

# Learning and Teaching in the Back Country

By Ally Pike, Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead, Montana



Did you know that horses’ eyes take longer than humans’ to adjust between light and dark environments? I did some research and it can take from 15 to 45 minutes! I had no idea, but this helps explain that one time I got mowed over in the barn after a night ride. It took me 5 years, but there’s always something new to learn.

I do love learning, but also teaching when I can. So when I was asked about a month ago to help with the BCHMT Youth Packing Camp, I jumped right in. The experience of wilderness on horseback is unparalleled to anything else, in my humble opinion. So to have

a few days teaching kids on a camping trip how to pack stock, about horses in camp, and Leave No Trace, it was such a privilege and joy. The kids were so fun too. I could rave forever on how fun and (mostly) well-behaved they were. Everyone got along and everyone was ready to work. What a dream team. Increasing youth involvement into BCHA has been a frequent topic this year as we begin to form a youth committee in BCHA. We’ve had a few great panel discussions over the last few years (with some available on record and notes if requested), and we continue to prepare for more. The con-

versations have ranged from program structure and logistics all the way to updating each other on the newest and coolest words like “cap.” Gen Z uses this as a term for lying, and no-cap is not lying. I think? The point being is that we want to build conversations on more ways to teach and facilitate opportunities to learn backcountry riding. Our world is no doubt having a wild ride through the constant changes and increasing speeds these days. Other conversations we’ve grazed on have been deeper things like inclusivity and diversity. It’s so important to bring these conversations to the table. This

helps with making new connections, building trust, and holding space for everyone to have these opportunities. In closing, I challenge you to see what youth activities you can get involved in or create for your chapter. It’s a crazy world we’re living in, but there’s always the backcountry. P.S. I don’t want to hear any complaining about “kids these days.” The 80’s were not normal.

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## Interested in Joining?

Contact BCHA or the organization nearest you.

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# Public Lands Update Trails are Common Ground

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

In August, BCHA joined partner organizations to formally launched the [Trails Are Common Ground](#) education initiative. BCHA encourages its members and chapters to share widely information about this initiative via social media, websites and newsletters. We want to get the word out on the importance of this initiative. Here’s why.

Trail use is at an all-time high and treating each other with kindness in how we share trails and interact with one another remains important—more now than ever before. Thus, Trails are Common Ground is a national awareness campaign to elevate the importance of responsible use and positive interaction among trail users. The initiative is intended to unify the voices and knowledge of trail user groups, advocacy organizations, and those capable of reaching current, new, and non-traditional trail users in a manner that no organization can accomplish alone.

## Campaign Origins

Trails are Common Ground was originated and continues to be facilitated by the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), whose executive director undertook extensive outreach with a diverse community of regional and national trail-focused organizations. On their own dime, IMBA also brought in media and marketing consultants to inform the campaign. Together, we worked over several months in order to:

- Build and “brand” a cohesive message from the trails community to the American public that reflects a unified trails ethos, or ethic; and
- Identify user-specific “principles” of behavior on the trail.

The coalition shaped the campaign to reinforce the many local, regional and user-specific trail respect programs in existence by promoting kindness and awareness while elevating the work of these programs. More than 15 zoom meetings have taken place with input from more than 20 organizations, as well as outdoor industry brands, land managers, representatives with BIPOC communities, and adaptive trail users. Coalition members represent all manner of activities that take place on natural surface trails, including hiking, equestrian, trail running, mountain biking and motorcycle single-track.

## Campaign Assets

BCHA developed equine-specific content that is housed on both the campaign and BCHA websites. To access this information, click on the Trails are Common Ground banner on BCHA’s main webpage. Included is a great 2-minute video on Stop, Speak & Smile (3-S) trail etiquette. Special thanks go to BCHA Education Committee chair, Craig Allen, and BCHA Webmaster Marty DeVall, for preparing this page; to BCH Virginia for much of its content; and to trail user groups in Central Oregon for allowing us to highlight their 3-S video.

In addition to the website, the campaign includes [social media](#), and creative assets that can be shared and personalized by brands, non-profits, content creators, and all passionate trail users who want to rise together to share the message of Trails are Common Ground. Key Principles and Messages for the campaign are: Respect, Inclusivity, Safety, Enjoyment. All public messaging is centered on these pillars, encouraging users to exercise kindness and the importance of being knowledgeable before stepping out onto the trail.

On September 9th, BCHA participated in a [webinar hosted by American Trails](#) to announce the Trails are Common Ground initiative. A recorded version of the webinar can be accessed via this link. It includes reference to short-term goals of the Trails are Common Ground initiative, which are to:

Unify and rally voices and organizations around a common theme that connects with any trail user regardless of their trail interest.

Reach 1 million trail users in 2021 and 5 million in 2022 with this unifying ethos.

Drive trail users to sources of knowledge (e.g., user-specific webpages, etc.).

Provide trail planners and land managers new knowledge and inspire their innovation.

Influence on-trail behaviors.

## Why is this Important?

In terms of member education and trail etiquette, the national trails community has long focused on educating their own members—with little focus or discussion on identifying

common or shared values that help define why all trail users love the outdoors. Trails are Common Ground aims to build a communal perspective on the mutual use of, and respect for, trails and for one another. By conveying a message of shared respect for the trails, we hope to move closer toward shared respect among all trail users. With focus on a series of practical guidelines for using trails based on widely-held values, such as practicing kindness, the Trails are Common Ground campaign elevates the importance of respectful, inclusive, safe, and enjoyable experiences on trails.

Long-term goals of the campaign are not set in stone. Additional mutual learning, trust-building and the cultivation of additional partners has to occur before the loose-knit coalition can begin to articulate a truly inclusive agenda for trails and trail users into the future. We hope the first phase of the initiative, which is focused primarily on education and innovation, will serve to stimulate further innovation in trail planning, design and construction techniques such that future trail systems consider the desires and motivations of all trail users.

Consequently, a logical next step in the Trails are Common Ground initiative could be for the coalition to promote quality recreational experiences for EVERYONE via critical agency land use or trail planning efforts. Wouldn’t that be refreshing, rather than trail user groups working largely in isolation in order to either defend the status quo, prevent further losses in access, or combat attempts by one user group to dominate a given trail system? Such a broad and inclusive approach seems possible once more trail users and agency decision-makers recognize what constitutes our common ground.

In the meantime, please share the campaign assets widely. Consider and promote ways by which you and your chapter can continue to promote kindness on the trail, such as:

- Carry trail kindness forward.
- Be trail kind.
- Spread good trail vibes.

Horsemen and women are already good at this. Let’s continue to embody the good we wish to see on the trail.





# View from the Chairman's Saddle

By Sherry Copeland, BCHA National Chairman

## Priorities & Thank You!

As Summer is winding down and the colors of Fall are starting to appear, I want to provide updates, share new topics and, most importantly, say Thank You!

This is the first completely digital newsletter and I am so excited to utilize this enhanced method of communication.

*Thank you, National Board, for recognizing and approving this more efficient and economical process!*

In August, I had the great pleasure to attend Montana Back Country Horsemen's First Rendezvous. It was good to see familiar faces and to meet and visit with members representing all the chapters.

One of the highlights was meeting Mr. Smoke Elser, a BCHA icon. I was reminded just how important the education aspect of BCHA is and must continue to be. Smoke, and others, shared an abundance of information regarding the historical aspects of educational materials developed and used through the years. This certainly emphasized the on-going need for BCHA to continue work on, update and provide these educational platforms and opportunities, and to make it available to all members.

*Thank you, Smoke and BCH Montana, for the hospitality, the historical information, and the challenge to further Education!*

Education priorities include Webinars and Workshops. Members will have the opportunity to participate, learn and share information and ideas during the Webinar titled BCHA 101 – Everything You Want to Know About BCHA! - scheduled for November 20. Stay tuned for the registration information on this and the other sessions being developed.

*Thank you, Committee Chairs, for assessing the need and developing these educational opportunities!*

## Communication remains a priority!

The monthly Updates have been well received and will continue to provide brief glimpses into the happenings of BCHA. Please continue to share your experiences, projects and events so they can be included.

The Software Evaluation Task Force is nearing a recommendation for software to facilitate efficient and effective communication directly with membership. Work continues to secure accurate membership data from the BCH State organizations, so when implemented, software can reach the entire membership.

*Thank you to those serving on the Task Force to help achieve this effort and "Harness Our Grassroots!"*

Finally, I want to acknowledge the work, progress and accomplishments of Back Country Horsemen Members, States and Chapters!

Despite the continuing pandemic restrictions, devastating wildfires, unprecedented flooding, and so many other obstacles, BCH members, states and chapters are moving forward in full force as BCHA continues to, (as Randy says) "Punch Above Our Weight!"

To all who have maintained a trail, met with other user groups and partners, held recruitment and educational events, collected and provided data, and made donations: **THANK YOU!**

Hope to see y'all on the trail,

*Sherry*



Sherry Copeland and Smoke Elser

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:memberdata@bcha.org) or call 206-498-6952
3. Have an address change or going south for the winter?  
Go to [BCHA.org](http://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](mailto:WildernessAdvisor@bcha.org) or call 541-602-0713

#### Financial:

1. Contact State Treasurer
2. *Latifia Rodriguez*, BCHA Treasurer  
[treasurer@bcha.org](mailto:treasurer@bcha.org)

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

1. *Michelle Wade*, Executive Administrator  
[michellewade@bcha.org](mailto:michellewade@bcha.org) or call 360-443-6996

#### New Mailing Address:

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# To Picket Or Not To Picket Mules

By Dan Harper, Missoula Back Country Horsemen, Montana

In his book, *Give Me Mountains For My Horses*, Tom Reed relates a sad story that brought me back to a specific memory. Tom raised and trained a horse named Grizz. Grizz became his favorite horse, his lead horse. On a pack trip into the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, Grizz was, as usual, picketed with a rope from the front pastern to a steel picket pin, pounded into the ground. Some of the other horses on the trip were hobbled and some were loose. The herd always kept close to where the lead horse was picketed. For reasons unknown, the herd spooked and bolted across the meadow with Grizz following. Unfortunately when Grizz hit the end of the picket rope, the pin pulled out of the ground. The rope, under great tension, shot the pin like a guided missile, impaling the horse and penetrating into the chest. He was dead in ten minutes.

I had a similar experience with a picket pin and a horse. The mare, who had been trained on the picket, was on one side of the picket circle when the other horses and mules charged by. By the time she was on the other side of the circle, she was hitting a full gallop. I watched in horror as the rope stretched and tightened. I expected her to be thrown on her back. Instead the pin shot out of the dirt and like an arrow, pierced the skin on her rib cage and bounced out, leaving the picket pin hanging, laced through three inches of skin. That was the last time I picketed a horse.

Mules tend to stay close to the dominate lead horse or mule both in the pasture and in camp. An advantage of picketing is that the lead horse or mule is allowed to graze while keeping the other mules close by. Depending on herd dynamics, the non-picketed stock may need to be hobbled. In any case the picketed lead horse or mule will

provide a ride to round up the rest of the herd if necessary.

Here are some thoughts on how to safely picket a mule or horse. A 20-30 foot 3/8 or 1/2 inch synthetic rope works well. In order to keep the hoof from becoming entangled with loose rope, the last 8 to 10 feet should be a chain or alternatively the rope can be threaded through a length of garden hose. A strong steel picket pin with a point on one end and a swivel on the top works best in most situations. A padded picket hobble and a side line hobble will also be needed.

Good equipment is necessary, but good training is more important. In a confined area, use a soft rope to teach the mule to easily give each foot to pressure. With a loop of rope around the pastern, pull and release until the mule easily yields to pressure. Repeat for each foot. Next, again in a confined area like a round pen, attach the side line hobble, back and front on the same side. Allow plenty of time for the animal to become accustomed to moving about in the hobble. Repeat this procedure for several days to ensure that the mule is doing well with the side line hobble. Next, attach the picket hobble to the hind leg next to the side line hobble. Using the side line hobble in conjunction with the picket helps keep a startled animal from getting up too much of a head of steam before hitting the end of the line. Attaching the picket to the hind leg keeps the leg from being pulled out from under the mule



Side line hobble, rope with last 10 feet in garden hose and picket pin

in an emergency. The picket pin must be securely in the ground. Pull the line to be sure that the horse gives to pressure. Limit the amount of line to 12 feet or so at first and always lead the mule to the end of line before releasing him to ensure that he understands that he is constrained. Attach the rope to the picket swivel with a quick release knot that won't jam.

Clear the circle encompassed by the picket line of all debris and snags. The risk of problems increases if other horses and mules not part of your herd are present in the meadow. Move the picket often to avoid overgrazing. At first limit the picket rope to about 20 feet. At night, high-line the mule for safety. Always start the training at home and progress to a mountain meadow when the mule is comfortable on the picket.

To picket or not to picket depends on the horse's or mule's temperament, good equipment and training. Also, a suitable area for the picket is necessary.

Good luck with your stock in the mountains. Remember, "It is better to ride a thin mule than to chase a fat one."

# Monture Riding Clinic - Riding in Control

By Wade Murphy, Upper Clark Fork Back Country Horsemen, Montana; Photos by Dawn Brennan, Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead, Montana

BCHMT had a very fun time at the Monture gathering in August. It was good to meet a lot of new people from around the state. This was a different crowd than we tend to see at meetings and convention. Over the weekend we set aside some time for education. I led a 10-person clinic on "control". We had great participation and we all learned quite a bit about our animals and ourselves. I thought I would take a few minutes to outline what we covered.

Are you in control of your animal? This is not necessarily a yes or no question. The reality is, our level of control changes as conditions change. The further your animal gets from their comfort zone the more nervous they get. As they get more nervous we become less in control of them.

When I ride my horse in my arena at home he is very comfortable there. This is his home and he has spent many years there and has spent countless hours being ridden in that arena. I have excellent control of him there. When I take him to a new place his prey animal instincts kick in, and my level of control over him decreases.

As Back Country Horsemen, this is our reality. We love to take our animals to new and exciting places. Taking our

animals to new places and often away from their barn buddies takes them out of their comfort zone. This often leads to nervous animals. As our control over the animal decreases our ability to ride safely also decreases.

One way of getting our animals back into their comfort zone is by having them perform exercises that they are familiar with. When you perform simple exercises that your animal is good at, they gain confidence and return to their comfort zone. Your control increases.

Our August clinic was a series of exercises for people to practice at home that can be used at the trailhead or on the trail to stay in control and increase safety. The following is an outline of some of the exercises we practiced. The exercises start simple and build on each other to eventually gain control of the major body parts of the horse.

1. Lateral flexion; simple flexing the head left and right. Our goal is to have the animal flex willingly to the lightest request possible.

2. One rein stop; our goal is to have our animal come to complete stop and relax anytime we flex their head around without any leg pressure.

3. Controlled circle (about 20" radius); our goal is to walk our animals in

a simple circle on a loose rein. We want them in control to the left and right, and also going the speed we want. We also introduce controlling the hips. We have them move their hips over off of our leg pressure.

4. Checkerboard exercise; walk the lines on a checkerboard with 90 degree turns. Our goal is to have them walk straight lines and then turn with the lightest pressure possible. We practiced first seat pressure, then leg pressure then follow with rein pressure if needed.

5. Walking lateral flexion; this builds off of step one only at a walk. Our goal is circling with good forward motion with the head flexed either left or right.

6. Vertical flexion; flexing downward at their poll. Our goal is have them flex their head to the lightest pressure. We start at a standstill and progress to a walk, trot, and lope.

7. Transitions; Changing speeds. Our goal is to have our animals quick to change speed as we ask them to. Walk to trot. Trot to walk etc.

8. Backing; we build off of vertical flexion for this. Our goal is to have our animals backup with very light cues.

9. Side pass; we build off of shoul-

[continued, bottom of next page]

Compete. Have fun. (Or both.)

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# BCHA Double Diamond Award

By John Chepulis, Volunteer Hours Chair;  
Beartooth Back Country Horsemen, Montana

The Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) National Board established this special annual award in 2003. This award is presented to BCHA chapters for exceptional volunteer projects and/or educational programs completed during the previous year. The efforts eligible for recognition can include, but not limited to, trail maintenance, trail construction, trailhead construction, educational programs, and youth programs.

Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) will accept applications from any chapter/unit for a volunteer project or educational program that has been accomplished during the calendar year (Jan.1-Dec.31) immediately preceding the April National Board of Directors Meeting. All award applications shall be for a specific project or educational program, not for multiple projects or programs undertaken during the year. Multiple outings to accomplish a specific project are acceptable.

Include a detailed description of what the project entailed and how it was accomplished from start to finish. Answer the questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how. Include any pictures (a maximum of eight photos) the committee can use in making its decision. Also include any additional support letters from the agency or private parties that were worked with on this project or program.

Applications must be submitted by email in Word or Adobe format with a maximum of four pages. (Digital format is preferred; however, a hard copy will be accepted if electronic options are not available to the nominator.

Applications must be received by March 20, 2022 , either by email to: Volunteer@bcha.org or US Mail to: John Chepulis, 2 Dovetail Lane, Columbus Mt. 59019.

The BCHA Volunteer Hours Committee appointed by the National Chair of BCHA will decide the winner or winners. The award will be presented at the BCHA National Board Annual Banquet. For questions, please call 406-581-6507

Thank you for the coming application!

BCHA Volunteer Hours Committee

## Riding in Control

[continued from previous page]

der and hip control exercises to progress to a side pass.

10. Speed control; we practice 3 different speeds of walk, 3 different speeds of trot and a lope. (We skipped the lope at Monture due to the condition of the ground where we were riding). Our goal is to get our animal to transition to all these different speeds with very light cues.

11. Desensitizing; we introduced our animals to a quad, chain saw, horse clippers, etc. Our goal is to boost their confidence when they encounter scary objects.



# Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics for Stock Use

Submitted by Stacy Kuhns, Education Chairman, BCH California

## Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Educate yourself on the area you plan to visit. Scout the area before an extended trip and locate appropriate grazing areas. Talk with local land managers to learn about available feed and water, bear issues, high-use areas to avoid, and current restrictions.
- Choose appropriate grazing restraints to minimize impact. Loose grazing, hobbles, highlines, electric fencing, and pickets minimize impact.
- Repackage food to minimize waste and the load on pack animals. Take only animals necessary for your trip.
- Train and practice backcountry activities with your animals at home so they are used to restraints, loads, and other techniques you'll be using. Take the most experienced, calmest animals.
- Getting lost can cause damage to land and risk for rescuers. Carry and use a map, and cell phone, know your route and stay on it.

## Travel Durable Surfaces

- Water horses 200' from water source, carry water in bucket to animals. If watering in a stream or lake, choose a location with low rocky bank or established ford. Avoid soft ground covered with vegetation.
- Stay in center of trail, single file, and avoid trailside areas.
- Use trails designed for heavy use. Follow regulations and avoid non-horse trails.
- Take rest breaks well off trail, on durable surfaces including dry grass, sand, or dirt.
- When traveling cross-country, each rider should pick his or her own route to disperse hoofprints, staying on durable surfaces.
- Avoid steep slopes. Ride across slopes rather than straight up or down to minimize impact.
- In undeveloped areas, stay only one night at each site to lessen the trampling of the site which may cause an impacted site to be formed.
- To help disperse your campsite impact, setup kitchen area in the most durable location as it gets the most traffic. Place tents on the most durable surface available.

## Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, Pack it out. This includes all garbage. Do not burn or bury trash.
- Disperse manure piles away from camp daily, and after rest breaks along the trail.
- If there are no bathroom facilities, deposit solid human waste in cat holes by digging 6-8" deep, 200' from water sources, camps, and trails.
- When breaking camp, visually sweep the entire area for any items left.

## Leave What You Find

- Use weed-free feed to prevent spread of invasive plants. Start feeding your animals 3 or more days prior to entering areas with weed restrictions to allow their digestive systems to clear.
- Fill in areas the animals have pawed to help regrowth.
- Don't break limbs, cut trees, build structures, or tie horses to trees without a tree saver to avoid leaving scars.
- Don't flag or blaze trails when going cross-country. If you mark trail with temporary markers, retrieve and removed on the way out.

## Minimize Campfire Impacts

- Make sure fires are allowed and obtain fire permit as required.
- Only have fire if weather is safe, there is a source of wood, and time to prepare and maintain the fire. Keep the fires small and responsible.
- Use only down and dead wood that is smaller than wrist. Gather wood away from camp, do not strip camp areas bare.
- Use portable liquid fuel or wood-burning stove rather than an open campfire for cooking.
- Burn fires to ash, don't leave half-burned logs.
- If there is no established fire ring, use a firepan.

## Respect Wildlife

- Control your dog; consider electronic collars; teach your dog voice and hand commands.
- Always store feed, food, and trash in secured containers to prevent wildlife from accessing.
- If your presence changes wildlife behavior, you're too close.

## Be Considerate of Other Visitors

- Use pack animals to remove trash left by others.
- When encountering other trail users, greet them and ask to please move to the safest side of trail. Be polite.



Winter Sponsorship Deadline:  
December 5th, 2022

## 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 12,500 members nationwide who belong to 212 active chapters/units and affiliates in 32 states. Our mailing list includes members, public land agency personnel (Forest Service, BLM, National Parks, state land agencies), elected officials, advertisers, and other trail and horse organizations. Visit [www.bcha.org](http://www.bcha.org) for more information on BCHA.

### Display Sponsorship Rates

Newsletter Ad Size ..... Price per Single Issue

#### One column wide (W x H)

2.5 inches x 2.5 inches ..... \$55  
2.5 inches x 5 inches ..... \$95  
2.5 inches x 10 inches ..... \$135

#### Two columns wide (W x H)

5 inches x 2.5 inches ..... \$95  
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across bottom of page ..... \$175

#### 20% bonus for sponsorships in four issues

(one year). All prices are for black and white ads. Ask about full color prices. BCHA reserves the right to refuse advertising space to any person or company. All ads must be paid for before inserting in the newsletter. The 4-issue package must be paid at time of first insertion.

### Mechanical Requirements:

Artwork is accepted in these formats: Adobe Acrobat PDF, Photoshop JPG saved for PC format. Images must be at a resolution of 300 pixels per inch at the actual size used in the artwork. All ads will be black and white unless special arrangements are made. Note: For questions or graphic design and layout of your ad, please contact Deborah Schatz at (406) 314-1084 or [deborah.bcha@gmail.com](mailto:deborah.bcha@gmail.com).

#### Design, Layout and Sponsorship Director

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#### Printing

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Salem OR 97305

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# Fundraising Committee Report

By Latifia "Tif" Rodriguez, Fundraising Committee Chair

[fundraising@bcha.org](mailto:fundraising@bcha.org)

## We are trying to earn our 2021 Top-Rated badge by Great Nonprofits!

If you love our work then tell the world! Stories about us from people like you will help us make an even bigger impact in working towards our mission. GreatNonprofits – the #1 source of nonprofit stories and feedback – is honoring highly regarded nonprofits

with their 2021 Top-Rated List. Please help us raise visibility for our work by posting a brief story of your experience with us. All content will be visible to potential members, volunteers and donors.

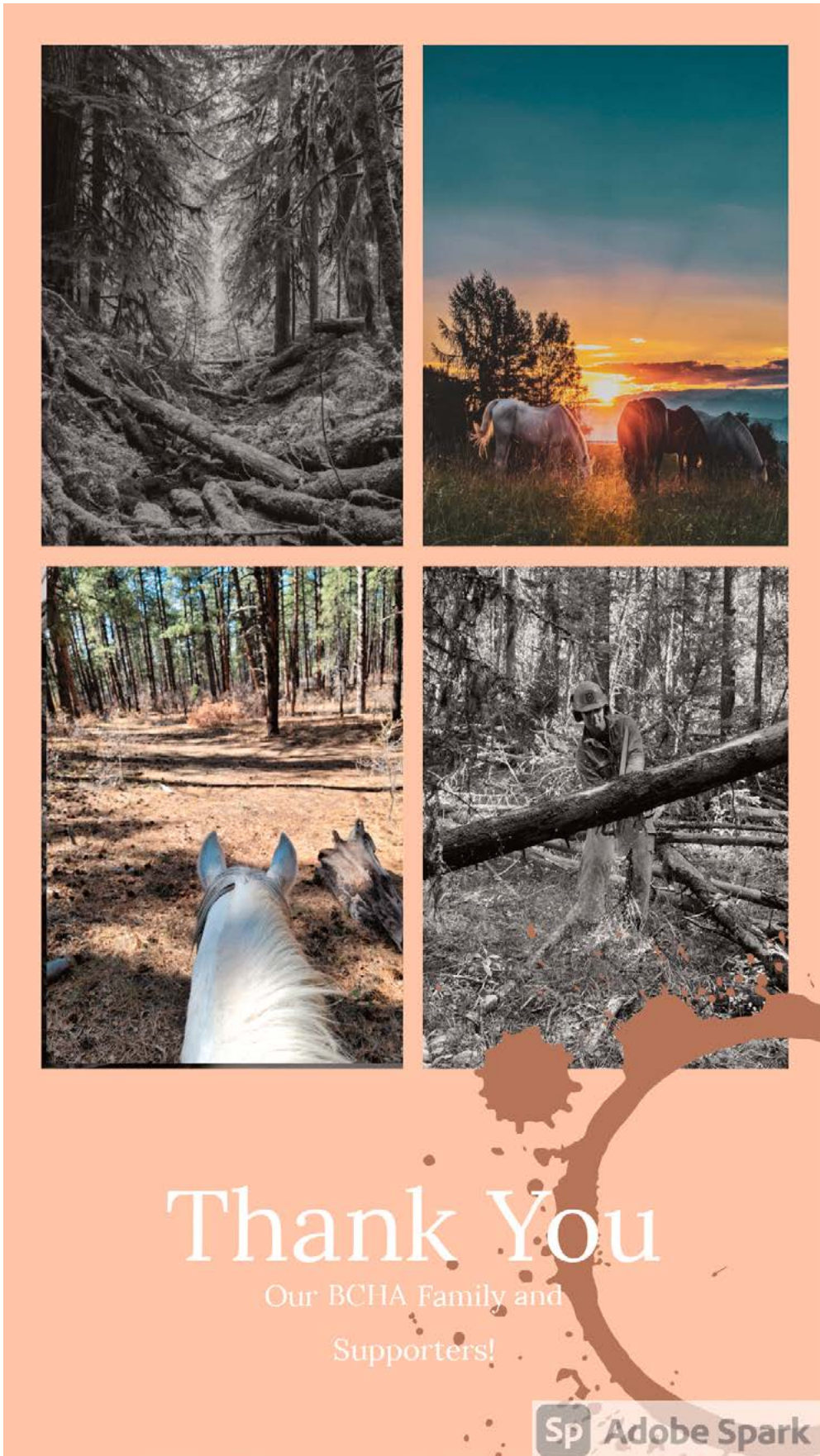
It's easy and only takes 3 minutes! Go here to get started! <https://greatnonprofits.org/reviews/write/back-country-horsemen-of-america-2>



## On behalf of the Fundraising Committee, thank you to our members and supporters!

Because of you we're able to continue our nationwide work to fulfill our mission.

*Tif Rodriguez, Chair*



### Sign up for the Top Trail Journeys Trailblazer challenge!



You can sign up until  
November 1st.

A portion of all proceeds  
earned goes to BCHA!

It's fun, it gets us outside  
and it reinforces our love  
for our public lands.

[Top Trail Journeys](https://www.bcha.org/top-trail-journeys)

If you need help or have questions, contact us at any time: [fundraising@bcha.org](mailto:fundraising@bcha.org)

### 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](mailto:fundraising@bcha.org)  
All inquiries are private and confidential



# Maintaining Trails when Muddy

By Ken Carmichael, Back Country Horsemen of Washington, Ponderosa Chapter

Recently I was one of many recipients of an email from Paul Knowles of Spokane County Parks. In part what it said was:

“We have a huge favor to ask of you! Would you mind putting out to your organizations’ members through your social media or other avenues a reminder that Spokane County’ trails are closed when muddy? We’ve been experiencing some spring-like freeze and thaw conditions, which can cause some of our trails to be more prone to damage by trail use than others, in particular:

- Any location where we have newer trails
- Areas where soils and exposure make them more susceptible to freeze/thaw.

We really appreciate your help in preserving and protecting the significant investment in volunteer hours needed each year to build and maintain Spokane County’s trails.”

When I read this, I realized that this applies to all our lands, thus this general plea going out across our country. This applies on all our lands, city, county, state, federal and private. Let’s apply Paul’s ask of a “huge favor” to everywhere we are on the land.

Last year several recreational groups were asked to provide input to a county signage program. Through this cooperation the following sign was created. I think it applies beyond the county so will quote here:

“Trails Closed When Muddy. During periods of rain and spring thaw, use of these trails leaves deep tire ruts, hoof and footprints resulting in severe or permanent trail damage. Spokane County relies heavily on community volunteers to build and maintain these trails for YOU to enjoy. PLEASE, help us thank our volunteers by choosing to recreate when the conditions are right. If you are leaving a visible tire rut, hoof or footprint more than 1” deep, the trails are too muddy to use.”

Back Country Horsemen is one of many groups that work to keep our trails open for multiple users and we fully support Paul. Therefore, the plea goes out to everyone to be conscious of the impact we can have on wet and muddy trails.

In 2020 we have seen a significant increase in the number of people using our public lands, and specifically the trails. Some of these people may not be aware of the affect they are having. Education can be a part of preserving our trails. If you are on a trail and look back to see imprints you are making it is a good time to select another trail, or time to recreate.

We can all do our part in maintaining our trails, even if you are not using a shovel. If you want to help further with trail maintenance and construction, please contact your local Back Country Horsemen chapter.

# BCHA - Always Needs Partners!

By Darrell Wallace, BCHA Past Chairman

For many years, BCHA has pursued partnerships with other organizations to ensure that BCHA can maximize its effectiveness, but the committee charged with that function was called the Public Liaison Committee, and was frequently confused with BCHA’s Public Lands Committee! Historically, this committee often included past-national chairmen and other knowledgeable members.

Last April, the Board of Directors voted for a new name: the Partnership Committee. This committee continues to work with BCHA’s Director of Public Lands and Recreation Randy Rasmussen to recommend formal (and sometimes financial) agreements to the national directors. Not a lot of work, but essential to our mission!

The ideal committee member would have an extensive knowledge of BCHA

partnerships and relationships, but we are fortunate to have Randy Rasmussen keeping track of all that, so we are currently focusing on BCHA members who are members of other trail organizations, or maybe just familiar with organizations that share our values.

Have you ever wondered why a certain organization is not listed as a BCHA Partner? If you know about (or maybe belong to) an organization like that, BCHA needs you on the Partnership Committee! Committee members do not need to hold any other BCH office. Please contact current Chairman (Past-national chairman) Darrell Wallace, or any BCHA officer for more information or to join the committee. Darrell can be reached at 360-918-3016 or [dlwallace700@gmail.com](mailto:dlwallace700@gmail.com).



## Saddle Pal

The easy way to attach your lead rope



[www.saddlepalbycate.com](http://www.saddlepalbycate.com)

# Back Country Trails

By Dan Applebaker

I belong to an organization of sorts  
That’s centered ‘round the mule and the horse.  
Its members, we all donate our time and our skills.  
We cut felled logs and we clear the way  
So outdoor lovers can get out and play  
On the many trails that cover the outback hills.

Back Country Horsemen is how we are known.  
Almost 200 chapters is the size we have grown,  
Since inception back in 1973.  
Our thousands of members have one thing in common.  
To keep trails open, to repair and build on  
The trails crossing our land from sea to sea.

Our creation we owe to four great names  
Of Roland and Dennis and Ken and Dulane  
Whose ideas took root over 40 years ago.  
In the hills of Montana it came to fruition,  
Those ideas took form as a noble mission  
To preserve the back country and keep it open to all.

To perpetuate stock use in the wilderness,  
To keep those lands open for recreational use  
Are two of the purposes stated in that mission.  
With concerted effort we can do such,  
And if we fail to do that much?  
We might as well call it a day and all go fishin’.

As the times have evolved in recent years  
The hikers and bikers en masse have appeared  
In numbers far too great for us to ignore  
“It’s getting too crowded!” we fret and we fuss.  
But these trails should be big enough for all of us.  
So, let’s make it work for all, to all I implore.

In the past we have clashed with those mountain bikers  
And even had tiffs with some of the hikers  
That use the trails as much or more than we.  
But there’s something I’ve learned from my time riding horses,  
Instead of us fighting we need to join forces,  
And come together for a powerful trail lobby.

Let ‘em be gone for good, those petty old ways,  
So we can all get back and spend our days  
Hiking and biking and riding stock through the woods.  
Put aside our differences, build on our strengths.  
Learn about one another. Heck, go to great lengths  
To understand one another and work for the common good.

We may have quarreled in the past,  
We need to put that behavior behind us, and fast  
Cause this land we all love, we’re lovin’ it to death.  
These trails, they need us, our muscle and sweat,  
Whether you bike them, or ride them, or cross them on foot,  
To preserve them and keep them from breathing their last breath.

If we can do that, all work as one,  
Our legacy we’ll leave long after we’re gone  
Is to see on the trails that criss cross our great nation,  
Our kids riding horses, on foot, and on bikes.  
Sharing their thoughts, their dreams and their likes  
On those trails that WE preserved for THEIR generation.



Betsy Rogan’s mule, Lucas, and horse, Sage, enjoy each other’s companionship in the Bob Marshall Wilderness of Montana.



# Next-Gen Packers

## The Northwest Montana chapter of the Back Country Horsemen has partnered with 4-H to teach horse packing to up-and-coming riders

By Micah Drew, Flathead Beacon

On a summer evening, three horse packers rode into the Bob Marshall Wilderness north of Lincoln to pack out a trail crew. The crew had been packed into the wilderness by a different group of horsemen and was awaiting the string of animals that would haul out their gear the next morning.

“Generally when you go to meet someone at a trailhead or on the trail who’s a packer, it’s an outfitter or someone from a backcountry horsemen chapter — an older guy or older woman,” said Rick Mathies, president of the NorthWest Montana Back Country Horsemen chapter. “But then these 15-, 16- and 18-year-old kids come along and pack the crew out and they know how to do it really well.”

“The group was kind of shocked,” Mathies added. “But it’s a pretty cool experience for the kids to be able to do that for adults and do it on their own.”

The kids Mathies referred to are Melanie and Seline Totten and Judah Westphal, three members of the 4-H Trail and Packing program, a first-of-its-kind partnership between the local 4-H extension office and the Back Country Horsemen.

The Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead chapter was founded in 1973, and swiftly grew large enough to help found chapters in states across the West and merge into a national organization dedicated to educating and inspiring like-minded individuals about stock use in the backcountry and aiding government agencies in maintaining and managing backcountry areas.

“A lot of those members are aging out,” said Mathies, who picked up packing when he was in his 50s. “There’s not a lot of younger people coming into the organization, so some of those packing skills are being lost.”

In 2015, Mathies and a group of similarly minded horse and backcountry enthusiasts decided to create a new chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of Montana, the NorthWest chapter, geared towards youth and families.

“We wanted to do things a little different way and try to figure out how to bring young folks, youth and families in the backcountry,” he said. “We wanted to concentrate on passing on what we could to the next generation.”

Mathies said there had been some discussions in the past about starting a packing group in 4-H, so it was a natural progression to start the conversations about a partnership. Other than a little bit of packing curriculum from a group in Bozeman, there wasn’t much existing framework to build out a horse-packing program, but in 2016

the program launched with 14 kids.

“It helped that three or four of the kids were already within our chapter and their families were involved,” Mathies said. “They gave us a lot of good feedback about whether we were communicating with the kids the right way or just a bunch of old guys talking a lot.”

The program curriculum is based around a series of clinics during the packing off-season that teach youths the basics of horse packing. Members advance through five levels that cover the basics of horsemanship, manly preparation and pack loading, culminating in leading a multi-day packing trip and teaching another group or member how to pack.

Thirty-four youths signed up for the program in 2020, and Mathies said 27 were involved this year, including Westphal, who advanced through all the levels in a single year.

The Totten sisters first started packing with their father when they were around 11 years old and then joined the 4-H program when it started up.

“Even with our parents dragging us in to it, we learned all the basics from 4-H,” Melanie, 18, said. “How to make loads, how to put the saddles on, how to take care of the horses. All our basics, how to deal with what’s going to happen on the trail came from 4-H.”

Melanie, Seline, 15, and Judah, 17, put their skills to use this summer packing for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation as a team.

“It’s super relaxing out there,” Melanie said. “Yeah, stuff happens, the horses can react differently than in 4-H, but we can handle it. We can handle anything that happens to us out there.”

Over the summer, the team packed in dozens of volunteer groups and trail crews, gaining a reputation among for their skills in the backcountry, which is bolstered by their youth.

“We planned each trip ourselves — we funded them, we planned them, we carried them out,” Melanie said. “All summer we had the support from the Back Country Horsemen, but it was on us entirely and we did it.”

Mathies says the 4-H program has done exactly what it was envisioned to do: ignite a passion in the younger generation and pass the packing torch forward.

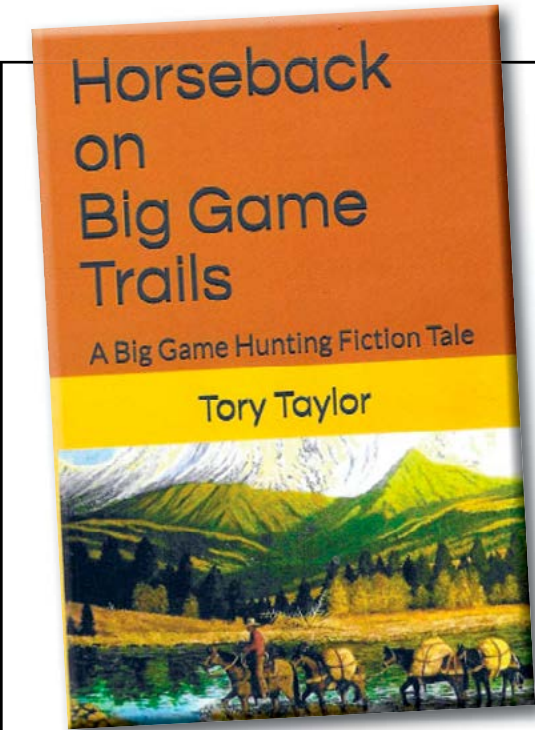
“I’m not going to lie, we’ve started talking about next year,” Seline said. “We’ve all decided we’re quitting our jobs and we’ll be back packing next summer.”



Judah Westphal and Melanie Totten ride through Herron Park as part of a packing demonstration.

Melanie Totten and Seline Totten prepare packs as part of a demonstration in Herron Park.

Photos by Hunter D’Antuono, Flathead Beacon



Retired Wyoming outfitter Tory Taylor announces his latest book

## Horseback on Big Game Trails

The main content is fiction based upon actual hunts and events with characters who were real persons. The story follows the autumn adventures of a wilderness outfitter, his staff, hunters, horses, and big game.

Born and raised at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, Taylor has always lived in view of the high peaks he calls home. People often comment that reading Taylor’s books is like sharing a campfire with him - you can almost smell the smoke, hear the horses’ bells, and feel the cool mountain air.

Available on Amazon.com, ISBN 9798536867556. Illustrated. 123 pages.  
Book cover painting by Ken Moreland, Merriman, NB.

