deep canyons and towering cliffs are as the ancient Hebrews said of their Zion a “...spiritual point from which reality emerges...” As my Mormon ancestors also taught, Kolob is “... the nearest place where God dwells.”

Are there horses in Zion? A few. At least for now.

Doug West winters in St. George, Utah, with his wife Trea, dog Maynard, and three Walking Horse mares. He is a member of the Southwest Chapter of BCHU. Contact him at parasite.ranch@gmail.com.

A New Book from a Back Country Horseman

Skyhorse Publishing, a national publisher of equine and outdoor books, has released a book by Dan Aadland, charter member and past president of Beartooth BCH in Montana. Aadland wrote The Pocket Guide to Equine Knots with members of Back Country Horsemen particularly in mind.

When first requested by the publisher to write such a book, Aadland debated just what approach would be most useful. Many knot books exist, and the famous *Ashley Book of Knots*

contains some 4,000 knots! But Aadland decided the best approach was to concentrate on 30-40 knots that he’d found most useful in handling horses, and then explain the many ways in which the knots are used, adding some training and stock-handling tips along the way.

Production of the book was accelerated when the 1500 Tractor Supply Stores nationwide contracted to stock the book, which should be available in any TSC store (and online). Mean-

while, Skyhorse has contracted Aadland to write a book based on his clinic “**Beyond the Round Pen: Training your horse for the Backcountry.**” (See ad this issue.)

Aadland and his wife Emily ranch in southcentral Montana where they raise cattle, Tennessee Walking Horses, and gaited mules. Dan has written eight other books, including *The Complete Trail Horse*. He can be contacted at draa@montana.net.

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DAN AADLAND is the author of *The Complete Trail Horse* and *101 Trail Riding Tips*. He is a contributor to *Equus*, *The Trail Rider*, *Western Horseman* and other publications. He and his wife, Emily, live in Absarokee, Montana.

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Back Country Horsemen of America

From the Chairman's Saddle



By Don Saner, Chairman

Hello BCHA!

As I sit down to write my column, I sat back and reflected on the last two years of my chairmanship.

As chairman, I see a side of BCHA that no one but a handful of people get to see. The amount of information that comes across your desk such as public land issues, membership, and committee's work is just amazing! I've listened to the advice and recommendations to make my decisions on where to engage BCHA's time, effort and resources.

That's why it's no small matter when I say BCHA's view that the Transfer and Sale of our Public Lands is one of the biggest threats to public access to these lands. This is a fight that BCHA cannot win alone. We need to be engaged with other organizations within the recreation, conservation, and service community. Some of these organizations we may not agree 100% with us, but let's come together on the items we do agree with and work to find compromises on the items with which we don't agree.

If we are fighting and divided among ourselves, it will make it that much easier for the folks that are trying to take away the federal lands from us. We need to stand united! Get engaged in your state, county and local Land issues! BCHA is here to help if called upon. Get involved early and often. It is much more difficult to change minds

once they are made up.

I would like to take the time to thank each and every one of you who have contributed to BCHA over the years. Without your support, we could only do a fraction of what we do for public lands, along with all the other things that BCHA is involved with on a daily basis. Everything the membership does as a volunteer on public land does much more for BCHA than you might think. Over the course of my term, I have attended conferences and met with the different agencies and members of recreation and conservation organizations. You just name the person and I have probably met with them! The one thing I hear from every person I have had the pleasure to meet is all the great work that BCHA (and that means each and every one of you!) has done for our public lands! This is the cornerstone that BCHA is built upon!

In conclusion, I want to thank some folks that I couldn't imagine having gone through the last two years without: officers Freddy Dunn, Roy Cornett, and Tom Thomas; Executive Director Jim McGarvey; committee members Darrell Wallace, Alan Hill, Ginny Grulke, Doug Bechum, and Mac Long; all the standing committee chairmen; Director of Public Lands and Recreation Randy Rasmussen; the Management Team at AR Erica Fearn and John Aliberti; and last but surely not least, BCHA Webmaster Marty Duvall.

A special thank you to my good friend Nick Martinez. Nick, there was a time I didn't know whether to cuss you out or thank you. But you have always been there for me.

To the national directors and the general BCHA membership, it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your national chairman.

Thank you, all!

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Dan Aadland, Ph.D., is a lifelong horseman, rancher, and writer, author of nine books (including *The Complete Trail Horse*) and many magazine articles for equine and outdoor publications.



BCHAMissionStatement

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.

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Index of Sponsors

Aadland, Dan	
Horsemanship Clinic	3
American Endurance Ride Conference	5
Back Country Store	8
Bear Country Containers	5
Blue Creek Outfitters	5
Boone and Crockett Club	12
Cate's Creations, Saddle Pal.....	12
Chris Tornow Saddlemaker	7
Kinsey Horsemanship.....	12
North American Trail Ride Conference	3
Outfitters Supply	9
Trailhead Supply.....	3

Federal Public Lands Under Assault: What's at Stake?

By Jean Clancey, Emerald Empire BCH, Oregon

Six hundred and forty million acres in the western United States are owned by the American people. These public lands are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Service, and a system of federal wildlife refuges. Most BCHA members are aware by now that the public status of these vast lands where we ride and pack is in grave jeopardy. Over the past several years, there have been state and national newsletter articles, reports from our BCHA Executive Committee, and alerts from BCHA Director for Public Lands and Recreation Randy Rasmussen. All have been sounding the alarm. If we have been paying attention, we know now that without fighting back we may lose our public land. In the BCHA 2015 National Meeting report, Phil Hufstader said, “This issue is probably the biggest issue to face BCHA in years; without the public lands, we don’t exist.”

What is BCHA's Position on the Sale or Transfer of Public Lands?

Introducing a March 8 BCHA Federal Lands Transfer webinar, Chairman Donald Saner wrote, “The 115th Congress is mobilizing for what could become the most significant ‘show down’ ever over the control of our federal public lands. The issue has become BCHA’s number one priority in our efforts to protect public access to federal public lands. In his March 2, 2017 email, Saner declared, “It is my hope that BCHA members will be prepared and willing to throw their energy into this critical debate.”

At its National Board Meeting on April 23, 2016, the BCHA Board approved a Resolution to Oppose the Transfer or Sale of Federal Public Lands Managed by the United States Departments of Interior and Agriculture. It was further resolved that «this resolution be made known to the President of the United States, congressional delegations and elected officials from each state, and agency officials of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.»

There is no question that BCHA stands firmly against any sale or transfer of our public lands, which are our American heritage and birthright, and acknowledges that the very future of our trails now stands at highest risk.

What Are the Specifics?

Federal Land Action Group. Two Utah congressmen have launched this group to identify ways Congress could push a transfer of federal lands to state and local governments. Representatives Chris Stewart (R-UT) and Rob Bishop (R-UT), who is chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, are holding a series of forums with the end goal of introducing legislation to move federal lands “back to their rightful owners.” Randy Rasmussen argued that these lands were never state-controlled, so Mr. Bishop’s use of the term “back to their rightful owners” is not accurate. “Was Mr. Bishop instead referring to Native American tribes? We doubt it,”

Rasmussen asserted. These forums are currently ongoing in 2017.

Revised Budget Rules Change. On its first day in session January 3, 2017, the 115th Congress approved new rules designed to make it easier to transfer federal lands to states. Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) sponsored the change. Basically, the revised budget rules deny that federal land has any monetary value at all, thus allowing the new Congress to get around established requirements that any measure that costs the U.S. Treasury money must be offset either by budget cuts or revenue raising provisions. The impact of the change is that lawmakers cannot raise a budgetary objection if a land transfer bill comes to the floor. In *The Guardian* on January 20, 2017, Heather Hansman noted, “The Congressional devaluation of national property is the most far-reaching legislative change in a recent push to transfer federal lands to the states. Bills proposing land transfers could now swiftly diminish USFS and BLM lands across the country.” New Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke is on record against federal land transfers. However, while still holding his congressional seat, he voted in favor of the rules change that include the lands transfer provision.

H.R.621, The Disposal of Excess Federal Lands Act. This bill was introduced by Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) on January 24, 2017. It called for the sale of 3.3 million acres currently owned by the BLM in 10 western states. The designated sale of 70,300 acres were in 19 Oregon counties. The bill was instantly met with a backlash from conservation and sportsmen’s groups, and Mr. Chaffetz rescinded his bill in just over a week.

\$50 Million to Transfer Federal Land. Rob Bishop (R-UT) is working on yet another front as of March 3, 2017. He sent a request to the House Budget Committee that \$50 million be set aside to account for the costs of transferring federal land to states or local governments. On March 6, 2017, Timothy Cama of *The Hill* wrote, “In his request, Bishop argued that poorly managed federal lands create a burden for surrounding states and communities.” There has been no response from the Committee to Mr. Bishop’s request as of this writing.

H.R.232, State and National Forest Management Act of 2017. This bill was introduced by Don Young (R-AK) on January 3, 2017, to both the House Committees on Natural Resources and on Agriculture: “To authorize States to select and acquire certain National Forest System lands to be managed and operated by the State for timber production and for other purposes under the laws of the State, and for other purposes” (GovTrack.us).

Meanwhile in Oregon. OR House Bill 2365, introduced February 17, 2017 establishes a task force to study the feasibility of transferring federally managed lands to the State of Oregon. Chief sponsor Gene Whisnant (R-Sun-River) and co-sponsor Carl Wilson (R-Grants Pass) said that HB 2365 was

a first step toward determining whether it makes sense for the state of Oregon to acquire land managed by the BLM and the USFS. Mr. Whisnant has since withdrawn his name as sponsor but defended his continued support for the bill. The *Bend Bulletin* noted the bill remains in committee as of February 16, 2017.

What Is the Rationale for Transfer?

As you can see, these bills are coming fast and furiously. The majority in the new Congress arrived with marching orders from the GOP 2016 party platform to “immediately pass universal legislation providing a timely and orderly mechanism requiring the federal government to convey certain federally controlled public lands to the states.” In brief, there are a few consistent arguments made in favor of land transfers.

Proponents of the sale and transfer of public lands claim that managing millions of acres presents a financial burden for federal agencies. Divesting the federal government of its land would be a benefit for the federal budget. Proponents also argue that allowing communities to actually manage and use these lands will generate not only state and local income tax, but also federal income tax revenues. On January 4, 2017, Parish Braden wrote in the *High Country News* that it will also reduce the federal government’s need to subsidize communities adjacent to federal lands with programs such as Payments in Lieu of Taxes or Secure Rural Schools. According to Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) in *The Hill* during early February 2017, “The long overdue disposal of excess federal lands will free up resources for the federal government while providing much needed opportunities for economic development in struggling rural communities.

Arguments Against Federal Land Transfer

Our main concern should be the loss of open access to and use of our great public lands throughout America. This outcome is entirely possible given the current political climate. The BCHA Resolution in Opposition is a clear declaration on behalf of the irreplaceable value of these lands for recreational equestrian saddle and pack stock use.

Other stakeholders are speaking out, too. Bowhunters are on record as of February 25, 2017 in the *Pope & Young Club* newsletter, “The mystery behind these proposed policies is troublesome, and, as a bowhunting and conservation organization, we are highly concerned for the end result: loss of access and eventual sale and decimation of these lands....States do not have better resources to manage this land. State ownership makes is possible to sell, lease, or close to hunting. Federal Lands are a 100-year-old conservation symbol.”

Twenty groups – including the influential Outdoor Industry Alliance, National Wildlife Federation, and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers – sent a letter to the 115th Congress

blasting the Revised Budget Rules The *Denver Post* noted the change by saying “[the public lands] “shape our national identity” and “are critical to the future of hunting, fishing, and wildlife and the sustained economic health of communities bordering these lands

Oregon Natural Desert Association conservation director Dan Morse, speaking to arguments against OR2365, said that the benefits to having public lands managed by federal agencies are already clear. Some of the costs to managing public lands can be prohibitive for individual states. He cited a study showing federal land transfer could cost the state \$75 million per year in firefighting costs alone. As a result, the *Bend Bulletin* summarized the bill could result in land eventually being sold to private buyers.

The economic value of public lands should be fully recognized. According to the *Denver Post* on February 2, 2017, The Outdoor Industry Association in Boulder has tallied \$646 billion in economic impact to the US and 6.1 million American jobs that are created by the outdoor recreation economy. Outdoor recreation leans heavily on accessing public land.

How Do We Respond?

- Be informed. Stay current through BCHA and BCHO emails and newsletters.
- Follow advisories from Randy Rasmussen and consider acting on his suggestions.
- Track the bills described above and ones that will keep coming. Contact senators and representatives, both state and federal, expressing opposition to any federal land transfers to individual states, or to any bills that make transfers or sales easier.
- Talk to fellow equestrians individually and in groups.
- Talk to other outdoor users. Tell them what is going on and what is at stake.
- Tell your BCHA Executive Committee and National Board to be sure that our “Resolution to Oppose the Transfer or Sale of Federal Lands” is made known to the current president, the 115th Congress, elected officials from each state, and agency officials, as was resolved in 2016.

It’s worth repeating the words of BCHA Chair Donald Saner, “It is my hope that BCHA members will be prepared and willing to throw their energy into this critical debate.”

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RESOLUTION TO OPPOSE THE CONVEYANCE, SALE OR TRANSFER OF MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY OF FEDERAL PUBLIC LANDS MANAGED BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENTS OF INTERIOR AND AGRICULTURE

WHEREAS, the mission of the Back Country Horsemen of America is to work to ensure public lands remain open to recreational equestrian saddle and pack stock use, and

WHEREAS, the public lands of this nation managed by the United States Departments of Interior and Agriculture are a part of our national treasure and heritage, and

WHEREAS, these public lands are held in perpetuity to benefit future generations of Americans because of the renewable resources and recreational value, and

WHEREAS, we support the sustainable management of resources on federal lands in cooperation with other stakeholders, and

WHEREAS, the conveyance, sale or transfer of management authority of these lands will remove large acreages from the nation’s federal public lands system, fragment existing land areas, compromise public access, and set a precedent for the privatization of all public land, and

WHEREAS, specifically the disposal of these federal public lands will decrease the opportunity for all recreational use of these lands,

WHEREAS, no federal lands should be removed or transferred except for lands considered under the Federal Land Transaction Reconciliation Act (FLTRA, PL 106-248),

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Back Country Horsemen of America to go on record in opposition of any plan, action or legislation for the conveyance, sale or transfer of management authority of public lands managed by the United States Departments of Interior and Agriculture (except under FLTRA), and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be made known to the President of the United States, congressional delegations and elected officials from each state, and agency officials of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.

Approved on April 23, 2016 by the BCHA National Board of Directors

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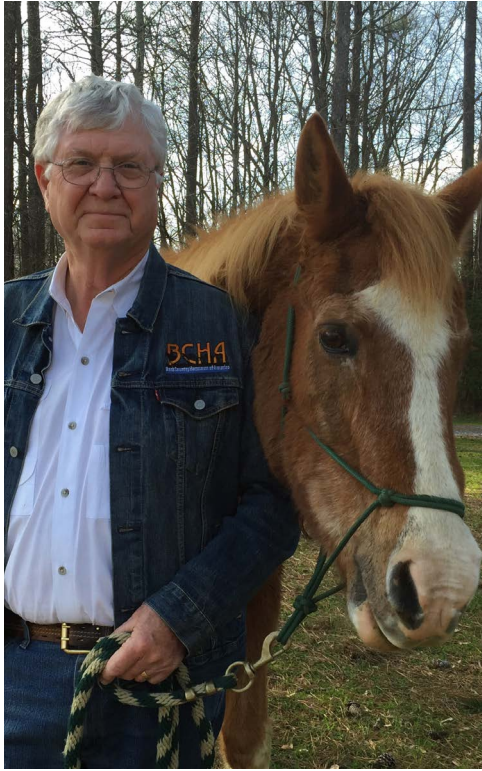
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Message from the Executive Director



Trusty Rusty 15 years on.

A Life With and Without Helmets

By BCHA Executive Director Jim McGarvey

This past fall, I turned 70 years old and decided to start wearing a riding helmet. My wife Cindy said she would start wearing one also. On Facebook, she posted a photo of us, wearing our helmets. Comments ranged from, “Well, it’s about time, Jim!” to one from my great good friend Phil Hufstader from BCH Oregon who said, “Hey, you old geezer, getting too old to stay in the saddle?” Phil’s still my great good friend.

The comments though did get me thinking about the times in my life that I wore a helmet and the times that I maybe should have. My first clash with a helmet was in the ‘60s. Ohio had just passed a law that motorcycle riders had to wear a helmet. The law didn’t specify what kind so I bought an Army surplus store WWII GI helmet and spray-painted it red. It was all very fashionable on my small red 175cc Harley Bobcat. Then on a Friday afternoon, at a busy intersection, I made a sharp left turn going over a smooth manhole cover and the rear wheel slid out from under me. I landed spread-eagle in front of all the stopped traffic but with only my pride hurt. I don’t think a helmet would have made any difference.

Not long after that, while sitting in the rear seat of a snowmobile racing another through the woods we crashed into a creek embankment. I woke up in the hospital ER with two dislocated thumbs and spine injury. I was in the hospital for the three-and-a-half weeks. A helmet probably would have made a difference.

During all this time and for a few years later, my younger brother Davey and I turned pit crew wrenches for oval track stocks cars. In the early ‘70s we decided to build our own car and go racing taking turns driving. During one of my turns, I got bumped, spun and hit in the inner wall. The racing seat broke its welds and I hit the door roll bars and broke some ribs and banged my head.

The real mistake, though, was that I should have had someone besides myself weld that seat! The helmet probably saved me from breaking my head.

About 15 years ago, I decided to try arena and open country jumping. Like automobile racing, a helmet is required equipment. In my first and only Hunter Pace – an open field event, I safely completed all the jumps over 45 minutes of riding. But when in an arena, I would come off way too many times. So, I gave up that sport. You definitely need a helmet for that sport.

More than 40 years after that first old Harley, in 2010 I got the crazy idea to try riding motorcycles again. Instead of the 175cc engine of long ago this one was a 1300cc motorcycle. I had read that the weight, horsepower and speed of today’s bikes can be a great surprise to someone returning to motorcycles after decades of being away. I should have taken that advice to heart. The clutch release and gearing were quite different than my ‘60s motorcycle and difficult to get used to. So, on one sunny summer afternoon, I started to turn on a country road when a car traveling rather fast, rounded the curve. In a bit of a panic, I twisted the throttle full out. The motorcycle’s front wheel lifted up and I sailed off the road and into the trees. When I woke up I was under the still-upright motorcycle stuck between trees and old rusty barbwire with folks looking at me. The bike’s mirror and saddle bags were torn off and the handle bar bent. With the help of those folks that stopped along the road, we got the motorcycle out of the woods and back on the pavement. And like you are supposed to do when a horse throws you, I got back on, drove it home then immediately sold it. The helmet probably saved me from breaking my head.

In wrapping up, I am not advocating for folks to wear helmets when on a horse or mule. Everyone needs to make his or her own decision. Down here



On Trusty Rusty.

in the south, folks mostly ride gaited horses. When riding recreationally, the horses can move out at a pretty steady, good clip 12-18 MPH or more. As I have gotten older, these faster speeds seem to make the roots, rocks and other tripping things loom larger on the trail. But looking back, as they say, sometimes part of the thrill of living is to do stuff that sometimes can get you a bit closer to dying.

Email or call me with any questions or comments.

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Chapter Articles

Green Mountain Horse Camp Corral Renovation

By Newsletter Editor George Proulx and Olympic Chapter Project Planner Jim Murphy

Beginning last year while applying for a grant, the Olympic Chapter of BCH Washington took a look at our long-range needs and what project would bring the biggest benefit for our Chapter. Rising to the top of the list were two small trail bridges which were needed to cross two altered water channels on the Davis Trail in the DNR Green Mountain State Forest southwest of Bremerton. Our step-by-step process may be useful to other chapters seeking to complete similar projects.

We partnered with DNR on this project, so with their input we submitted a grant request. In the proposal, DNR would provide the steel stringers, concrete footings, and hardware. Olympic Chapter would purchase and install the treated lumber for deck, post, and railings. The Chapter also proposed paying for an excavator to move the steel bridge stringers to the site, set them in place, set foundations, and move the treated wood deck, and railing lumber to the site. The match for this grant was the material noted above, plus the labor for installation and the increased amount of trail available for maintenance. We were successful in winning the grant, but there was a long wait for the funding.

DNR decided it could not wait until the grant funding was available to begin the installation, so we moved ahead with the project forfeiting the grant. We paid the \$8,000 cost from funds set aside for future trail maintenance out of our Chapter savings account. The project moved forward smoothly with both partners providing the agreed upon material and man hours. The bridges were completed about the same time as the original RTP grant funding became available.

Many BCH Chapters have local riding areas for weekend trips or when more mountainous areas are not open or too far away. The primary land base recreation area used by members of the Olympic Chapter is state-owned land managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Olympic Chapter has a volunteer contract with DNR to maintain the trails and the horse camp. As part of the contract, the Chapter also provides a Camp Host at the horse camp on weekends from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

Before the next grant cycle began, Olympic Chapter decided we were not getting enough bang for the buck we were spending on trail and horse camp maintenance! Further review of our volunteer work budget determined that the same repair and maintenance was being repeated again and again, often several times each year. Maintenance of the Green Mountain Horse Camp was our highest cost item and still not very effective.

We determined the most expensive part of the horse camp maintenance was the corrals. The surrounding topography is not drainage friendly. Over the years, the corrals were becoming a muddy, smelly mess difficult to maintain properly. Many of the rails had also

succumbed to the harsher elements of Western Washington. Despite the high maintenance cost, the 12-by-12 corrals are a desired feature of the horse camp. Our step-by-step process to permanently improve the corrals and reduce maintenance may be useful for chapters seeking to accomplish similar projects.

With the experienced planning and able assistance of Olympic Chapter member/landscape designer Brian Sundberg, the liaison and procurement efforts of former Chapter President Jim Davis, plus the spec writing ability of past BCHA Chair Jim Murphy, the details of this project came together. (Oh, did I mention that Brian owns a Bobcat?)

We set our first priority to harden the corral area of the camp, hopefully to reduce the amount and frequency of corral maintenance. Hardening the corral facility required two steps:

1. Re-engineer the corral footprint with the use of crushed rock and drain pipe to remove water and dry up the site.
2. Replace the corral posts, fencing, and installation of metal gates instead of rails.

The corral section of the horse camp featured two rows of seven corrals with an aisle way between the two rows. Two additional corrals were located on the other side of the camp for a total of sixteen corrals. The basic sequence of the renovation was:

1. Remove the old corral poles, posts, and rails.
2. Excavate the corral footprint approximately 100-by-30 to a depth of 8 inches to accommodate 172 yards of crushed rock drainage fill.
3. Install a drain pipe system.
4. Install crushed rock drain stack.
5. Install new treated posts and fence lumber.
6. Install metal gates and related hardware.
7. Top off and groom the corral ground surface with Buckshot.

DNR donated new pressure treated posts and rails for this project.

How does the Olympic Chapter fund this work? We put on a three-day ride in the summer called The Western Dream Ride held at a dude ranch in the Cascade Mountains. Cabins and corrals are available on a reservation basis. All meals are furnished. A live and silent auction is held. There is Cowboy Church and western entertainment besides good trail riding. Oh yes, and a swimming pool! Participation is limited to about 130 riders. Putting on this event is a lot of hard work but it is one way the Chapter can earn enough money to fund their volunteer work for the year. They make sure that those attending the Western Dream Ride understand that the proceeds from this ride are what keep trails open in the Green Mountain State Forest.

Chapter members, volunteers, and friends of BHC enjoyed pleasant early spring weather every Saturday in April during the renovation. The initiative and teamwork of the chapter members was as brilliant as the sun-



shine as every person exhibited what friendship, good horse ownership and LNT is all about! The Green Mountain Horse Camp Renovation Project was completed July 2016 and we received rave reviews from users of the corrals. No longer will the camp visitors have to worry about their horses standing in muck and trying to pick the areas clean in the same conditions. In addition, other minor repair and grooming was completed in each of the 17 camp sites throughout the horse camp. As we progress through winter and spring we

will see how they hold up in the wet weather and if our investment was worthwhile.

We hope everyone enjoys the new corrals and appreciates all of the hard work that went into the project. It was a labor of love and a nice source of well-deserved pride for all who participated. By the way, enjoy the firewood that the old rails have provided throughout the camp sites.

Remember and practice LNT and the new corrals will last a very long time.

For others who want to complete this type of project, the cost of this upgrade to the corrals was:	
Treated posts, fencing, bolts, lag screws, and related hardware	\$ 1,203
Crushed rock – 100 yards 3/4" crushed basalt	\$ 3,292
50 yards 3/4 to 1-1/2" clean	\$ 2,290
22 yards Buckshot 1/8"	\$ 530
16 metal gates 6 foot 2 inches @ \$96.90	\$ 1,550
Fuel for heavy equipment & miscellaneous consumables	\$ 550
Food for volunteer work crew; 5 work parties @ \$50 each	\$ 250
Total expense for the corrals	<u>\$ 9,665</u>

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Back Country Horsemen of America 2017 Convention

Great Falls, Montana

The 2017 BCHA convention will be held in Great Falls, Montana this year April 20, 21 and 22. Along with all the activities planned for the convention, there are many nearby shops and attractions in Great Falls.

Prior to this year’s convention, on April 18 and 19, there is a special opportunity for BCH members who wish to obtain chain saw certification at the “B bucking & limbing” and “C bucking & limbing” levels. Room for the certifications is still available for those interested. Please call Mark Himmel 406-781-8252 for information and day scheduling.

On April 20, BCHA regular business will be conducted by BCHA Chairman Don Saner at the Holiday Inn in Great Falls from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

During the evening of April 20, a meet-and-greet will be held at the C. M. Russell Museum. Members and guests will be able tour the museum and see many of Charlie Russell’s paintings on hand along with the other western art displays. After the tour, we will enjoy the rest of the evening at the famous Sip & Dip Lounge for hors d’oeuvres, bever-

ages, and mermaid attraction.

On April 21, Randy Rasmussen will conduct the Public Lands Workshop. The theme this year is Celebrating our Partners, Our Success. We’ll hear from some of our key partners, including the U.S. Forest Service, Montana Youth Corps and the Backcountry Hunters & Anglers. We’ll also learn details of how three BCH states recently plotted a path toward success – from proactive campaigns identifying horseback riding opportunities on public lands to disrupting proposals for the sale or transfer of federal public lands. The purpose of the Public Lands Workshop is to offer BCHA National Board members practical lessons that might be applied at home.

On April 22, the business meeting of BCHA will continue from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Also, Cindy McGarvey has many new great BCHA logo items for sale at the country store.

A full and exciting evening is planned for the annual banquet on Saturday evening, including the passing of the gavel, awards, live auction and a live band.



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Tooling to clean up your camp site before you head for home!

By Ed Haefliger

Leaving a minimum of impact on the areas where we camp or tie up our horses or mules is a responsibility of which we all need to be aware. An active national program called Leave-No-Trace endeavors to get the message across to all users of our natural resources. Other than garbage left behind after an outing, the most obvious offense is the visible residue (un-policed manure and rotting hay) from our mules or horses.

When one is working out of a stock trailer at a trailhead, it is common to carry a manure fork to clean up during or after a stay. However, how does one tool properly to take care of that chore in the back country? That is something I was concerned about from the beginning of my packing with a pack string. In my world, if I find something I believe needs fixing or addressing I will get to it even if it means I must invent a new mouse trap.



The first photo demonstrates how I have addressed this issue. At first glance, one would think what is the problem? Once you get into it, especially if you have several head in the group making deposits to your work load, the complexity of the chore jumps up at you. “What am I going to use to remove the leavings? I would rather not pick it up in my hands! I could use a stick and flip it into my hat! Could I use that little plastic ‘cat hole’ spade?”

Well, I can see you folks are thinking, but do you wish to do any of the preceding methods? I’ll bet not. “Okay, Ed, how do you get it done?”

First off, one needs a bit of a handle at least 30 inches long to facilitate raking the material into a series of small piles. This longer handle assists in picking it up and packing it to a desired location for broadcasting. I have taken old plastic manure forks that have broken their long handles and cut them off to the desired length of 30 inches. I rasped down the new handle to a diameter that will loosely fit into the old fork head. I next obtained a “wire lock clevis pin” that will fit into the installation hole in the old fork head. This pin must be long enough to fit all of the way through the fork head and its wire must be wide enough to fit around it completely. With the handle inserted into the fork head, slip the pin into the head and through the hole you drilled in the handle. And here’s a safety note: drill an additional hole into the handle above the intersection of the head and

handle. Into this hole insert a small piece of twine that you have tied to the wire end of the clevis pin. This will stop the clevis pin from taking off when you broadcast your manure. The last thing you want to do, at this point is to be pawing through tall grass and manure looking for it! The second photo shows this hole and string clearly.

In addition, I show in the first photo to a small child’s garden shovel with a face measuring 6 inches by 8 inches. This shovel handle is set up exactly the same way as the forks. A shovel in camp is at times a Godsend. At some point during the night you know you heard that pawing at the highline. I know you were too tired to get up and hobble the offender! Therefore, this morning, it is time to pay the fiddler and fill that hole. It is time to break out the trusty shovel you packed in.

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State Articles

Combined Push to Keep Trails Open in Washington State

By Janet Ford, Methow Valley BCH, Washington

MVBCH President Cathy Upper made a strong case in late 2015 for BCH of Washington (BCHW) to hold its fourth State Wide Work Party (SWWP) at the Twisp River Trail System. The SWWP organizers led by BCHW Special Projects Coordinator Jason Ridlon agreed. From Jul. 1- 5, 2016, over 90 BCHW members from 17 chapters, including the independent members' group, joined the work party based at Twisp River Horse Camp 22 miles west of Twisp on the east side of the North Cascades.

One reason for selecting the Twisp River Trail System in the Methow Ranger District was the outstanding array of trails accessible from about 12 trailheads in a relatively small area. The Twisp River Trail #440, which runs for 15 miles in the valley along the river, links many of the trailheads. All the other trails climb from the valley (or branch off trails that climb from the valley) and cross the wilderness boundary into the Chelan Sawtooth Wilderness and on to passes to the north, west or south of the watershed or to destination lakes. The passes variously lead to National Park, National Recreation Area, access routes to Stehekin, the Pacific Crest Trail and Chelan-Sawtooth bench.

Another reason for choosing this trail system was the risk of losing many of these trails because of lack of resources to perform much-needed maintenance. Even clearing annual down-fall is often not accomplished on some trails. In common with trails in many states, the land manager (Forest Service in this case) has inadequate funding to provide resources for even half of the miles of trails in its care. Though helpful, work by volunteers – including local Methow Valley Chapter of BCH (MVBCH), Washington Trails Association and other local user groups – was not anywhere near sufficient to keep all the trails open, let alone maintained.

Further hindering trail maintenance in the Methow Ranger District were two separate devastating fires in the area in 2014 and 2015 – the Carlton Complex and the Twisp River Fire. The trails in upper Twisp River were not burned, but all available workers were concentrated on fire control and access to the trails was closed. The effect of the reduced clearance in those two years was compounded by the heavy snow in the winter of 2015-16 which brought down more trees than usual on the trails. At the start of 2016, the outlook was dire and we did not expect some of the trails to be passable throughout the year to any but the most adventurous hikers.

Work areas were prioritized on nine trails which were accessible from the Twisp River Horse Camp, including a section of Twisp River Trail which would be used to access some of the other trails. Preliminary work was done by MVBCH. Cathy Upper was in charge of camp setup and maintenance and MVBCH Trail Boss Bill Ford was the local trail coordinator leading scouting and preparatory work on trails. Jason Ridlon visited several times to check out and help with this work. BCHW President Kathy Young

joined him once, participating in the trail preparation.

About 80 of the 93 recorded BCHW members attending the SWWP worked four to five days on the trails. Apart from logging the heavy blow-down from winter, the work carried out was on long-neglected maintenance. Sometimes many different activities were underway at the same time and up to seven trails had one or more crews working on them. The intensity of effort required much planning and considerable support for the trail crews. A total of 397 volunteer hours were spent on support.

A cook team provided three meals a day; record keepers kept track of volunteer hours, types of work and miles of trail worked on; radio contact was maintained between the camp and trail teams; the LNT team worked in camp to remove manure and distribute water to camp sites; drivers transported stock to more distant trail heads.

Monetary support for running the work party came locally from MVBCH and from several other chapters of BCHW, as well as grants and donations given by others interested in supporting work on trails. A grant of \$1,000 from BCHA was used for materials needed for water bars and turnpikes, such as timber and pins and culverts, as well as defraying other costs. There were also many in-kind donations, as well as the loan of a stock truck and of a water truck and several horse troughs. The MVBCH catering trailer was available to the SWPP cook crew.

Even though we relied on our experiences from the first three SWPPs, the fourth SWWP was a considerably larger undertaking than its predecessors. Despite the large numbers of people and stock involved, the work was accomplished with no accidents or injury to participants. This was due to the strict adherence to safety protocols, attention to detail in planning, and good management of the trail crews. In addition, the volunteers themselves were generally experienced and skilled at their job.

The main aim of the work party was to undertake long-term maintenance. However, logging and brushing took up a substantial portion of the total trail volunteer hours because access to the work areas (especially for pack stock) was sometimes blocked. Maintenance was initially delayed on a few trails leaving some work to be completed after the SWWP by MVBCH trail crews.

Substantial long-term maintenance work was achieved. At least eight turnpikes were built or repaired. The large-



Top: Turnpike on NorthCreek Trail # 413. Photo by Kathy Young. Bottom: South Creek Trail #401 Vicky Gish packing for trail crew working on water bars. Photo taken by Jan Ford.

est (105 feet) on North Creek Trail #413 had four culverts installed under it. Another five were built or repaired on Williams Creek Trail #407. Water bars and tread drains were established for better drainage and tread was repaired on several trails. Decking on one bridge was repaired. An enormous amount of brushing was undertaken. Apart from three miles of the Twisp River Trail, the crew worked on another eight trails with a total length of 52.5 miles. Although BCHW volunteers did not work the full length of every trail, probably none of these trails would be passable to stock without the work of the SWWP.

The total volunteer hours recorded by the trail crews during the SWWP were 1790. Another 409 hours were logged in by MVBCH members before and after the SWWP. All the participants felt gratified, not only with the overall achievements of the SWWP in maintenance of trails in the Twisp River Valley, but also with their own individual contribution to its success. A bonus was getting to know and interacting with BCHW members who shared their dedication to the trails and had the skills and energy to make a real difference. Despite physical adversity, a few participants determined to come to the fourth SWWP and make their contribution. They are an inspiration to us all.

State Articles

Leave No Trace Principles

By Marybeth Conger, Back Country Horsemen of Idaho



LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES Camping with horses & mules

Marybeth Conger, BACK COUNTRY HORSEMAN OF IDAHO Education Chair

IN THE BACK COUNTRY HILLS, THE CHARACTER OF US ALL COMES OUT.

It is important to remember that LNT principles are guidelines, not rules. Consider your surroundings, local regulations, weather concerns, and your skill level when choosing the best way to Leave No Trace. Anything we do is better the nothing.

PLANNING – The most critical component of a safe and successful trip.

- Contact local land managers for maps, regulations and opportunities for the area. Get information and rules concerning permits, campfires, party size, grazing, weed-seed-free feed, trail conditions and closures, etc.
- Make alternate plans in case of bad weather.
- Select appropriate equipment for the worst conditions the country and time of year might offer.
- Pack lightly. Take only as much gear, as you need for the trip.
- Obtain maps of the area and know how to use them and your compass.
- Condition yourself and your stock for the trip.
- Know your stock and get horses used to highlines, pickets, hobbles, nosebags, feed bags, etc.
- Check on bears in area, especially grizzlies. Be sure you obtain and understand special safety and food storage regulations.
- If certified weed-seed-free feed is required, get horses used to new feed and feed weed-seed-free exclusively a minimum of 2 days before leaving on your trip.
- Think about communications in the event of an emergency as your cell phone may not work.

PACKING: Techniques

- Use lightweight, compact camp equipment. Backpacking equipment reduces weight and size allowing you to use fewer animals.



The Catch Pen Pine Valley Equestrian Campground

By Paul Sloane, Southwest Chapter, BCH Utah

The Pine Valley Equestrian Campground is located in the Dixie National Forest in southwest Utah about one hour north of St. George. It features eleven campsites with corrals, pull-through parking, water, picnic tables, and fire rings. The road through the campsites are paved and toilet facilities are conveniently placed throughout the facility. The corrals were originally installed as a project by the Southwest Chapter of BCH Utah and are continually maintained by the chapter members. We make it possible for riders from around the country to enjoy the many miles of trails accessible from the campgrounds. If you enjoy riding through the pines on mountain trails, Pine Valley is the place for you. There are trails for the more experienced riders and horses and trails for those who are less adventurous.

In addition to great riding the historic little town of Pine Valley offers enjoyment for the non-rider with things to do when you are not in the saddle, such as paved walking or bicycling trails, a lake with good trout fishing, a restaurant, small convenience store for essential items, and a visitor's center.

Southern Utah offers more diverse riding experiences within reach of the Pine Valley campground. Red Mountain Wilderness area, Snow Canyon State Park, Red Cliffs Desert Reserve all offer rides through beautiful Red Rock country on sandy trails. While you are on your trip you can stop and enjoy the great Zion Nation Park (see the article in this issue by Doug West) and Bryce Canyon National Park making memories that will last a life time.

To plan your trip go to www.recreation.gov and search Pine Valley Utah Recreation Area.



Keeping Paradise Possible

By Robert Eversole, BCH Washington

Paradise. For some that’s an image of a tropical beach. For me it’s a dirt trail that twists and meanders to a backcountry camp deep in the wilderness. It’s a quiet solitude punctuated by the peaceful clip clop of hooves and the far scream of an eagle aloft. It’s the sweet perfume of pine on a warm summer day. It’s the companionship of a trusted horse who will faithfully take you home.

Unfortunately, in a growing number of cases paradise has padlocks.

In only a few short generations we’ve “improved” a lot of backcountry and rural areas into suburbia and shopping malls. “Trail Closed” signs are both dreaded and, unfortunately, frequently encountered. Lest we lose them, we’d better take care of the equine-friendly country that remains. Paradise needs protecting.

You don’t need to be a trail rider, or even have your own horse, to recognize the importance of conserving horse trails. There are many things that each of us can do to preserve equine trails. Unfortunately, often it’s sometimes difficult to explain why groups like ours are important. Here are some of the reasons to join that I talk about during my expo clinics.

Horse clubs are focal points for both social events and trail stewardship efforts. For me, the biggest reason to join an equestrian club is for the comradery of people who have the same interests. Being able to talk about trail conditions, feed, training, and so forth is priceless.

Don’t have a local Back Country Horsemen group nearby, or don’t care for the one that is? Start a new one. These organizations are always looking for new members and new chapters. A



quick Google search will put you in touch with someone who can help.

Here are four reasons to join, or start, a horse club. And quotes from those who did.

1. You’ll meet like-minded people and make new friends.

“Share activities with like-minded people both socially and out on the trails.”

“The diversity of a club’s membership allows members to ride and camp with others who have similar aspirations and at a whole range of experiences. It makes it easy to find people to ride with when their regular partner is unable to get away.”

“There’s a large group of us who don’t just go out on club rides, we’ll meet up on other weekends too – it’s great to have lots of different people to go riding with.”

“Looking for love? I know lots of

couples who met through horses!”

2. You’ll see new places and do new things.

“You can expand the scope of your own activities by taking part in those organized by more experienced members.”

“A lot of clubs have a range of social events which complements the riding scene.”

“If you want to go to a new trail area there’s bound to be someone in the club who has already been and willing to give you info on the place.”

3. You’ll learn new skills

“Many clubs offer training opportunities, however chaotic or informal, and there are always more experienced members around to provide guidance and help.”

“Practical peer-to-peer coaching so that we all learn together.”

“Knowledge transfer from more experienced members, a bit like an apprenticeship.”

“As a new member, I doubt that I’d have made the steps to ride outside the

arena without the support of the club.”

4. It’s fun!

“It’s more fun spending your day out with others. And they can get great photos of you and your partner on rides too.”

There are more benefits than just being a member of a club. There are new friends to be made, information to learn and most of all the comradery of people who get what it means to love horses and trail riding.

We live during a time when equine trail use is being curtailed. Most Americans live in urban settings, removed from our version of paradise. Most of them don’t understand the importance of conservation, outdoor recreation, and the protection of trails.

Please, don’t wait until you’re faced with a crisis before you get involved. Volunteer with trail projects, join a club that will help protect your trail access, and educate yourself and others on best practices.



Saddle Pal

The easy way to attach your lead rope

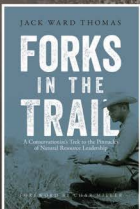
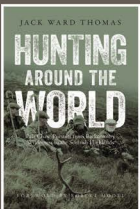
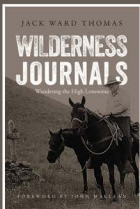


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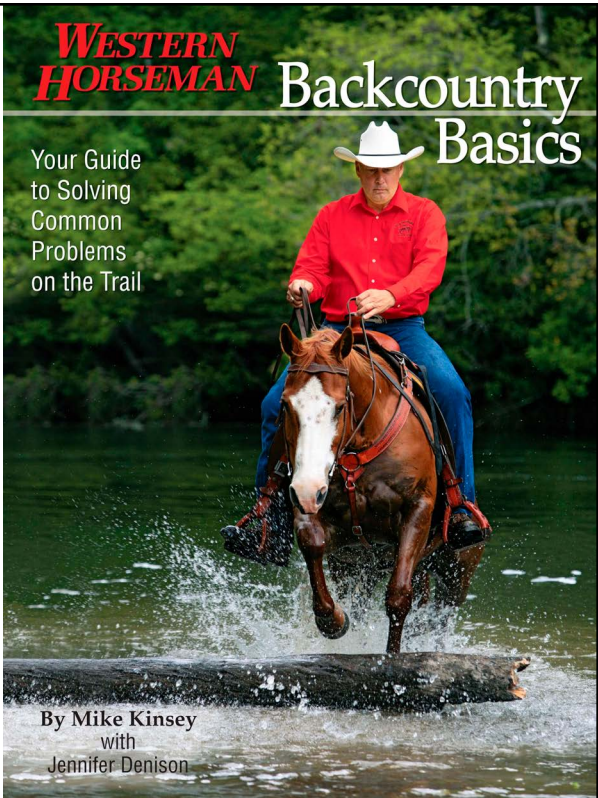
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