

What lies on the trail ahead?

By Melissa DiNino, recipient of the Back Country Horsemen of Montana Packing Skills Scholarship in 2018



Growing up in the suburbs of New England, the presence of both horses and wilderness were inconsistent in my life. Fortunately, I was able to get a taste for their magic early on, riding horses at my friend’s farm in Connecticut and spending every summer at my family’s cabin in the woods of Maine. While I didn’t know it at the time, those moments in my childhood shaped much of who I am today.

Since moving to Montana, I have taken every opportunity to keep both horses and wilderness at the forefront of my life. The Back Country Horsemen of Montana Packing Skills Scholarship was one of those opportunities that I was very fortunate to

receive last year, which allowed me to head into the Scapegoat Wilderness for my very first pack trip.

Guided by Connie and Mack Long of Bob Marshall Wilderness Outfitters, our class learned the ins and outs of packing into the backcountry. Connie and Mack shared their passion and philosophy with us – everything from wilderness stock care to Leave No Trace techniques – so that each of us could grow as stock users and stewards of the land. I was humbled by all of the logistics and planning that must go into even a few days of packing stock into the backcountry.

Mother Nature also did her part to share a few lessons on the unpredictable nature of going into the

backcountry. While you may think you’re prepared, you never truly know what lies on the trail ahead, whether it’s a storm that postpones your departure or a pack mule mishap that changes your course.

While I’ve worked with horses for years, mules were an unknown for me. I was lucky to be paired with Lily, a six-year-old molly, for the duration of the trip. Her sweet demeanor and sure feet left me with a newfound love for mules, and I’m dreaming about the day when I can add one (or three) to a string of my own.

We also lucked out with a visit from Smoke Elser. The stories he shared gave me an appreciation for the landscape we traveled through,

and they left me with a desire to explore even further. Being able to see new country in this way lends to a sense of place and a connection to home that most folks will never have.

Nearly a year later, I can’t say I remember all of my hitches, but attending the Packing Skills Class gave me new skills, new friendships, and new ways to give back to my community. Without the scholarship, I couldn’t have experienced this trip, and for that I am so grateful. Thank you to everyone with Back Country Horsemen of Montana for making this possible.



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(888) 893-5161

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Contact BCHA or the organization nearest you for more information.

National:
BCH of America
Erica Fearn
59 Rainbow Road
East Granby, CT 06026
(888) 893-5161
FAX (360) 832-1564
efearn@bcha.org
www.bcha.org

State Organizations:
BCH of Alabama
1404 Arkadelphia Road
Warrior, AL 35180
(205) 936-9043
chad.bowman@hatchmott.com
backcountryhorsemenal.com

BCH of Alaska
PO Box 3148
Palmer AK 99645
(907) 360-0480
kaylene.johnson@gmail.com

Arkansas Back Country
Horsemen
575 Getaway Road
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theloosecayuse@gmail.com
www.arkansasbch.org

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Golconda IL 62938
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Mulemaid@shawneelink.net

Hoosier BCH Indiana
12784 E Rollins Lane
Springville IN 47462
(812) 797-4540
hoosierhorsemen@yahoo.com

BCH of Iowa
3445 Lima Trail
Missouri Valley, IA 51555
(402) 350-3249
sue.maiwald@yahoo.com

BCH of Kansas
1409 Lincoln Road
Concordia KS 66901
(785) 243-2494
steve.lindsey@lia_ks.com

BCH of Kentucky
2068 Ponds ville Kepler Road
Smiths Grove KY 40353
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jthorses2009@gmail.com
www.kybch.com

BCH Pigeon River and
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BCH of Minnesota
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651-345-9909
www.bchmn.org

BCH of Missouri
519 Good Hope Road
Marshfield, MO 65706
(417) 425-9969
www.bchmo.org

BCH of Montana
2130 9th Street W. #109
Columbia Falls, MT 59912
bchmt406@gmail.com
www.bchmt.org

BCH of Nevada
PO Box 19324
Reno NV 89511
(775) 843-2569
info@bchnv.com
www.bchnv.com

BCH of New Mexico
PO Box 37005
Albuquerque NM 87176
chairman@bchnm.org
www.bchnm.org

BCH of North Carolina
102 Arrowhead Lane
Whittier, NC 28789
(828) 577-3462
tomthomas262@gmail.com
www.bchofnc.org

BCH of North Dakota
2550 Windsor Pl N
Mandan, ND 58554

BCH of Oregon
PO Box 362
O'Brien, OR 97534
(541) 746-4547
www.bcho.org

Black Hills BCH
of South Dakota
20112 Buckin Horse Lane
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(605) 645-2296
bhbchsd@gmail.com
www.bhbchsd@blogspot.com

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(509) 276-6226
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Affiliates:
Saratoga BCH
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How Can BCHA Help State and Local Organizations?

By Richard Cochran, High Sierra Unit, Back Country Horsemen of California

When considering how BCHA can help state and local organizations that are part of our family, it caused me to think back to when California became part of BCHA. California started out as the High Sierra Stock Users Association (HSSUA). HSSUA was established in California's Central Valley with for the purpose of developing relationships with the federal land managers who operated the nearby national forests and national parks. To that extent, it was successful. However, when a new forest supervisor or park superintendent started in a local park or forest we had to re-establish our credentials and create a relationship with the new person. Plus, we heard from many other parts of California where equestrians were having challenges dealing with local land managers. The problems faced by equestrians were not limited to the Sierra Nevada Mountains for which the HSSUA was named.

When HSSUA learned about BCHA, it encompassed just three states. We contacted Montana BCH and made inquiries about the organization. We even got one of the Montana leaders, Lloyd Fagerland, to visit Central California and discuss the pros and cons of becoming part of BCHA. I do not know if there was a formal expansion effort taking place at that time but Lloyd Fagerland was persuasive in his presentations. We also invited one of the leaders of Washington BCH to meet with us to discuss the question of whether or not to become part of BCHA. Ken Wilcox from Washington came to Central California and made the case for us to join BCHA. He, too, was convincing. So, the HSSUA made the decision to become part of BCHA. We changed our name from the High Sierra Stock Users Association to the Backcountry Horsemen of California (BCHC). Yes, we made the words back and country into one word. Unlike the other states, we have an unusual name.

Which brings me to how the transformation of a local advocacy organization (HSSUA) into a statewide organization (BCHC) is a good case study of how BCHA can help your state or local organization. It helped the newly transformed BCHC in several ways. Let me start by telling you

that the challenges in dealing with local federal land managers haven't gone away. It seems that every forest or park is constantly revising their land management documents. Further, the process involved in the updates to the land management plans can go on for years at a time to the point where you believe the process is never going to end.

When the High Sierra Unit of BCHC came face to face with a new wilderness stewardship plan, we were able to receive advice and assistance from BCHA about critical issues involved in the proposed plan. The local land managers were aware that BCHA was looking at issues involved in the plan and it gave our arguments more credibility. We know that it will not always be possible to have BCHA look at local issues, but BCHA was an invaluable resource when the High Sierra Unit was working on the subject wilderness stewardship plan.

One of the biggest benefits of being part of BCHA is by and large, federal, state, and even some local government land managers know who BCHA is. BCHA is now a recognized authority on stock use issues. When anti-stock persons or organizations make unfounded claims about the impacts of stock use BCHA can help counter those claims. It gives BCH state and local chapters and units credibility as we work with them to protect the interests of equestrians.

Of course, BCHA's credibility came hard-earned from work projects that our members have performed. In the High Sierra Unit, we make it a practice to furnish our local member of Congress information about the number of volunteer hours the members of BCHA have contributed. It is easier to ask for help from Congress if you can demonstrate that your organization is giving back in the form of volunteer work.

If your local or statewide equestrian group is experiencing challenges about your rights regarding the use of certain public lands, it may be in your best interest to consider becoming part of a state BCH organization. Or, if you live in a state where there is no state BCH organization, you should consider forming one.

Oly

Olens Ten Four was his registered name
A son of Easy Jet from quarter house fame
I found him at a ranch near Pingree Idaho
And first drove away because I didn't know
What a good horse was or which way to go

On the way home about Blackfoot
I thought I better take another look
I turned around and went back to the ranch
And Oly was mine, maybe not by chance

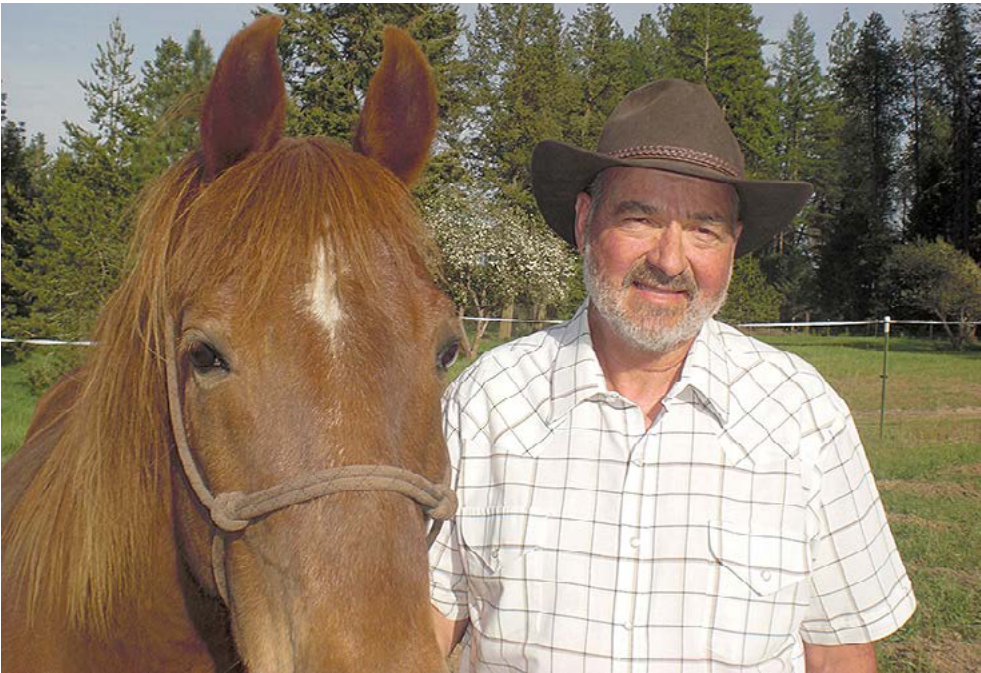
They say those Easy Jet colts are hot
But he was a gentleman and really was not
We traveled together and rode the mountains
For 17 years we were great companions
The pack trips and hunting trips we went on
Were times that most people can just dream of
The prime of my life was spent with Oly
And I will never forget the things that he taught me

As he got old I just couldn't stand
To work him so hard, it made me sad
One of my good friends had a granddaughter
Who needed a horse that was a good starter
I asked him to come and take Oly away
To a better home to finish his race

When George picked him up, who would have thought
This old cowboy was a little distraught
But in my heart I really knew
That Oly had a better home, and the Olittle girl too

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View from the Chairman's Saddle

By Darrell Wallace, BCHA National Chairman

Wow! The National Board Meeting in Asheville, N.C. was exciting and now we are embarking on a whole new BCHA year! Unanimous passage of the resolution supporting Minimum Requirements Decision Guide (MRDG) by the U.S. Forest Service gave me good reason to request a meeting with Chief Vicki Christiansen. I was pleased with her willingness to consider our positions on the MRDG, as well as other issues.

Past Chairman Freddy Dunn put our organization on a much more productive track by organizing all BCHA committees. I hope to continue with her success story. I am particularly pleased with the progress of our Public Lands Committee under Jerry Bentz (Ore.). Jerry organized regional subcommittees and most are conducting conference calls each month. Compliments to our Education Committee Chair Craig Allen (Utah) who organized a high-performance group who keep turning out more and more great programs. You'll be hearing more about our committees and their work in future View from the Chairman's Saddle columns, articles in the newsletter, and on the BCHA website.

Because our Governing Policies call for succession planning, I am teaming up with Vice Chairman Sherry Copeland (Mo.) for my column this quarter. We are fortunate to have elected a brilliant Vice Chairman and I'm grateful to have Sherry's knowledge and insights in discussions of virtually all BCHA issues that come to my attention. So, Sherry is providing a brief introduction so that all of you can begin to get to know her. I am sure that you will appreciate her as much as I do!

Happy Trails!
Darrell



Vice Chairman's Comments

By Sherry Copeland, BCHA National Vice-Chairman

I am excited to team with Chairman Darrell on BCHA issues. He is not kidding about teaming up on discussing issues: all the issues!

Improving communication through teamwork is a goal for the new BCHA year. The Executive Committee, Officers, and Committees are part of the team for effective communication. In addition, I look forward to engaging the National Directors and including them on the team moving forward. But, the team is not complete without all BCHA members. My challenge is to you – as a team member – contact your National Directors to discuss issues, voice concerns, recognize accomplishments, and provide support.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve on the BCHA team as Vice Chairman and will try to be worthy of the praise the Chairman used in my introduction.

Looking forward to a productive year,
Sherry

BCHA Mission Statement

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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- North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC)
- North Carolina Horse Council
- Old Dominion Endurance Rides Inc.
- Pennsylvania Equine Council
- Walkers & Talkers Saddle Club

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BCH Kansas Sees Growth with Regional Chapters

By Diana Skinner & Cheryl Thomas, Sunflower BCH Kansas

After operating for three years as a state chapter organization, a small group of dedicated Back Country Horsemen Kansas members got together to discuss the best way to encourage new membership. It was decided that forming regional chapters might be a way to boost membership. Smaller local chapters would be more personal and local activities and projects could offer potential members a first-hand look at the benefits of BCHA membership.

Early February 2018 saw the organizational meeting of the first regional chapter. First of all, it was necessary to determine if there were 15 BCH Kansas members in the geographical area. Once membership requirements were confirmed, bylaws were established and temporary officers were elected. Most of the equestrian trails in Kansas are located at Corps of Engineer lakes. Four of the lakes are within a 30-mile radius, so those four lakes became the boundaries of the first regional BCH Kansas chapter. After much discussion on a name for this chapter, Jayhawk or Wildcat (yep, we are right between the two in-state rival universities), a compromise was reached on Sunflower Chapter. The name is in honor of the state flower and makes the chapter easily recognized as in Kansas.

Since the establishment of the Sunflower Chapter, membership in BCH Kansas has seen significant growth.

In addition to the 15 initial Sunflower members, 23 new members joined Sunflower BCH Kansas in 2018. Members have been excited about supporting their favorite trails. A substantial portion of the total 2018 volunteer work hours reported from Kansas were from the Sunflower Chapter. These regional members contributed over 1,500 hours in 2018 in trail and equestrian campground maintenance. Benefit trail rides were also held in the Sunflower region that raised almost \$9,000 for local trail and campground improvements. Having local representation and local work crews allows Sunflower BCHA to develop stronger relationships with public land managers. It's a definite plus when these land managers see the same people working on the trails that they see riding the trails.

With the impressive growth in membership and increased awareness that the Sunflower Chapter has brought to BCH Kansas, other regions of the state are working toward regional chapters. The Saddle Ridge Chapter has recently formed near Kansas City. The Chapter has made significant strides in trail maintenance in that area and a much-improved relationship with local public land managers. The development of regional BCH Kansas chapters has proven to be a win-win for both our state membership and for trail preservation on Kansas public lands.



2018 Sunflower BCH Kansas Work Horse Awards were presented to members who had accumulated 100+ hours of volunteer trail work during the year. Recipients are: (front l-r) Cheryl & Jim Thomas, Jo Turner & Dewayne Burgess, Mike Milburn; (back l-r) Delbert & Diana Skinner, Sheila Watkins (Not pictured: Ken & Susan Johnson).

Finding Artifacts in the Backcountry

By Eleanore Eberts, Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead, Montana

One of the many advantages to being in the backcountry on horseback is the ability to see much more of our surroundings. Sometimes we see wildlife, spring wildflowers, and occasionally we see evidence of past human presence. Often this evidence is in the form of a broken piggin' string, but an artifact much older can pop up. Montana has been occupied for many thousands of years. One might find evidence of homesteaders or miners in the form of metal cans, archers from small, intricate points, and of people who used large stone spear points.

If you find something that is interesting while out in the backcountry, it is always a good idea to take a few pictures. Take a few quick photos before picking up the object or exploring further, take a few of the surrounding area, then take some close ups. Taking a picture before touching the object and a photo of the area ensures that there is a record to assist in recreating its original environment when you leave and can give clues to its use and history.

After you have finished admiring and contemplating your find, please put it back where you found it, and try to recreate its resting place. If it was covered in leaves, kick some leaves over it with your boot.

Practice leave no trace principles with your exploration so the next person can enjoy it as well.

In addition to leave no trace ethics, do remember that any object that has been used by humans and is over 100

years old is protected by law on publicly owned land. If you see someone packing out artifacts, please stand up for everyone and remind them of this. Artifacts, whether they are cans from the 1910s or projectile points from 10,000 years ago, must be left where they are found by the average lay-person. In fact, looting from federal land can result in a felony! It is important for future research that the artifact is left in its resting spot because without the context of where the item was found it cannot reveal much about the past.


Before leaving the site, it is a good idea to record a GPS point. This can either be with a GPS unit or with the GPS included in a cell phone. This will make it possible for you and others to make it back to the site in the future, even if the landscape should change in the meantime.

Once you are home, the GPS point and the digital photographs can be emailed to the State Historic Preservation Office or other applicable institution such as the local Forest Service district office or a reputable local museum. By giving the information collected to the professionals the artifact can spark greater understanding of an area, and the artifact can be protected if needed. If the artifact should befall some unfortunate circumstance there would be a record of it that includes photos and the location, all thanks to you!




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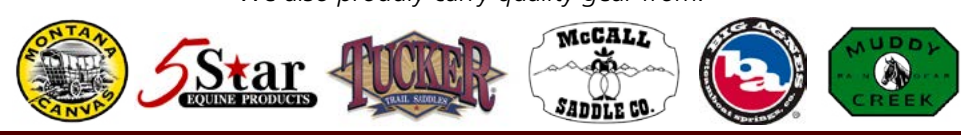
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Woods and Watersheds

By Nancy Deisch, Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen, Arkansas



On April 26 Arkansas Buffalo River BCH participated in a Woods and Watersheds symposium sponsored by a nonprofit based in northwest Arkansas called Native Expeditions. Their mission is to provide education, leadership skills, and stewardship opportunities in cultural areas, environmental literacy, and technology integration. Members who volunteered were Jeff and Donna Blake, Jacque Alexander, Jake Skobel, and Nancy Deisch.

Presenters manned fourteen stations and taught 200 children – in roving groups from eight different schools. We provided overviews of Leave No Trace, cave/karst geology, mammals, macros/fish, birds/worms, primitive skills, search and rescue, stream team, and mountain biking. The teachers represented volunteer organizations, the private sector, Buffalo National River Park, and state agencies. Five BRBCH members took rigs and equines, camped overnight, and taught at a place called Mulberry Mountain (usually an outdoor concert venue).

Buffalo River BCH taught the seven principles of LNT as they relate to equines. Probably what really caught the attention of the students (grades

6-12) were the horses and mules brought to demonstrate different LNT points. They were so entranced by the animals that a couple of the kids failed to hear the warning that the fence was electrified. Sometimes it pays to listen. Thanks to the BCHA grant Buffalo River was awarded in April, we were able to give each participant a trash bag with the seven LNT principles printed on it along with the cards that reinforce those ideals.

Buffalo River looks forward to other engagements with Native Expeditions involving children in our region and the shared wish to encourage good, safe, and ethical use of the great outdoors.


Top to bottom:
A band of students from the Fayetteville, Ark, School of Rock performed during the lunch break.

Jacqueline Alexander and Nancy Deisch with the display of LNT principles.

Jeff Blake teaching a group of Job Corp students about planning.


The students kept a constant presence at the horse pen.





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Executive Administrator
Erica Fearn, CAE
59 Rainbow Road
East Granby, CT 06026
860-586-7540
efearn@BCHA.org

Committees:

Education
Craig Allen
education@bcha.org

Expansion
Truman Prevatt
expansion@bcha.org

Funding
Ginny Grulke
fundraising@bcha.org

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Karen Saner
grants@bcha.org

Media and Marketing/Facebook
Brian Peirick
double51005@yahoo.com

Public Lands
Jerry Benz
publiclands@bcha.org

Public Liaison/Advocacy Partners
Don Saner
publicLiaison@bcha.org

Volunteer Hours
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volunteer@bcha.org

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Managing Editor
Sherry Jennings
PO Box 305
East Olympia WA 98540-0305
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National Board Meeting

Pony Express Trail Project Earns MLU the 2018 Double Diamond Award

By Lucy Badenhoop

2018 marked the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System Act, so BCHC-MLU (Mother Lode Unit, Calif.) partnered with the U.S. Forest Service (Eldorado National Forest) and the California Division of the National Pony Express Association to restore 47 miles of alpine trail between Pollock Pines (elevation 3980 feet) and Echo Summit (elevation 7382 feet). This section of the historic Pony Express (XP) Trail is in a steep granite canyon carved by the South Fork of the American River and shares the narrow corridor with Hwy 50.

Several trail features needed attention and were included in the project. Each task required special skills and equipment beyond the usual sawyer work MLU performs every spring. In these instances, MLU called on friends from other trail organizations in the region to assist and advise our volunteers in developing a variety of new skills (trail rerouting, ford building, grading/gravel install, and rigging/tackle techniques). Such technical assistance and special equipment came from individual members of Elegant Ears Mule Association, Tahoe Rim Trail Association, and Pacific Crest Trail Association.

XP Corral Trailhead. First priority was the restoration of the XP Corral Trailhead near the midpoint of the 47 miles to provide a staging area for work parties and provide public access to the trail. This feature was functionally completed in 2018 (stump removal, grading for erosion control and surface hardened with gravel). The finishing work remains to be completed after the 2018-19 winter snowmelt.

Youth & Public Education. As soon as the trailhead was functional again, Scouts BSA were invited to learn trail maintenance skills and Leave No Trace practices. In July, Troop 466 from Sunnyvale pruned vegetation and added trail markers. In August, Troop 186 from Elk Grove placed riprap (cobblestones) in five erosion-sensitive areas around the trailhead – three of which protected the seasonal creek. Troop 186 returned in October to finish a sixth area of riprap and clean culverts on 12 miles of the trail they adopted. One of their Eagle Scout candidates is creating a trail map for the U.S.F.S. to pass out to trail users as part of a new U.S.F.S. Recreational Opportunity Guide (ROG) for the Pony Express Trail.

Kyburz Ford. A recent wild fire denuded the mountain above Kyburz, to a degree that the severe winter of 2016-17 caused a trail bridge to be totally destroyed by a massive debris slide resulting in closure of about four miles of trail. The U.S. Forest Service estimated replacement of the bridge would cost \$70,000 and would take several years. As an alternative, environmental approvals were expedited to allow the trail to be relocated 150 yards upstream to a spot suitable for construction of a ford.

Monster Log Removal. Every winter, trees fall across the single-track trail on hillsides that frequently slope at 30-45 degrees, with vehicle traffic below. A few of the trees exceed three feet in diameter. Removal requires special equipment and training to cut move a half-ton section of log off the trail and prevent it from rolling downhill into U.S. Highway 50 traffic.

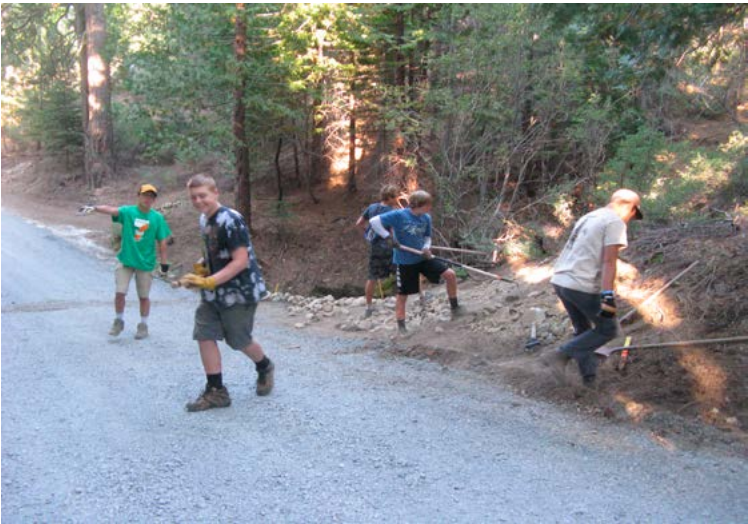
One such log was on the XP Trail just East of Pollock Pines and closed one mile of the trail. Using grant funds, MLU bought a 32-inch chain saw and some rigging equipment (e.g., cables, winches, pulleys) and conducted training on Nov. 1. The 40-foot-long log was successfully cut where it blocked the trail with its four-foot diameter trunk. All three sections of log remained stable on the hillside and the cutout was parked off the tread so that only a minor s-shaped reroute was needed around the cut ends of the log.

Range, Mules, and More!

By Linda Meyer, Back Country Horsemen of SW Virginia

Each National Board Meeting attendee received copies of six national magazines: American Trails, Mules & More, Western Mule magazine, Forests (National Forest Foundation), Carolina Trail Rider and Range. These magazines reach hundreds of thousands of like-minded subscribers annually. These publications communicate subject matter we love to hear about – our critters, lifestyle, history, facts, and the love of our lands.

Hopefully, you’ve shared these issues with your chapters to inform membership about these great resources. Additional information about these publications can be found on their websites and Facebook pages. This gift is one that will keep on giving and is greatly appreciated.



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MLU Pack Clinic Expands Topics

Text by Lucy Badenhoop
Pictures by Randy Hackbarth & Norma Kohlbaker

Each April, the MLU annual pack clinic introduces would-be packers to basic packing equipment and techniques with a chance for some hands-on practice. Due to requests, the 2018 clinic included two new subjects that also attracted non-packers: horse camping and high-lining critters.

The Saturday clinic started with a round of self-introductions by all those present, including a half dozen college students from the MLU-sponsored pack team at the University of California, Davis. (This year, UCD will field two teams of four packers at the Mule Days competition in Bishop on Memorial Day Weekend.)

After introductions, a summary of the seven principles of Leave no Trace was presented and reinforced with a plastic tag each attendee could attach to their gear as a reminder. LNT was followed with wild fire preparation information provided by Carrie Johnen. Emphasis was placed on having your pets and stock micro-chipped or otherwise identified so that rescuers can locate owners and reunite them. Next, Jerry Hietzler and Mike Kohlbaker used an iron mule to demonstrate basic packing techniques using the box hitch. An assortment of gear was available to show how the hitch adapted to hard or soft panniers and could be used on both saw buck and Decker type pack saddles. The morning session concluded with demonstrations on how to set up a highline for stock with a variety of ropes, knots and hardware that increase one's ability to tighten the line. This was followed by a hands-on opportunity for anyone interested in learning the basic knots and hitches.

The Dutch oven lunch was the hit of the day and offered an opportunity to socialize over a tasty meal. This culinary treat was prepared by Sheila Bond and Ron Akers. After lunch, Steve Smith invited everyone to his campsite for an introduction to horse camping using a tent. He was able to show how basic rider comforts can be achieved without an enormous investment. This new presentation was of special interest to those riders wanting to try horse camping for the first time to see if it really appealed to them. Afterward, some folks headed for home while others saddled their horses for a short ride before the pot luck supper and evening campfire.

Clockwise:
Steve – camping
Jerry – iron mule
Jerry – highline



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860-586-7540
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E-mail: efearn@BCHA.org

Managing Editor

Sherry Jennings
PO Box 305
East Olympia WA 98540-0305
E-mail: BCHAEditor@comcast.net

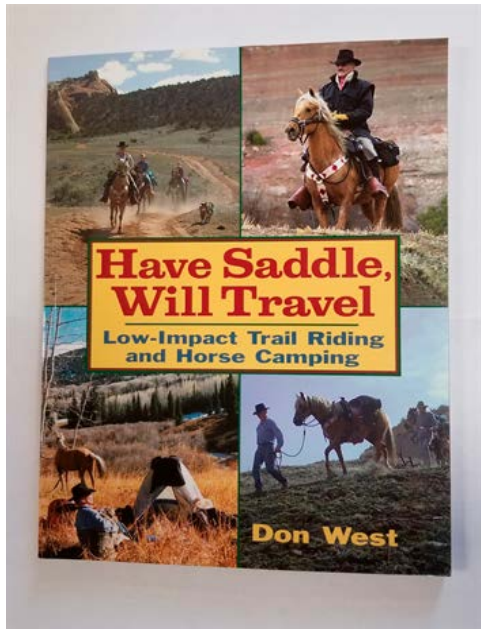
Design, Layout and Sponsorship Director

Deborah Schatz
4720 Trumble Creek Road
Columbia Falls MT 59912
(406) 314-1084
E-mail: deborah.bcha@gmail.com

Printing

Eagle Web Press
4901 Indian School Rd. NE
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Have You Heard? Keeping the Trails Open for Future Generations

By Ginny Grulke. Photos by Roy Cornett.

Today’s chaotic communications environment makes it more difficult than ever for BCHA to break through with messages of good news that affect us all. Hopefully, you’re reading this and learn that our new Legacy Fund formed in 2018 is off to a roaring start. From October 2018 through April 2019, generous BCHA members have donated \$75,000 to the Legacy Fund! Our members’ generosity is extremely exciting and thoroughly overwhelming, especially since our initial goal was \$20,000 by April.

The Legacy Fund concept resonates with many BCH members as a way to invest today to protect BCHA far into the future – for future generations. It is also the start toward an Endowment Fund, that when substantially funded, will provide BCHA with earned income and a solid and secure financial foundation. The Legacy Fund will help insure we are prepared – and can overcome – most any challenge we may face in the future. Legacy donations go into a restricted fund where the principal is not touched, except for the costs of maintaining the fund (for example, if we hire an investment advisor to wisely invest the funds). We are aiming for a fund balance of \$500,000 in a few years, so the earned income can be used for BCHA projects and expenses while the principal continues to grow.

Here are a few frequently asked questions with answers that can help you decide how you want to support BCHA – and future generations’ enjoyment of the back country:

Is there a minimum donation for the Legacy Fund? You can be a member of the Legacy Society with a donation of *any size*. Small donations from many members add up. However, if you’re willing to consider a larger donation and are able to donate \$1,000 or more by Dec. 31, 2019, you will become a Legacy Founding Member and receive special recognition. After Dec. 31, 2019, the minimum donation to become a Legacy Founder will be \$5,000.

What if I want to give more, but I’m on a fixed budget? Installment payments can be arranged, allowing you to work your donation into your monthly budget. If you choose the installment plan, the first payment needs to be given before Dec. 31, 2019.

Can I recognize a friend or family member with my donation? Some members give their donation “In memory of” a beloved past member who made a difference in their chapter or state. Some chapters have donated to honor founding members of their chapter. Some members have honored their husbands, wives, or close friends. You could even honor a beloved trail horse or mule that made a big difference in your life.

What is our way to the future?

“The true meaning of life is to plant trees,
under whose shade you never expect to sit.”
~Nelson Henderson

KEEPING THE TRAILS OPEN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Join your fellow BCHA members and become a Legacy Fund supporter. To get more information or talk to a Legacy committee member with questions, contact Erica Fearn at Efearn@bcha.org or 860-586-7540.



BCH Flathead Partners with Spotted Bear Ranger District in Packing Clinic

By Deborah Schatz, Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead, Montana
Photos by Annette Leverington and Marion Willmus

Forest Service packers Guy, Abby, Mike and Madeline, along with their horses and mules, attracted a crowd when they arrived in Columbia Falls, Mont. on Saturday, May 4, 2019. Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead partnered with the Spotted Bear Ranger District to present the packing clinic for BCH members and the general public.

Clinic participants came from as far away as Polson, Mont., and Sandpoint, Idaho, to watch and learn the efficient, traditional methods of the professional packers. Hands-on practice followed the demonstrations.

Clockwise:
Mike prepares to manta a load of loose duffle.
Abby checks the loads on her Mustang, Huckleberry.
Madeline explains how to balance the loads.
Guy shows how to tie the string together.

