

We Did It!

By Tess Stransky, Board Director and Education Chairman
East Valley Back Country Horsemen (EVBCH), Apache Junction, Arizona



When given lemons, you make lemonade. What were you doing when you realized Covid-19 was here and your world, as you knew it, was about to change? Our Chapter was about to have its spring “end of season” party 2020 when everything just STOPPED. It was like the old movie, “The Day the Earth Stood Still.” Little did we know just how long. The following explains how our members made lemonade during Covid-19 and kept the ball rolling.

EVBCH are members not just from AZ, but from all over... Montana, Canada, Washington, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Colorado... 16 states to be exact. 70% winter here for an average of 5 months (mid November through March). Of course, here in the desert, that’s prime time. The population of trail riders doubles and work on the forest resumes in earnest. Many of our

members also belong to “home” Chapters in other states and bring along their knowledge, expertise, commitment and experiences to ride and do trail work.

Getting back to the big STOP... we all experienced a different end-of-season. Energy levels were still high. Goodbyes were left unsaid while the entire world became so restless. As a result, resident board/committee chairs came together to discuss the year’s progress. We met, masked and distanced, many times, brainstorming how to improve our organizational structure, our operations, and mission effectiveness. An important part of this effort was to do some serious succession planning. Somehow, we knew that we needed to use this time to “upgrade” - not our kitchens, but our Chapter!

The first step was to embrace more technology-available solutions. To obtain some current information about

what our members were thinking, but perhaps not fully expressing, the Membership Committee conducted a confidential online survey. The questions were focused on what we were doing, how we were doing it, and suggested changes. Bottoms up, grassroots. In particular, the study revealed that the members preferred smaller rides and felt that smaller rides were safer. We were reminded that Leave No Trace (LNT) was a key BCHA mission. LNT suggests 8-10 riders on any ride. The preference by our members for smaller riding groups aligned with a major LNT mission statement. We had a direction.

During this adverse time, we had the opportunity to really do some of our best thinking and planning. The survey indicated members were also wanting...and had the willingness... to take part in more service projects, but

work in smaller groups. To date we had well over 100 members, many of which were wanting to do more. They liked that all EVBCH activities were only open to members. More educational events, social events and partnering with local organizations were high on our members’ minds. But, as Covid-19 appeared to be here to stay, events were to take a backseat. So, we focused on rides: recons, work parties, and social. This outdoor work would be the glue to keep us together, aligned with our BCHA mission: “Keep Trails Open for All” and “Maintain our Access.”

In this new “ride” organization, a key person is the Trails Coordinator (TC). The TC set up a system on our group Facebook whereby members sign up for the ride on a “first come” basis, but also ensuring a good rotation among the participants. The TC ensures that participants are members.

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Back Country Horsemen of America
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Interested in Joining?

Contact BCHA or the organization nearest you for more information.

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Public Lands Update How BCHA Prioritizes Public Land Issues

By Randy Rasmussen, M.S., Director, Public Lands & Recreation

I’ve been asked many times what type of assistance BCHA might lend to individual BCH chapters or states when public land issues suddenly arise. Such “issues” usually take the form of potential threats to continued access to favorite trails, like a trail closure proposed for horse use or a proposal to add electric motorized bike use (e-bikes) on our mixed-use trails.

BCH State Public Land Officers

The first point-of-contact for chapter leaders on emerging public land issues is to consult with their state public land officers. Nearly all of BCHA’s 32 states have assigned someone with that responsibility.

State public land officers meet regularly (via phone calls) with BCH counterparts in their region, while each region has one or more designated “regional co-chairs” that sit on BCHA’s Public Lands Committee. It’s via this process that we discuss emerging issues that might carry regional or national implications and for which a response by BCHA might either be warranted or serve to prevent a negative precedent from occurring that could affect other BCH states or regions.

Action taken by BCHA on public lands issues will vary upon the needs of a given state and the precedent-setting nature of the issue. Since BCHA is not a top-down organization, and each state is incorporated independently, you will rarely see BCHA forming public land policies that each state is expected to follow or act upon. We are instead a true “grassroots” organization and we look for synergies and harmony in policy positions as much as possible.

Case in point: Some BCH states strongly favor federal Wilderness designation by Congress in order to protect important landscapes. Some BCH states take a wait-and-see approach in order to review the pros and cons of individual wilderness proposals. Meanwhile, a few BCH states are flat-out opposed to any new Wilderness designation. That’s quite a mixed bag.

As BCHA’s Director of Public Lands & Recreation, I’m available as a resource and for chewing on, or strategizing on, important federal public land issues. BCHA works with 32 states. So we (national) are not suited to track or affect local or state policy or decision-making, and certainly not after a decision has been made. Importantly, most solutions are “local” whether they are political or policy-related.

I’ve found that some losses in access to public lands that our membership has suffered might have been prevented if BCH chapters had maintained frequent communications with local federal land managers and/or had been engaged in local trail user coalitions. Remember the adage: If you’re not at the table, you’re probably on the menu. Engagement at the local level is critical.

National Issues

National public land issues that currently are critical to BCHA and its mission include:

- a. Funding for trails and recreation programs for federal land management agencies, including
 - Annual appropriations made via Congress
 - The Recreational Trails Program (that supports grant programs in each state)
 - The exploration of alternate sources of grant funding that bypass agency overhead and go directly to boots-on-the-ground projects
 - Efforts to address the agencies’ long standing maintenance backlog (that’s why the 2020 Great American Outdoors Act is such a HUGE win!)

-Using the Land and Water Conservation Fund to purchase critical inholdings that create public recreational opportunities and to “complete” important National Scenic Trails (and another reason why the Great American Outdoors Act is a HUGE win)

b. Addressing threats to the use and enjoyment of federal public lands by horsemen, including

-Fighting efforts that would result in the sale or transfer of federal public lands either to states, local governments or private entities

-Actively opposing bills in Congress to authorize the use of mountain bikes in federally-designated Wilderness

-Opposing policy changes that would authorize the use of electric bikes on non-motorized trails in the absence of public dialogue and environmental analysis

Example: BCHA worked recently in coordinated fashion with both BCH California and BCH New Mexico to develop responses to proposals by national forests in those states to allow Class 1 e-Bikes on otherwise non-motorized trails.

c. Finding proactive ways to advance the interests of BCHA while establishing us as a major national “player” with respect to perpetuating the public’s enjoyment of trails and the back country/Wilderness, including

-Removing barriers and bureaucratic red tape that prevent volunteers and partners from conducting trail work parties

Example: we worked several years to move and ultimately see passed in Congress the 2016 National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act.

-Engaging in coalitions and coordinated actions that promote the economic and wellness benefits of outdoor recreation and trail use and the need for public land agencies to place higher priority on recreational access given its positive outcomes to society

Keep Abreast of BCHA Actions

You can keep up with national public land issues on which BCHA works either via:

- a. Monthly calls of your state/regional Public Lands Committee
- b. By reading notes of the monthly BCHA Executive Committee call (which include a Public Lands Report) and notes from BCHA’s monthly call with National Board Members
- c. Occasional public lands-related action alerts circulated via email by BCHA
- d. Materials posted on BCHA’s website <https://www.bcha.org/blog/category/alerts/> or via our quarterly newsletter, which includes a Public Lands Update and can be found online at <http://www.bcha.org/blog/newsletter/>

However you choose to engage in public land issues, please know that your commitment as a BCHA member and volunteer is the number ONE thing you can do to perpetuate our mission and good reputation. BCHA is fortunate to have so many skilled and passionate volunteers. Please know that your contributions continue to bring great value and leverage in BCHA’s advocacy in support of our collective use and access of our nation’s incredible public lands.



The Fagan Family.
We’re members of the Shoshone BCH. Pic is from December 2020 about 25 miles north of Cody, Wyoming.



View from the Chairman’s Saddle

By Darrell Wallace, BCHA National Chairman

I recently chatted with an old friend who used to belong to BCHA but sold his horses and moved to Costa Rica. He asked about BCHA saying, “I guess with all this pandemic, you guys have kinda hunkered down to wait it out?” I told him that was far from the truth; that we have continued to hold monthly Executive Committee and National Director meetings via Zoom, our committees continue to work on projects, and our members continue to donate funds so that we can expand our work. He was incredulous, and I told him he underestimated our love of riding away from the cities and an organization that supports that.

I just realized that this will be my last column as National Chairman. I don’t regret the past two years a bit – this is as fine an organization as I can imagine, and I’m proud to volunteer my time and energy to it. Last week, a friend brought me his copy of the BCHA newsletter from October 1997 – 23 years ago! As I read the articles and recognized names of back country horsemen who gave so much to this organization, I realized that many things have changed, and many things have stayed the same.

BCHA has come a long way in the past several years. We’ve added a Strategic Plan, a Business Plan, Governance Policies, more frequent contact, and now digital contact. But we have continued our original focus: to assist public land managers, keep trails open for stock use, educate ourselves and others about stock use, and ensure that our grandchildren can enjoy riding trails.

As we prepare for our digital National Board Meeting the last week of April, I know we will continue this effort with our best possible energy and experience. We are an organization of BCH states, but each state has members who bring their own ideas, experience, and energy to our mission. I look forward to seeing our next set of leaders improve on what we’ve done.

Happy Trails!

Darrell

Advocacy Equals Future Access

By Latifia “Tif” Rodriguez, Fundraising Chair, Executive Committee BCHA

OUR NATIONAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS ARE CRITICAL TO OUR FUTURE SUCCESS

As we go forward into the future, we will see an increase in our legislative and regulatory challenges. Advocacy is where we try to positively influence the actions of public officials, lawmakers, legislators and land managers. At the national level, Advocacy is a key function and benefit performed by BCHA on behalf of BCHA states and chapters. To perpetuate BCHA’s mission, BCHA must maintain a consistent, informed, strong and respected voice with federal land management agencies and elected officials. We often advocate side by side with other trail-oriented organizations: (a) to protect the public’s access to federal public lands; (b) to preserve and protect our wilderness; and (c) to ensure agency budgets accurately reflect the importance of trails and their benefits to the American public and recreational horsemen. Our Advocacy needs are growing and the Legacy Fund supports those needs into the future. IF BCHA IS NOT A STRONG AND WELL-FUNDED ADVOCATE AND PARTNER – PROTECTING OUR INTERESTS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE – WHO WILL BE?

WHAT ARE SOME OF ADVOCACY’S RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

BCHA’s Director of Public Lands and Recreation is a key player and advocate among several national coalitions, including the Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS), the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA) and the American Trails “Trails Move People” coalition. In 2020, often with partners, sometimes alone, Advocacy addressed many issues. Here are a few:

1. Helped defeat the “Mountain Bikes in the Wilderness” bill by submitting public testimony, reaching out to lawmakers to ensure opposition and aligning with other partners.
2. Acted as lead plaintiff in a lawsuit in Federal Court to challenge the illegal authorization of electric bikes (E-bikes) on over 130 miles of non-motorized trails in the Tahoe National Forest.
3. Acted quickly when the Lincoln National Forest – arbitrarily and unilaterally – proposed to authorize the use of E-bikes on a non-motorized trail system and ensured an open public process was put in place. The agency withdrew its proposal to allow E-bikes on the non-motorized trail system.
4. Initiated and advocated for the inclusion of the U.S. Forest Service in the Great American Outdoors Act, whereby the USFS will receive \$285 million per year for the next five years to address its backlog in the maintenance of roads and facilities, including trails, bridges, horse camps and trailhead facilities.
5. And, so much more ...

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 ensure 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.

Thank you to our Advocacy Partners:

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

BCHA Advocacy Partners are organizations, alliances, and coalitions involved in a common goal of Keeping Trails Open. To learn more about your organization becoming an Advocacy Partner email Partners@bcha.org.

CLIP AND SAVE!



CONTACT INFORMATION

Updated 09/25/2020

Please contact the appropriate state representative first, thank you.

Membership:

1. Contact State Membership Coordinator
2. Not receiving your BCHA newsletter? Contact *Dana Chambers*, BCHA Membership Data Coordinator memberdata@bcha.org or call 206-498-6952
3. Have an address change or going south for the winter?
Go to [BCHA.org](https://www.bcha.org) and click on the ‘Membership’ tab. At the bottom of the page are the forms you can fill out to take care of that.

Public Lands/Advocacy:

1. Contact State PLC
2. *Randy Rasmussen*, BCHA Director, Public Lands & Recreation
WildernessAdvisor@bcha.org or call 541-602-0713

Financial:

1. Contact State Treasurer
2. *Mark Himmel*, BCHA Treasurer
markahimmel@gmail.com or call 406-781-8252

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1. *Michelle Wade*, Executive Administrator
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We Did It!

By Tess Stransky
[continued from front page]

All rides are posted a week ahead with descriptions, length and some level of difficulty. We are so fortunate to have a knowledgeable member to orchestrate this procedure. Grateful are we to have such a diverse capable group with the “know how” to get things done!

Then, we began to prioritize additional goals for the coming year. Fewer riders on sanctioned rides meant more trail bosses/drag. This was an integral part of our commitment to further member safety and training. Agreeing that we needed to offer trainings, we began to organize the information that we felt was necessary to present/discuss to those interested. Rediscovering BCHA.org, our mother ship, was mind blowing! So many resources: templates, videos, etc. As a result, the Education and Trails committees facilitated six trail boss/drag and maintenance trainings, twelve recons, three work parties and several social rides. Our general membership meetings, Board meetings and trainings were held outdoors at a local park as well as through Zoom. Trail, Education and Membership committee meetings all took place outdoors, masking with social distancing. In addition, our Membership Chair put together a New Member Packet as our Education Chairs met with them monthly. Warm welcomes and EVBCH “goody bags”, created by our Membership Chair, were presented to them as BCHA was further explained and questions answered.

Continuing to embrace technology, we...

- * created a new website with a PayPal option and online fulfillment of Membership Applications and old Harmless Agreements, thanks to our secretary.

- *facilitated an electronic election of Officers and Directors online as other members facilitated an electronic election in January.

- * and hosted a very successful silent auction! Using our group Facebook site for the silent auction was another great success!

New members were joining us, particularly local residents - another measure of success. So many lessons were learned; primarily that succession planning is one of the most important things any Chapter needs to do. Facing other challenges “head on,” we are proud of what all took place during such a stressful time. If you get a chance, please visit our new website: evbch.org

In closing, we repeat, “When given lemons, make lemonade!” Covid-19 was our lemon; our lemonade was an unexpected opportunity to plan to “upgrade” our Chapter in ways we normally would have never had the time to accomplish. Our president maintained the needed leadership; members were diligent with little/no drama. We did it!

San Rafael Back Country Horsemen Improve Local Trails

By Rod Player, San Rafael Back Country Horsemen, Utah

Three of the main purposes of Back Country Horsemen are to: (1) Perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses and mules in America’s back country and wilderness; (2) To work to ensure the public lands remain open to recreational pack and saddle stock use and (3) To assist the agencies responsible for the management of public lands”. Consistent with these purposes, in association with the Manti-LaSal National Forest, during 2020, the San Rafael Back Country Horsemen completed several projects in central Utah. The horsemen completed improvements valued at more than \$100,000. Just over \$60,000 was donated as labor and the use of personal equipment by Chapter members. The Chapter also obtained three different grants totaling \$41,000.

Two of the grants were Recreation Restoration Infrastructure Grants issued by the Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation and the third grant came was a Swell Trails Grant Program from Emery County. These grants were used to hire American Conservation Experi-

ence (ACE) Crews to rebuild a bridge in the upper portion of the Left Hand Fork trail in Huntington Canyon and construct a new section of trail around a dangerous slide area on the Flood Canyon trail (also in Huntington Canyon). Other trail work included the rebuilding of a bridge on the Josephite Point Trail which was built by members of the San Rafael Chapter.



Newly re-built bridge on the Left Hand Fork trail.

Trailheads Museums Lodging Dining Rodeo Entertainment

Shoshone National Forest
the “horse forest”
adjoining Yellowstone

Shoshone Back Country Horsemen of Northwest WY would like to share our portion of paradise with the world-wide equine community.

Having just celebrated our 25th anniversary as caretakers of equine trails in the Shoshone National Forest, we want to welcome you to America’s first national forest, a premier equine destination. It was and still is affectionately known as the “horse forest.” It consists of 1,389 miles of non-mechanized trails winding through 1.4 million acres, 56% of which is designated wilderness area.

The Cody, WY area has trailheads, trails and scenery that will make your vacation unforgettable, and is the gateway to Yellowstone National Park. Cody is centrally located to experience western hospitality at its finest. The Buffalo Bill Center of the West (a Smithsonian Affiliate consisting of five museums of western history at a single location), nightly rodeos, dining, lodging, entertainment, and western culture all await you in Cody, WY.

Please go to our website at www.shoshonebch.org for more information on Shoshone Back Country Horsemen and our efforts to preserve this great heritage. Ride the trails less traveled and pack out the experience of a lifetime along with what you packed in.

For additional information on Shoshone National Forest:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/shoshone>
For more information on the Cody, WY area:
<http://www.codyyellowstone.org>

IN COOPERATION WITH THE PARK COUNTY TRAVEL COUNCIL

Spring Warm-Ups: Reconditioning Horses and Mules in the Spring

By Stacie G. Boswell, DVM, DACVS-LA
Member Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen
Board Certified Large Animal Surgeon
Author, *The Ultimate Guide for Horses in Need* (horseandriderbooks.com)
<https://stacieboswell.com>



It's tough to keep horses or mules fit during the winter months, even if you have access to an indoor arena. Now that things are thawing and your horses and mules are shedding their fuzzy winter coats, it's definitely time to start working out.

After three months of leisure time, all conditioning from the previous season is essentially lost. You're starting at ground zero of getting your horse in shape again. Experts recommend using a six to eight week program to get a horse from fat to fit. It's critical to start slow. If your horse or mule gained weight over the winter, the strain on arthritic joints or previous tendon or ligament strain can contribute to lameness. Starting back slowly will help keep him sound and comfortable.

Going to hard work too quickly also increases the chances of your horse sustaining an injury. As muscles strengthen, they help support legs as they move, thus protecting tendons, ligaments, and joints from strains and sprains. Bones build density in response to impactful exercise. You want to make sure your animal is ready before you take him on a long back country journey. If he isn't fit and consequently sustains an injury, you could have a hard time getting him out of the back country.

Experts recommend to start your exercise program with walking only, and gradually increase from 15 to 30 minutes of time. Then, add in trotting (or gaiting), beginning with 5 minutes. Gradually increase the amount of trotting until he can do 30 minutes, and then start working at the canter. Cavaletti, ground poles, or other arena obstacles can be useful for building topline and core muscle strength, and will help keep the exercise interesting

for both you and him. If you do all of your riding on trails, this type of regimen may not be possible. But you can still start slow and protect your horse. Start with some trails that are familiar, with good footing, and minimal altitude gain. After you have done several shorter rides at the walk, start increasing the distance, add some short stretches of faster work at the trot or gait, and choose trails with more difficulty. If you notice that your horse or mule is blowing and needs to catch his breath, is sweating, or needs constant encouragement to keep going, you need to stop and let him rest. Even if it shortens your planned day ride, turning back home is a good choice. It's better to take care of your animal so that he will be able to take care of you through the entire riding season.

The Pecos Back Country Horsemen chapter does a great job with spring fitness for their group. They plan six to eight local day rides in the spring, when the higher country is still under snow. As a group, they start slow. Then, when they go for longer summer rides and pack trips into the National Forest, their animals are fit for the trip both physically and mentally. I would encourage all chapters to plan some early-season "fitness and training rides."

If a horse does develop an injury or soreness, you may see that he is sluggish, stiff, cranky, or refuses to do his job. Behavior due to pain is often misinterpreted as a training issue, resulting in battles between riders and their mounts. Taking the time to get your horses and mules fit during the still-short spring days will result in a happier riding season for you both through the long, beautiful summer season.


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Summer Sponsorship Deadline:
June 5th, 2021

BCHA Newsletter Media Kit

Our BCHA newsletter is read by passionate trail riders, saddle and pack stock owners, avid back country packers and others who have an investment in saddle and pack stock and public land management. We serve over 12,900 members nationwide who belong to 194 active chapters/units and affiliates in 31 states. Our mailing list includes members, public land agency personnel (Forest Service, BLM, National Parks, state land agencies), elected officials, advertisers, other trail and horse organizations. Visit www.bcha.org for more information on BCHA.

Display Sponsorship Rates

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Fundraising Committee Report

By Latifia "Tif" Rodriguez, Fundraising Committee Chair
fundraising@bcha.org



We are PLATINUM!

GuideStar Platinum that is. What is GuideStar you ask? It's a place where publicly available information is stored for more than 2.5 million organizations in the United States. It is the number one resource for anyone, whether it be donors, donation seekers and community members in need, to find information about nonprofits. It provides this information for free under its own nonprofit mission, "to revolutionize philanthropy by providing information that advances transparency, enables users to make better decisions, and encourages charitable giving."

Our information is already contained in this database, as BCHA is a registered c(3) with the IRS, filing 990s and financial reports. We chose to take advantage of this status and let our donors know we are as transparent as we can be, not only for current donors but for new funding opportunities. More and more foundations allow a link directly to our GuideStar profile.

If someone asks just say, "Check us out on GuideStar." Our page link is [Back Country Horsemen of America - GuideStar Profile](https://www.guidestar.org/profile/81-0468209). (<https://www.guidestar.org/profile/81-0468209>)

You do have to create an account to view profiles, but it's free. You can also check out the profiles of some of our partners, The Wilderness Society, The American Hiking Society, and others, to see what they're up to.

Want to do more to help? Write us a positive review on the Great Nonprofits site here: [Back Country Horsemen of America Reviews and Ratings | Columbia Falls, MT | Donate, Volunteer, Review | GreatNonprofits](https://greatnonprofits.org/org/back-country-horsemen-of-america-2). (<https://greatnonprofits.org/org/back-country-horsemen-of-america-2>)

These will then link to our GuideStar profile, enabling others to see the positive support we have from our community.

This is a big accomplishment, and all of our members and supporters enabled this to happen. Thank you. Check out our profile, write a positive review and refer your friends!



Top Trail Gives to BCHA

BCHA has a new trail partner! Top Trail, through virtual challenges, is giving a portion of proceeds earned to BCHA.

The deadline to register was February 28, 2021.

I hope all of our members encouraged their friends and family to participate. It's a great way to have fun and help BCHA at the same time.

[Top Trail Journeys \(https://www.toptrailjourneys.com\)](https://www.toptrailjourneys.com)

We wanted to extend a thank you to Top Trail for selecting BCHA as their first nonprofit to benefit from these fun and engaging challenges.

When they polled their members on who they should donate to, BCHA was at the top of the list.

Thank you to everyone who signed up. The challenge to earn miles goes through the end of April, so for those who supported this fun adventure, get outside and tackle those miles!

Happy Trails!



Compete. Have fun. (Or both.)

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- 1, 2, or 3 days

For Miles of Smiles - Come Ride with Us!

NATRC.ORG

A rebuilding year, 2020

By John Simmons, President, Beartooth Back Country Horsemen, Montana



If the owners of a professional athletic team owned a Back Country Horsemen chapter, they would at least call the last half of the 2020 year a rebuilding season. Why? They have rebuilding seasons if they lost several of their team to a sickness or a couple of key players to broken bones, free agency, or even old age. These owners must arch their backs and hold up their chin and find some new ideas. New horses! Hopefully this coming new year our group of horse enthusiasts will continue to be a part of the USA rebuilding year. My horseshoer tells me his profession is one of Montana’s essential businesses. His horse care business goes hand in hand with our BCH mission statement.

Our mission, “To perpetuate the common sense use of equine in the back country,” is not to be taken lightly. Our efforts to help keep ourselves sane by continuing our presence on the trails in remote areas of our beautiful states should not be taken carelessly nor forgotten by anyone, especially ourselves. We can all participate in this endeavor to keep our identity as WE help sustain and protect this gift from our ultimate benefactor.

“Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.”

Our 50-member chapter, the Beartooth Back Country Horsemen (BBCH), is located in the south central part of Montana. Our southern border touches the state line. There we border with Wyoming; our closest BCH neighbor is the Shoshone chapter. We, as well as they, are influenced greatly by the presence of the captivating Absaroka / Beartooth Wilderness lying between us. Also, this Wilderness extends to our southwest and into the northern edge of Yellowstone National Park.

Our BBCH group was founded 24 years ago, after many of the trails into the wilderness were closed for years following the forest fires of 1988. Extending for miles, the burned landscape was defined by a combination of crumpled and many standing skeletons of the former representatives of the old conifer forests. A great number of those still standing stoic sentinels were near our historic trails and pathways. The wilderness of the Custer Gallatin National Forest was too dangerous to enter for the next three years after these fire events. At first, even a slight breeze could topple these old, carbonized co-

nifer statues at any time. Each winter/spring thereafter for several years, the windier, unsettled weather pattern would topple more of these charred carcasses crisscrossing the landscape, including the trails. These natural occurrences went on for several years. We and the Forest Service sent trail crews to open up the back country each spring. Now into the present, we still have these adverse weather events happening every winter. Although less in number, there are still old over mature and/or previously damaged trees that still tumble down to close our trails.

We were still able to accomplish much back country maintenance this year despite the Covid-19. We have discovered that it’s not too difficult to social distance if you are up on the back of a horse.

During the month of May, as is our 24 year tradition, we provided a crew of several of our members to clean the lower half of our main adopted trail, the Stillwater River pathway. This major wilderness trail goes south for 28 miles and meets a trail going west for 10 miles that hooks up with Yellowstone National Park.

The past few years we have also done a considerable amount of packing support of wilderness crews’ food and equipment. These back country trips are usually associated with the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation. Three of their late 2020 summer trips were canceled this year, but in July we did pack in/out a nine-person volunteer trail crew.

We did two days of trail cleaning on the four-mile-long Island Lake trail. Later, we laid out plans on site for a new corral on the Meeteetse Spires, located on BLM land. We also cleaned the Face of the Mountain trail up to the same area. This area we combine with the Wyoming Shoshone Chapter.

The last project before the Covid-19 really got serious here in Montana was when three of us spent a three-day pack trip, delivering food and electronic equipment for six of our local Fish, Wildlife and Parks biologists. They are studying stream water flows to improve the Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout habitat.

Yes, we did have a good year, even though it ended early; our athletic events were strained some, we didn’t have the run and gun offense of the pro-

fessional basketball or the high speed passing games of the college football powers. It would be hard to be a member of that kind of group, there are not many of the players there who ultimately are able to get themselves to the finals and then become hailed as having achieved their goal.

I like to think of our chapter as being similar to a baseball or hockey team. We are defined more as being persistent and methodical. We do not need many scores to achieve a win. Our enemy spends as much time pushing back as we push forward. Every spring we start over - the wind, rain and snow have left us chores many ordinary folks would not want to tackle. Even though 2020 has ended as such an unusual year, our members still achieved much trail work.

Even though many of us at this time in our life may be seldom able or care to push to make the ultimate three miles an hour, it is still good to be there and try. For those that worry about not having a pack animal and not being able to help the projects that require a packer, remember it is still true that two can do much better than one. A diamond hitch works great for many loads and it is easier to tie if a friendly helper is standing on the far side of the equine just to hook the manly rope, thrown over the top, to the chinch hook for the lead packer.

This note of mine is a thank you to all the folks who contributed this year and to the future younger generations who will someday step up to the plate to continue safeguarding the successes achieved by those older original cohorts. I want to encourage everyone’s eternal vigilance, and willingness to be prepared and ready to maintain and defend the values of these beautiful natural places, stepping up to the plate and calling for the ball is many times not an easy task. These are must-do projects if we are to preserve our freedom of visiting our beautiful, natural back country. This right is looked on as a privilege by many more folks than just us.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to scoring a goal this past year, small or large. And I hope you all will help to do the same, in some small or large way, for our next year’s essential projects.

BCH Kansas Honors Lindseys

Cheryl Thomas, BCHKS Volunteer Hours Coordinator



The Kansas chapter of Back Country Horsemen of America recently honored Steve and Priscilla Lindsey with the BCHKS Lindsey Grant in appreciation of a lifetime of dedication to trail building in Kansas. Steve and Priscilla were founding members of BCHKS in 2013 and have since held leadership positions at both the state and national levels. The Lindsey Grant will be awarded annually to members and regional chapters in amounts from \$100 to \$500 in support of projects that meet BCHA’s Mission.

Parking Whoas Part II

By Michelle King, Back Country Horsemen of East Tennessee



Back Country Horsemen of East Tennessee (BCHET) successfully completed the Happy Trails parking lot and trailhead in 2019. We shared that story in the 2020 Spring newsletter. As always, parking continues to be a top priority for equestrians. We aren’t driving donut-sized smart cars. There is no squeezing in a tight spot. We need room to maneuver our rigs safely with our prized trail partners on board. Let’s face it, some of us need football fields to maneuver even the smallest of rigs but that’s another story for another time. We have some great news!

BCHET has been hard at work on our latest project. Another multi-purpose parking lot located at the north end of Cherry Flats Road in Roan Mountain, TN. This parking lot provides parking for horse trailers, hikers, mountain bikers, hunters, birders and the like. It now provides trailhead access to the eastern end of the White Rocks Mountain area with easy access to over 40 miles of Forest Service roads and multi-use single track trails.

The Legacy Fund

By Steve McClintock, Legacy Fund, and Latifia "Tif" Rodriguez, Fundraising Chair, Executive Committee BCHA

THE LEGACY FUND IS A STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FOR BCHA "KEEPING TRAILS OPEN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS"

In 2018, we began to focus on the need for BCHA to set up an endowment type fund. These "endowment type funds" have been established by most significant, nonprofit organizations as they seek to secure their long-term financial future. Every forward thinking organization has to plan for its financial future and BCHA has moved forward to meet this strategic challenge.

The Legacy Fund is a totally restricted fund. The principal cannot be withdrawn for any reason. When the principal reaches \$500,000, the plan is to convert the restricted fund into a permanent endowment fund. As the principal grows through donations, bequests and investments, the earned income from interest and dividends will grow. Earned income will provide reliable financial support for BCHA's programs and projects in the future.

HONORING THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE BCHA LEGACY FUND

In early 2018, we started approaching members and asking them to put "seed money" in the Legacy Fund – each \$1,000 or more. These Founding Members took a leap of faith – and commitment – to the future of BCHA. Today, we want to express again our appreciation to the Founding Members

of the Legacy Fund for their foresight and dedication. Our early goal was modest – \$20,000. We have exceeded our expectations and have now raised \$109,000. We have pledges that take us to \$120,000 by the National Board Meeting in April.

WE ARE ASKING YOU TO HELP US REACH THE NEXT PLATEAU OF \$175,000 AND BE A LEGACY SOCIETY BENEFACTOR — HERE'S HOW WE GET THERE

The Legacy Fund is at \$109,000 now and we have pledges to take us to \$120,000 by the the National Board Meeting in April 2021. Given our success, we are setting a new goal of raising an additional \$40,000 by April 2022. When we reach \$160,000 in donations and pledges, a Special Gift of \$15,000 will be triggered and we will have reached \$175,000.

Any member that donates \$1,000 or more will become a LEGACY SOCIETY BENEFACTOR. Donations can be made all at once. Alternatively, using our Pledge Agreements, donations can be made in installments over 2021 or in multiyear installments up to April 2023. Any member who donates any amount automatically becomes a member of the Legacy Society. We continue to encourage BCHA states and chapters to make donations.

All donations should specify "For the benefit of the BCHA Legacy Fund."



Contact the Legacy Fund at fundraising@bcha.org, by calling 360-443-6996, or by visiting our website at bcha.org if you have questions. All inquiries are private and confidential. We are not lawyers, but we can be helpful as you think through what you might want to do.

GUARDIANS OF THE TRAILS

The guardians are those who have named the Legacy Fund in their will and shared with us.

Please consider a bequest to support the future financial security of BCHA.



Contact us at fundraising@bcha.org
All inquiries are private and confidential

Buffalo River Trail Restoration Project



Mark Foust and BCH

Representatives of the National Park Service (NPS) at Buffalo National River, the Arkansas Back Country Horsemen, and the Buffalo River Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen met recently to celebrate the successful conclusion of a multi-year collaborative trail rehabilitation project. The project focused on the Cecil Cove Loop near the Erbie Horse Camp along the Buffalo National River. After noting the deterioration of the popular trail, members from the Arkansas Back Country Horsemen actively pursued a Recreational Trails Project grant from the Arkansas Highway Department and the Federal Highways Administration. The grant, which totaled \$36,665, paired the trail maintenance crew of the NPS with volunteers from the Arkansas BCH. "It was a perfect pairing," noted Jacque Alexander, who both wrote the grant and served as a volunteer on the project. "The Back Country Horsemen of America is a service organization dedicated to keeping trails open for everyone. We were excited for this opportunity to work alongside the National Park Service crew in restoring this badly damaged trail and grateful to the Highway Department and Federal Highways for their help."

Craig and Connie Allen, UT
Jim and Alice Allen, SD
Jeanne Barsanti, GA
Alisa Boswell, WA
Marvin and Patsy Breitzkreutz, MN
Barbara and Troy Chappell, ND
Bonnie and John Chepulis, MT
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Melinda and Robert Wagner, GA
Craig and Susan Waldron, AL
Kristy Stender and Darrell Wallace, WA
Patty and Jim Wilber, NM
Barbara and Russ Wright, MN

BCHA Chapters

BCHAZ, Central Arizona Chapter; BCHNM, Santa Fe Chapter; BCHWA, Whatcom Chapter

In Honor and Memory Of

Marsha Copeland, In Honor and Memory Of Ed Copeland, MO
Ginny Grulke, In Honor and Memory Of Eric Grulke, KY
Ann Hargis, In Honor and Memory Of Howard Hargis, AZ
Brad and Nancy Pollman, In Honor and Memory Of Carl Pollman, MT

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