

Pandemic Restrictions Mean Adjusting Work for Gila Chapter



The Gila Chapter of Back Country Horsemen is the largest BCH chapter in New Mexico with 58 members. This chapter works with the supervisor’s Silver City office of the National Forest Service to maintain the approximately 1,700 miles of trails within the Gila National Forest and Wilderness areas. The Gila terrain is rugged. Steep, rocky mountains; deep canyons; flat, rocky mesas; and giant rock outcroppings are typical, with elevations from 5,000 to 11,000 feet.

The Gila National Forest is covered with vegetation that ranges from ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, spruce, and true fir at high elevations to pinon, juniper, and various varieties of oak at lower elevations, interspersed with grassy meadows and riparian valleys that are welcome sights along which grow massive sycamores and cottonwoods. At its lowest elevation, it becomes mountainous high desert with varieties of scrub vegetation.

Deer, elk, javalina, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, coyotes, and smaller mammals abound along with several varieties of snakes, including

rattlesnakes. The area is also home to the once-endangered Gila trout in numerous spring-fed streams. Keeping trails maintained is important to many people, none more appreciative than the large number of equestrians who enjoy the solitude and beauty of a day ride or a week-long pack trip.

2020 has been challenging for Back Country Horsemen chapters in general. Certainly, this has been true for the Gila Chapter. Unable to meet monthly as usual, the Gila Chapter resorted to ZOOM meetings and a clever on-line newsletter, published by secretary Cindi DeCapiteau, to keep communication current with members. Gerry Engle, coordinator of trail projects and liaison to Gila National Forest management, devised trail maintenance plans that required only two-man crews rather than larger crews. Fortunately, many of our chapter members are certified with chain saws and crosscut saws, so removing down trees blocking trails could be done safely with two volunteers. Two person crews were especially useful on trails that were relatively close to Silver City and could be easily

accessed by hiking or riding an hour or two. Dry, windy weather and forest fires always account for the necessity of down pine tree removal on a regular basis. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic actually increased the need for more frequent monitoring and clearing of trails closer to population centers because many more individuals used the forest trails this year as a physical and mental health outlet.

Over 789,000 acres of the 3.3 million acre Gila National Forest is Wilderness area. Wilderness means what it implies. All trail maintenance needs to be done without the use of motorized equipment. Crosscut saw use is the order of the day. All maintenance is very remote and accessed only by horses, mules, and hikers. Remoteness also requires pack animals, and a plan involving packing in for a week or more. In 2020, working in two-person volunteer teams, brought the mileage number of cleared trails down to about 60 miles from the over 100 miles cleared in many past years. As we enter 2021 with vaccine available, we may still need to work in small numbers, including

those who are brushing out as well as sawyers. However, packing in to Wilderness area requires a larger number of volunteers for safety and efficiency. By spacing crews out while riding or hiking in, maintaining social distancing in camp, and keeping each two-person unit separated from each other by a distance that accords with the down trees being sawn, trail clearing is efficient and contributes to prioritizing the health and safety of volunteers.

Safety in using equipment, safety from environmental hazards, and safety from the elements is likely to continue to be compounded in 2021 by safety precautions from COVID-19. But, with correct protocols, the Gila Chapter will continue to make the Gila National Forest available to equine riders, hikers and hunters.

Check out www.gilatrailsinfo.org for a map of cleared trails, water availability updates, trail mileages, and more.

To stay updated about most recent Gila trail work – www.facebook.com/gilatrailsinfo/.

Back Country Horsemen of America
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Interested in Joining?

Contact BCHA or the organization nearest you.

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Public Lands Update BCHA Advocacy Magnified Through Partnerships

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

In my advocacy work on behalf of BCHA, I often ask myself, “How did we get this far?” The optimist in me says, “Trails and recreation are getting more attention from the federal agencies and Congress now, more than ever before.” Yet the pessimist in me, when hearing member accounts of lost access, says, “Why were we unable to prevent these trail closures?”

I believe that the answer to both questions, in most cases, is based in large part on the strength of our partnerships.

BCHA has come a long way toward ensuring that public lands remain open to recreational pack and saddle stock use. I choose to view our progress via “The glass is half full” analogy. Importantly, I believe that it’s being filled at a rate that is faster than our losses. Yet any loss is hard to take and, most often, is permanent. We can’t rest on our laurels.

I attribute much of BCHA’s gains as resulting from both the strength and depth of our partnerships with:

1. BCH states and chapters,
2. Land management agencies, and
3. Other recreation and trail partners.

I’m confident that the gains BCHA’s volunteers have made at the chapter and state level have come largely as the result of the partnerships they have forged on their own over the years. After all, horsemen are a small segment of the outdoor recreation and trails community. It’s best to have allies who are aware of, and often look after, our collective interest.

Entering into a partnership does not mean that you must be prepared for some give-and-take. Rarely have I seen instances where horsemen were asked to forego or overlook an issue important to us. You can remain true to your principles while still seeking to find alignment with partners on issues of mutual interest.

To that end, here are a few examples of key partnerships at the national level in which I represent BCHA (listed in alphabetical order). I believe the time and effort in building these relationships has proven to be of great benefit—both to me personally and in order to advance the mission and interests of BCHA.

American Hiking Society: An organization that advocates for hiking trails and protecting the hiking experience, AHS continues to embrace its informal partnership with BCHA. I’ve never heard a negative word about equestrians/ horsemen from this group. For over eight years, AHS has been a strong partner with BCHA, working side-by-side and alternating leadership roles on issues that include our joint trail-based appropriations requests we send each year to Congress and, more recently, insisting that federal agencies continue to treat electric motorized bicycles (e-bikes) as a motorized trail use.

American Horse Council: AHC has been a long-standing partner of BCHA’s. We pay annual dues to be an AHC member organization and it’s worth the representation we receive. AHC is based in Washington, DC, and in many ways serves as BCHA’s unofficial presence in the nation’s Capitol. AHC continues to promote and support bills in Congress that facilitate public access to our public lands. BCHA is a member of AHC’s Recreation, Trails & Land Use Committee. That committee recently lent support to two public lands issues important to BCHA—the proper management and designation of trails for e-bike use, and the growing problem associated with parties without stock occupying designated horse campsites.

American Trails: American Trails serves as the umbrella organization for the nation’s trails community, bringing together diverse motorized and non-motorized trail organizations, including water trails (yes, they do exist!). BCHA pays dues to be a member organization, and it’s well worth it given the incredible online library and other resources maintained by American Trails. They organize many great webinars (recordings available online) and are quick to include BCHA and the horse community at every turn. For those of you who attended BCHA’s 2019 National Board Meeting in Asheville, NC, recall that our keynote speaker was American Trails’ Executive Director, Mike Passo. His address, “Breaking Down the Silos” among trail users was well received by our audience.

Coalition for Recreational Trails: BCHA is a dues-paying member of the CRT. Its focus is to promote and expand the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Recall that the RTP is funded via a portion of federal gas taxes and distributed to all states to support grants for recreational trails.

Like American Trails, the CRT has strong representation among motorized and non-motorized trail users. It’s a universe in which we can all agree, as everyone is united behind funding in support of our trails. Most recently, the CRT has been crucial in the introduction and promotion among Congress of H.R. 1864, the RTP Full Funding Act. If passed, this bill could more than double the amount of RTP funds flowing to states each year.

Equine Land Conservation Resource: ELCR is a national equine organization with a mission to protect and conserve lands for the horse and horse-related activities. They strive to maintain America’s equine heritage. Does that sound somewhat similar to BCHA’s mission and vision? It is and there are some great synergies that flow from our similar missions. Yet ELCR’s primary focus is to conserve equine use of private lands across the country, while the focus of BCHA’s mission is public lands. To me, those distinctions make our work together additive and complementary. ELCR’s website includes an extensive library of resources for equine advocates. Check it out at www.elcr.org

International Mountain Bicycling Association: IMBA played a key role several years ago in preventing the “Bikes in Wilderness bill” from gaining momentum in Congress. The issue nearly fractured the organization; we need to remember and thank them for that. IMBA did the right thing and found that promoting trail systems “close to home” remains their biggest success. Most recently, IMBA invited BCHA and a wide range of trail organizations to work together to shape a national educational campaign to promote a unified trail user ethic. When rolled out, it will emphasize mutual respect and challenge all trail users to take personal responsibility to minimize trail conflict and encourage high quality trail experiences for all. This is a timely and important role for which IMBA has taken national leadership.

National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance: BCHA occupies a seat among NWSA’s board of directors. The organization was founded only ten years ago, but quickly became the umbrella organization for wilderness stewardship, or “friends,” groups across the nation. They value BCHA’s long-standing role in wilderness and trails stewardship and the dedication of our volunteers who promote the use of primitive tools in wilderness settings. NWSA might best be known for their rapidly expanding annual grant programs. This year, NWSA awarded over \$547,000 in matching grants under their National Forest System Trails Stewardship Partner Funding program.

Remember the 2016 National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act (Trails Act)? That was the bill for which BCHA pushed passage over several years in Congress alongside partners AHC and The Wilderness Society. This year alone, NWAS’s grant program of the same name will result in:

- An estimated 2,709 miles of national forest trails maintained by over 6,700 volunteers and staff;
- Matching contributions of \$1,144,779 in cash and \$2,521,086 as in-kind (labor) contributions.

That represents nearly a 7:1 expected return on investment of public funds. That’s a great example of the power of partnerships!

Partnership for the National Trails System: BCHA is a dues-paying member of PNTS and has a seat among its Advocacy and Policy Committee. This is the umbrella group for non-profit groups that support the nation’s 30 national scenic and historic trails (read: long distance), a special designation made only by law/Congress. It includes regional partners that help the agencies manage the Appalachian, Continental Divide and Pacific Crest national scenic trails. Other regional trails on which horseback use is allowed, if not encouraged, are the Arizona and the Pacific Northwest national scenic trails and the Pony Express and Old Spanish national historic trails. PNTS is probably best known for its annual Hike the Hill® event held in Washington, DC, and in which BCHA has participated for over a decade. Over the years, PNTS has advocated in support of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Forest Service “Trails Act,” and robust and consistent funding for all trails. For over 24 years, PNTS has consistently advocated on behalf of trails with our federal agency partners, Congress and key leaders within each administration.

Finally, any discussion of key partners would not be complete without explicit mention of our members, donors, business partners and public land management agencies. Yet we don’t have space here, so we’ll reserve those discussions

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View from the Chairman's Saddle

By Sherry Copeland, BCHA National Chairman

Saddle Up for BCHA!

While the National Board of Directors were forced to meet virtually again this year, rest assured the impact and productivity of the meeting was significant – congratulations to the National Directors for the great representation and in identifying two priority areas for improvement:

Communication – efficient, effective and timely methods, and

Educational Information – making the vast and diverse information resources available and accessible across BCHA

The challenges are set, let the work continue...

As a life-long equestrian trail user and second-generation trail advocate, I am excited and humbled by the opportunity to serve as BCHA National Chairman. I have to say a big “Thank You!” to Past Chairman Darrell Wallace for taking the succession planning to a new level in preparing me for this responsibility.

I am so proud to serve with Mark Himmel, Vice Chairman and Latifia Rodriguez, Treasurer, focusing on the daily functions necessary to represent the remarkable, diverse, hardworking volunteer members of BCHA.

The Executive Committee, consisting of the Officers, Past Chairman, Directors, Craig Allen, Dennis Serpa, and Jim Allen; and Non-Directors, Brad Pollman and Tom Thomas, continue to provide the day-to-day management of BCHA, to achieve the ends as directed through policy established by the National Board of Directors.

National Directors are diligently participating in the monthly National Directors meetings via Zoom. They are receiving updates on the actions of the Executive Committee, as well as presenting challenges and sharing information from the BCHA state and chapter organizations. Please contact your National Directors and provide questions and information that need to be discussed, shared, and brought to the National discussion platform.

Committee chairs for Chapter Support Grants, Education, Expansion, Fund Raising, Media & Marketing, Membership, Public Lands, Partnerships, Volunteer Hours and Youth Committees are convening the committees to provide information, assistance, and support for the diverse needs of BCHA state organizations and chapters. Thank you to those who are serving on committees, but they need your help! All committees are in need of greater participation – Please consider serving on one (or two) of the committees as each one is vital to the growth and mission of BCHA.

With these groups being only part of the working infrastructure of BCHA, the most valuable asset is the strength in the foundation - and that foundation is YOU – the Boots on the Ground volunteer members. YOU are the key to the growth, success and sustainability. The goals for work on Communication and Educational Information include exploring communications methods that are directly with YOU; and providing workshops and webinars available to YOU.

Hopefully, this overview helps with the question, “What is BCHA doing for me?” and I want to challenge YOU to ask the question, “What else can I be doing for BCHA?” Together, we can work to offer innovative perspectives to facilitate growth and continued success for BCHA.

So, now, let’s saddle up and continue the mission to “Keep Trails Open for All!”

Hope to see y’all on the trail,

Sherry

Public Lands

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for future BCHA newsletters. Suffice to say, throughout my eight years with BCHA, I hold no doubt that trails and recreation are receiving more attention from the federal agencies and Congress now, than they ever have before. For that, BCHA can take some credit. Yet we would not have seen these tremendous strides if not for the combined efforts of these and other dedicated partners. We cannot do it alone.

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 06/09/2021

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 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. *Latifia Rodriguez*, BCHA Treasurer
treasurer@bcha.org

Administrative: (or if you are not sure who to contact)

1. *Michelle Wade*, Executive Administrator
michellewade@bcha.org or call 360-443-6996

New Mailing Address:

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2021 National Board Meeting Recap

Sunday

1. REVIEW NATIONAL DIRECTORS RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Constitution Description - Sherry recapped responsibilities of National Directors

b. Governance Policies Requirements - Sherry recapped responsibilities of National Directors.

Takeaway: The job of the national director goes beyond the annual national board meeting; it's a year-round responsibility and commitment.

c. National Board Director Education Module - If you haven't already, be sure to watch this module that the Education Committee put out.

[Director Training module](#)

2. REVIEW MEETING DOCUMENTS - All available on new Google BCHA Shared Drive, National Board Meeting, NBM 2021

a. General Meeting Agenda

b. Consent Agenda: 2020 NBM Minutes; Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

c. Financial Documents: Treasurer's Report 2021-2022 Proposed Budget

d. Election Documents: Candidate Resumes

e. Governance Directive Changes

f. Media and Marketing suggestion for digital newsletter

g. BCHA IPS - Legacy Investment with Stifel

3. ZOOM MEETING PLATFORM & PROTOCOL

a. Meeting Format and Instructions

b. Questions?

Monday, April 26

Administrative Items/Protocols Discussed; Quorum established

• Agenda presented

• Freddy led the memorial to departed members

• Consent agenda

- 2020 NBM Minutes
- Executive Committee Reports May 2020 through March 2021

• Treasurer's Report

• All committees reported on 2020-'21 committee happenings

- Contracts, Chapter Support Grants, Education, Expansion, Fundraising (ad hoc), Media/Marketing, Membership (ad hoc), Public Lands, Public Liaison & Partnerships, Volunteer Hours, Youth, Nominations - all presentations, reports can be found on the BCHA Shared Drive.

• Takeaways: Need to make things accessible to all members; if you have an idea, join a committee, don't make the committee chairs chase you; their jobs and plates are full.

Monday (cont.)

• Thank yous to all committees for tremendous work done

• Where is committee chair contact information?

- BCHA quarterly newsletter
- On [BCHA.org](#) under "Contact Us"

All committee reports posted to BCHA Shared Drive.

New Business

Governance Policy Changes to change the name of the Public Liaison Committee to the Partnerships Committee and to refine its makeup and operation

Resolution (s) – Presentation - None

Investment Policy Statement - Legacy Fund investment with Stifel

Other New Business

- 2021-'22 BCHA Proposed Budget - Approval vote to be taken on Wednesday, April 28, 2021

Unfinished Business - None

Tuesday, April 27

Essential Information for All National Directors

Director Conversations (by region)

- Southeast – AL, GA, FL, SC, NC, VA, TN, KY, AR
- Northeast – MD, IA, KS, MN, WI, IL, MI, IN, NY
- Rockies – MT, CO, ND, SD, WY, UT, NM
- Far West – WA, OR, ID, CA, AK, NV, AZ

Wednesday, April 28

Quorum established

• BCHA Past Chairmen Panel Discussion

- All available past Chairmen addressed the history of BCHA during their tenure.

• Lifetime Achievement Award Presentation

- Mike McGlenn

• What's going on with British Columbia BCH?

Wednesday (Cont.)

• Double Diamond Award – Melinda presented the award background and requirements. The winner this year is BCH of Virginia Highlands chapter

• 2021 – 2022 Budget Proposal Approved

Final nominations – all positions filled - Directors are two years, officers are one year.
Sherry Copeland – Chair
Mark Himmel – Vice Chair
Latifa Rodriguez – Treasurer
Brad Pollman – Non-Director EC Member
Jim Allen – Director EC Member

Hard Hat Auction!!

• Auction war since 2016; originally started off as an Education Committee donation; now it goes to the BCHA Chapter Support Grants.

- 2016 - UT
- 2017 - MT
- 2018 - CA
- 2018 - It took a trip to Washington DC
- 2018 - Embarked on a work exchange between WA and NC
- 2019 - SD
- 2020 - MO

• Bidding ensued and the winner is MT with a winning bid of \$2,000 WOW!

In Conclusion...

• So many wonderful comments and positive feedback about BCHA's History of Service.

• BCHA is a wonderful organization with an immense number of dedicated individuals.

• Officers are proud to serve – contact them any time with questions and they'll track it down for you: chairman@bcha.org, vchairman@bcha.org, treasurer@bcha.org.

• Remember directors, you ALL need to be on at least one national committee. Why not make it two?

SEE YOU IN KANSAS CITY, MO IN 2022!

BCHA

Back Country Horsemen of America

Vision

Initiative

Dedication

Commitment

Support

2021

LIFETIME

ACHIEVEMENT

AWARD

PRESENTED TO...

MIKE

McGLENN

In appreciation for your vision, initiative, dedication, commitment and support to Back Country Horsemen of America and Keeping Trails Open for All.

Thank you for all your hard work!

BCHA will be making a donation to the Legacy Fund in honor of Mike McGlenn.

BCHA 2022

National board

Meeting

Kansas City, Missouri

April 9th, 2022 - April 13th, 2022

SAVE THE DATE!

4

www.bcha.org

Back Country Horsemen of America

Collaboration Works - and We Have a New Trail to Prove It!

By Kim McCarrel, East Cascades Chapter, BCH Oregon



Trail use in Central Oregon has exploded over the past decade, causing unpleasant encounters between horseback riders and mountain bikers to grow exponentially. By 2016, complaints about horse/bike conflicts were so bad that the Forest Service called in the leadership of East Cascades BCHO and other equestrian and mountain biking groups and asked us to help solve the problem.

Our meetings involved a fair amount of anger and blaming at first. But as we talked through the issues with the bicyclists, we began to find things on which we could agree.

For starters, we realized education was needed. Some trail users didn't understand what to do when they encountered other trail users. And while local bike trails have signs saying "Bikes Only," our shared-use trails had no signage to alert users to expect horses, hikers, and bikes.

Together, we developed a "Share the Trail" education campaign that includes:

1. Etiquette signs at trailheads.
2. Trail signs showing the types of users that share that trail.
3. An informational brochure distributed at bike, tack, and outdoor stores.
4. An entertaining 2-minute video that has been viewed over 600,000

times on Facebook and YouTube. You can watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-oS-MRzu7YU>. Please share it!

Our Share the Trails campaign is working. Today, Central Oregon trails have fewer horse/bike conflicts than before.

But on one stretch of the Metolius-Windigo Trail near Bend, OR, conflicts persist. The trail goes through a popular horse camp, connects two major bike trail networks, and has a steep slope and many blind corners. Our trail groups and the Forest Service agreed: horses and bikes need separate trails in this section.

Equestrians and mountain bikers worked together to design a new trail to parallel the existing one. We raised money for the required environmental assessment. We got a Recreational Trails Program grant, pooling our resources for the necessary matching funds. And we selected a contractor who will start building the new trail in July. If all goes well, horses and bikes will be separated on this trail by the end of the summer.

By collaborating with the bike community, we've accomplished far more than we could have by ourselves. Our trails are safer and more fun, and soon we'll have a new trail to prove it!

Check out other products on our Facebook site



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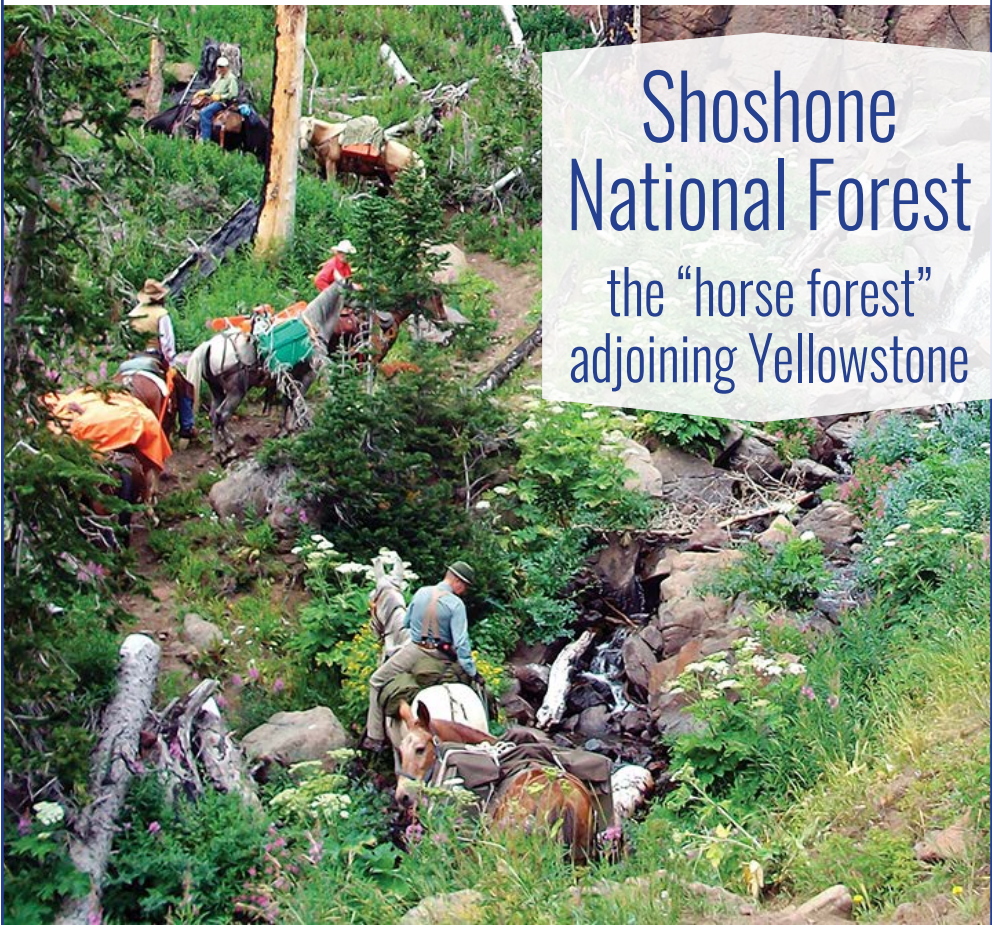
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Please go to our website at www.shoshonebch.org for more information on Shoshone Back Country Horsemen and our efforts to preserve this great heritage. Ride the trails less traveled and pack out the experience of a lifetime along with what you packed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

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MLU Partnerships Pack a Punch

By Lucy Badenhoop, Mother Lode Unit, BCH California

Packers put a lot of trust in their pack stock, but it's a two-way partnership – the animals trust their handlers too. This is especially important when a challenging pack job is requested and volunteer packers from two BCHC units – Mother Lode Unit (MLU) and Mid Valley Unit (MVU) – combine their resources to meet the need. It should be noted that MVU packers are associate members of MLU which allows them to be covered under our Volunteer Service Agreement if injured and our grant funding when mileage reimbursement is available.

MLU and MVU packers often team up to satisfy US Forest Service requests for pack support of their trail crews. In 2020 the Tahoe National Forest, Foresthill Ranger District, requested help with a new access route to the North Fork of the American River via the seldom-used trail out of Sailor Flat Staging Area (about 45 miles northeast of Auburn, CA). This effort expanded the usual partnership to include services of a contractor trail maintenance team employed by the Tahoe National Forest, Foresthill Ranger District.

This trail was not known to our equestrians, so MLU did a pre-ride and identified some unacceptable conditions. The USFS trail crew made significant improvements but it was still a steep, narrow trail down to the river and a long, four-mile climb back to the service road and another two miles to the trailhead. The entire length was roughly a 15 percent grade and the single track portion was without level resting planes or wide spots for dismounting or turning around or tie ups.

The contractor trail crew was packed down into the canyon in early October of 2020 and packed out three weeks later by four mounted packers, seven pack stock plus an outrider, while a sixth volunteer helped at the trailhead but did not ride. The first trip was uneventful, but during the second trip, there were two unwelcome surprises.

On the downhill leg, a large tree had recently fallen which had to be removed. The packer's handsaws worked for delimbing and brush removal, but one rider had to hike down to the river for a chain saw and a sawyer from the contractor crew (see picture). The de-

lay had the packers arriving at the river just in time for lunch before loading up for the return trip uphill.

On the pack-out leg, about halfway up the single track, the last pack animal lost her rear footing and tumbled down 200 feet of steep hillside snapping off small trees before stopping against a larger tree on the edge of a dry creek bed.

After four packers scrambled down the hill to the downed animal, they were relieved to find that there were no broken legs and she could stand. Even with the load and tack removed, getting her back up to the trail seemed impossible at first, but the group devised a plan.

A handsaw was used by one packer to clear brush back up to the trail on a diagonal path across the steep hill. About the same time he reached the trail, one of the trail crew hiking out arrived with a McCloud which was used to cut a narrow trail tread along the cleared path. It took a while to build the escape route, but the horse walked out, went to the vet for some stitches and made a full recovery.

Using the newly cut track, USFS personnel went back the following day to retrieve the load and tack. As a result of MLU's incident report, on November 3, 2020, the USFS conducted an after-incident debrief conference call with all the involved agencies to collect the lessons learned. The discussion revealed two main obstacles in responding to the crisis.

1. The narrow trail restricted access for assistance.
 - a. Without room to pass in opposite directions or turn around, stock could only move forward. The front two riders had no option but to continue to the top end of the single track.
 - b. The remaining four riders had difficulty dismounting to help.
 - c. Only the front rider found a tree to tie up his mount, thus blocking the trail for the stock behind him to essentially ground tie.
2. The terrain made communication extremely difficult.
 - a. The remoteness and steepness of the canyon precluded use of cell phones or radios to summon off-site help.



Clearing trail going down (photo by Cordell Van Rees)

- b. The two riders going forward did not know what had happened or what help should be summoned.
- c. The four who dismounted had communication issues up and down the hill from the trail, 200 feet downhill to the horse's resting site, and another 300 feet downhill to find the one pannier that got loose.

Despite these impediments, the four groups coordinated their efforts to rescue the horse and equipment.

- MLU and MVU packers worked feverishly to create a new path and help the horse up the hill.
- The contractor trail crew arrived just when their tools were needed to cut the trail tread.
- The USFS returned to the site the next day to retrieve the tack and cargo.

As a result of this experience, MLU has decided to purchase ten family service radios so that each volunteer on the trail keeps one on their person (not on the stock). This will enable those on the trail to talk to others within line-of-site and when necessary relay information back to the trailhead for additional equipment or outside help.

With the shortened daylight this time of year, it's a good thing the packers got an early start. The tree clearing and horse rescue added several hours to the 12-mile round trip, but they still made it back to camp before nightfall.

How to Organize and Run a BCH Chapter Booth

Ideas from Marybeth Conger & Karen Kimball, BCH Idaho Education chairs

Before the event

Clearly define and communicate your GOAL. An example could be promoting the BCH organization to gain chapter memberships.

Displays and signs: Have at least one large banner stating clearly who or what you are. Additional displays can help to inform your audience but don't expect anybody to read text while wandering by a booth. Use large, eye-catching graphics and save the details for your flyers.

Freebies & Literature. A classic way to attract people to your booth is to give away usable items. If you want people to contact you and remember you, plan to hand out literature relating to your message. Bring more than you think you will need. Even a few dollars' worth of candy can get people to approach.

Activities & Demonstrations: Bring these to draw people to your booth. Holding a drawing for a larger

prize can net you a bowl full of contact information. If you can demonstrate something related to your BCH chapter or display the results of a successful project or activity, bring it for show and tell. Better yet, allow your visitors to participate in some way. Some examples might be knot tying, mantying a bale of hay, cleaning tack, etc.

Stuff to bring such as table and chairs: Again, event organizers may provide these, or not. If you're not sure, ask.

- Tie downs and tools: If you know you will be assembling your own booth, table, or displays, make sure to bring the tools you'll need. Screwdrivers, pliers, and an adjustable wrench could come in handy.
- A cart or dolly: Especially if it is a large event, don't assume you'll be able to park anywhere close to your booth.
- Lights/AV/Laptops. If you think you will need these items, be sure

you will have a source of electricity.

- Water. You'll be talking a lot, and it may be costly or inconvenient to visit the event concessions.

At the Event

Get help and have a schedule: If your booth is doing its job, you'll have lots of people to talk to over the course of the event. Don't make it a one-person show. You'll want help just to make sure that everybody has somebody to talk to without waiting in line. If at all possible, arrange the schedule so that people work in shorter shifts. It's tiring to stand for long periods of time and say the same things over and over.

Prep and select your volunteers: They'll be speaking for your chapter, and they'll come across more professionally if they're informed and engaged. Volunteers who know how to "work" a crowd can draw attention to your booth. They should be friendly and comfortable talking to the public.

A Summer Odyssey for Long Ears

By Chuck Miller, Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen of Montana

It was a dark and stormy night during the month of April, well ok, I don't remember if it was stormy or not, but I do recall that enthralling phone call. This was the beginning of the 2002 summer odyssey. So what the devil is an odyssey, you ask? Why it's an epic adventure of grand proportion, something to be deeply involved in, a part of life to live!

That phone call was from Nick Hazelbaker who has the charge of 825 miles of wilderness trails in our Bitterroot National Forest, which overlaps western Montana and eastern Idaho. His Forest Service duties include the responsibility of determining which trails get cleared and maintained, plus which trail crews go where and how they are supplied. Since there are hundreds of miles of trails inside the wilderness, maintenance is done with hand tools and in the old fashion way, on foot. Our Bitterroot Valley in Montana is about 95 miles long and 10 miles wide. On the west side of the valley the mountains are tall and may rise to over 10,000 feet elevation. The Bitterroot mountain chain is divided every 2-3 miles by deep, rocky canyons that contain important trail systems and creeks, or cricks, if you like. Most of these streams have a primitive dam system on the upper end to collect water for irrigation that is used during the summer months. The trails must be maintained so that the irrigators can periodically open or close the head gate to regulate the water flow. These dams also need frequent upkeep, as many were built in the early 1900s, so supplies and repair parts must be packed in on equine stock. This wilderness trail system also has a number of connections to the Idaho segment of the Bitterroot-Selway Wilderness, therefore trail maintenance is important for both dams and long distance travel.

Nick's call was to inquire as to whether the Bitterroot Back Country Horsemen would like a summer project. Since we are a service organization who assist the Forest Service on various projects in order to keep the backcountry open for public use, and try to educate our members on packing livestock, as well as the Leave No Trace use of our forest, I said, "Sure, why not." He then asked, "Don't you want to know what the project will be?" Well, after knowing Nick for years, how hard could it be? He then replied, "I need another packer for a three-man trail crew." There was a pregnant moment of silence. "I'd need that support all summer," he said. That was all I needed to hear, can you imagine... my thoughts went wild, cool canyons, scenic vistas, mule sweat and dog hair! What a summer! Nick said he'd work out the trail schedule and it would be up to me to work out the details with the three-man trail crew. How hard could that be? The plot thickens.

After discussing the plan with our Back Country Horsemen members, it was accepted, and everyone thought it was a great plan to donate our time and energy to make it happen. With this in mind, I moseyed out to the pasture one morning and in passing mentioned the plan to my riding mule. No more than five minutes later all five mules were lined up to sign their waiver of liability. They would not be responsible for any

broken eggs during the summer!

True to his word, Nick sent the work/pack schedule. It was ambitious. At least nine different canyon trails were to be cleared, most of which were 9 to 15 miles in length. The early survey of several trails revealed that many large diameter trees were down, and numerous avalanches had left debris that had hid much of the trails' underlying condition. Because of these factors the trail crew would need to stay in the high mountain areas to get the job done. The length of time that they might stay would vary from several days up to a full hitch of eight days. As you can see, each pack trip to support the trail crew would require a loaded pack trip in, an empty trip back out, then when they would radio that they were ready to leave we would "deadhead" back in and pack back out.

So, how hard could it be? Just three guys, oh yeah, they also probably burn 4-5,000 calories (or more) per day, and they're staying how long? Well, there is also personal gear, tents, clothes, sleeping bags, cooking pots, and the ever present seven pound cast iron skillet. Tools, yes, we got lots of 'em. Let's see, large diameter rope with pullies for the big cut logs, two shovels, three axes, one four-foot rock bar for moving boulders or logs, three pulaskies (an all purpose tool for digging and chopping), a six-foot crosscut saw, as well as a smaller four-footer. On several trails a McLeod tool was needed, this being a fire fighting tool that works well for clearing water bars. This particular tool has a four-foot handle with a ten-inch hoe on one side and three and a half inch rake teeth on the other side of the head. Frequently there were also limb loppers and a pick. Oh, almost forgot the cooler, backpacks, and chairs. I never did find the kitchen sink, but I'm quite sure it was there! All the personal gear was packed in modified GI medical boxes, each of these three were about three feet by one foot by two feet. It's amazing how much stuff one guy can put in that limited space. Well, I can tell you—up to 85 pounds in one box! Once that box gets mantied up, lifting that up to the Decker packsaddle is guaranteed to make you pucker! It was very fortunate that my wife Diana has a sense of humor and a selective hearing deficit.

We had participation from several members of the Back Country Horsemen and one soul who rode and packed with us on all trips but one. Dennis Price, I thank you! P.S. He's a good packer too and usually rides mules. Dennis said he worked in the construction business in the past, but I suspect he also moonlighted as a college professor teaching English. How do I know? On at least two or three occasions he rode a young horse and there were several episodes of well practiced and polished oratory comments, including nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adverbs, all directed at that short eared equine. I was surprised how easily those words slipped over the lips of that silver tongued devil.

Well, the first time the trail crew showed up, I was a little surprised at the diversity of their "stuff" and so the odyssey and the challenge began. We started by separating out things that were alike, such as two metal boxes, backpacks, axes, and so on. Initially



Chuck Miller, Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen, Montana

this took awhile, but after several trips it was easier. That being done, the next step was to package it so the goods could be loaded on the mules. By using the Decker packing system, we are able to haul odd shaped and heavy loads safely. The plan started to come together as we wrapped the metal boxes in canvas, called a manty. Then to balance the opposite side for the third metal box, a combination of backpacks and tools was devised. This left the two crosscut saws, rock bar, shovels, limb loppers, chairs, cooler, and a fishing pole. I decided the items could best be handled by using some extra large pack bags. I had been fortunate to find a set of "whoppers" at an auction and now this is just what the ol' doc ordered. It was now time to weigh each load so that each side is within two to three pounds, then they would ride in a more balanced manner. That being done, it was off to the trailhead to pack up the mules. Dennis transported the packs in the back of his pickup and pulled his mule trailer, while Diana and I took the lead with our truck and mule trailer. At the departure site we loaded the three pack mules, mounted the three riding mules and up the trail we went. Actually, all went well and only one or two adjustments were needed. Not only must weight be measured, but center of gravity must be judged, as if either one is out of proportion the packs will not ride well and you will have to get off, reposition them, or add a rock (ore sample) to the light side. The maiden voyage was only eight miles, and we passed the trail crew at the four mile marker. After getting to the drop-off site we ate lunch and rode back empty. A good start to the summer odysseys!

Actually, all of the next seventeen trips went extremely well, no wrecks, rollovers, or crashes. Each time we went out the mules just got better, better at standing still while being loaded, more careful while jumping two foot logs, and more careful on the steep talus switchbacks. The scenery was out of this world with forested mountains, wildflowers of all colors, wildlife, high mountain meadows, and scenic vistas. Diana said on one or two trips that when you can look over the toe of your boot and see a hundred and fifty yards downhill, that's too much vista! Thank goodness she was riding her gallant mule Val! Actually she and Dennis

had much more to say when we rode through four nests of yellow jacket wasps during these trips!

Now you're asking, "How much did you actually do during the summer of ought two?" Well, I'll have to tell you it was a wonderful experience, an odyssey, and full of comradeship. The Back Country Horsemen did an admirable job of community service and supported the U.S. Forest Service in keeping the back country open to all. We certainly have to give the hard working trail crew a hand shake and a hearty thank you for all of their hard work, as without them, we would not be able to enjoy the trails to the backcountry!

All together we packed a total of nine canyons (18 trips), rode 270 trail miles, hauled mules 520 miles, volunteered 200 hours of time, and packed 5,950 pounds of materials. This came to be a potential cost savings to the USFS of \$13,183. All with mules enjoyed their summer odyssey and an occasional saddle horse who has several interesting names, but only Dennis can tell you his real one.

'Til we talk again... Keep the iron (shoes) down and the hide side up.

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Fundraising Committee Report

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

Why set up a bequest in your will for the legacy fund?
“KEEPING TRAILS OPEN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS”
Steve McClintock

WHAT IS A BEQUEST?

A bequest is a gift — usually a financial asset. After you have taken care of loved ones, kids and grandkids in your will, what matters? What is a meaningful, personal legacy for you? You can trust BCHA will continue to represent a lot of your core values — now and in the future.

HOW DO YOU BENEFIT FROM SETTING UP A BEQUEST?

1. Your estate can usually claim a charitable tax deduction for 100% of the asset transferred.
2. Making a gift through your estate plan allows you to MAINTAIN FULL CONTROL of your assets as long as you live.
3. Maintaining full control of your assets means you WILL NOT JEOPARDIZE YOUR OWN FINANCIAL SECURITY NOW in order to make a gift in the future.
4. Making a gift through your will or estate plan may make it possible for you to consider making a larger bequest — a gift — than you might have otherwise considered in your lifetime — when you needed the money and income.

HOW CAN I MAKE A BEQUEST?

We understand most folks visit their lawyer every two to three years so they can review their wills. Circumstances can change quickly and updates are a good idea. We are also told about 80% of bequests are set up by people aged 64-79. That’s many of us. When you visit your lawyer, he/she can help you easily add a bequest to your will. It’s not rocket science. Cost should be minimal.

When you are considering setting up a bequest, here are several ideas. A specific bequest can be for a specific dollar amount or specific personal property. A percentage bequest of your estate value is another option. A residual bequest is related to the rest, residue and remainder of your estate after other distributions have been made. A contingent bequest is always useful. If the primary beneficiary does not survive you then that portion of your estate could benefit the BCHA Legacy Fund.

A bequest can also have an even more personal, special meaning. More and more people are setting up bequests “in memory of” and/or “in honor of” a spouse or another special person in their lives. In addition, we have set up “The Guardians of the Trails” who have named the BCHA Legacy Fund in their will and shared this information with us. Sharing is totally voluntary. No disclosure of the exact gift is necessary. All information is kept private and confidential.

All bequests should specify the bequest is given, devised and bequeathed to the Back Country Horsemen of America, a 501c (3) nonprofit organization, Federal Tax ID #81-0468209, for the Benefit and Use of the BCHA Legacy Fund. Contact us at fundraising@bcha.org or call 360-443-0996. All discussions are private and confidential. You should rely on your lawyer, financial advisor and/or tax consultant for expert advice. Our address is BCHA, Attention: Legacy Fund, P.O. Box 1182, Columbia Falls, MT 59912-1182.

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

BCHA Grants in Action

McDonald Hollow Trail System-Supported by a BCHA Grant

By Marjorie Lewter, DVM, Eastern Divide BCH of Virginia



Left: Zora Groover, age 5, enjoys a ride on Jake.

Leslie Roberts Gregg is riding Jack.



Top right: McDonald Hollow yeild sign

Bottom right: Trail etiquette brochures

The brand new trail system awaits horseback riders, bikers, runners, and hikers in Blacksburg, VA. McDonald Hollow Trail System is designed to connect the outskirts of the town with the National Forest Poverty Creek Trail system on the far side of Brush Mountain. The mountainside land was purchased and donated by New River Land Trust and various stakeholders were invited to participate in the planning.

For over a year, the Back Country Horsemen of America, Eastern Divide Chapter attended meetings and surveys of the land to give input from the horseback rider’s perspective. We collaborated with New River Striders, Poverty Creek Trails Coalition, Town of Blacksburg New River Land Trust, and the National Forest Service. Challenges of heavy bike popularity near a college town, safety, and user education were addressed.

A \$600 grant was received in 2020 from the Back Country Horsemen of America to contribute to the project. The funds were used to purchase the universal Yield sign to inform trail us-

ers and to develop and print a brochure on Trail Etiquette to be shared with users. The brochure will be available at the Ribbon Cutting ceremony, when pandemic restrictions allow that to take place. It will be posted at kiosks and has already been welcomed at bike shops which are selling so many new bikes these days. The Trail Etiquette brochure will also be posted on the BCH of Virginia website as a downloadable copy for others.

We anticipate that riders from numerous properties nearby will use this trail system to access miles of popular Jefferson National Forest trails on the far side of Brush Mountain. The high priority for the equestrians was safety and sustainable design. Yield signs posted at every intersection remind all trail users to yield to horses. Educational brochures will be distributed to new bike owners and available at the entrance kiosks. The outreach and education of trail users by BCHA will be a proactive step for the area’s multi-use trails and will ensure that equestrians are always included in that definition.



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