

Back Country Horsemen of America Makes a Good Trail Ride a Great One by Sarah Wynne Jackson

Back Country Horsemen of America works hard to keep trails open for horse use across the nation. They also dedicate their time and effort to making sure equestrians have the amenities they need to fully enjoy their trail experience. Adequate parking at trailheads, safe corrals, and a clean supply of water can make a good riding day a great one.

Small but Effective

Despite being a relatively small group, the Shoshone Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Wyoming thrives because of the dedication of a core group of about a dozen people, many of whom come from the Big Horn Basin of northwestern Wyoming. In one year alone, they planned and built four new corrals on the Wood River, built a trailhead at Big Creek, cleared 173 miles of forest trails, and repaired six feed bunks at Jack Creek.

Because the mangers at Jack Creek had been in place for many years, they had numerous rotted and broken boards which allowed feed to become lost due to spillage. Not only is the Jack Creek Trailhead a popular destination for horsemen from across the country, it is heavily used by local riders as well.

The Shoshone Back Country Horsemen redesigned and rebuilt the feed bunks, which required \$415 in materials for each one. A Back Country Horsemen Education Foundation grant supplied \$1000. The chapter donated the rest of the funds for materials, and volunteered their labor and the equipment required to complete the project, which took about two-and-a-half days.

Formed in 1993, the Shoshone Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Wyoming put down its roots by developing trail facilities where they were badly needed. It began by working with the US Forest Service on the Shoshone National Forest, improving and developing trailheads west of Cody.

Shoshone BCH continues to partner with the USFS through a cost share agreement to maintain well over 100 miles of trail each year. This agreement allows the USFS to do more with their budget while focusing volunteer efforts where they are needed the most. The Bureau of Land Management in Cody has also partnered with the chapter on the development of multiple trailheads on BLM administered lands.

As with every Back Country Horsemen of America unit, all of the Shoshone Chapter's income goes toward maintaining and developing trails and trailheads; training members in correct trail clearing, Leave No Trace skills, and back country first aid; and public education and efforts which support the mission of BCHA.

Whatever the Weather

The Wasatch Front Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Utah is located in the northern part of the state and they aren't afraid to spend a day doing trail work when the snow flies. When Weber County donated corral panels for installation at North Fork County Park in

Huntsville, the Wasatch Front Chapter volunteered to sort and assemble them on a cold, wintry day.

A few weeks later, a group of volunteer welders began the tedious task of securing what were once old, dilapidated panels into useful corrals. Other volunteers pitched in by putting a fresh coat of paint on the panels and clearing unwanted sagebrush. Wasatch Front Chapter's future plans for the newly constructed equestrian area include tapping into the current water supply to bring water access closer to the corrals. Weber County will work on improving the trailer parking around them.

North Fork Park and Campground is one of many parks adopted by Wasatch Front Back Country Horsemen. The chapter teams up with other volunteer park users like Weber Pathways and Ogden Nordic to keep the bridges sturdy on the Ben Lomond and Mule Back trails. They also clear all trails of deadfall and treacherous low hanging limbs. Chapter volunteers donate the use of their pack animals to haul water and supplies to and from Boy Scout activities on the Ben Lomond trail and support the annual Skyline Mountain Marathon.

A few years ago, the chapter worked with the Weber County Parks Department to plan and complete a new trail, called Mule Back. The name acknowledges the Back Country Horsemen and fits with other trail names such as Mule Shoe and Mule Ear. Mule Back Trail provides a short cut connection from Cutler Flats to Mule Shoe. The connection makes it safer for users by keeping them away from the frequently driven dirt road.

The Wasatch Front Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Utah is one of the largest and most active chapters in the state, with thousands of volunteer man-hours dedicated annually to trail improvement and maintenance efforts in Weber, Davis, and Cache counties.

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 regarding the use of horses and stock in wilderness and public lands.

If you want to know more about Back Country Horsemen of America or become a member, visit their website: www.bcha.org; call 888-893-5161; or write 342 North Main Street, West Hartford, CT 06117. The future of horse use on public lands is in our hands!

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