

# Back Country Horsemen of America

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[www.bcha.org](http://www.bcha.org)

Winter 2023

## BCHA Grant Project Report Tri-Lakes Chapter Back Country Horsemen of Missouri

By Marsha Copeland, Tri-Lakes Chapter, Back Country Horsemen of Missouri (BCHMO)

Tri-Lakes Chapter BCHMO received a 2022 BCHA grant in the amount of \$1,000.

Project: Tri-Lakes Chapter, in an effort to be pro-active in addressing the safety issue of electric bicycles (e-bikes) on non-motorized multi-use trails in Missouri, used the grant funds to purchase the educational, safety, and ethics triangle “right-of-way” signs to be placed on Missouri’s multi-use trails and at trailheads. This project is timely as the Missouri Department of Conservation, a state land management agency, has changed regulations to allow e-bikes on its non-motorized trails open to equestrians. Tri-Lakes Chapter volunteers its efforts on multiple conservation areas making this of extreme concern for our chapter and all riders in Southwest Missouri. Our chapter also volunteers work hours to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and National Park managed areas. The signs will be placed in all appropriate places where Tri-Lakes Chapter volunteers to care for the trails.

With the grant funds, it was possible to purchase 27 of the 12”x12” Trail Courtesy Sign (right-of-way). The signs are aluminum with protective overlay.

In addition to the triangle Trail Courtesy Signs, our chapter was able to purchase two different designs promoting education, safety, and ethics to place at specific trailheads and

equestrian campgrounds.

Tri-Lakes Chapter is responsible for working in eight different land management areas: four Missouri Department of Conservation; two U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and two National Parks. Our chapter is also sharing the signs with other BCHMO chapters. Signs have been shared with Ridge Runner Chapter, Mountain Riders Chapter, and Tornado Ridge Chapter. Tri-Lakes will also place signs within a private campground, Brushy Creek Lodge and Resort. The public Ozark Trail and other trails within the Mark Twain National Forest are in the Brushy Creek trail system. The signs placed at Brushy Creek will be especially significant as Brushy Creek is heavily used by equestrians, hikers, and has adjoining motorized trails.

Pictures below show signs being placed on Tri-Lakes Chapter work areas and the sharing opportunity with other BCHMO chapters within the state.



Tri-Lakes Chapter at Bolivar Landing Trailhead





## From the Chairman's Saddle

By Sherry Copeland, BCHA National Chairman

Happy New Year Back Country Horsemen!

Happy 50th Anniversary Back Country Horsemen of America!

Here we go 2023 - I feel the excitement of being part of BCHA as we celebrate 50 years of service, education and advocacy; and the enthusiasm of expectations for the future for BCHA.

As we take a look back over the past 50 years of accomplishments, more importantly, let's look to the future of BCHA and what part each of us have in the responsibility to continue the work and reach the goals that Ken Ausk, Roland Cheek, Dulane Fulton and Dennis Swift envisioned around that campfire in the Flathead of Montana 50 years ago.

We have come so, so, so far..... but we have a long way to go and I want to share a few expectations of goals within reach for BCHA heading into this 50th Anniversary Celebration:

- Engaging, informed, and contributing 64-member National Board of Directors
- Streamlining efficient communication and administration processes
- Increasing specific fundraising opportunities
- Reporting ALL the volunteer hours performed

It all starts with you!

Members, Chapters, States, and National Directors – this is the call to action!

Members: Participate with your Chapter.

Chapters: Communicate with your State.

States: Direct and support your National Directors.

National Directors: Engage, communicate, and contribute.

High expectations and goals? Yes, but so were those of the "Founding Four" – so,

Let's celebrate and, at the same time, let's answer the questions "How can I support these expectations?" and "What can I contribute to reach these goals?" - as we continue the goal of "Keeping Trails Open for All!"

See y'all on the trail,

*Sherry*

## BCHA Mission Statement

1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness areas.
2. To work to 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.

## BCHA 2023 National Board Meeting



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## BCH Montana State Convention

April 14-16th, 2023

Majestic Valley Arena, Kalispell, Montana

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# BCHA Grant Project Report

Redwood Unit of Back Country Horsemen of California

The Redwood Unit of BCH California submitted a grant proposal to help pay for two new pipe corrals up in the Marble Mountains Wilderness Area Trailhead at Ten Bear. Fire burned part of the old original wood corrals. The work was to be done during the second weekend in July. But with so many fires raging in Northern California, the work had to be postponed.

Finally, on October 16th, five women and myself took off and headed up into the mountain which was a four hour drive from Eureka, CA. Three of the ladies had to drive an additional hour to get there. A level spot away from the burned area was found, and in two and a half hours, the corrals were installed. Six of the panels were chained together and concreted into the ground. Four Tee posts were pounded into the ground, one at each far corner, and then all the clamps were welded into place. All the extra work was done to prevent the corrals from being stolen.



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# Time to start planning

By Greg Schatz, Youth Committee Chair, photo by Kyle Stansbury Photography

It's time to start planning your youth projects for 2023. If you are looking for ideas of what to do, see the youth committee folder on BCHA's Google Drive:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/12ynHzXrU081t-FZgUKj0F1buHPEsCjz6t>

Some examples of information you will find include:

- a description of a one-hour meet and greet with young campers
- an outline of a half-day "introduction to Back Country Horsemen" for youth
- a description of a weekend packing camp for youth
- games to introduce youth to camping and horse use in the back country
- the 4-H Horse and Mule Packing Manual
- a description on how to hold a youth education day on sharing trails

If you have any questions please let me know.

[gregschatzbuilder@gmail.com](mailto:gregschatzbuilder@gmail.com)



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# Arkansas BCH Hosts First Chainsaw Certification Class

By Pam Floyd

After years of effort, Arkansas Back Country Horsemen is pleased to announce the successful completion of its first chainsaw certification class. An ongoing shortage of Class C instructors in the state, complicated by recent Covid restrictions, led to the cancellation of multiple classes over the last several years. Disappointed but undeterred, Arkansas BCH's saw manager, Lonnie Obryant, joined forces with the USFS Region 8 saw coordinator, Patrick Scott of North Carolina, to ensure that this class did not suffer the same fate. Patrick arranged for certified instructors Forrest Sutton and Dennis Helton to travel from North Carolina, local BCH members scheduled required CPR/First Aid classes and provided meals for participants, and rancher Jim Starkey stepped up to host the two day class at his beautiful facility in Harrison, Arkansas. With Lonnie coordinating all the individual efforts and everyone else holding their collective breaths in hopes that this event would actually come together, the class did take place on October 27th and 28th in a spirit of good will and camaraderie. Arkansas now boasts fourteen new certified chainsaw users, five Class A, as well as nine Class B. District Ranger Allen Smith gave the official stamp of approval when he signed off on the certifications, noting he appreciates the



work of Back Country Horsemen in Arkansas.

Chainsaw certification is an important next step in allowing the four chapters of Arkansas BCH to better serve on the public lands where they ride and work. That service area includes parts of the Ozark-St Francis

National Forest, Devil's Den State Park, Pea Ridge National Military Park, and the Buffalo National River. Plans for additional classes are already in the works, and the hope is that Arkansas will soon have its own Class C instructors.

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# Arkansas BCH Rendezvous River Ride

By Nancy Deisch and Pam Floyd, Arkansas Back Country Horsemen



Members of Arkansas Back Country Horsemen (ABCH) and the Buffalo River Chapter BCH have once again made a lifetime of memories in just the first three weeks of October, 2022. In celebration of the Buffalo National River's 50th anniversary, the group hosted the Rendezvous River Ride, beginning at the mouth of the river where it empties into the White River and ending near the upper reaches of its headwaters. The ride was open to members of all four chapters in Arkansas, thus the "rendezvous" in the title. The format was changed a bit for this fourth full river ride. Instead of riding the length of the river and requiring riders to shuttle their trailers and camping equipment forward to a different campsite every day as they had done in the past, this year the members opted for five campgrounds along the river, allowing participants to ride and camp at each one for three to four days before moving on to the next. This proved to be a popular option as it allowed for plenty of riding time on the trails (nearly 170 miles), while also making more time for rest and relaxation around the campfire each night.

Each of the five campgrounds was hosted by members of ABCH,

whose first responsibility was to make sure the trails in their area were clear and passable. Much of this prep work took place throughout the year with work days scheduled as needed. Keeping trails open for everyone is the heart of our mission, so most of this preparation felt like business as usual. Of course, this year there was the added incentive of knowing the big Ride lay ahead.

During the River Ride, the hosts each arranged for at least one group meal, invited educational speakers and musical entertainment, provided nightly campfires, and had emergency contingency plans in line for each area – in short, the hosts tried to think of everything anyone might need or want. The Ride started at a private camp near the lower end of the Buffalo River, Saddle Valley Ranch, where members Ted Spears and Elaine Appel hosted. A highlight on the final night was a barbecue dinner provided by the camp owners, along with music by a local bluegrass band. After four great days of beautiful and sometimes challenging riding, the group moved to Hathaway, a primitive horse camp serving the lower Buffalo. Here hosts Rhonda Keeter and Terry Bell, along with other members of the Lower

*RRR riders gather at Woolum on the Middle Buffalo River.*

Buffalo River BCH, treated the riders to a fabulous fish fry, complete with all the trimmings. Chuck Bitting, a retired geologist with the National Park Service, gave a fascinating campfire talk about the history of the mines in this area, which was followed by a fun bushwhacking ride the next day to some of those local mines.

Jacque Alexander and Joyce Taylor assumed host duties when the Ride moved to Woolum on the middle Buffalo. Fall colors were really popping here, making for beautiful rides along the river. Jacque and Joyce made sure that deeply-wooded trails opening up to awe-inspiring vistas and brisk river crossings were part of every day's adventure. Joyce's husband, Johnny Taylor, drove up from Little Rock one evening to see what a Back Country ride was all about, and he stayed to grill burgers for the entire group. This was followed by a campfire talk by Arkansas Game and Fish wildlife biologist, Rachel Norton, who spoke about the bears, elk, turkeys, and other wildlife that many of us have witnessed while riding this section of the river. As if that wasn't enough, the camp dogs kept us laughing every evening with their Frisbee-chasing antics.

*[continued next page]*

## Arkansas BCH Rendezvous River Ride

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Leaving Woolum's gorgeous riding behind was hard, but with the fall colors following along and becoming more vivid every day, the riders next headed upriver to the Erbie Horse Camp. There hosts Chuck and Carol Bitting guided them to hidden caves and springs in the area, along with rides to several historical old home places. Around the fire, Jim and Susie Lyles, both retired from the Buffalo National River, shared their extensive knowledge of the history and the lore of the upper Buffalo, which made the day rides to some of the places they talked about even more meaningful. Even members who had ridden this area many times found new and interesting things to marvel over. On the last day, Carol lead a memorable ride that included private land where the most hospitable folks imaginable, Greg and Diane Spear and their daughter Jessie, welcomed the hungry riders, laid a feast before them, watered their horses and mules, and then sent them on their way back to Erbie, content and well-fed.

The bluebird kind of days that had marked the first weeks of the Rendezvous River Ride turned a bit nippy at the last stop, Steel Creek, on the upper Buffalo. However, the lows in the 20's didn't deter the committed group of riders as their 17-day adventure neared the end. Larkin and Pam Floyd hosted this portion of the Ride, assisted by the welcoming rangers at the Steel Creek ranger station. The riding there included most of the beloved sites on this section of the river, including Granny Henderson's Cabin, Sneed's Creek, Kyle's Landing, and a long pull up to the popular Low Gap Café for lunch one day. Waking up every morning to the magnificent Roark Bluff across the river from the camp was just icing on the frosty cake. Music and cowboy poetry filled the last two nights, with a northwest



*Steel Creek on the Upper Buffalo River*

Arkansas fan-favorite, Brick Fields blues duo, along with members of ABCH, providing never-to-be forgotten entertainment.

The 2022 Rendezvous River Ride ended as previous rides had – with most riders ready to turn around and do it all over again. The camaraderie and the communion with fellow riders and equines gave each person a feeling of peace and harmony that only time spent in the wilderness with friends can provide.

Of course, an event like this isn't all just fun, food and games; this River Ride took almost a year to plan, with riders from all of the Arkansas BCH chapters taking part in the planning and execution of the arrangements. Thank you to members of the Buffalo River Chapter, the Lower Buffalo River BCH, the AR-Ozarks chapter, and the BCHNWA chapter for pitching in to scout and clear trails. After all, keeping trails open is where it all begins. Special thanks go to the camp cooks who brought in supplies, set up grills and griddles, and cooked delicious meals for 30-plus hungry cowpokes. "An army moves on its stomach," holds true for River Riders, too! Bobby Alexander and his fellow camp cookies, Peter Deisch and Chuck Bitting, were reg-

ulars on the scene, cooking up dutch oven favorites like fajitas, cobblers, and cowboy scrambles with homemade biscuits on an almost daily basis. Member Tom Cole didn't get to ride with us, but he drove up to Steel Creek just to work his own kind of dutch oven magic.

And then, there are the horses and mules... In any event like this, they are the true stars of the show. It's not bragging to say that our horses and mules were nearly flawless in their execution of duties. In fact, they seemed as eager to hit the trails every day as their riders. Most notable, Rambler, a Missouri Foxtrotter, completed his fourth river ride (over 610 miles total) – the only horse to have completed every mile of all four river rides. He just happens to be one of the authors' (Nancy's) horses!

So far, these special River Rides have occurred every three years: 2013's Great River Ride, 2016's Centennial Ride, 2019's Silver Celebration Ride, and now 2022's Rendezvous River Ride. Likely we have said this after each ride, but this one really may have been the best. Who knows what 2025 will bring? One thing is for sure; however, it will be hard to top this year's Arkansas BCH Rendezvous River Ride.



# Fish Plant Burnout

By Larry Shuman, Shasta Trinity Unit, Back Country Horsemen of California

A few months back I wrote an article on our fish plant in 2021. Well, since then the dynamic of our annual plant changed. The Dixie Fire devastated the North State including the Caribou Wilderness which we had just planted earlier in the year.

We talked to Fish and Wildlife, and they were willing to tackle planting again if we were. They went into the lakes, and they seemed to be OK. The fingerlings we planted last year were up to 6 inches and were thriving. They caught one over four pounds. I will take payment to tell you which lake. The consensus was the lakes could still sustain trout.

We knew the logistics had changed and just to get access to the lakes with stock would be daunting. We started in late May creating access and were ready to go by late June. Instead of the 18 lakes we usually plant, we had 15. Three were removed from the list for just this year as UC Davis wanted to use them for a study of the fire effects.

This is what we had. The south of the Wilderness was devastated to the point we did not see one live tree until we got to Long Lake. Ten miles of trail and six lakes were devoid of life. Only the meadows seemed to escape. The north and middle of the Wilderness was not so bad. It is a long narrow wilderness. In the north and middle the trails leading in were burnt out almost as bad as the south end. Miraculously the lakes themselves were OK. In fact, when you get to the lakes, it hardly seems like a fire went through the area.

So, we planted 15 lakes with 35,000 + fingerling trout over three days. All went well without incident. Only time will tell what the future holds as the effects of winter runoff, erosion, and other factors from the fire take effect. This used to be a well-traveled, easy hiking and riding wilderness, but this year we saw two people day fishing in the north and had someone camp with us at the trailhead in the south. The next day they hiked in for an hour or so, and then they turned around and left. Not much fun camping and hiking in what is destroyed.



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# RMBCH Celebrates Accomplishments on USFS Sangre de Cristo Trails

By Hillary Leeman, Rocky Mountain Back Country Horsemen, Colorado

Yes, Rocky Mountain Back Country Horsemen were back at it again this spring and summer, getting those three adopted Sangre de Cristo trails cleared and open to safely ride or hike. If you are not familiar with these gorgeous trails, they are located near the town of Westcliffe, Colorado, and possess some rugged, high elevation terrain that opens up to beautiful mountain lakes, with most above 11,000 feet.

This year, we had another “Brighten the Sangres” event where several volunteers went out to our adopted trails at the beginning of June to gauge the damage from winter storms. North Brush trail is always a lot of work; our volunteers have used the term “pick-up sticks” to describe the way deadfall crisscrosses the first couple miles of this trail. If you have the chance to get to the lakes on this trail, it won’t disappoint! This trail has the most scenery changes of all the Sangres routes and it is one of the longest day rides you can do out there.

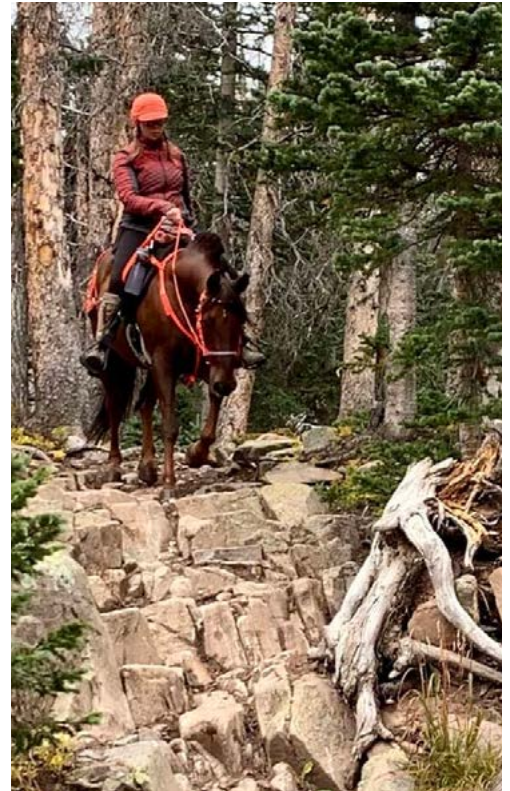
Lakes of the Clouds and Swift Creek form a fun and challenging loop for riders, when there isn’t a pile of deadfall on a technical segment, or a wash out in a really inconvenient spot. One of our riders on a solo mission reported seeing a small black bear running away from her horse on Swift Creek, so these trails are not without other hazards. This trail was opened up for riders and hikers fairly early in the season, so we set our sights on getting to the Macey Lakes.

I personally love this trail very much; it has a lot of unique aspects, like waterfalls, colorful cliffs, and lots of distinctive technical “rock scrambling” obstacles to really test your equine partner’s skills... and the first lake you reach is absolute-

ly spectacular to behold. In 2022, this trail saw the most deadfall in recent memory... all told, our volunteers eventually removed over 230 downed trees from this trail to make it accessible. I’ve said it before, and I’ll say it once more, the Silky saws significantly increased the speed that we could cut logs off the trail. Even with several different sized “Katanaboy” saws to help us, our volunteers still spent over 400 work hours throughout the summer re-opening the magnificent Macey Lake trail for all. On August 13th of this year, a small crew of four riders took down the last monstrous “horse-stopper” that had crashed across the trail less than half a mile from the terminus.

With that, a celebration for the end of September was planned to recognize a truly fabulous work season spent in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. As many of you may know, autumn in Colorado is a golden experience, and the Custer County area is no exception! Yet again, an incredible donation of the rodeo grounds by Wet Mountain Valley Saddle Club allowed us to host riders from all across Colorado. Equestrians were able to explore Macey Lake with me, North Brush and Lakes of the Clouds with other members, and even Music Pass (a newly adopted trail for RMBCH in 2023). The weekend boasted fun entertainment from a talented guitarist, as well as potluck meals with delicious snacks.

Our riding was cut short by an early snow storm, so we enjoyed a hearty



breakfast at a local eatery. With the early snow, we expect 2023 to have plenty more work when the snow eventually melts. I anticipate at least three weekend events in Westcliffe next year: Assess the Sangres in early June, Brighten the Sangres in late July, and Celebrate the Sangres in late September again. Once we set specific dates, mark your calendars and plan to come discover this exceptional range with your horses and friends.



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# Wilderness Crosscut Saw Class, Mount Rogers National Recreation Area

By Nancy Sluys, Back Country Horsemen of the Virginia Highlands

October 17-21, 2022 the U.S. Forest Service Region 8, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), and Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) partnered to host a comprehensive A/B/C/C+ crosscut saw certification course at the Sugar Grove Volunteer Trail Camp (Konnarock), in Sugar Grove, VA on the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area in southwest Virginia. Being our home forest, the Back Country Horsemen of the Virginia Highlands received an invitation to attend, and Jeff Nelson and I were willing and available. It was an amazing experience and a great format. The first two days were only for C Sawyers, and then the A/B course started and went for three days. The C Sawyers trained and evaluated the A/B Sawyers while they were also evaluated instructing. There were approximately 30 people in attendance, primarily from SAWS and the ATC, and aside from Jeff, myself and Ken Jones, a C Sawyer from Tennessee, also represented BCHA.

The first day there was a lot of classroom material, and the new instructors took turns presenting. It was great experiencing the different approaches and teaching styles. Later, we went out into the field and did some ax work and simple cuts to get accustomed to the saw and our partner. I was going for a B Bucking recertification and Jeff was certifying for the first time at the B level.

On day two, after some review and a little more class, we went out to tackle real life situations to work on our logistical skills. There were many scenarios available for everyone to have some challenging situations. Each day we worked with a different instructor in the field and once again we learned so much from different points of view. Gaining knowledge



from so many different, very experienced sawyers from varying parts of the country gave us a much better education than our local FS unit can provide.

The third day we were evaluated through many different situations. In each situation, we had to outline what we saw, the dangers, how we would approach it, our cut plan, escape plan, etc., and then we would carry it out. As we were being evaluated, our evaluators were also being evaluated. It sounds pretty intense but actually there was lots of camaraderie and humor, so the atmosphere was relaxed and fun. The training was very worthwhile and had the added bonus of three days to network with members of other user groups doing similar work in our forests. The event was so successful that more are being planned with different topics such as Chainsaw Certification and Packing, among others. The Mount Rogers Work Camp and Konnarock Volunteer Trail Camp, which are next to each other, were the perfect venue with camping cabins for attendees, classrooms and lots of big trees out



back to cut down. Keep your eyes open for announcements of more class offerings at this location in the future.



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